

# Virgil's Fourth Eclogue

Latin text with notes and translation

Originally translated by Ulysses Vestal on August 3, 1998

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## Bibliography

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Meter: Dactylic Hexameter

IV

Sicelides Musae, paulo maiora canamus.  
non omnis arbusta iuvant humilesque myricae;  
si canimus silvas, silvae sint consule dignae.

5       Ultima Cumaeci venit iam carminis aetas;  
magnus ab integro saeculorum nascitur ordo.  
iam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna<sup>1</sup>,  
iam nova progenies caelo<sup>2</sup> demittitur alto.  
tu modo nascenti puero, quo<sup>3</sup> ferrea primum  
desinet ac toto surget gens aurea mundo,  
10       casta fave Lucina; tuus iam regnat Apollo.

      Teque adeo decus hoc aevi, te consule<sup>4</sup>, inibit,  
Pollio<sup>5</sup>, et incipient magni procedere menses;  
te duce, si qua manent sceleris vestigia nostri,  
inrita perpetua solvent formidine<sup>6</sup> terras.  
15       ille deum vitam accipiet divisque videbit  
permixtos heroas et ipse videbitur illis<sup>7</sup>  
pacatumque reget patriis virtutibus orbem.

      At tibi prima, puer, nullo munuscula cultu<sup>8</sup>  
errantis hederas passim cum baccare tellus  
20       mixtaque ridenti colocasia fundet acantho.  
ipsae lacte domum referent distenta capellae  
ubera nec magnos metuent armenta leones;  
ipsa tibi blandos fundent cunabula flores.  
occidet et serpens et fallax herba veneni<sup>9</sup>  
25       occidet; Assyrium vulgo nascetur amomum.

      At simul heroum laudes et facta parentis

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1. *Saturnia regna*: probably a metrical variant and should be understood as singular.
  2. *caelo...alto*: abl. place from which without preposition.
  3. *quo*: abl. of means.
  4. *teque adeo...te consule*: ablative absolute.
  5. *Pollio*: vocative, not nominative. Pollio held the consulship in 40 B.C.
  6. *formidine*: abl. of separation.
  7. *illis*: dative of agent.
  8. *nullo culto*: abl. of description or abl. of attend. circum. with *fundet*.
  9. *veneni*: gen. of reference with *fallax*. Atl., genitive of specification with the same.

iam legere et quae sit poteris cognoscere virtus,  
 molli paulatim flavescet campus arista  
 incultisque rubens pendebit sentibus uva  
 30 et durae quercus sudabunt roscida mella.  
 Pauca tamen suberunt priscae vestigia fraudis,  
 quae<sup>10</sup> temptare Thetin<sup>11</sup> ratibus, quae cingere muris  
 oppida, quae iubeant telluri infindere sulcos.  
 alter erit tum Tiphys et altera quae vekat Argo  
 35 delectos heroas; erunt etiam altera bella  
 atque iterum ad Troiam magnus mittetur Achilles.  
 Hinc, ubi iam firmata virum te fecerit aetas,  
 cedet et ipse mari vector nec nautica pinus  
 mutabit merces; omnis feret omnia tellus.  
 40 non rastros patietur humus, non vinea falcem,  
 robustus quoque iam tauris iuga solvet arator;  
 nec varios discet mentiri lana colores,  
 ipse sed in pratis aries iam suave rubenti<sup>12</sup>  
 murice<sup>13</sup>, iam croceo mutabit vellera luto,  
 45 sponte sua sandyx pascentis vestiet agnos.  
 “Talia saecla” suis dixerunt “currite” fuis  
 concordēs stabili fatorum numine Parcae.  
 Adgredere o magnos - aderit iam tempus - honores,  
 cara deum suboles, magnum Iovis incrementum.  
 50 aspice convexo nutantem pondere mundum,  
 terrasque tractusque maris caelumque profundum;  
 aspice, venturo laetantur ut omnia saeclo.  
 O mihi tum longae maneat pars ultima vitae,  
 spiritus et quantum sat erit tua dicere facta:  
 55 non me carminibus vincat nec Thracius Orpheus  
 nec Linus, huic<sup>14</sup> mater quamvis atque huic pater adsit,  
 Orphei Calliopea, Lino formosus Apollo.  
 Pan etiam, Arcadia<sup>15</sup> mecum si iudice certet,  
 Pan etiam Arcadia dicat se iudice victum.  
 60 Incipe, parve puer, risu cognoscere matrem;  
 matri longa decem tulerunt fastidia menses.

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10. *quae...quae...quae inbeant*: anaphora; *inbeant* is subjunctive because it is in a relative clause of purpose.

11. *Thetin*: metonym for the sea.

12. *suave*: adverbial accusative.

13. *murice*: instrumental abl.

14. *huic...huic*: dative of possession.

15. *Arcadia...iudice*: abl. abs.

incipere, parve puer. qui<sup>16</sup> non risere<sup>17</sup> parenti,  
nec deus hunc mensa, dea nec dignata cubili est.

