

ГОРАЦИЙ

THE ART OF POETRY: AN
EPISTLE TO THE PISOS

Quintus Horatius Quintus The Art of Poetry: an Epistle to the Pisos

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The Art of Poetry: an Epistle to the Pisos / Q. Horatii Flacci Epistola Ad
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Horace
The Art of Poetry: an
Epistle to the Pisos / Q.
Horatii Flacci Epistola Ad
Pisones, De Arte Poetica

TO

*The Rev. JOSEPH WARTON, D.D. MASTER of
WINCHESTER SCHOOL;*

AND TO

*The Rev. THOMAS WARTON, B.D. FELLOW of
TRINITY COLLEGE, OXFORD.*

MY DEAR FRIENDS!

In a conversation, some months ago, I happened to mention to you the idea I had long entertained of that celebrated Epistle of Horace, commonly distinguished by the title of THE ART OF POETRY. I will not say that you acceded to my opinion; but I flattered myself that I at least interested your curiosity, and engaged your attention: our discourse, however, revived an

intention I had once formed, of communicating my thoughts on the subject to the Publick; an intention I had only dropt for want of leisure and inclination to attempt a translation of the Epistle, which I thought necessary to accompany the original, and my remarks on it. In the original, Horace assumes the air and stile of an affectionate teacher, admonishing and instructing his young friends and pupils: but the following translation, together with the observations annexed, I address to You as my Masters, from whom I look for sound information, a well-grounded confirmation of my hypothesis, or a solution of my doubts, and a correction of my errors.

It is almost needless to observe, that the Epistle in question has very particularly exercised the critical sagacity of the literary world; yet it is remarkable that, amidst the great variety of comments and decisions on the work, it has been almost universally considered, except by one acute and learned writer of this country, as a loose, vague, and desultory composition; a mass of shining materials; like pearls unstrung, valuable indeed, but not displayed to advantage.

Some have contended, with Scaliger at their head, that this pretended *Art of Poetry* is totally void of art; and that the very work, in which the beauty and excellence of *Order* (*ordinis virtus et Venus!*) is strongly recommended, is in itself unconnected, confused, and immethodical. The advocates for the writer have in great measure confessed the charge, but pleaded in excuse and vindication, the familiarity of an epistle, and even the genius of

Poetry, in which the formal divisions of a prosaick treatise on the art would have been insupportable. They have also denied that Horace ever intended such a treatise, or that he ever gave to this Epistle the title of *the Art of Poetry*; on which title the attacks of Scaliger, and his followers, are chiefly grounded. The title, however, is confessedly as old as the age of Quintilian; and that the work itself has a perpetual reference to *Poets and Poetry*, is as evident, as that it is, from beginning to end, in its manner, stile, address, and form, perfectly *Epistolary*.

The learned and ingenious Critick distinguished above, an early ornament to letters, and now a worthy dignitary of the church, leaving vain comments, and idle disputes on the title of the work, sagaciously directed his researches to scrutinize the work itself; properly endeavouring to trace and investigate from the composition the end and design of the writer, and remembering the axiom of the Poet, to whom his friend had been appointed the commentator.

In every work regard THE AUTHOR'S END! For none can compass more than they intend. Pope.

With this view of illustrating and explaining Horace's Art of Poetry, this shrewd and able writer, about thirty years ago, republished the original Epistle, giving the text chiefly after Dr. Bentley, subjoining an English Commentary and Notes, and prefixing an Introduction, from which I beg leave to transcribe most part of the three first paragraphs,

"It is agreed on all hands, that the antients are our masters

in the *art* of composition. Such of their writings, therefore, as deliver instructions for the exercise of this *art*, must be of the highest value. And, if any of them hath acquired a credit, in this respect, superior to the rest, it is, perhaps, the *following work*: which the learned have long since considered as a kind of *summary* of the rules of good writing; to be gotten by heart by every young student; and to whose decisive authority the greatest masters in taste and composition must finally submit.

"But the more unquestioned the credit of this poem is, the more it will concern the publick, that it be justly and accurately understood. The writer of these sheets then believed it might be of use, if he took some pains to clear the sense, connect the method, and ascertain the scope and purpose, of this admired epistle. Others, he knew indeed, and some of the first fame for critical learning, had been before him in this attempt. Yet he did not find himself prevented by their labours; in which, besides innumerable lesser faults, he, more especially, observed two inveterate errors, of such a fort, as must needs perplex the genius, and distress the learning, of *any* commentator. The *one* of these respects the SUBJECT; the other, the METHOD of the *Art of Poetry*. It will be necessary to say something upon each.

"1. That the *Art of Poetry*, at large, is not the *proper* subject of this piece, is so apparent, that it hath not escaped the dullest and least attentive of its Criticks. For, however all the different *kinds* of poetry might appear to enter into it, yet every one saw, that *some* at least were very slightly considered: whence the frequent

attempts, the *artes et institutiones poetica*, of writers both at home and abroad, to supply its deficiencies. But, though this truth was seen and confessed, it unluckily happened, that the sagacity of his numerous commentators went no further. They still considered this famous Epistle as a *collection*, though not a *system*, of criticisms on poetry in general; with this concession however, that the stage had evidently the largest share in it [Footnote: *Satyra hac est in fui faeculi poetas, praecipui yero in Romanum Drama, Baxter.*]. Under the influence of this prejudice, several writers of name took upon them to comment and explain it: and with the success, which was to be expected from so fatal a mistake on setting out, as the not seeing, 'that the proper and sole purpose of the Author, was, not to abridge the Greek Criticks, whom he probably never thought of; nor to amuse himself with composing a short critical system, for the general use of poets, which every line of it absolutely confutes; but, simply to criticize the Roman drama.' For to this end, not the tenor of the work only, but as will appear, every single precept in it, ultimately refers. The mischiefs of this original error have been long felt. It hath occasioned a constant perplexity in defining the *general* method, and in fixing the import of *particular* rules. Nay its effects have reached still further. For conceiving, as they did, that the whole had been composed out of the Greek Criticks, the labour and ingenuity of its interpreters have been misemployed in picking out authorities, which were not wanted, and in producing, or, more properly, by their studied refinements

in *creating*, conformities, which were never designed. Whence it hath come to pass that, instead of investigating the order of the Poet's own reflexions, and scrutinizing the peculiar state of the Roman Stage (the methods, which common sense and common criticism would prescribe) the world hath been nauseated with, insipid lectures on *Aristotle* and *Phalereus*; whose solid sense hath been so attenuated and subtilized by the delicate operation of French criticism, as hath even gone some way towards bringing the *art* itself into disrepute.

