

Bacchus in Virgil

the main references, with translations by A. S. Kline

Ecl. 4

at tibi prima, puer, nullo munuscula cultu
errantis **hederas** passim cum **baccare** tellus
mixtaque ridenti colocasia fundet **acantho**. 20
ipsae lacte domum referent distenta capellae
ubera nec magnos metuent armenta leones;
ipsa tibi blandos fundent cunabula flores.

And for you, boy, the uncultivated earth will pour out
her first little gifts, straggling ivy and cyclamen everywhere
and the bean flower with the smiling acanthus.
The goats will come home themselves, their udders swollen
with milk, and the cattle will have no fear of fierce lions:
Your cradle itself will pour out delightful flowers:

Ecl. 5

Daphnis et Armenias curru subiungere tigris
instituit; Daphnis thiasos inducere **Bacchi**, 30
et foliis lentas intexere mollibus hastas.

...
...postquam te fata tulerunt,
ipsa Pales agros atque ipse reliquit **Apollo** 35

Daphnis taught men to yoke Armenian tigers
to chariots, and to lead the Bacchic dance
and to entwine the pliant spears with soft leaves.
As vines bring glory to the trees, grapes to the vines,
bulls to the herds, corn to the rich fields,
so you alone to your people. Since the Fates took you,
Pales and Apollo themselves have left our lands.

sis bonus o felixque tuis! en quattuor aras: 65
ecce duas tibi, **Daphni**, duas altaria **Phoebo**.

O be kind and auspicious to your own! See, four altars:
look, two are yours Daphnis, two more are for Phoebus.

79-80

ut Baccho Cererique, tibi sic uota quotannis
agricolae facient: damnabis tu quoque uotis.

Ecl. 6

cum canerem reges et proelia, Cynthius aurem 3
uellit et admonuit: 'pastorem, Tityre, pinguis
pascere oportet ouis, deductum dicere carmen.' 5

[...]

When I sang of kings and battles the Cynthian grasped
my ear and warned me: 'Tityrus, a shepherd
should graze fat sheep, but sing a slender song.'

Pergite, Pierides. Chromis et Mnasyllus in **antro** 13

Silenus pueri somno uidere iacentem,
inflatum hesternis uenas, ut semper, **Iaccho**; 15

Speak, Muses. The boys Chromis and Mnasyllus
saw Silenus lying asleep in a cave,
his veins swollen as ever with yesterday's wine:

[...]

tum canit, errantem Permessi ad flumina Gallum 64

Aonas in montis ut duxerit una sororum,
utque uiro **Phoebi** chorus adsurrexerit omnis; 66

[...]

Then he sings Gallus wandering by the waters of Permessus,
how one of the Muses led him to the Aonian hills,
and how all the choir of Phoebus rose to him:

omnia, quae **Phoebus quondam meditante** beatus 82

audiit Eurotas iussitque ediscere laurus,
ille canit...

He sings all Phoebus once practised, and blest Eurotas heard,
and ordered his laurels to learn by heart,

Ecl. 7

{C.} Nymphae noster amor Libethrides, aut mihi carmen,
quale meo Codro, concedite (proxima **Phoebi**
uersibus ille facit) aut, si non possumus omnes,
hic arguta sacra pendebit fistula pinu.

{T.} Pastores, **hedera** crescentem ornate poetam, 25
Arcades, inuidia rumpantur ut ilia Codro;
aut, si ultra placitum laudarit, **baccare** frontem
cingite, ne uati noceat mala lingua futuro.

{C.} Saetosi caput hoc apri tibi, **Delia**, paruus 30
et ramosa Micon uiuacis cornua cerui.
si proprium hoc fuerit, leui de marmore tota
puniceo stabis suras euincta **coturno**.

{T.} Sinum lactis et haec te **liba, Priape**, quotannis 35
exspectare sat est: custos es pauperis horti.
nunc te marmoreum pro tempore fecimus; at tu,
si fetura gregem suppleuerit, aureus esto.

{C.} Nerine Galatea, thymo mihi dulcior Hyblae,
candidior cyncis, **hedera** formosior alba,
cum primum pasti repetent praesepia tauri,
si qua tui Corydonis habet te cura, uenito. 40

[...]

