Famous Art Poems

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Art Poem

Shran Jones

Damn you art...

Your pulsating rhythm, your shape and form

the plasmatic coherent that converge on inanimate

objects making them something
different, like the light

catching spots as a shutter clicks or the pose of a

single syllable appears on a clear white sheet of paper.

Art entranced me, seduced me and made me want to dance

that forbidden dance that only few understand.

Hopefully one day I'll find someone with the same

intensity for the love of art and impassioned, we will be

as life imitates art and art imitates life and no distinction

is made between the two.

Oh why couldn't I be a pencil pusher

checking facts and dealing with
numbers in

a fun less unemotional setting for I no longer sleep.

Art calls me with a thought or image that must

be produced or become forever lost in the achieves

of memories.

I'll be the snake and art will be the charmer

until my last dog days are spent and art is what's

left behind so others would become completed

The Art of Poetry

Horace

In an Epistle Addressed to
Lucius Calpurnius Piso and his Two Sons[1]
Humano capiti cervicem pictor equinam.
Translated by Francis

Suppose a painter to a human head
Should join a horse's neck, and wildly spread
The various plumage of the feathered kind
O'er limbs of different beasts, absurdly joined;
Or if he gave to view a beauteous maid
Above the waist with every charm arrayed,
Should a foul fish her lower parts infold,
Would you not laugh such pictures to behold?
Such is the book, that like a sick man's dreams,
Varies all shapes, and mixes all extremes.
        "Painters and poets our indulgence claim,
Their daring equal, and their art the same."
I own th' indulgence such I give and take;
But not through Nature's sacred rules to break,
Monstrous to mix the cruel and the kind,
Serpents with birds, and lambs with tigers joined.
        Your opening promises some great design,
And shreds of purple with broad lustre shine
Sewed on your poem. Here in laboured strain
A sacred grove, or fair Diana's fane
Rises to view; there through delicious meads
A murmuring stream its winding water leads;
Here pours the rapid Rhine; the wat'ry bow
There bends its colours, and with pride they glow.
Beauties they are, but beauties out of place;
For though your talent be to paint with grace
A mournful cypress, would you pour its shade
O'er the tempestuous deep, if you were paid
To paint a sailor, midst the winds and waves,
When on a broken plank his life he saves ?
        Why will you thus a mighty vase intend,
If in a worthless bowl your labours end?
Then learn this wandering humour to control,
And keep one equal tenor through the whole.
        But oft our greatest errors take their rise
From our best views. I strive to be concise;

by its power.

I prove obscure. My strength, my fire decays,
When in pursuit of elegance and ease.
Aiming at greatness, some to fustian soar;
Some in cold safety creep along the shore,
Too much afraid of storms; while he, who tries
With ever-varying wonders to surprise,
In the broad forest bids his dolphins play,
And paints his boars disporting in the sea.
Thus, injudicious, while one fault we shun,
Into its opposite extreme we run.
One happier artist of th' Aemilian square,[2]
Who graves the nails, and forms the flowing hair,
Though he excels in every separate part,
Yet fails of just perfection in his art,
In one grand whole unknowing to unite
Those different parts; and I no more would write
Like him, than with a nose of hideous size
Be gazed at for the finest hair and eyes.
Examine well, ye writers, weigh with care,
What suits your genuis; what your strength can bear.
To him, who shall his theme with judgment choose,
Nor words, nor method shall their aid refuse.
In this, or I mistake, consists the grace,
And force of method, to assign a place
For what with present judgment we should say,
And for some happier time the rest delay.
Would you to fame a promised work produce,
Be delicate and cautious in the use
And choice of words; nor shall you fail of praise,
When nicely joining two known words you raise
A third unknown. A new-discovered theme
For those, unheard in ancient times, may claim
A just and ample licence, which, if used
With fair discretion, never is refused.
New words, and lately made, shall credit claim,
If from a Grecian source they gently stream;
For Virgil sure, and Varius may receive
That kind indulgence, which the Romans gave
To Plautus and Caecilius: or shall I
Be envied, if my little fund supply
Its frugal wealth of words, since bards, who sung
In ancient days, enriched their native tongue
With large increase? An undisputed power
Of coining money from the rugged ore,
Nor less of coining words, is still confessed,
If with a legal, public stamp impressed.
As when the forest, with the bending year,
First sheds the leaves which earliest appear,
So an old age of words maturely dies,
Others new-born in youth and vigour rise.
We and our noblest works to fate must yield;
Even Caesar's mole, which royal pride might build,[3]
Where Neptune far into the land extends,
And from the raging north our fleets defends;
That barren marsh, whose cultivated plain[4]
Now gives the neighbouring towns its various grain;
Tiber (who taught a better current) yields
To Caesar's power, nor deluges our fields;
All these must perish, and shall words presume
To hold their honours, and immortal bloom?