"2. But the wrong explications of this poem have arisen, not from the misconception of the subject only, but from an inattention to the method of it. The *latter* was, in part the genuine consequence of the *former*. For, not suspecting an unity of design in the subject it's interpreters never looked for, or could never find, a consistency of disposition in the method. And this was indeed the very block upon which HEINSIUS, and, before him, JULIUS SCALIGER, himself fumbled. These illustrious Criticks, with all the force of genius, which is required to disembarass an involved subject, and all the aids of learning, that can lend a ray to enlighten a dark one, have, notwithstanding, found themselves utterly unable to unfold the order of this Epistle; insomuch, that SCALIGER [Footnote: Praef. i x LIB. POET. ct 1. vi. p. 338] hath boldly pronounced, the conduct of it to be *vicious*; and HEINSIUS had no other way to evade the charge, than by recurring to the forced and uncritical expedient of a licentious transposition. The truth is, they were both in

one common error, that the Poet's purpose had been to write a criticism of the Art of Poetry at large, and not, as is here shewn of the Roman Drama in particular."

The remainder of this Introduction, as well as the Commentary and Notes, afford ample proofs of the erudition and ingenuity of the Critick: yet I much doubt, whether he has been able to convince the learned world of the truth of his main proposition, "than it was the proper and sole purpose of the Author, simply to *criticise* the Roman drama." His Commentary is, it must be owned, extremely seducing yet the attentive reader of Horace will perhaps often fancy, that he perceives a violence and constraint offered to the composition, in order to accommodate it to the system of the Commentator; who, to such a reader, may perhaps seem to mark transitions, and point out connections, as well as to maintain a *method* in the Commentary, which cannot clearly be deduced from the text, to which it refers.

This very-ingenious *Commentary* opens as follows:

"The subject of this piece being, as I suppose, *one, viz. the state of the Roman Drama*, and common sense requiring, even in the freest forms of composition, some kind of *method*. the intelligent reader will not be surprised to find the poet prosecuting his subject in a regular, well-ordered *plan*; which, for the more exact description of it, I distinguish into three parts:

"I. The first of them [from l. 1 to 89] is preparatory to the main subject of the Epistle, containing some general rules and reflexions on poetry, but principally with an eye to the following

parts: by which means it serves as an useful introduction to the poet's design, and opens with that air of ease and elegance, essential to the epistolary form.

"II. The main body of the Epistle [from l. 89. to 295] is laid out in regulating the *Roman Stage*; but chiefly in giving rules for Tragedy; not only as that was the sublimer species of the *Drama*, but, as it should seem, less cultivated and understood.

"III. The last part [from l. 295 to the end] exhorts to correctness in writing; yet still with an eye, principally, to the *dramatic species*; and is taken up partly in removing the causes, that prevented it; and partly in directing to the use of such means, as might serve to promote it. Such is the general plan of the Epistle."

In this general summary, with which the Critick introduces his particular Commentary, a very material circumstance is acknowledged, which perhaps tends to render the system on which it proceeds extremely doubtful, if not wholly untenable. The original Epistle consists of four hundred and seventy-six lines; and it appears, from the above numerical analysis, that not half of those lines, only two hundred and six verses, [from v. 89 to 295] are employed on the subject of *the Roman Stage*. The first of the three parts above delineated [from v. i to 89] certainly *contains general rules and reflections on poetry*, but surely with no particular reference to the Drama. As to the second part, the Critick, I think, might fairly have extended the Poet's consideration of the Drama to the 365th line, seventy lines

further than he has carried it; but the last hundred and eleven lines of the Epistle so little allude to the Drama, that the only passage in which a mention of the Stage has been supposed to be implied, [*ludusque repertus, &c.*] is, by the learned and ingenious Critick himself, particularly distinguished with a very different interpretation. Nor can this portion of the Epistle be considered, by the impartial and intelligent reader, as a mere exhortation "to correctness in writing; taken up partly in removing the causes that prevented it; and partly in directing to the use of such means, as might serve to promote it." Correctness is indeed here, as in many other parts of Horace's Satires and Epistles, occasionally inculcated; but surely the main scope of this animated conclusion is to deter those, who are not blest with genius, from attempting the walks of Poetry. I much approve what this writer has urged on the *unity of subject, and beauty of epistolary method* observed in this Work; but cannot agree that "the main subject and intention was *the regulation of the Roman Stage.*" How far I may differ concerning particular passages, will appear from the notes at the end of this translation. In controversial criticism difference of opinion cannot but be expressed, (*veniam petimusque damusque vicissim,*) but I hope I shall not be thought to have delivered my sentiments with petulance, or be accused of want of respect for a character, that I most sincerely reverence and admire.

I now proceed to set down in writing, the substance of what I suggested to you in conversation, concerning my own conceptions of the end and design of Horace in this Epistle. In

this explanation I shall call upon Horace as my chief witness, and the Epistle itself, as my principal voucher. Should their testimonies prove adverse, my system must be abandoned, like many that have preceded it, as vain and chimerical: and if it should even, by their support, be acknowledged and received, it will, I think, like the egg of Columbus, appear so plain, easy, and obvious, that it will seem almost wonderful, that the Epistle has never been considered in the same light, till now. I do not wish to dazzle with the lustre of a new hypothesis, which requires, I think, neither the strong opticks, nor powerful glasses, of a critical Herschel, to ascertain the truth of it; but is a system, that lies level to common apprehension, and a luminary, discoverable by the naked eye.

