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The Metrical Form of the *Pervigilium Veneris*

A) The *Pervigilium Veneris*¹

Cras amet qui numquam amavit quique amavit cras amet.

I. *ver novum, ver iam canorum; vere natus orbis est,
 vere concordant amores, vere nubunt alites,
 et nemus comam resolvit de maritis imbribus.
 cras amorum copulatrix inter umbras arborum (5)
 implicat casas uirentis de flagello myrteo,
 cras Dione iura dicit fulta sublimi throno.*

Let him who has never loved love tomorrow, and let him who has loved love tomorrow.

The spring is new, the spring is already harmonious; in spring, the world was born, in spring, loves harmonize, in spring, the birds marry, and the grove has loosened her hair from her husband's showers. Tomorrow, the one who brings together loves among the shades of the trees weaves her verdant homes out of myrtle shoots; tomorrow, Dione declares the laws, seated on a lofty throne.

cras amet qui numquam amavit quique amavit cras amet.

II. *tunc cruore de superno spumeo Pontus globo
 caeruleas inter catervas inter et bipedes equos (10)
 fecit undantem Dionem de marinis imbribus.*

Let him who has never loved love tomorrow, and let him who has loved love tomorrow.

Then, from a foamy ball of celestial blood, among the sea-blue bands and two-footed horses, Pontus created Dione, surging from the ocean's waters.

cras amet qui numquam amavit quique amavit cras amet.

III. *ipsa gemmis purpurantem pingit annum floridis,*

¹ All translations (and accompanying errors) are mine.

*ipsa surgentes papillas de Favoni spiritu
 urget in nodos tepentes; ipsa roris lucidi (15)
 noctis aura quem relinquit, spargit umentis aquas.
 emicant lacrimae trementes de caduco pondere;
 gutta praeceps orbe parvo sustinet casus suos.
 en! pudorem florulentae prodiderunt purpurae.
 umor ille, quem serenae astra rorant noctibus, (20)
 mane virgineas papillas solvit umentis peplo.
 ipsa iussit mane nuda virgines nubant rosae;
 facta Cypridis de cruore deque Amoris osculis
 deque gemmis deque flammis deque solis purpuris,
 cras ruborem, qui latebat veste tectus ignea, (25)
 unico marita nodo non pudebit solvere.*

Let him who has never loved love tomorrow, and let him who has loved love tomorrow.

She paints the year purple with flowery jewels, she drives the rosebuds, rising on the breath of the west wind, against their warm sheaths; she sprinkles the waters of clear dew which the breeze of the night leaves behind. Tears spring forth, trembling from the tottering weight; a drop, poised to fall, in a small orb delays its fall. Look! the purple flowers have issued their blushes. That moisture, which the stars dropped in the peaceful night, early in the morning loosens the virgin rosebuds from their wet covering. She herself ordered that the maiden roses wed in the morning, naked; the rose, born from the blood of the Cyprian and the kisses of Amor, from jewels and flames and the purple tones of the sun, will not be ashamed to free the blushing that lay hidden, covered by a fiery garment, married in a single bond.

cras amet qui numquam amavit quique amavit cras amet.

IV. *ipsa nymphas diva luco iussit ire myrteo;
 it puer comes puellis: nec tamen credi potest
 esse Amorem feriatum, si sagittas vexerit. (30)
 ite, nymphae, posuit arma, feriatum est Amor!
 iussus est inermis ire, nudus ire iussus est,
 neu quid arcu neu sagitta neu quid igne laederet.
 sed tamen, nymphae, cavete, quod Cupido pulcher est;
 totus est in armis idem quando nudus est Amor. (35)*

Let him who has never loved love tomorrow, and let him who has loved love tomorrow.

The goddess herself has ordered the nymphs to go to the grove of myrtle. The boy goes as the girls' companion; but you can't believe that Amor is at leisure if he carries his arrows. Go, nymphs, he has set down his arms, Amor is at leisure! He has been ordered to go unarmed, he has been ordered to go nude, lest he cause any harm with his bow or arrow or flame. But still, nymphs, beware, because Cupid is handsome; the same Amor is entirely armed when he is nude.

cras amet qui numquam amavit quique amavit cras amet.

V.

*conpari Venus pudore mittit ad te uirgines;
una res est quam rogamus: cede, uirgo Delia,
ut nemus sit incruentum de ferinis stragibus
et rigentibus virentes ducat umbras floribus. (58)
ipsa vellet te rogare, si pudicam flecteret; (40)
ipsa vellet ut venires, si deceret virginem.
iam tribus choros videres feriatis noctibus
congreges inter catervas ire per saltus tuos
floreas inter coronas, myrteas inter casas.
nec Ceres, nec Bacchus absunt nec poetarum deus. (45)
detinenda tota nox est, pervigilanda canticis;
regnet in silvis Dione, tu recede Delia!*

Let him who has never loved love tomorrow, and let him who has loved love tomorrow.