Many shall rise, that now forgotten lie;
Others, in present credit, soon shall die
If custom will, whose arbitrary sway,
Words, and the forms of language, must obey.
By Homer taught, the modern poet sings,
In epic strains, of heroes, wars and kings.
Unequal measures first were tuned to flow
Sadly expressive of the lover's woe;
But now, to gayer subjects formed, they move
In sounds of pleasure, to the joys of love:
By whom invented, critics yet contend,
And of their vain disputings find no end.
Archilochus, with fierce resentment warmed,
Was with his own severe iambics armed,
Whose rapid numbers, suited to the stage,
In comic humour, or in tragic rage,
With sweet variety were found to please,
And taught the dialogue to flow with ease;
Their numerous cadence was for action fit,
And formed to quell the clamours of the pit.
The muse to nobler subjects tunes her lyre;
Gods, and the sons of gods, her song inspire,
Wrestler and steed, who gained th' Olympic prize:
Love's pleasing cares, and wine's unbounded joys.
But if, through weakness, or my want of art,
I can't to every different style impart
The proper strokes and colours it may claim,
Why am I honoured with a poet's name?
Absurdly modest, why my fault discern,
Yet rather burst in ignorance than learn?
Nor will the genius of the comic muse
Sublimer tones, or tragic numbers use;
Nor will the direful Thyestean feast
In comic phrase and language be debased.
Then let your style be suited to the scene,
And its peculiar character maintain.
Yet Comedy sometimes her voice may raise,
And angry Chremes rail in swelling phrase:[5]
As oft the tragic language humbly flows,
For Telephus or Peleus, 'midst the woes[6]
Of poverty or exile, must complain
In prose-like style; must quit the swelling strain,
And words gigantic, if with Nature's art
They hope to touch the melting hearer's heart.
'Tis not enough, ye writers, that ye charm
With ease and elegance; a play should warm
With soft concernment; should possess the soul,
And, as it wills, the listening crowd control.
With them who laugh our social joy appears;
With them who mourn we sympathise in tears:
If you would have me weep, begin the strain,
Then I shall feel your sorrows, feel your pain;
But if your heroes act not what they say,
I sleep or laugh the lifeless scene away.
The varying face should every passion show,
And words of sorrow wear the look of woe;

