Ants and Bees in Ovid’s Theater: *Ars Amatoria* 1.89-100

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| 1. Ovid, *Ars Amatoria* 1.93-97  ut redit itque frequens longum formica per agmen,  granifero solitum cum vehit ore cibum,  aut ut apes saltusque suos et olentia nactae  pascua per flores et thyma summa volant,  sic ruit ad celebres cultissima femina ludos; | Just as an ant constantly comes and goes in a long column, carrying its familiar food in its grain-bearing mouth, or just as bees, having obtained their glades and fragrant fields, fly through the flowers and tips of the thyme, so do the most put-together women rush to the crowded games; |
| 2. Virgil, *Aeneid* 4.402-407  ac velut ingentem formicae farris acervum  cum populant hiemis memores tectoque reponunt;  it nigrum campis agmen, praedamque per herbas  convectant calle angusto; pars grandia trudunt  obnixae frumenta umeris, pars agmina cogunt  castigantque moras; opere omnis semita fervet. | And just as when ants, mindful of winter, raid a huge heap of grain and bring it back to their home; a black column goes through the fields, carrying the booty through the grass on a narrow path; some, struggling, push the great grain with their shoulders, some encourage the column, and rebuke delays; the whole path seethes with work. |
| 3. Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.421-436  miratur molem Aeneas, magalia quondam,  miratur portas strepitumque et strata viarum.  instant ardentes Tyrii, pars ducere muros  molirique arcem et manibus subvolvere saxa,  pars optare locum tecto et concludere sulco;  iura magistratusque legunt sanctumque senatum.  hic portus alii effodiunt, hic alta theatri  fundamenta locant alii, immanisque columnas  rupibus excidunt, scaenis decora apta futuris.  qualis apes aestate nova per florea rura  exercet sub sole labor, cum gentis adultos  educunt fetus, aut cum liquentia mella  stipant et dulci distendunt nectare cellas,  aut onera accipiunt venientum, aut agmine facto  ignavum fucos pecus a praesepibus arcent;  fervet opus redolentque thymo fragrantia mella. | Aeneas marvels at the massive buildings, once huts; he marvels at the gates and the noise and the paved roads. The Tyrians eagerly forge ahead, some to build out the walls and to construct the citadel and to roll up rocks with their hands, some to select a spot for a building and enclose it with a trench; they adopt laws and choose magistrates and the sacred senate. Here some are digging harbors, here others are laying the deep foundations of a theater, cutting huge columns out of the cliffs, adornments fit for the future stage. Just as bees do their work in the early summer through the florid countryside, when they lead out the full-grown members of their race, or when they pack in the liquid honey and expand their cells with sweet honey, or accept the burdens of newcomers, or in a column keep the lazy rogue swarm away from their homes; the work is feverish and the honey smells strongly of thyme. |
| 4. Virgil, *Georgics* 4.197-205  illum adeo placuisse apibus mirabere morem,  quod neque concubitu indulgent, nec corpora segnes  in Venerem solvunt aut fetus nixibus edunt;  verum ipsae e foliis natos, e suavibus herbis  ore legunt, ipsae regem parvosque Quirites  sufficiunt, aulasque et cerea regna refingunt. | Indeed, you will marvel at this custom that pleases the bees, that they don’t indulge in sex, nor do they loosen their bodies in love, nor do they strain to give birth to their offspring; but in truth they themselves gather their young, asexually, in their mouths from leaves and sweet herbs, and they themselves provide a king and tiny citizens, and remodel their palaces and waxen kingdoms. |

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