"Venus sends us, maidens of comparable chastity, to you. There is one thing that we ask: go, Delian maiden, so that the forest be unbloodied from your wild animal hunts and so that it cast verdant shadows on upright flowers. She would have asked you herself, if she could bend your chaste will; she would have asked you to come, if it were fitting for a maiden. Now, on these three nights of celebration, you might have seen dancers among the gathered groups passing through your woodlands, among crowns of flowers and homes of myrtle. Neither Ceres nor Bacchus nor the god of poets is missing. We must lengthen the whole night, we must keep watch with songs: let Dione rule in the woods! But you, Delian, depart."

cras amet qui numquam amavit quique amavit cras amet.

**VI. iussit Hyblaeis tribunal stare diva floribus;
praeses ipsa iura dicit, adsederunt Gratiae. (50)
Hybla totos funde flores, quidquid annus adtulit,**

*Hybla, florum sume vestem, quantus Aetnae campus est!
 ruris hic erunt puellae uel puellae montium:
 quaeque silvas, quaeque lucos, quaeque fontes incolunt.
 iussit omnes adsidere pueri mater alitis, (55)
 iussit et nudo puellas nil Amori credere.*

Let him who has never loved love tomorrow, and let him who has loved love tomorrow.

The goddess has ordered that her tribunal stand among the Hyblaeian flowers. She as ruler declares the laws; the Graces have sat down. Hybla, pour forth all your flowers, whatever the year has brought; Hybla, put on your garment of flowers, as large as the plain of Aetna! Here, there will be girls of the field or girls of the mountains, those who inhabit the woods and the groves and the fountains. The mother of the winged boy has ordered them all to sit near, she has ordered that the girls not trust at all in Amor, even when he is nude.

cras amet qui numquam amauit quique amauit cras amet.

VII. *cras erit quo primus Aether copulavit nuptias; (59)
 ut pater totum creavit vernis annum nubibus,
 in sinum maritus imber fluxit almae coniugis,
 unde fetus mixtus omnis aleret magno corpere.
 ipsa venas atque mentem permeanti spiritu
 intus occultis gubernat procreatrix viribus,
 perque caelum perque terras perque pontum subditum (65)
 pervium sui tenorem seminali tramite
 imbuit iussitque mundum nosse nascendi vias.*

Let him who has never loved love tomorrow, and let him who has loved love tomorrow.

Tomorrow will be the day on which Aether first coupled in marriage; he, as father, created the entire year from springtime clouds; the husband's shower flowed into the lap of his nourishing wife, from where he, commingled with her great body, would nourish all the offspring. She as creator guides the veins and mind with her penetrating spirit, with her powers hidden within, and throughout the sky, throughout the lands, throughout the sea, all subject to her power, she has impressed a penetrating course of herself with the passage of the seed, and she has ordered that the world recognize the paths for generation.

cras amet qui numquam amauit quique amauit cras amet.

VIII. *ipsa Troianos nepotes in Latinos transtulit;
ipsa Laurentem puellam coniugem nato dedit; (70)
moxque Marti de sacello dat pudicam virginem;
Romuleas ipsa fecit cum Sabinis nuptias;
unde Ramnes et Quirites proque prole posterum
†Romuli matrem† crearet et nepotem Caesarem.*

Let him who has never loved love tomorrow, and let him who has loved love tomorrow.

She translated the descendants of the Trojans into Latins; she gave the Laurentian girl to her son as wife; and soon after, she gives the chaste maiden to Mars from the sanctuary; she created the marriages of the Romulans with the Sabines; from this, she would create the Ramnes, the Quirites, and for the offspring of those later, the mother of Romulus and Caesar, the grandson.

cras amet qui numquam amavit quique amavit cras amet. (75)

XI. *rura fecundat uoluptas, rura Venerem sentiunt;
ipse Amor, puer Dionae, rure natus dicitur.
hunc, ager cum parturiret, ipsa suscepit sinu,
ipsa florum delicatis educavit osculis.*

Let him who has never loved love tomorrow, and let him who has loved love tomorrow.