Let it in joy assume a vivid air;
Fierce when in rage; in seriousness severe:
For Nature to each change of fortune forms
The secret soul, and all its passions warms:
Transports to rage, dilates the heart with mirth,
Wrings the sad soul, and bends it down to earth.
The tongue these various movements must express;
But, if ill-suited to the deep distress
His language prove, the sons of Rome engage
To laugh th' unhappy actor off the stage.
        Your style should an important difference make
When heroes, gods, or awful sages speak;
When florid youth, whom gay desires inflame;
A busy servant, or a wealthy dame
A merchant, wandering with incessant toil,
Or he, who cultivates the verdant soil;
But if in foreign realms you fix your scene,
Their genius, customs, dialects maintain.
        Or follow Fame, or in th' invented tale
Let seeming, well-united truth prevail:
If Homer's great Achilles tread the stage,
Intrepid, fierce, of unforgiving rage,
Like Homer's hero, let him spurn all laws,
And by the sword alone assert his cause.
With untamed fury let Medea glow,
And Ino's tears in ceaseless anguish flow.
From realm to realm her griefs let Io bear,
And sad Orestes rave in deep despair,
But if you venture on an untried theme,
And form a person yet unknown to fame,
From his first entrance to the closing secne,
Let him one equal character maintain.
        'Tis hard a new-formed fable to express,
And make it seem your own. With more success
You may from Homer take the tale of Troy,
Than on an untried plot your strength employ.
Yet would you make a common theme your own,
Dwell not on incidents already known;
Nor word for word translate with painful care,
Nor be confined in such a narrow sphere,
From whence (while you should only imitate)
Shame and the rules forbid you to retreat.
        Begin your work with modest grace and plain,
Not like the bard of everlasting strain,
"I sing the glorious war and Priam's fate "
How will the boaster hold this yawning rate?
The mountains laboured with prodigious throes,
And, lo! a mouse ridiculous arose.
        Far better he, who ne'er attempts in vain,
Opening his poem in this humble strain:
"Muse, sing the man who, after Troy subdued,
Manners and towns of various nations viewed;"
He does not lavish at a blaze his fire,
Sudden to glare, and in a smoke expire;
But rises from a cloud of smoke to light,
And pours his specious miracles to sight;
Antiphates his hideous feast devours,
Charybdis barks, and Polyphemus roars.
He would not, like our modern poet, date[7]
His hero's wanderings from his uncle's fate;
Nor sing ill-fated Ilium's various woes,
From Helen's birth, from whom the war arose;
But to the grand event he speeds his course,
And bears his readers with resistless force
Into the midst of things, while every line
Opens, by just degrees, his whole design.
Artful he knows each circumstance to leave

Which will not grace and ornament receive:
Then truth and fiction with such skill he blends,
That equal he begins, proceeds, and ends.
Mine and the public judgment are the same;
Then hear what I, and what your audience claim.
If you would keep us till the curtain fall,
And the last chorus for a plaudit call,
The manners must your strictest care engage,
The levities of youth and strength of age.
The child, who now with firmer footing walks,
And with unfaltering, well-formed accents talks,
Loves childish sports; with ceaseless anger burns,
And idly pleased with every moment turns.
The youth, whose will no froward tutor bounds,
Joys in the sunny field, his horse and hounds;
Yielding like wax, th' impressive folly bears;
Rough to reproof, and slow to future cares;
Profuse and vain; with every passion warmed,
And swift to leave what late his fancy charmed.
With strength improved, the manly spirit bends
To different aims, in search of wealth and friends;
Bold and ambitious in pursuit of fame,
And wisely cautious in the doubtful scheme.
A thousand ills the aged world surround,
Anxious in search of wealth, and when 'tis found,
Fearful to use what they with fear possess,
While doubt and dread their faculties depress.
Fond of delay, they trust in hope no more,
Listless, and fearful of th' approaching hour;
Morose, complaining, and with tedious praise
Telling the manners of their youthful days;
Severe to censure; earnest to advise,
And with old saws the present age chastise.
The blessings flowing in with life's full tide,
Down with our ebb of life decreasing glide;
Then let not youth in infancy engage
To play the parts of manhood or of age;
For where the proper characters prevail,
We dwell with pleasure on the well-wrought tale.
The business of the drama must appear
In action or description. What we hear,
With weaker passion will affect the heart,
Than when the faithful eye beholds the part.
But yet let nothing on the stage be brought
Which better should behind the scenes be wrought;
Nor force th' unwilling audience to behold
What may with grace and eloquence be told.
Let not Medea, with unnatural rage,
Slaughter her mangled infants on the stage;
Nor Atreus his nefarious feast prepare,
Nor Cadmus roll a snake, nor Progne wing the air;
For while upon such monstrous scenes we gaze,
They shock our faith, our indignation raise.
If you would have your play deserve success,
Give it five acts complete; nor more, nor less;
Nor let a god in person stand displayed,
Unless the labouring plot deserve his aid;[8]
Nor a fourth actor, on the crowded scene,
A broken, tedious dialogue maintain.
The chorus must support an actor's part;
Defend the virtuous, and advise with art;