My notion is simply this. I conceive that one of the sons of Piso, undoubtedly the elder, had either written, or meditated, a poetical work, most probably a Tragedy; and that he had, with the knowledge of the family, communicated his piece, or intention, to Horace: but Horace, either disapproving of the work, or doubting of the poetical faculties of the Elder Piso, or both, wished to dissuade him from all thoughts of publication. With this view he formed the design of writing this Epistle, addressing it, with a courtliness and delicacy perfectly agreeable to his acknowledged character, indifferently to the whole family, the father and his two sons. *Epistola ad Pisones, de Arte Poetica.*

He begins with general reflections, generally addressed to his *three* friends. *Credite, Pisones!—pater, & juvenes patre digni!—*

In these preliminary rules, equally necessary to be observed by Poets of every denomination, he dwells on the necessity of unity of design, the danger of being dazzled by the splendor of partial beauties, the choice of subjects, the beauty of order, the elegance and propriety of diction, and the use of a thorough knowledge of the nature of the several different species of Poetry: summing up this introductory portion of his Epistle, in a manner perfectly agreeable to the conclusion of it.

Descriptas servare vices, operumque colores,

Cur ego si nequeo ignoroque, poeta salutor?

Cur nescire, pudens pravè, quam discere malo?

From this general view of poetry, on the canvas of Aristotle, but entirely after his own manner, the writer proceeds to give the rules and history of the Drama; adverting principally to Tragedy, with all its constituents and appendages of diction, fable, character, incidents, chorus, measure, musick, and decoration. In this part of the work, according to the interpretation of the best criticks, and indeed (I think) according to the manifest tenor of the Epistle, he addresses himself entirely to *the two young gentlemen*, pointing out to them the difficulty, as well as excellence, of the Dramatick Art; insisting on the avowed superiority of the Graecian Writers, and ascribing the comparative failure of the Romans to negligence and avarice. The Poet, having exhausted this part of his subject, suddenly drops a *second*, or dismisses at once no less than *two* of the *three* Persons, to whom he originally addressed his Epistle, and

turning short *on the ELDER PISO*, most earnestly conjures him to ponder on the danger of precipitate publication, and the ridicule to which the author of wretched poetry exposes himself. From the commencement of this partial address, *o major juvenum, &c.* [v. 366] to the end of the Poem, *almost a fourth part of the whole*, the second person plural, *Pisones!—Vos!—Vos, O Pompilius Sanguis!* &c. is discarded, and the second person singular, *Tu, Te, Tibi, &c.* invariably takes its place. The arguments too are equally relative and personal; not only shewing the necessity of study, combined with natural genius, to constitute a Poet; but dwelling on the peculiar danger and delusion of flattery, to a writer of rank and fortune; as well as the inestimable value of an honest friend, to rescue him from derision and contempt. The Poet, however, in reverence to the Muse, qualifies his exaggerated description of an infatuated scribbler, with a most noble encomium of the uses of Good Poetry, vindicating the dignity of the Art, and proudly asserting, that the most exalted characters would not be disgraced by the cultivation of it.

*_Ne forte pudori Sit _tibi Musa, lyrae solers, & cantor
Apollo.*

It is worthy observation, that in the satirical picture of a frantick bard, with which Horace concludes his Epistle, he not only runs counter to what might be expected as a Corollary of an Essay on *the Art of Poetry*, but contradicts his own usual practice and sentiments. In his Epistle to Augustus, instead of stigmatizing the love of verse as an abominable phrenzy, he calls

it (*levis haec insania*) a slight madness, and descants on its good effects—*quantas virtutes habeat, sic collige!*

In another Epistle, speaking of himself, and his addiction to poetry, he says,

—*ubi quid datur oti,
Illudo chartis; hoc est, mediocribus illis
Ex vitiis unum, &c.*

All which, and several other passages in his works, almost demonstrate that it was not, without a particular purpose in view, that he dwelt so forcibly on the description of a man resolved

—in spite Of nature and his stars to write.

To conclude, if I have not contemplated my system, till I am become blind to its imperfections, this view of the Epistle not only preserves to it all that _unity of subject, and elegance of method, _so much insisted on by the excellent Critick, to whom I have so often referred; but by adding to his judicious general abstract the familiarities of personal address, so strongly marked by the writer, not a line appears idle or misplaced: while the order and disposition of the Epistle to the Pisos appears as evident and unembarrassed, as that of the Epistle to Augustus; in which last, the actual state of the Roman Drama seems to have been more manifestly the object of Horace's attention, than in the Work now under consideration.

Before I leave you to the further examination of the original of Horace, and submit to you the translation, with the notes

that accompany it, I cannot help observing, that the system, which I have here laid down, is not so entirely new, as it may perhaps at first appear to the reader, or as I myself originally supposed it. No Critick indeed has, to my knowledge, directly considered *the whole Epistle* in the same light that I have now taken it; but yet *particular passages* seem so strongly to enforce such an interpretation, that the Editors, Translators, and Commentators, have been occasionally driven to explanations of a similar tendency; of which the notes annexed will exhibit several striking instances.

Of the following version I shall only say, that I have not, knowingly, adopted a single expression, tending to warp the judgement of the learned or unlearned reader, in favour of my own hypothesis. I attempted this translation, chiefly because I could find no other equally close and literal. Even the Version of Roscommon, tho' in blank verse, is, in some parts a paraphrase, and in others, but an abstract. I have myself, indeed, endeavoured to support my right to that force and freedom of translation which Horace himself recommends; yet I have faithfully exhibited in our language several passages, which his professed translators have abandoned, as impossible to be given in English.

All that I think necessary to be further said on the Epistle will appear in the notes.

I am, my dear friends,
With the truest respect and regard,
Your most sincere admirer,

And very affectionate, humble servant,
GEORGE COLMAN.

LONDON,

March 8, 1783.