{T.} Aret ager, uitio moriens sitit aëris herba, 57
Liber pampineas inuidit collibus umbras:

Phyllidis aduentu nostrae nemus omne uirebit,
Iuppiter et laeto descendet plurimus imbri. 60

{C.} **Populus Alcidae gratissima, uitis Iaccho,
formosae myrtus Veneri, sua laurea Phoebos;**
Phyllis amat corylos: illas dum Phyllis amabit,
nec myrtus uincet corylos, nec laurea Phoebi.

{T.} Fraxinus in siluis pulcherrima, pinus in hortis, 65
populus in fluuiis, abies in montibus altis:
saepius at si me, Lycida formose, reuisas,
fraxinus in siluis cedit tibi, pinus in hortis.

{M.} Haec memini, et uictum frustra contendere Thyrsin.
ex illo Corydon Corydon est tempore nobis. 70

Corydon:

Nymphs of Libethra, whom I love, either grant me a song
such as you gave my Codrus (he makes verses
nearest to Phoebus's own): or if we're not all so able,
let my tuneful pipe hang here on the sacred pine.

Thyrsis:

Arcadian Shepherds crown your new-born poet with ivy,
so that Codrus's heart bursts with envy:
or if he praises me beyond what's pleasing, circle
my brow with cyclamen, lest his evil tongue harms the poet to be.

Corydon:

Delia, a bristling boar's head is yours, from young Micon,
with the branching antlers of a mature stag.
If this good fortune lasts, your statue will stand
made all of smooth marble, your calves in red hunting boots.

Thyrsis:

A large cup of milk, and these cakes, are all you can expect,
each year, Priapus: the garden you guard is poor.
We've fashioned you from marble, for the meantime:
but you'll be gold, if the flock is swelled by breeding.

Corydon:

Galatea, Nereus's child, sweeter than Hybla's thyme,
whiter than the swan, more lovely to me than pale ivy,
as soon as the bulls return from the meadows to their stalls,
if you've any love for your Corydon, come to me.

Thyrsis:

No, let me rather seem to you bitterer than Sardinian grass,
spikier than butcher's-broom, viler than stranded seaweed,
if this day's not longer to me than a whole year.
Go home my cherished oxen. If you've any shame, go home.

Corydon:

Mossy springs and the grass sweeter than sleep,
and the green strawberry-tree that covers you with thin shade,
keep the summer heat from my flock: now the dry solstice comes,
now the buds swell on the joyful branches of the vine.

Thyrsis:

Here is a hearth, and soaked pine torches, here a good fire
always, and door posts ever black with soot:
here we care as much for the freezing Northern gale,
as wolves for counting sheep, foaming rivers for their banks.

Corydon:

Here junipers, and bristling chestnuts, stand,
their fruits lie here and there under each tree:
now all things smile: but if lovely Alexis left
these hills, you'd see the rivers truly run dry.

Thyrsis:

The field is dry: the parched grass is dying in the arid air,
Bacchus begrudges his vines' shade to the hills:
but all the groves will be green when my Phyllis comes,
and mightiest Jupiter will descend in joyful rain.

Corydon:

The poplar's dearest to Hercules, the vine to Bacchus,
the myrtle to lovely Venus, his own laurel to Phoebus:
Phyllis loves the hazels: and while Phyllis loves them,
neither myrtle nor laurel shall outdo the hazel.

Thyrsis:

The ash is the loveliest in the woods, the pine-tree in gardens,
the poplar by the riverbanks, the fir on high hills:
but lovely Lycidas, if you'd often visit me,
the woodland ash would yield to you, and the garden pine.

Meliboeus:

These lines I remember: Thyrsis, beaten, competing in vain.
From that time on it's Corydon, Corydon with us.

Ecl. 9

'**Daphni**, quid antiquos signorum suspicis ortus? 9.46
ecce **Dionaeci** processit Caesaris astrum,
astrum quo segetes gauderent frugibus et quo
duceret apricis in collibus uua colorem.
insere, Daphni, piros: carpent tua poma nepotes.' 9.50

‘Daphnis, why are you watching the ancient star signs rising?
See Caesar’s comet, born of Dione, has mounted,
that star by which the fields ripen with wheat,
and the grape deepens its colour on the sunny hills. Graft
your pears, Daphnis: your grandchildren will gather their fruit.’