Govern the choleric, the proud appease,
And the short feasts of frugal tables praise;
Applaud the justice of well-governed states,
And Peace triumphant with her open gates.
Intrusted secrets let them ne'er betray,
But to the righteous gods with ardour pray
That Fortune with returning smiles may bless
Afflicted worth, and impious pride depress;
Yet let her songs with apt coherence join,
Promote the plot, and aid the main design.
Nor was the flute at first with silver bound,
Nor rivalled emulous the trumpet's sound:
Few were its notes, its form was simply plain,
Yet not unuseful was its feeble strain
To aid the chorus, and their songs to raise,
Filling the little theatre. with ease,
To which a thin and pious audience came,
Of frugal manners, and unsullied fame.
    But when victorious Rome enlarged her state,
And broader walls inclosed th' imperial seat,
Soon as with wine grown dissolutely gay,
Without restraint she cheered the festal day;
Then poesy in looser numbers moved,
And music in licentious tones improved;
Such ever is the taste, when clown and wit,
Rustic and critic, fill the crowded pit.
    He, who before with modest art had played,
Now called in wanton movements to his aid,
Filled with luxurious tones the pleasing strain,
And drew along the stage a length of train;
And thus the lyre, once awfully severe,
Increased its strings, and sweeter charmed the ear:
Thus poetry precipitately flowed,
And with unwonted elocution glowed;
Poured forth prophetic truths in awful strain,
Dark as the language of the Delphic fane.
    The tragic bard who for a worthless prize[9]
Bade naked satyrs in his chorus rise,
Though rude his mirth, yet laboured to maintain
The solemn grandeur of the tragic scene;
For novelty alone he knew could charm
A lawless crowd, with wine and feasting warm.
    And yet this laughing, prating tribe may raise
Our mirth, nor shall their pleasantly displease;
But let the hero, or the power divine,
Whom late we saw with gold and purple shine,
Stoop not in vulgar phrase; nor yet despise
The words of earth, and soar into the skies.
For as a matron, on our festal days[10]
Obliged to dance, with modest grace obeys,
So should the Muse her dignity maintain
Amidst the satyrs, and their wanton train.
    If e'er I write, no words too grossly vile
Shall shame my satyrs, and pollute my style,
Nor would I yet the tragic style forsake
So far, as not some difference to make
Between a slave, or girl, too pertly bold,
Who robs the miser of his darling gold,
And grave Silenus, with instructive nod
Giving wise lectures to his pupil god.
From well-known tales such fictions would I raise

As all might hope to imitate with ease;
Yet while they strive the same success to gain,
Should find their labour; and their hopes are vain:
Such grace can order and connexion give,
Such beauties common subjects may receive.
Let not the wood-born satyr fondly sport
With amorous verses, as if bred at court;
Nor yet with wanton jests, in mirthful vein,
Debase the language, and pollute the scene,
For what the crowd with lavish rapture praise,
In better judges cold contempt shall raise.
Rome to her poets too much licence gives,
Nor the rough cadence of their verse perceives;
But shall I then with careless spirit write?
No! Let me think my faults shall rise to light,
And then a kind indulgence will excuse
The less important errors of the muse.
Thus, though perhaps I may not merit fame,
I stand secure from censure and from shame.
Make the Greek authors your supreme delight;
Read them by day, and study them by night.
"And yet our sires with joy could Plautus hear,
Gay were his jests, his numbers charmed their ear."
Let me not say too lavishly they praised,
But sure their judgment was full cheaply pleased,
If you or I with taste are haply blessed,
To know a clownish from a courtly jest;
If skilful to discern when formed with ease
The modulated sounds are taught to please.
Thespis, inventor of the tragic art,
Carried his vagrant players in a cart:
High o'er the crowd the mimic tribe appeared,
And played and sung, with lees of wine besmeared.
Then Aeschylus a decent vizard used;
Built a low stage; the flowing robe diffused.
In language more sublime his actors rage,
And in the graceful buskin tread the stage.
And now the ancient comedy appeared,
Not without pleasure and applause was heard;
But soon its freedom rising to excess,
The laws were forced its boldness to suppress,
And, when no longer licensed to defame,
It sunk to silence with contempt and shame.
No path to fame our poets left untried;
Nor small their merit when with conscious pride
They scorned to take from Greece the storied theme,
And dared to sing their own domestic fame.
With Roman heroes fill the tragic scene,
Or sport with humour in the comic vein
Nor had the mistress of the world appeared
More famed for conquest, than for wit revered,
Did we not hate the necessary toil
Of slow correction, and the painful file.
Illustrious youths! With just contempt receive,
Nor let the hardy poem hope to live,
Where time and full correction don't refine
The finished work, and polish every line,
Because Democritus in rapture cries,
"Poems of genius always bear the prize
From wretched works of art," and thinks that none
But brain-sick bards can taste of Helicon;
So far his doctrine o'er the tribe prevails,
They neither shave their heads, nor pare their nails;
To dark retreats and solitude they run,
The baths avoid, and public converse shun;
A poet's fame and fortune sure to gain,
If long their beards, incurable their brain.
Ah! Luckless I! Who purge in spring my spleen--
Else sure the first of bards had Horace been.