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16. *qui...hunc*: irregular use of plural relative with singular antecedent. This use primarily occurs when the relative clause expands on a larger group of which the antecedent forms a part. *Hunc* is the object of *dignata est*. *Qui* is plural, not singular, because of *risere*, which is not an infinitive in this case. See following note.

17. *risere*: poetic for *riserunt*.

Lines 1 - 10

Silician Muses, let us sing somewhat loftier.  
Orchards and humble tamarisks do not please everyone;  
If we sing of woods, let [these] wood be worthy of a consul.  
The last age of the Cumaean prophecy comes now;  
The great order of the generations arises afresh.  
Now Justice even returns, [and] the kingdom of Saturn returns,  
Now a new offspring is sent from the deep heavens.  
Only you, pure Lucina<sup>18</sup>, favour at birth the child,  
From whom the iron age first of all will cease and a golden race  
Will arise in all the world. Your Apollo<sup>19</sup> rules now.

Lines 11 - 17

And when you, yes you, are consul, the glorious age will begin,  
Pollio, and the mighty months<sup>20</sup> will start to advance;  
When you are the leader, if any traces of our wickedness remains,  
Their cancellation will free the lands from constant fear.  
He will receive the life of the gods and he will see the  
Heroes among the gods and he himself will be seen by them  
And he will rule a pacified world with his ancestral virtues.

Lines 18 - 25

But for you, child, the earth gives forth her first little gifts from uncultivated  
Ground—wandering ivy scattered with baccar, and the Egyptian  
Beans mixed with the smiling acanthus.  
The goats of their own accord bring back home their udders swollen with milk  
And the herds are not afraid of the mighty lions.  
Your very cradle pours forth captivating flowers for you.  
Both the serpent will die and the plant hiding its poison<sup>21</sup> will die.  
The Assyrian spice will spring up all over.

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18. Goddess of childbirth. Lucina is occasionally associated with Juno. More often she is identified with Diana, the Latin equivalent of Artemis.

19. Apollo is the patron of poets and poetry, and in this role he is important to Virgil.

20. "The mighty months" viz. *magnus...ordo* of line 5.

21. Lit., "the plant deceitful regarding its poison."

Lines 26 - 36

As soon as you are able to read the glories of heroes and the deeds  
Of your parent and to know what *virtus* is, the campus will shine  
Little by little with gentle grains of wheat and the red  
Grape will hang from wild briars and the stubborn  
Oaks will exude dewlike honey.  
Nevertheless a few traces of old crimes exist, [crimes] which ordered [men]  
To test the Sea with rafts, to encircle towns with walls, [and] to  
Cut furrows into the earth.  
Another Tiphys will then arise and another Argo, which  
Carries the choosen heroes; there will even other wars and a great  
Achilles will be sent to Troy again.

Lines 37 - 45

Hereafter, when the hardened age has made you a man,  
Even the passenger will yield to the sea and the nautical pine<sup>22</sup>  
Will not exchange goods; every land will produce everything.  
The earth will not suffer the hoes; the vineyards, not the sickle.  
The strong plowman too will now free the yoke from the bulls;  
Wool will not learn to assume various colors,  
In the fields the ram of his accord will change his fleece,  
Now to a sweetly blushing purple, now to a saffron yellow,  
By its own accord vermilion will adorn the grazing lambs.

Lines 46 - 48 (coda)

“Race on ages such as these!” to their spindles  
Cried the *Parcae*<sup>23</sup> in agreement with the steadfast will of the Fates.

Lines 49 - 52

Beloved offspring of the gods - the time is already at hand,  
Undertake your great honors, a great addition of Jupiter.  
Behold the world swaying with its vaulted weight,  
Both the earth and the expanse of the sea and the deep sky.  
Look, how all things rejoice with this age about to come.

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22. “Nautical pine” is a metonymy for a sailing vessel.

23. *Parcae*: the Latin equivalent of the Greek *Moirai*, or Three Fates. In Latin, they were known as Nona, Decuma, and Morta; in Greek, Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos. The historical evolution of the Latin *Parcae* is largely unknown. The key to their assimilation to the Greek *Moirai* comes from their association with *fusi* (spindles).

Line 53 - 59

Then may that final part of a long life remain for me,  
And there will enough inspiration to tell your deeds.  
Neither Thracian Orpheus nor Linus although  
his mother and his father might be present - Calliopea  
for Orpheus, beautiful Apollo for Linus - would surpass me in songs.  
Even Pan, if he competed with me - with Arcadia being a judge,  
Even Pan would say that he was surpassed - with Arcadia being a judge.

Line 60 - 63

Begin, little child, to acknowledge with a smile your mother;  
To your mother these ten months have brought a long weariness.  
Begin, little child. Those who have not smiled upon their parent,  
neither the god deemed worthy of his table, nor goddess of her bed.

Finem.