Q. HORATII FLACCI EPISTOLA AD PISONES

* * * * *

Humano capiti cervicem pictor equinam
Jungere si velit, et varias inducere plumas
Undique collatis membris, ut turpiter atrum
Definat in piscem mulier formosa supernè;
Spectatum admissi risum teneatis, amici?
Credite, Pisones, ifti tabulae fore librum
Persimilem, cujus, velut aegri somnia, vanae

HORACE'S EPISTLE TO THE PISOS.

* * * * *

What if a Painter, in his art to shine,
A human head and horse's neck should join;
From various creatures put the limbs together,
Cover'd with plumes, from ev'ry bird a feather;
And in a filthy tail the figure drop,

A fish at bottom, a fair maid at top:
Viewing a picture of this strange condition,
Would you not laugh at such an exhibition?
Trust me, my Pisos, wild as this may seem,
The volume such, where, like a sick-man's dream,
Fingentur species: ut nec pes, nec caput uni
Reddatur formae. Pictoribus atque Poëtis
Quidlibet audendi semper fuit aequa potestas:
Scimus, et hanc veniam petimusque damusque *viciffim:
Sed non ut placidis coëant immitia, non ut
Serpentes avibus gementur, tigribus agni.

* * * * *

Incoeptis gravibus plerumque et magna professis
Purpureus latè qui splendeat unus et alter
Assuitur pannus; cùm lucus et ara Dianae,
Et properantis aquae per amoenos ambitus agros,
Aut flumen Rhenum, aut pluvius describitur arcus.
Sed nunc non erat his locus: et fortasse cupressum
Scis simulare: quid hoc, si fractis enatat exspes
Extravagant conceits throughout prevail,
Gross and fantastick, neither head nor tail.
"Poets and Painters ever were allow'd
Some daring flight above the vulgar croud."
True: we indulge them in that daring flight,

And challenge in our turn, an equal right:
But not the soft and savage to combine,
Serpents to doves, to tigers lambkins join.

Oft works of promise large, and high attempt,
Are piec'd and guarded, to escape contempt,
With here and there a remnant highly drest,
That glitters thro' the gloom of all the rest.
Then Dian's grove and altar are the theme,
Then thro' rich meadows flows the silver stream;
The River Rhine, perhaps, adorns the lines,
Or the gay Rainbow in description shines.

These we allow have each their several grace;
But each and several now are out of place.

A cypress you can draw; what then? you're hir'd,
And from your art a sea-piece is requir'd;
Navibus, aere dato qui pingitur amphora coepit
Institui: currente rotâ cur urceus exit?
Denique sit quidvis simplex duntaxat et unum.

* * * * *

Maxima pars vatium, (pater, et juvenes patre digni)
Decipimur specie recti. Brevis esse laboro,

Obscurus sio: sectantem laevia, nervi
Desiciunt animique: proessus grandia turget:
Serpit humi tutus nimum timidusque procellae.
Qui variare cupit rem prodigaliter unam,
Delphinum silvis appingit, fluctibus aprum.
In vitium dycit culpae fuga, si caret arte.

A shipwreck'd mariner, despairing, faint,
(The price paid down) you are ordain'd to paint.
Why dwindle to a cruet from a tun?
Simple be all you execute, and one!

Lov'd fire! lov'd sons, well worthy such a fire!
Most bards are dupes to beauties they admire.
Proud to be brief, for brevity must please,
I grow obscure; the follower of ease
Wants nerve and soul; the lover of sublime
Swells to bombast; while he who dreads that crime,
Too fearful of the whirlwind rising round,
A wretched reptile, creeps along the ground.
The bard, ambitious fancies who displays,
And tortures one poor thought a thousand ways,
Heaps prodigies on prodigies; in woods
Pictures the dolphin, and the boar in floods!
Thus ev'n the fear of faults to faults betrays,
Unless a master-hand conduct the lays.
Aemilium circa ludum faber imus et unguis
Exprimet, et molles imitabitur aere capillos,
Infelix operis summâ, quia ponere totum

Nesciet: hunc ego me, si quid componere curem,
Non magis esse velim, quàm pravo vivere naso,
Spectandum nigris oculis, nigroque capillo.

* * * * *

Sumite materiam vostris, qui scribitis, aequam
Viribus: et versate diu, quid ferre recusent
Quid valeant humeri. Cui lecta potenter erit res,
Nec facundia deferet hunc, nec lucidus ordo.

* * * * *

Ordinis haec virtus erit et venus, aut ego fallor,
Ut jam nunc dicat, jam nunc debentia dici
Pleraque differat, et praesens in tempus omittat.
An under workman, of th' Aemilian class,
Shall mould the nails, and trace the hair in brass,
Bungling at last; because his narrow soul
Wants room to comprehend *a perfect whole*.
To be this man, would I a work compose,
No more I'd wish, than for a horrid nose,
With hair as black as jet, and eyes as black as sloes.

* * * * *

Select, all ye who write, a subject fit,
A subject, not too mighty for your wit!
And ere you lay your shoulders to the wheel,
Weigh well their strength, and all their weakness feel!
He, who his subject happily can chuse,
Wins to his favour the benignant Muse;
The aid of eloquence he ne'er shall lack,
And order shall dispose and clear his track.

Order, I trust, may boast, nor boast in vain,
These Virtues and these Graces in her train.
What on the instant should be said, to say;
Things, best reserv'd at present, to delay;
Hoc amet, hoc spernat, promissi carminis auctor.

* * * * *

In verbis etiam tenuis cautusque ferendis,
Dixeris egregié, notum si callida verbum
Reddiderit junctura novum: si forté necesse est
Indiciis monstrare recentibus abdita rerum;
Fingere cinctutis non exaudita Cethegis

Continget: dabiturque licentia sumpta pudenter.
Et nova factaque nuper habebunt verba fidem, si
Graeco fonte cadant, parcé detorta. Quid autem?
Caecilio, Plautoque dabit Romanus, ademptum
Virgilio, Varioque? ego cur acquirere pauca
Guiding the bard, thro' his continu'd verse,
What to reject, and when; and what rehearse.

