

1. Venus and the horses of war (*Theb.* 3.262-68):¹

iamque iter extremum caelique abrupta tenebat,
cum Venus ante ipsos **nulla formidine** gressum
figit equos; **cessere retro** iam iamque rigentes
suppliciter posuere iubas. tunc pectora summo
adclinata iugo vultumque obliqua madentem
incipit (interea **dominae** vestigia iuxta
spumantem proni mandunt adamantia iugales):

And just as he was reaching the end of his journey, the sheer drop of the heavens, Venus, **with no fear at all**, took a stand before the horses themselves; **they stepped back** and straightaway lowered their stiffened manes **in supplication**. Then she rested her breast on the top of the chariot and spoke, tilting her tear-stained face (meanwhile the team mouthed the frothed adamant of their bits, leaning toward the feet of their **mistress**):

2. A successful appeal to Jupiter (*Aen.* 1.227-29, 254-56)

atque illum talis iactantem pectore curas
tristior et lacrimis oculos suffusa nitentis
adloquitur Venus: ...

...

Olli subridens hominum sator atque deorum
vultu, quo caelum tempestatesque serenat,
oscula libavit natae, dehinc talia fatur:

...

But Venus, thus sadder and with her shining eyes filled with tears, addressed him as he pondered the cares in his breast:

...

Smiling at her with **the face that calms the heavens and the weather**, the father of gods and men lightly kissed his daughter's mouth and then spoke these words ...

3. Mars to Venus (*Theb.* 3.295-99; 310-15):

'o mihi bellorum requies et **sacra voluptas**
unaque pax animo; **solī cui tanta potestas**
divorumque hominumque meis occurrere telis
impune et media quamvis in caede frementes
hos adsistere equos, hunc ense avellere dextrae:

...

... sed ne mihi corde supremos
concipe, cara, metus: quando haec mutare potestas

1 The texts used are Hill 1983 for the *Thebaid*, Bailey 1947 for Lucretius, and Mynors 1969 for the *Aeneid*; all translations are my own.

nulla datur, cum iam Tyriis sub moenibus ambae
bellabunt gentes, adero et socia arma iuvabo.
tunc me sanguineo late defervere campo
res super Argolicas haud sic deiecta videbis;
hoc mihi ius, nec fata vetant.'...

"O, my rest from wars and **sacred pleasure** and the only peace for my soul, **you alone of gods and men have such great power**, to meet my weapons safely, to stop these horses, even as they roar in the midst of slaughter, and to wrench this spear from my right hand...

... but my dear, please do not conceive such extreme fears: seeing that no power is granted to change these things, I will be present at the point when both nations fight beneath the Tyrian walls, and I will aid our allied force. **Then you will be not at all dejected to see me rage furiously upon the fortunes of the Argives on the bloody field of battle;** that is my due, and the fates do not forbid it."

4. A more gentle pacification (Lucr. 1.1, 31-37):

Aeneadam genetrix, hominum divumque voluptas
...
nam tu sola potes tranquilla pace iuvare
mortalis, quoniam belli fera moenera Mavors
armipotens regit, in gremium qui saepe tuum se
reicit aeterno devictus vulnere amoris,
atque ita suspiciens tereti cervice reposta
pascit amore avidos inhians in te, dea, visus,
eque tuo pendet resupini spiritus ore.

For you alone can aid mortals with tranquil peace, since valiant Mars rules the fierce duties of war, and he often reclines upon your lap, conquered by the eternal wound of love, and, looking up with his smooth neck bent back, he feasts on the visions of desire as he wonders at you, goddess, and the breath from his thrown back head hangs upon your lips.

5. Venus among poisons (Theb. 2.282-288):

tum varias pestes raptumque interplicat atro
Tisiphones de crine ducem, **et quae pessima ceston**
vis probat; haec circum spumis lunaribus unguis
callidus atque hilari perfundit cuncta veneno.
non hoc Pasithea blandarum prima sororum,
non Decor Idaliusque puer, sed Luctus et Irae
et Dolor et tota pressit Discordia dextra.

... then he intertwines various plagues and the chief snake plucked from the black hair of Tisiphone, **and the most evil force that shows the power of the cestos;** the clever god annoints these all over with lunar foam and fills the whole thing with giddy poison. Pasithea, first among the pleasing sisters, did not mold this, nor did Beauty or the Idalian boy, but Grief and Wrath and Pain and, with her whole hand, Discord.

