**Poetic Potency and Loss in the Dirae**

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**1.** sic precor, et nostris superent haec carmina uotis:

ludimus et multum nostris cantata libellis,

optima siluarum, formosis densa uirectis,

tondemus uirides umbras, nec laeta comantis

iactabis mollis ramos inflantibus auris

*Dirae* 25-29

Thus I pray, and may our songs overcome with our prayers

We play, and the best of the woods

Much sung in our little books, dense with lovely greenery

We are cutting these green shades. You will not happily toss

Your soft flowing branches in the blowing breeze.

**2.** lusimus, Octaui, gracili modulante Thalia

atque ut araneoli tenuem formauimus orsum;

lusimus: haec propter culicis sint carmina docta,

omnis et historiae per ludum consonet ordo

notitiaeque ducum uoces, licet inuidus adsit.

*Culex* 1-5

We played, Octavian, with graceful Thalia singing

And as we shaped the slender spider’s web,

We played. Because of this let the songs of the gnat be erudite,

And let the whole sequence of the story and the known voices of the leaders

Harmonize through play. It’s okay that someone hostile be present.

**3.** ibo et Chalcidico quae sunt mihi condita uersu

carmina pastoris Siculi modulabor auena.

certum est in siluis inter spelaea ferarum

malle pati tenerisque meos incidere amores

arboribus: crescent illae, crescetis, amores.

*Ecl*. 10.50-54

I’ll go and those songs that I made in Chalcidean verse

I’ll sing with the reed of the Sicilian shepherd.

But in the woods amongst the caves of beasts

It is better to suffer and inscribe my tender loves

On trees. These loves will grow; you will grow.

**4.** Battare, cycneas repetamus carmine uoces:

diuisas iterum sedes et rura canamus,

rura quibus diras indiximus, impia uota.

ante lupos rapient haedi, uituli ante leones,

delphini fugient pisces, aquilae ante columbas

et conuersa retro rerum discordia gliscet –

multa prius fient quam non mea libera auena:

montibus et siluis dicam tua facta, Lycurge.

*Dirae* 1-8

Battarus, let us revive swan voices in song:

Let us sing fields and homes sundered again,

Fields on which we cast curses, unholy prayers.

Sooner than goats snatch wolves, sooner than calves lions,

Sooner than dolphins flee fish, [and] eagles doves

And the chaos of things creeps back…

Much will happen before my pipe is unfree:

I will tell your deeds to the mountains and forests, Lycurgus.

**5.** nunc et ouis ultro fugiat lupus, aurea durae

mala ferant quercus, narcisso floreat alnus,

pinguia corticibus sudent electra myricae,

certent et cycnis ululae, sit Tityrus Orpheus,

Orpheus in siluis, inter delphinas Arion.

*Ecl*. 8.52-56

Now may even the wolf flee before the sheep,

The oak bear apples of solid gold, the alder bloom with narcissus,

The tamarisks sweat out thick ambers on their bark,

Owls vie even with swans, Tityrus would be an Orpheus,

An Orpheus in the woods, an Arion amongst the dolphins.

**6.** Pugnabunt arcu dum Thraces, Iazyges hasta,

Dum tepidus Ganges, frigidus Hister erit;

Robora dum montes, dum mollia pabula campi,

Dum Tiberis liquidas Tuscus habebit aquas,

Tecum bella geram; nec mors mihi finiet iras,

Saeva sed in manes manibus arma dabit.

*Ibis* 135-140

While the Thracians fight with the bow and the Iazygans with the spear

While the Ganges is warm and Hister cold

While mountains are hard, and pasturage soft,

While the Tuscan Tiber has flowing waters,

I will wage war with you, and your death won’t be an end to my anger.

Even unto the shades, death will give savage arms to my hands.

**7.** aduena, ciuili qui semper crimine creuit.

o male deuoti, praetorum crimina, agelli,

tuque inimica tui semper Discordia ciuis,

exsul ego indemnatus egens mea rura reliqui,

miles ut accipiat funesti praemia belli?

hinc ego de tumulo mea rura nouissima uisam,

hinc ibo in siluas.

*Dirae* 81-87

The foreigner who always prospers with a civil charge.

O fields grievously cursed, the sins of praetors,

And you, Discord, always hostile to you citizen.

Do I, condemned as exile, destitute, leave my fields

So that a soldier accept the rewards of deadly war?

From here I might look down from this mound on my furthest fields.

From here I will go into the woods.

**7.** Ut tamen audisiti percussum fulmine vatem

Admonitu matris condoluisse potes,

Et potes aspiciens circum tua sacra poetas

“Nescioquis nostri” dicere “cultor abest.”

*Tristia* 5.3.31-34

Thus, after you heard that a bard was struck by lightning,

With the memory of your mother, you might sympathize

And be able, looking around your holy poets,

To say, “A worshiper of mine, I don’t know who, is missing.”

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