On the old stock of words our fathers knew,
Frugal and cautious of engrafting new,
Happy your art, if by a cunning phrase
To a new meaning a known word you raise:
If 'tis your lot to tell, at some chance time,
"Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme,"
Where you are driv'n perforce to many a word
Which the strait-lac'd Cethegi never heard,
Take, but with coyness take, the licence wanted,
And such a licence shall be freely granted:
New, or but recent, words shall have their course,
If drawn discreetly from the Graecian source.
Shall Rome, Caecilius, Plautus, fix *your* claim,
And not to Virgil, Varius, grant the same?
Or if myself should some new words attain,
Shall I be grudg'd the little wealth I gain?
Si possum, invidior; cùm lingua Catonis et Ennî
Sermonem patrium ditaverit, et nova rerum
Nomina protulerit? Licuit, semperque licebit
Signatum praesente notâ procudere nomen.
Ut silvae foliis pronos mutantur in annos;

Prima cadunt: ita verborum vetus interit aetas,
Et juvenum ritu florent modò nata vigentque.
Debemur mortì nos, nostraque; sive receptus
Terrâ Neptunus, classes Aquilonibus arcet,
Regis opus; sterilisve diu palus, aptaque remis,
Vicinas urbes alit, et grave sentit aratrum:
Seu cursum mutavit iniquum frugibus amnis,
Doctus iter melius: mortalia facta peribunt,
Tho' Cato, Ennius, in the days of yore,
Enrich'd our tongue with many thousands more,
And gave to objects names unknown before?
No! it ne'er was, ne'er shall be, deem'd a crime,
To stamp on words the coinage of the time.
As woods endure a constant change of leaves,
Our language too a change of words receives:
Year after year drop off the ancient race,
While young ones bud and flourish in their place.
Nor we, nor all we do, can death withstand;
Whether the Sea, imprison'd in the land,
A work imperial! takes a harbour's form,
Where navies ride secure, and mock the storm;
Whether the Marsh, within whose horrid shore
Barrenness dwelt, and boatmen plied the oar,
Now furrow'd by the plough, a laughing plain,
Feeds all the cities round with fertile grain;
Or if the River, by a prudent force,
The corn once flooding, learns a better course.
Nedum sermonum stet honos, et gratia vivax.
Multa renascentur, quae jam cecidère; cadentque

Quae nunc sunt in honore vocabula, si volet usus,
Quem penés arbitrium est, et jus, et norma loquendi.

Res gestae regumque ducumque et tristia bella,
Quo scribi possent numero, monstravit Homerus.

Versibus impariter junctis querimonia primúm,
Pòst etiam inclusa est voti sententia compos.
Quis tamen exiguos elegos emisit auctor,
Grammatici certant, et adhuc sub iudice lis est.

Archilochum proprio rabies armavit iambo.
Hunc socci cepêre pedem, grandesque cothurni,
Alternis aptum sermonibus, et populares
Vincentem strepitus, et natum rebus agendis.
The works of mortal man shall all decay;
And words are grac'd and honour'd but a day:
Many shall rise again, that now are dead;
Many shall fall, that now hold high the head:
Custom alone their rank and date can teach,
Custom, the sov'reign, law, and rule of speech.

For deeds of kings and chiefs, and battles fought,
What numbers are most fitting, Homer taught:

Couplets unequal were at first confin'd
To speak in broken verse the mourner's mind.
Prosperity at length, and free content,
In the same numbers gave their raptures vent;

But who first fram'd the Elegy's small song,
Grammarians squabble, and will squabble long.

Archilochus, 'gainst vice, a noble rage
Arm'd with his own Iambicks to engage:
With these the humble Sock, and Buskin proud
Shap'd dialogue; and still'd the noisy croud;
Musa dedit fidibus divos, puerosque deorum,
Et pugilem victorem, et equum certamine primum,
Et juvenum curas, et libera vina referre.

Descriptas servare vices, operumque colores,
Cur ego, si nequeo ignoroque, poëta salutor?
Cur nescire, pudens pravè, quàm discere malo?

Versibus exponi tragicis res comica non vult;
Indignatur item privatis ac prope socco
Dignis carminibus narrari coena Thyestae.
Singula quaeque locum teneant sortita decenter.
Embrac'd the measure, prov'd its ease and force,
And found it apt for business or discourse.

Gods, and the sons of Gods, in Odes to sing,
The Muse attunes her Lyre, and strikes the string;
Victorious Boxers, Racers, mark the line,
The cares of youthful love, and joys of wine.

The various outline of each work to fill,
If nature gives no power, and art no skill;

If, marking nicer shades, I miss my aim,
Why am I greeted with a Poet's name?
Or if, thro' ignorance, I can't discern,
Why, from false modesty, forbear to learn!

A comick incident loaths tragick strains:
Thy feast, Thyestes, lowly verse disdains;
Familiar diction scorns, as base and mean,
Touching too nearly on the comick scene.
Each stile allotted to its proper place,
Let each appear with its peculiar grace!
Interdum tamen et vocem comoedia tollit;
Iratuque Chremes tumido delitigat ore;
Et tragicus plerumque dolet sermone pedestri.
Telephus aut Peleus, cum pauper et exul uterque,
Projicit ampullas et sesquipedalia verba,
Si curat cor spectantis tetigisse querelâ.

Non satis est pulchra esse poëmata; dulcia sunt,
Et quocunque volent, animum auditoris agunto.
Ut ridentibus arident, ita flentibus adflent
Humani vultus; si vis me flere, dolendum est
Primum ipsi tibi: tunc tua me infortunia laedent.
Telephe, vel Peleu, male si mandata loqueris,
Aut dormitabo, aut ridebo: tristia moestum
Vultum verba decent; iratum, plena minarum;
Yet Comedy at times exalts her strain,
And angry Chremes storms in swelling vein:
The tragick hero, plung'd in deep distress,

Sinks with his fate, and makes his language less.
Peleus and Telephus, poor, banish'd! each
Drop their big six-foot words, and sounding speech;
Or else, what bosom in their grief takes part,
Which cracks the ear, but cannot touch the heart?