6. Venus at Lemnos

a) Transformed (*Theb.* 5.57-64):

dis visum turbare domos, nec pectora culpa
nostra vacant: nullos Veneri sacravimus ignes,
nulla deae sedes; movet et caelestia quondam
corda dolor lentoque inrepunt agmine Poenae.
illa Paphon veterem centumque altaria linquens,
**nec vultu nec crine prior, solvisse iugalem
ceston et Idalias procul ablegasse volucres
fertur. ..**

It had seemed good to the gods to disturb our homes, and our hearts were not devoid of blame: we had consecrated no fires for Venus, no home for the goddess; grief stirs even heavenly hearts and the slow moving band of Poenae steals in. *She*, as she left behind long established Paphos and her hundred altars, **with neither face nor hair as before, is said to have undone her matrimonial *cestos* and sent her Idalian birds far away.**

b) Bearing arms in a dream (*Theb.* 5.134-140)

... nec imago quietis
vana meae: **nudo stabat Venus ense** videri
clara mihi somnosque super. 'quid perditis aevum?'
inquit, 'age aversis thalamos purgate maritis.
ipsa faces alias melioraque foedera iungam.'
dixit, et hoc ferrum stratis, hoc, credite, ferrum
imposuit. ...

... nor was the vision of my dream in vain: **Venus was standing by me with bared sword**, clear to my sight and more than a dream. "Why do you squander your lives?" she said, "Come, cleanse your beds of estranged husbands. I will bring together these these torches and better unions." She spoke and placed this sword (this very one, believe it!) on the bed.

c) ... and at a sacrifice (*Theb.* 5.155-158)

hic sanxere fidem, tu Martia testis Enyo
atque inferna Ceres, Stygiaeque Acheronte recluso
ante preces venere deae; **sed fallit ubique
mixta Venus, Venus arma tenet, Venus admovet iras.**
nec de more cruor: natum Charopeia coniunx
obtulit, accingunt sese et mirantia ferro
pectora congestisque avidae simul undique dextris
perfringunt, ac **dulce nefas in sanguine vivo
coniurant**, matremque recens circumvolat umbra.

... here they solemnized the pact – you, Mars' Enyo, were witness and infernal Ceres, and, Acheron opened, the Stygian goddesses came before the request; **but Venus is involved everywhere, unnoticed, Venus bears arms, Venus stirs up wrath.** Nor is the gore according to custom: the wife of Charops offered her child;

they armed themselves and eagerly, with hands brought together at once from all sides, they shattered his wondering breast with the sword and **swore the sweet crime in living blood**; the new shade fluttered around his mother.

d) Assisting with the slaughter (*Theb.* 5.280-283):

... illa, qua rere silentia, porta
stat funesta Venus ferroque accincta furentes
adiuvat (unde manus, unde haec Mavortia divae
pectora?). ...

... in that gate you think is still, **deadly Venus stands** and, **armed with a blade**, aids the raging women (whence the force, whence this warlike heart in the goddess?).

7. A happy ending? (*Theb.* 5.445-458):

ergo iterum Venus, et tacitis corda aspera flammis
Lemniadum pertemptat Amor. tunc regia Iuno
arma habitusque virum pulchraeque insignia gentis
mentibus insinuat, certatimque ordine cunctae
hospitibus patuere fores; tunc primus in aris
ignis, et infandis venere oblivia curis;
tunc epulae felixque sopor noctesque quietae,
nec superum sine mente, reor, placuere fatentes.
forsitan et nostrae fatum excusabile culpae
noscere cura, duces. **cineres furiasque meorum
testor ut externas non sponte aut crimine taedas
attigerim** (scit cura deum), etsi blandus Iason
virginibus dare vincla novis: sua iura cruentum
Phasin habent, alios, Colchi, generatis amores.

And so it was Venus again, and Love assailed the harsh hearts of the Lemnian women with silent flames. Then queenly Juno worked into our minds the men's arms and clothing and the marks of their excellent lineage, and all the women in turn eagerly opened their doors to the guests; then was the first fire on the altars, and oblivion from unspeakable concerns; then feasts and happy sleep and peaceful nights, and it was not without the intention of the gods, I think, that they pleased in assenting. And perhaps, my lords, you want to know the excusable nature of my fault. **I swear on the ashes and Furies of my family that I took up foreign marriage torches neither willingly nor in crime** (the attention of the gods knows), although alluring Jason offered snares for new virgins: its own laws hold along the bloody Phasis, you Colchians create different loves.

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