But shall I then, in mad pursuit of fame,
Resign my reason for a poet's name?
No! Let me sharpen others, as the hone
Gives edge to razors, though itself has none.
Let me the poets worth and office show,
And whence his true poetic riches flow;
What forms his genius, and improves his vein;
What well or ill becomes each different scene;
How high the knowledge of his art ascends,
And to what faults his ignorance extends.
    Good sense, the fountain of the muse's art,
Let the strong page of Socrates impart,
And if the mind with clear conceptions glow,
The willing words in just expression flow.
    The poet, who with nice discernment knows
What to his country and his friends he owes;
How various nature warms the human breast,
To love the parent, brother, friend or guest;
What the great offices of judges are,
Of senators, of generals sent to war;
He surely knows, with nice, well-judging art,
The strokes peculiar to each different part.
    Keep nature's great original in view,
And thence the living images pursue;
For when the sentiments and diction please,
And all the characters are wrought with ease,
Your play, though devoid of beauty, force and art,
More strongly shall delight, and warm the heart,
Than where a lifeless pomp of verse appears,
And with sonorous trifles charms our ears.
    To her loved Greeks the Muse indulgent gave,
To her loved Greeks, with greatness to conceive,
And in sublimer tone their language raise--
Her Greeks were only covetous of praise.
Our youth, proficient in a nobler art,
Divide a farthing to the hundredth part;
"Well done, my boy," the joyful father cries,
"Addition and subtraction make us wise."
    But when the rust of wealth pollutes the soul,
And monied cares the genius thus control,
How shall we dare to hope, that distant times
With honour shall preserve our lifeless rhymes?
    Poets would profit or delight mankind,
And with the pleasing have th' instruction joined
Short be the precept, which with ease is gained
By docile minds, and forcefully retained.
If in dull length your moral is expressed,
The tedious wisdom overflows the breast.
Would you divert? The probable maintain,
Nor force us to belief the monstrous scene,
That shows a child, by a fell witch devoured,
Dragged from her entrails, and to life restored.
Grave age approves the solid and the wise;
Gay youth from too austere a drama flies;
Profit and pleasure, then, to mix with art,
To inform the judgment, nor offend the heart,
Shall gain all votes; to booksellers shall raise
No trivial fortune, and across the seas
To distant nations spread the writer's fame,
And with immortal honours crown his name.
    Yet there are faults which we may well excuse,
For oft the strings th' intended sound refuse;
In vain his tuneful hand the master tries,
He asks a flat, and hears a sharp arise;
Nor always will the boy, though famed for art,
With speed unerring wing the threatening dart.
    But when the beauties more in numbers shine,