Geo. 1.7

Liber et alma Ceres, uestro si munere tellus
Chaoniam pingui glandem mutauit arista,
poculaque inuentis Acheloia miscuit uuis;

Bacchus and kindly Ceres, since by your gifts
fat wheat ears replaced Chaonian acorns,
and mixed Achelous’s water with newly-discovered wine,

Geo. 1.160-8, the farmer’s *arma*

Dicendum et quae sint duris agrestibus arma, 160
quis sine nec potuere seri nec surgere messes:
uomis et inflexi primum graue robur aratri,
tardaue **Eleusinae** matris uoluentia plaustra,
tribulaque traheaeque et iniquo pondere rastris;
uirgea praeterea **Celei** uilisque supellex, 165
arbutae crates et mystica **uannus Iacchi**;
omnia quae multo ante memor prouisa repones,
si te digna manet diuini gloria ruris.

I must tell of the sturdy countryman’s weapons,
without which the crops could not be sown or grown:
first the ploughshare, and the curved plough’s heavy frame,
the slow lumbering wagons of Demeter, the Eleusinian mother,
threshing sledges, drags, and cruelly weighted hoes:
and the ordinary wicker-ware of Celeus, besides,
hurdles of arbutus wood, and Iacchus’s sacred winnowing fans.
You’ll store away all these, you’ve remembered to provide long before,
if the noble glory of the divine countryside is to remain yours.

Geo. 2.1-8, invocation to Bacchus

Hactenus aruorum cultus et sidera caeli;
nunc te, Bacche, canam, nec non siluestria tecum
uirgulta et prolem tarde crescentis oliuae.
huc, pater o Lenaee: tuis hic omnia plena
muneribus, tibi pampineo grauidus autumnno 5
florete ager, spumat plenis uindemia labris;
huc, pater o Lenaee, ueni, nudataque musto
tinge nouo mecum **dereptis crura coturnis.**

So much for the cultivation of fields, and the stars in the sky:
Now I’ll sing you, Bacchus, not forgetting the saplings
of woodlands, and the children of slow-growing olives.
Here, O Lenaean Father (here all is filled with your gifts,
the field flourishes filled with autumnal vine shoots,
the grape harvest foams in the brimming vats)

here, O Lenaeon Father, come, and, free of footwear
plunge naked feet, with me, in the new vintage.

Geo. 2.380-96, aetiology of tragedy

non aliam ob culpam Baccho caper omnibus aris
caeditur et ueteres ineunt proscenia ludi,
praemiaque ingeniis pagos et **compita** circum
Thesidae posuere, atque inter pocula laeti
mollibus in pratis **unctos saluere per utres**
nec non Ausonii, Troia gens missa, coloni 385
uersibus incomptis ludunt risuque soluto,
oraque corticibus sumunt horrenda cauatis,
et te, Bacche, uocant per carmina laeta, tibi que
oscilla ex alta suspendunt mollia pinu.
hinc omnis largo pubescit uinea fetu, 390
complentur uallesque cauae saltusque profundi
et quocumque deus circum caput egit honestum.
ergo rite suum Baccho dicemus honorem
carminibus patriis lancesque et **liba** feremus,
et ductus cornu stabit sacer hircus ad aram 395
pinguiaque in ueribus torrebimus exta columnis.

It's for no other crime that a goat is sacrificed to Bacchus
on every altar, and that the old tragedies arrived on stage,
and the people of Theseus set up tributes to genius, in the villages
and at the crossroads, and danced joyfully in the soft meadows,
among the wine-cups, on the oiled goat-skin.
Likewise the Ausonian farmers, a people out of Troy,
act out rough verses, with unrestrained laughter,
and wear fearful faces, hollowed from bark,
and call to you, Bacchus, in joyful song, and hang
tender little masks on the tall pine-trees.
Then every vineyard ripens with plentiful fruit,
richness fills hollow valleys and deep glades,
and wherever else the god has turned his handsome face.
So, in the songs of our land, we'll duly speak in Bacchus's
honour, and bring him dishes of meats and sacred cakes,
and, led by the horn, the sacrificial goat will stand at the altar,
and the rich organs will be roasted on hazel spits.

Geo. 2. 454-7, vituperatio vitis

quid memorandum aequae Baccheia dona tulerunt?
Bacchus **et ad culpam** causas dedit; ille furentis
Centauros leto domuit, Rhoecumque Pholumque
et magno Hylaeum Lapithis **cratere** minantem.