'Tis not enough that Plays are polish'd, chaste,
Or trickt in all the harlotry of taste,
They must have *passion* too; beyond controul
Transporting where they please the hearer's soul.
With those that smile, our face in smiles appears;
With those that weep, our cheeks are bath'd in tears:
To make *me* grieve, be first *your* anguish shown,
And I shall feel your sorrows like my own.
Peleus, and Telephus! unless your stile
Suit with your circumstance, I'll sleep, or smile.
Features of sorrow mournful words require;
Anger in menace speaks, and words of fire:
Ludentem, lasciva; severum, seria dictu.
Format enim Natura prius nos intus ad omnem
Fortunarum habitum; juvat, aut impellit ad iram,
Aut ad humum moerore gravi deducit, et angit:
Post effert animi motus interprete linguâ.
Si dicentis erunt fortunis absona dicta,
Romani tollent equitesque patresque chachinum.

Intererit multum, Divusne loquatur, an heros;
Maturusne senex, an adhuc florente juventâ
Fervidus; an matrona potens, an sedula nutrix;

Mercatorne vagus, cultorne virentis agelli;
Colchus, an Assyrius; Thebis nutritus, an Argis.
The playful prattle in a frolick vein,
And the severe affect a serious strain:
For Nature first, to every varying wind
Of changeful fortune, shapes the pliant mind;
Sooths it with pleasure, or to rage provokes,
Or brings it to the ground by sorrow's heavy strokes;
Then of the joys that charm'd, or woes that wrung,
Forces expression from the faithful tongue:
But if the actor's words belie his state,
And speak a language foreign to his fate,
Romans shall crack their sides, and all the town
Join, horse and foot, to laugh th' impostor down.

Much boots the speaker's character to mark:
God, heroe; grave old man, or hot young spark;
Matron, or busy nurse; who's us'd to roam
Trading abroad, or ploughs his field at home:
If Colchian, or Assyrian, fill the scene,
Theban, or Argian, note the shades between!
Aut famam sequere, aut sibi convenientia finge,
Scriptor. Honoratum si forte reponis Achillem,
Impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer,
Jura neget sibi nata, nihil non arroget armis.
Sit Medea ferox invictaque, flebilis Ino,
Perfidus Ixion, Io vaga, tristis Orestes.

Si quid inexpertum scenae committis, et audes

Personam formare novam; servetur ad inum
Qualis ab incepto processerit, et sibi constet.

Difficile est propriè communia dicere: tuque
Rectius Iliacum carmen deducis in actus,
Quàm si proferres ignota indictaque primus.
Publica materies privati juris erit, si
Non circa vilem patulumque moraberis orbem;
Follow the Voice of Fame; or if you feign,
The fabled plan consistently sustain!
If great Achilles you bring back to view,
Shew him of active spirit, wrathful too;
Eager, impetuous, brave, and high of soul,
Always for arms, and brooking no controul:
Fierce let Medea seem, in horrors clad;
Perfidious be Ixion, Ino sad;
Io a wand'rer, and Orestes mad!

Should you, advent'ring novelty, engage
Some bold Original to walk the Stage,
Preserve it well; continu'd as begun;
True to itself in ev'ry scene, and one!

Yet hard the task to touch on untried facts:
Safer the Iliad to reduce to acts,
Than be the first new regions to explore,
And dwell on themes unknown, untold before.

Quit but the vulgar, broad, and beaten round,

The publick field becomes your private ground:
Nec verbum verbo curabis reddere, fidus
Interpres; nec desilies imitator in arctum,
Unde pedem proferre pudor vetet aut operis lex.

Nec sic incipies, ut scriptor cyclicus olim:
fortunam priami cantabo, et nobile bellum.
Quid dignum tanto feret hic promissor hiatu?
Parturiunt montes: nascetur ridiculus mus.
Quanto rectius hic, qui nil molitur inepte!
dic mihi, musa, virum, captae post moenia trojae,
qui mores hominum multorum vidit et urbes.
Non fumum ex fulgore, sed ex fumo dare lucem
Cogitat, ut speciosa dehinc miracula promat,
Antiphaten, Scyllamque, et cum Cylope Charibdin.
Nor word for word too faithfully translate;
Nor leap at once into a narrow strait,
A copyist so close, that rule and line
Curb your free march, and all your steps confine!

Be not your opening fierce, in accents bold,
Like the rude ballad-monger's chaunt of old;
"The fall of Priam, the great Trojan King!
Of the right noble Trojan War, I sing!"
Where ends this Boaster, who, with voice of thunder,
Wakes Expectation, all agape with wonder?
The mountains labour! hush'd are all the spheres!
And, oh ridiculous! a mouse appears.
How much more modestly begins HIS song,

Who labours, or imagines, nothing wrong!
"Say, Muse, the Man, who, after Troy's disgrace,
In various cities mark'd the human race!"
Not flame to smoke he turns, but smoke to light,
Kindling from thence a stream of glories bright:
Antiphates, the Cyclops, raise the theme;
Scylla, Charibdis, fill the pleasing dream.
Nec reditum Diomedis ab interitu Meleagri,
Nec gemino bellum Trojanum orditur ab ovo:
Semper ad eventum festinat; et in medias res,
Non secus ac notas, auditorem rapit: et quae
Desperat tractata nitescere posse, relinquit:
Atque ita mentitur, sic veris falsa remiscet,
Primo ne medium, medio ne discrepet imum.

Tu, quid ego et populus mecum desideret, audi;
Si fautoris eges aulea manentis, et usque
Sessuri, donec cantor, Vos plaudite, dicat:
Aetatis cujusque notandi sunt tibi mores,
Mobilibusque decor naturis dandus et annis.
Reddere qui voces jam scit puer, et pede certo
Signat humum; gestit paribus colludere, et iram
Colligit ac ponit temerè, et mutatur in horas.
He goes not back to Meleager's death,
With Diomed's return to run you out of breath;
Nor from the Double Egg, the tale to mar,
Traces the story of the Trojan War:
Still hurrying to th' event, at once he brings
His hearer to the heart and soul of things;

And what won't bear the light, in shadow flings.
So well he feigns, so well contrives to blend
Fiction and Truth, that all his labours tend
True to one point, persu'd from end to end.