Desire makes the country fertile, the country feels Venus; Amor himself, the son of Dione, is said to have been born in the country. Him, while the land was ready for harvest, she took in her bosom, she raised him with the gentle kisses of flowers.

cras amet qui numquam amavit quique amavit cras amet. (80)

X. *ecce iam subter genestas explicant tauri latus,
quisque tutus quo tenetur coniugali foedere;
subter umbras cum maritis ecce balantum greges;
et canoras non tacere diva iussit alites.
iam loquaces ore rauco stagna cygni perstrepunt, (85)
adsonat Terei puella subter umbram populi,
ut putes motus amoris ore dici musico,
et neges queri sororem de marito barbaro.
illa cantat, nos tacemus; quando ver venit meum?*

quando fiam uti chelidon, ut tacere desinam? (90)
perdidi musam tacendo, nec me Phoebus respicit.
sic Amyclas, cum tacerent, perdidit silentium.

cras amet qui numquam amavit quique amavit cras amet.

Let him who has never loved love tomorrow, and let him who has loved love tomorrow.

Look now! Under the broom trees, the bulls lay out their sides, each one safe in the marriage bond by which he is held. In the shade, look! the flocks of sheep with their husbands, and the goddess has ordered the sonorous birds not to be silent. Now the chatty swans make a racket with their raucous mouths, and Tereus' girl resounds under the shade of the poplar tree, such that you'd think that strains of love were being sung by her musical mouth, and you'd deny that she, as a sister, complained of the barbarous husband. She sings, I am silent; when will my spring come? When will I become like the swallow, so that I cease to be silent? I have lost my Muse through silence, and Phoebus does not regard me. Thus did silence destroy Amyclae, because they were quiet.

Let him who has never loved love tomorrow, and let him who has loved love tomorrow.

B) Aristotle *Poetics* 1459b34 - 1460a1

τὸ γὰρ ἥρωικὸν στασιμώτατον καὶ ὀγκωδέστατον τῶν μέτρων ἐστίν (διὸ καὶ γλώττας καὶ μεταφορὰς δέχεται μάλιστα· περιττὴ γὰρ καὶ ἡ διηγηματικὴ μίμησις τῶν ἄλλων), τὸ δὲ ἱαμβεῖον καὶ τετράμετρον κινητικὰ καὶ τὸ μὲν ὀρχηστικὸν τὸ δὲ πρακτικόν.

The heroic meter [dactylic hexameter] is the most stable and weightiest of meters, and for that reason it accepts rare words and metaphors most readily, for narrative poetry is elaborate beyond others. The iambic and the tetrameter are lively, the latter suitable for dancing and the former suited for practical matters.

C) Trochaic tetrameter catalectic / trochaic septenarius / *versus quadratus*

— ◡ — ◡ | — ◡ — ◡ || — ◡ — ◡ | — ◡ —

-or-

DUM da DUM x | DUM da DUM x || DUM da DUM x | DUM da DUM
 ("O my darlin', o my darlin', o my darlin' Clementine")

D) Aristotle *Poetics* 1449a22-24

τὸ μὲν γὰρ πρῶτον τετραμέτρῳ ἐχρῶντο διὰ τὸ σατυρικὴν καὶ ὀρχηστικωτέραν εἶναι τὴν ποίησιν, λέξεως δὲ γενομένης αὐτὴ ἡ φύσις τὸ οἰκεῖον μέτρον εὔρε.

At first, they used the tetrameter because its poetry was suited for satyrs and more suitable for dancing, but when dialogue was introduced, nature herself found the suitable meter [i.e., iambic trimeter].

E) Aristotle *Rhetoric* 1408b36-1409a1

ὁ δὲ τροχαῖος κορδακικώτερος, δημοῖ δὲ τὰ τετράμετρα· ἔστι γὰρ τροχερός ῥυθμός τὰ τετράμετρα.

The trochee is too like the *cordax* (an Old Comedy dance), as tetrameters make clear, for tetrameters are a tripping rhythm.

F) 1. Soldiers' Irreverent Songs at Triumphs - Suetonius *Iul.* 49

*Gallias Caesar subegit, Nicomedes Caesarem:
 Ecce Caesar nunc triumphat qui subegit Gallias,
 Nicomedes non triumphat qui subegit Caesarem.*

2. Children's Nursery Rhymes - Horace *Epistles* 1.1.59

rex eris si recte facies; si non facies, non eris.

3. Expressions of Public Joy - Suetonius *Cal.* 6.1

salua Roma, salua patria, saluus est Germanicus.

G) *Suda* s.v. Ennius

Ἐννιος· Ῥωμαῖος ποιητής...Σκιπίωνα...ᾄδων καὶ ἐπὶ μέγα τὸν ἄνδρα ἐξᾄραι βουλόμενός φησι μόνον ἂν Ὅμηρον ἐπαξίους ἐπαίνους εἰπεῖν Σκιπίωνος.

Ennius: Roman poet...singing about Scipio [or perhaps singing the *Scipio*?] and wishing to praise the man greatly, he says that only Homer could speak a panegyric worthy of Scipio.

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