What gift as memorable has the vine brought?
Bacchus even gave reason for offence: he caused the deaths
of the maddened Centaurs, Rhoetus, Pholos
and Hylaeus, who threatened the Lapiths with a heavy bowl.

Geo. 2.486-9

o ubi campi
Spercheosque et uirginibus **bacchata** Lacaenis
Taygeta! o qui me gelidis conuallibus Haemi
sistat, et ingenti ramorum protegat umbra!

O for the plains,
for Spercheus, for Taygetus of the Spartan virgins' Bacchic rites!
O set me in the cool valleys of Haemus, and protect me
with the shadows of mighty branches!

Geo. 2.527-531, *laus vitae ruris*

ipse dies agitat festos fususque per herbam, 527
ignis ubi in medio **et socii cratera coronant,**
te libans, Lенаe, uocat pecorisque magistris
uelocis iaculi certamina ponit in ulmo, 530
corporaue agresti nudant praedura palaestra.

Geo. 2.475-7, poetic inspiration

me vero primum dulces ante omnia Musae,
quarum sacra fero ingenti **percussus** amore,
accipiant caelique vias et sidera monstrent...

Geo. 3.42-8

en age segnis
rumpe moras; uocat ingenti clamore **Cithaeron**
Taygetique canes domitrixque Epidaurus equorum,
et uox adsensu nemorum ingeminata remugit. 45
mox tamen ardentis accingar dicere pugnas
Caesaris et nomen fama tot ferre per annos,
Tithoni prima quot abest ab origine Caesar.

end my lingering delay: Mount Cithaeron calls with loud cries,
the hounds of Taygetus, Epidaurus, tamer of horses:
and the sound doubled by echoes rings from the woods.
Soon I'll prepare myself to speak of Caesar's fiery battles,
and take his name forward, famous, for as many years
as Caesar's are far from immortal Tithonus's first birth.

Geo. 3.509-514

profuit **inserto latices infundere cornu**
Lenaeos; ea uisa salus morientibus una. 510
mox erat hoc ipsum exitio, furiisque refecti
ardebant, ipsique suos iam morte sub aegra
(di meliora piis, erroremque hostibus illum!)
discissos nudis laniabant dentibus artus.
It helped to pour wine juice in through a horn:
this seemed the only assistance for the dying:

Soon even this was fatal: they burned with renewed fury,
and sick to the point of death (may the gods be kinder
to the good, and such delusions be for our enemies!)
they mangled their torn bodies with their bare teeth.

Geo. 4.520-22, sparagmos of Orpheus
spretae Ciconum quo munere matres
inter sacra deum nocturnique orgia **Bacchi**
discerptum latos iuuenem **sparsere** per agros.

the Ciconian women, spurned by his devotion,
tore the youth apart, in their divine rites and midnight
Bacchic revels, and scattered him over the fields.

Geo. 4.554-8
hic uero subitum ac dictu mirabile monstrum
aspiciunt, liquefacta boum per uiscera toto
stridere apes utero et ruptis efferuere costis,
immensasque trahi nubes, iamque arbore summa
confluere et lentis **uuam** demittere ramis.

Here a sudden wonder appears, marvellous to tell,
bees buzzing and swarming from the broken flanks
among the liquefied flesh of the cattle,
and trailing along in vast clouds, and flowing together
on a tree top, and hanging in a cluster from the bowed branches.

Aen. 1.734
Adsit laetitiae Bacchus dator, et bona Iuno;
Let Bacchus, the joy-bringer, and kind Juno be present,

Aen. 3.300-3
saevit inops animi totamque incensa per urbem 300
bacchatur, qualis commotis excita sacris
Thyias, ubi audito stimulant trieterica Baccho
orgia nocturnusque vocat clamore Cithaeron.

Her mind weakened, she raves, and, on fire, runs wild
through the city: like a Maenad, thrilled by the shaken emblems
of the god, when the biennial festival rouses her, and, hearing the
Bacchic cry, Mount Cithaeron summons her by night with its noise.