Hear now, what I expect, and all the town,
If you would wish applause your play to crown,
And patient sitters, 'till the cloth goes down!

_Man's several ages _with attention view,
His flying years, and changing nature too.

_The Boy _who now his words can freely sound,
And with a steadier footstep prints the ground,
Places in playfellows his chief delight,
Quarrels, shakes hands, and cares not wrong or right:
Sway'd by each fav'rite bauble's short-liv'd pow'r,
In smiles, in tears, all humours ev'ry hour.
Imberbus juvenis, tandem custode remoto,
Gaudet equis canibusque et aprici gramine campi;
Cereus in vitium flecti, monitoribus asper,
Utilium tardus provisor, prodigus aeris,
Sublimis, cupidusque, et amata relinquere pernix.

Conversis studiis, aetas animusque virilis
Quaerit opes et amicitias, infervit honori;
Conmississe cavet quòd mox mutare laboret.

Multa senem circumveniunt incommoda; vel quod

Quaerit, et inventis miser abstinet, ac timet uti;
Vel quòd res omnes timidè gelidèque ministrat,
Dilator, spe lentus, iners, pavidusque futuri;
The beardless Youth, at length from tutor free,
Loves horses, hounds, the field, and liberty:
Pliant as wax, to vice his easy soul,
Marble to wholesome counsel and controul;
Improvident of good, of wealth profuse;
High; fond, yet fickle; generous, yet loose.

To graver studies, new pursuits inclin'd,
Manhood, with growing years, brings change of mind:
Seeks riches, friends; with thirst of honour glows;
And all the meanness of ambition knows;
Prudent, and wary, on each deed intent,
Fearful to act, and afterwards repent.

Evil in various shapes _Old Age _surrounds;
Riches his aim, in riches he abounds;
Yet what he fear'd to gain, he dreads to lose;
And what he sought as useful, dares not use.
Timid and cold in all he undertakes,
His hand from doubt, as well as weakness, shakes;
Hope makes him tedious, fond of dull delay;
Dup'd by to-morrow, tho' he dies to-day;
Difficilis, querulus, laudator temporis acti
Se puero, censor, castigatorque minorum.

Multa ferunt anni venientes commoda secum,

Multa recedentes adimunt: ne forte seniles
Mandentur juveni partes, pueroque viriles.
Semper in adjunctis aevoque morabimur aptis.

Aut agitur res In scenis, aut acta refertur:
Segnius irritant animos demissa per aurem,
Quam quae sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus, et quae
Ipse sibi tradit spectator: non tamen intus
Digna geri promes in scenam: multaue tolles
Ex oculis, quae mox narret facundia praesens:
Ill-humour'd, querulous; yet loud in praise
Of all the mighty deeds of former days;
When *he* was young, good heavens, what glorious times!
Unlike the present age, that teems with crimes!

Thus years advancing many comforts bring,
And, flying, bear off many on their wing:
Confound not youth with age, nor age with youth,
But mark their several characters with truth!

Events are on the stage in act display'd,
Or by narration, if unseen, convey'd.
Cold is the tale distilling thro' the ear,
Filling the soul with less dismay and fear,
Than where spectators view, like standers-by,
The deed submitted to the faithful eye.
Yet force not on the stage, to wound the sight,
Asks that should pass within, and shun the light!
Many there are the eye should ne'er behold,

But touching Eloquence in time unfold:
Ne pueros coram populo Medea trucidet;
Aut humana palam coquat exta nefarius Atreus;
Aut in avem Procne vertatur, Cadmus in anguem.
Quodcunque ostendis mihi sic, incredulus odi.

* * * * *

Neve minor, neu sit quinto productior actu
Fabula, quae posci vult, et spectata reponi
Nec Deus intersit, nisi dignus vindice nodus
Inciderit: nec quarta loqui persona laboret.

* * * * *

Actoris partes Chorus, officiumque virile
Defendat: neu quid medios intercinat actus,
Quod non proposito conducat et haereat apte.
Ille bonis faveatque, et concilietur amicis,
Et regat iratos, et amet peccare timentes:
Who on Medea's parricide can look?
View horrid Atreus human garbage cook?
If a bird's feathers I see Progne take,
If I see Cadmus slide into a snake,

My faith revolts; and I condemn outright
The fool that shews me such a silly sight.

Let not your play have fewer *acts* than *five*,
Nor *more*, if you would wish it run and thrive!

Draw down no God, unworthily betray'd,
Unless some great occasion ask his aid!

Let no *fourth person*, labouring for a speech,
Make in the dialogue a needless breach!

An actor's part the Chorus should sustain,
Gentle in all its office, and humane;
Chaunting no Odes between the acts, that seem
Unapt, or foreign to the general theme.
Let it to Virtue prove a guide and friend,
Curb tyrants, and the humble good defend!
Ille dapes laudet mensae brevis, ille salubrem
Justitiam, legesque, et apertis otia portis:
Ille tegat commisia, Deosque precetur et oret,
Ut redeat miseris, abeat fortuna superbis.

Tibia non, ut nunc, orichalco vincta, tubaeque
aemula; sed tenuis, simplexque foramine paucō,
Aspirare et adesse choris erat utilis, atque
Nondum spissa nimis complere sedilia flatu:
Quo fanè populus numerabilis, utpote parvus
Et frugi castusque verecundusque coibat.

Postquam coepit agros extendere victor, et urbem
Laxior amplecti murus, vinoque diurno
Placari Genius sestis impune diebus,

Loud let it praise the joys that Temperance waits;
Of Justice sing, the real health of States;
The Laws; and Peace, secure with open gates!
Faithful and secret, let it heav'n invoke
To turn from the unhappy fortune's stroke,
And all its vengeance on the proud provoke!