I am not angry when a casual line
(That with some trivial faults unequal flows)
A careless hand, or human frailty shows.
But as we ne'er those scribes with mercy treat
Who, though advised, the same mistakes repeat;
Or as we laugh at him who constant brings
The same rude discord from the jarring strings;
So, if strange chance a Choerilus inspire
With some good lines, I laugh, while I admire;
Yet hold it for a fault I can't excuse,
If honest Homer slumber o'er his muse;
Although, perhaps, a kind indulgent sleep
O'er works of length allowably may creep.
Poems like pictures are; some charm when nigh,
Others at distance more delight your eye;
That loves the shade, this tempts a stronger light,
And challenges the critic's piercing sight:
That gives us pleasure for a single view;
And this, ten times repeated, still is new.
Although your father's precepts form your youth,
And add experience to your taste of truth,
Of this one maxim, --Piso,--be assured,
In certain things a medium is endured.
Who tries Messala's eloquence in vain,[11]
Nor can a knotty point of law explain
Like learned Cascellius, yet may justly claim,[12]
For pleading or advice, some right to fame;
But God, and man, and lettered post, denies[13]
That poets ever are of middling size.
As jarring music at a jovial feast,
Or muddy essence, or th' ungrateful taste
Of bitter honey shall the guests displease,
Because they want not luxuries like these;
So poems, formed alone to yield delight,
Give deep disgust, or pleasure to the height.
The man who knows not how with art to wield
The sportive weapons of the martial field,
The bounding ball, round quoit, or whirling troque,
Will not the laughter of the crowd provoke:
But every desperate blockhead dares to write
Why not? his fortune's large to make a knight;
The man's freeborn; perhaps of gentle strain;
His character and manners pure from stain.
But thou, dear Piso, never tempt the muse,
If wisdom's goddess shall her aid refuse;
And when you write, let candid Metius hear,[14]
Or try your labours on your father's ear,
Or even on mine; but let them not come forth
Till the ninth ripening year mature their worth.
You may correct what in your closet lies:
If published, it irrevocably flies.
The wood-born race of men when Orpheus tamed,
From acorns and from mutual blood reclaimed,
This priest divine was fabled to assuage
The tiger's fierceness, and the lion's rage.
Thus rose the Theban well; Amphion's lyre,
And soothing voice the list'ning stones inspire.
Poetic wisdom marked, with happy mean,
Public and private; sacred and profane;
The wand'ring joys of lawless love suppressed;
With equal rites the wedded couple blessed:
Planned future towns, and instituted laws--
So verse became divine, and poets gained applause.
Homer, Tyrtaeus, by the muse inspired,
To deeds of arms the martial spirit fired.
In verse the oracles divine were heard,
And Nature's secret laws in verse declared;

Monarchs were courted in Persian strain,
And comic sports relieved the wearied swain;
Apollo sings, the Muses tune the lyre,
Then blush not for an art which they inspire.
'Tis long disputed, whether poets claim
From art or nature their best right to fame;
But art, if not enriched by nature's vein,
And a rude genius, of uncultured strain,
Are useless both; but when in friendship joined,
A mutual succour in each other find.
A youth who hopes th' Olympic prize to gain,
All arts must try, and every toil sustain;
Th' extremes of heat and cold must often prove,
And shun the weakening joys of wine and love.
Who sings the Pythic song, first learns to raise
Each note distinct, and a stern master please;
But now "Since I can write the true sublime,
Curse catch the hindmost!" cries the man of rhyme.
"What! In a science own myself a fool,
Because, forsooth, I learned it not by rule?"
As artful criers, at a public fair,
Gather the passing crowd to buy their ware,
So wealthy poets, when they deign to write,
To all clear gains their flatterers invite.
But if the feast of luxury they give,
Bail a poor wretch, or from distress relieve
When the black fangs of law around him bend,
How shall they know a flatterer from a friend?
If e'er you make a present, or propose
To grant a favour; while his bosom glows
With grateful sentiments of joy and praise,
Never, ah! Never let him hear your lays!
Loud shall he cry, "How elegant! How fine!"
Turn pale with wonder at some happier line;
Distil the civil dew from every eye,
And leap, and beat the ground in ecstasy.
As hirelings, paid for their funeral tear,
Outweep the sorrows of a friend sincere,
So the false raptures of a flatterer's art
Exceed the praises of an honest heart.
Monarchs, 'tis said, with many a flowing bowl
Search through the deep recesses of his soul,
Whom for their future friendship they design,
And put him to the torture in his wine;
So try, whene'er you write, the deep disguise,
Beneath whose flattering smile false Reynard lies.
Read to Quintilius, and at every line--
"Correct this passage, friend, and that refine."
Tell him, you tried it twice or thrice in vain--
"Haste to an anvil with your ill-formed strain,
Or blot it out." But if you still defend
The favourite folly, rather than amend,
He'll say no more, nor idle toil employ--
"Yourself unrivalled, and your works enjoy."
An honest critic, when dull lines move slow,
Or harshly rude, will his resentment show;
Mark every fault, and with his pen efface
What is not polished to its highest grace;
Prune all ambitious ornaments away,
And teach you on th' obscure to pour the day;
Will mark the doubtful phrase with hand severe,
Like Aristarchus, candid and sincere:
Nor say, for trifles why should I displease
The man I love? For trifles such as these