Aen. 4.345-6
sed nunc Italiam magnam Gryneus Apollo, 345
Italiam Lyciae iussere capessere sortes;

But now it is Italy that Apollo of Grynium,
Italy, that the Lycian oracles, order me to take:

Aen. 4.465-73

agit ipse furemtem 465
in somnis ferus Aeneas, semperque relinqui
sola sibi, semper longam incommittata videtur
ire viam et Tyrios deserta quaerere terra,
Eumenidum veluti demens videt agmina Pentheus
et solem geminum et duplices se ostendere Thebas, 470
aut Agamemnonius scaenis agitata Orestes,
armatam facibus matrem et serpentibus atris
cum fugit ultricesque sedent in limine Dirae.

Harsh Aeneas himself persecuted
her, in her crazed sleep: always she was forsaken, alone with
herself, always she seemed to be travelling companionless on some
long journey, seeking her Tyrian people in a deserted landscape:
like Pentheus, deranged, seeing the Furies file past,
and twin suns and a twin Thebes revealed to view,
or like Agamemnon's son Orestes driven across the stage when he
flees his mother's ghost armed with firebrands and black snakes,
while the avenging Furies crouch on the threshold.

Aen. 6

At Phoebi nondum patiens immanis in **antro**
bacchatur uates, magnum si pectore possit
excussisse deum; tanto magis ille fatigat 80
os rabidum, **fera corda domans**, **fingitque premendo**.

[...]

But the wild prophetess raged in her cavern, not yet
submitting to Phoebus, as if she might shake the great god
from her spirit: yet he exhausted her raving mouth
all the more, taming her wild heart, shaping her by constraint.

Talibus ex adyto dictis Cumaea Sibylla
horrendas **canit ambages antroque** remugit,
obscuris uera inuoluens: ea **frena furenti** 100
concutit et **stimulos** sub pectore uertit **Apollo**.

With such words, the Sibyl of Cumae chants fearful enigmas,
from her shrine, echoing from the cave,
tangling truths and mysteries: as she raves, Apollo
thrashes the reins, and twists the spur under her breast.

Aen. 7.385-405

quin etiam in silvas simulato numine Bacchi 385
maius adorta nefas maioremque orsa furem
evolat et natam frondosis montibus abdit,
quo thalamum eripiat Teucris taedasque moretur,
euhoe Bacche fremens, solum te virgine dignum
vociferans: etenim mollis tibi sumere thyrsos, 390
te lustrare choro, sacrum tibi pascere crinem.
fama volat, furiisque accensas pectore matres
idem omnis simul ardor agit nova quaerere tecta.

deseruere domos, ventis dant colla comasque;
 ast aliae tremulis ululatibus aethera complent 395
 pampineasque gerunt incinctae pellibus hastas.
 ipsa inter medias flagrantem fervida pinum
 sustinet ac natae Turnique canit hymenaeos
 sanguineam torquens aciem, torvumque repente
 clamat: 'io matres, audite, ubi quaeque, Latinae: 400
 si qua piis animis manet infelicis Amatae
 gratia, si iuris materni cura remordet,
 solvite crinalis vittas, capite orgia mecum.'
 talem inter silvas, inter deserta ferarum
 reginam Allecto stimulis agit undique Bacchi. 405

Moreover, she runs to the woods, pretending Bacchic possession,
 setting out on a greater sin, and creating a wider frenzy,
 and hides her daughter among the leafy mountains,
 to rob the Trojans of their wedding and delay the nuptials,
 shrieking 'Euhoe' to Bacchus, crying 'You alone are worthy
 of this virgin: it's for you in truth she lifts the soft *thyrsus*,
 you she circles in the dance, for you she grows her sacred hair.'
 Rumour travels: and the same frenzy drives all the women,
 inflamed, with madness in their hearts, to seek strange shelter.
 They leave their homes, and bare their head and neck to the winds:
 while others are already filling the air with vibrant howling
 carrying vine-wrapped spears, and clothed in fawn-skins.
 The wild Queen herself brandishes a blazing pine-branch
 in their midst, turning her bloodshot gaze on them, and sings
 the wedding-song for Turnus and her daughter, and, suddenly
 fierce, cries out: 'O, women of Latium, wherever you are, hear me:
 if you still have regard for unhappy Amata in your pious hearts,
 if you're stung with concern for a mother's rights,
 loose the ties from your hair, join the rites with me.'
 So Allecto drives the Queen with Bacchic goad, far and wide,
 through the woods, among the wild creatures' lairs.