To serious mischiefs lead the man I love,
If once the flatterer's ridicule he prove.
From a mad poet, whosoe'er is wise,
As from a leprosy or jaundice, flies;
Religious madness in its zealous strain,
Nor the wild frenzy of a moon-struck brain,
Are half so dreadful: yet the boys pursue him,
And fools, unknowing of their danger, view him.
But, heedless wandering, if our man of rhyme,
Bursting with verses of the true sublime,
Like fowler, earnest at his game, should fall
Into a well or ditch, and loudly call,
"Good fellow-citizens and neighbors dear,
Help a poor bard" not one of them will hear:
Or if, perchance, a saving rope they throw,
I will be there, and "Sirs, you do not know
But he fell in on purpose, and, I doubt,
Will hardly thank you, if you pull him out."
Then will I tell Empedocles's story,
Who nobly fond of more than mortal glory,
Fond to be deemed a god, in madding fit
Plunged in cold blood in Etna's fiery pit.
Let bards be licensed then themselves to kill;
'Tis murder to preserve them 'gainst their will.
But more than once this frolic he hath played,
Nor, taken out, will he be wiser made
Content to be a man; nor will his pride
Lay such a glorious love of death aside.
Nor is it plain for what more horrid crime
The gods have plagued him with this curse of rhyme;
Whether his father's ashes he disdained,
Or hallowed ground with sacrilege profaned:
Certain he's mad, and like a baited bear,
If he hath strength enough his den to tear,
With all the horrors of a desparate Muse
The learned and unlearned he pursues.
But if he seize you, then the torture dread!
He fastens on you till he reads you dead,
And like a leech, voracious of his food,
Quits not his cruel hold till gorged with blood.

1.Lucius Calpurnius Piso was a victorious soldier in the Thracian war and a popular Prefect of Rome. He seems to have been a man of literary taste, and Horace leads us to infer that his elder son was thinking of becoming a writer. It is to him that the epistle is chiefly addressed.

2.The Emilian square was a school of gladiators kept by Emilius Lepidus; many artists lived near it.

3. It formed the Julian harbour.

4. The Pontine marshes. These were partly drained, and the inundations of the Tiber were checked by order of Augustus.

5. A character in Terence.

6. Telephus suffered poverty in seeking for his father. Peleus was driven into exile for being accessory to his brother's murder. The adventures of both princes had been the subject of tragedies.

7. Antimachus, who wrote on the return of Diomedes and absurdly began his poem from the death of his hero's uncle Meleager.

8. At first in the Greek drama only one actor appeared on the stage apart from the chorus. Thespis was his own actor. Aeschylus added a second and Sophocles a third. The chorus took an active part in the representation.

9. Pratinus, who invented a mixed kind of tragedy with satyrs as the chorus. It was called the satyric drama.

10. Young women were usually chosen to dance in honour of the gods; but in some festivals, as in that of the great goddess, the pontiffs obliged married women to dance.--Dac.

11. Messala Corvinus, who inherited the eloquence as well as courage of his ancestors.

12. Cascellius Aulus was a Roman night, one of the greatest lawyers of his time. But his having courage to preserve his liberty in an age of universal slavery, raises his character with greater honour. than all his wit and learning. The triumvirs Lepidus, Antony, and Augustus, could not compel him to draw up their edict of proscription; nor is it less glorious to Augustus, that a man of such a spirit of freedom should be mentioned with applause by a poet of his court.

13. "Lettered post." The pillars of the booksellers' shops on which were put the names of the books for sale.

14. Spurius Metius Tarpa, a celebrated critic of that time.

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