The Pipe of old, as yet with brass unbound,
Nor rivalling, as now, the Trumpet's sound,
But slender, simple, and its stops but few,
Breath'd to the Chorus; and was useful too:
For feats extended, and extending still,
Requir'd not pow'rful blasts their space to fill;
When the thin audience, pious, frugal, chaste,
With modest mirth indulg'd their sober taste.
But soon as the proud Victor spurns all bounds,
And growing Rome a wider wall surrounds;
When noontide cups, and the diurnal bowl,
Licence on holidays a flow of soul;
Accessit numerisque modisque licentia major.
Indoctus quid enim saperet liberque laborum,
Rusticus urbano confusus, turpis honesto?
Sic priscae motumque et luxuriam addidit arti
Tibicen, traxitque vagus per pulpita vestem:
Sic etiam fidibus voces crevere feveris,

Et tulit eloquium insolitum facundia praeceps;
Utiliumque sagax rerum, et divina futuri,
Sortilegis non discrepuit sententia Delphis.

* * * * *

Carmine qui tragico vilem certavit ob hircum,
Mox etiam agrestes Satyros nudavit, et asper
Incolumi gravitate jocum tentavit: èd quod
A richer stream of melody is known,
Numbers more copious, and a fuller tone.

——For what, alas! could the unpractis'd ear
Of rusticks, revelling o'er country cheer,
A motley groupe! high, low; and froth, and scum;
Distinguish but shrill squeak, and dronish hum?—
The Piper, grown luxuriant in his art,
With dance and flowing vest embellishes his part!
Now too, its pow'rs increas'd, *the Lyre severe*
With richer numbers smites the list'ning ear:
Sudden bursts forth a flood of rapid song,
Rolling a tide of eloquence along:
Useful, prophetic, wise, the strain divine
Breathes all the spirit of the Delphick shrine.

He who the prize, a filthy goat, to gain,

At first contended in the tragick strain,
Soon too—tho' rude, the graver mood unbroke,—
Stript the rough satyrs, and essay'd a joke:
Illecebris erat et gratâ novitate morandus
Spectator functusque sacris, et potus, et exlex.
Verum ita risores, ita commendare dicaces
Conveniet Satyros, ita vertere seria ludo;
Ne quicumque Deus, quicumque adhibebi tur heros [sic]
Regali conspectus in auro nuper et ostro,
Migret in obscuras humili sermone tabernas
Aut, dum vitat humum, nubes et inania captet [sic]
Effutire leves indigna tragoedia versus,
Ut festis matrona moveri jussa diebus,
Intererit Satyris paulum pudibunda protervis.
Non ego inornata et dominantia nomina solum
Verbaque, Pisones, Satyrorum scriptor amabo
Nec sic enitar tragico differre colori,
For holiday-spectators, flush'd, and wild,
With new conceits, and mummeries, were beguil'd.
Yet should the Satyrs so chastise their mirth,
Temp'ring the jest that gives their sallies birth;
Changing from grave to gay, so keep the mean,
That God or Heroe of the lofty scene,
In royal gold and purple seen but late,
May ne'er in cots obscure debase his state,
Lost in low language; nor in too much care
To shun the ground, grasp clouds, and empty air.
With an indignant pride, and coy disdain,
Stern Tragedy rejects too light a vein:

Like a grave Matron, destin'd to advance
On solemn festivals to join the dance,
Mixt with the shaggy tribe of Satyrs rude,
She'll hold a sober mien, and act the prude.
Let me not, Pisos, in the Sylvan scene,
Use abject terms alone, and phrases mean;
Nor of high Tragick colouring afraid,
Neglect too much the difference of shade!
Ut nihil intersit Davusne loquatur et audax
Pythias emuncto lucrata Simone talentum,
An custos famulusque Dei Silenus alumni.

Ex noto fictum carmen sequar: ut sibi quivis
Speret idem; sudet multum, frustra que laboret
Ausus idem: tantum series junctura que pollet:
Tantum de medio sumtis accedit honoris.

Silvis deducti caveant, me iudice, Fauni,
Ne velut innati triviis, ac pene forenses,
Aut nimium teneris juvenentur versibus umquam,
Aut immunda crepent ignominiosa que dicta.
Offenduntur enim, quibus est equus, et pater, et res;
Nec, si quid fricti ciceris probat et nucis emtor,
Aequis accipiunt animis, donantve coronâ.
Davus may jest, pert Pythias may beguile
Simo of cash, in a familiar style;
The same low strain Silenus would disgrace,
Servant and guardian of the Godlike race.

Let me on subjects known my verse so frame,
So follow it, that each may hope the same;
Daring the same, and toiling to prevail,
May vainly toil, and only dare to fail!
Such virtues order and connection bring,
From common arguments such honours spring.

The woodland Fauns their origin should heed,
Take no town stamp, nor seem the city breed:
Nor let them, aping young gallants, repeat
Verses that run upon too tender feet;
Nor fall into a low, indecent stile,
Breaking dull jests to make the vulgar smile!
For higher ranks such ribaldry despise,
Condemn the Poet, and withhold the prize.
Syllaba longa brevi subjecta, vocatur Iambus,
Pes citus: unde etiam Trimetris accrescere jussit
Nomen Iambeis, cum senos redderet ictus
Primus ad extremum similis sibi; non ita pridem,
Tardior ut paulo graviorque veniret ad aures,
Spondeos stabiles in jura paterna recepit
Commodus et patiens: non ut de sede secundâ
Cederet, aut quartâ socialiter. Hic et in Accî
Nobilibus Trimetris apparet rarus, et Ennî.
In scenam missus cum magno pondere versus,
Aut operae celeris nimium cura que carentis,
Aut ignoratae premit artis crimine turpi.

Non quivis videt immodulata poëmata judex:

Et data Romanis venia est indigna poetis.
To a short Syllable a long subjoin'd
Forms an Iambick foot; so light a kind,
That when six pure Iambicks roll'd along,
So nimbly mov'd, so trippingly the song,
The feet to half their number lost their claim,
And *Trimeter Iambicks* was their name.
Hence, that the measure might more grave appear,
And with a slower march approach the ear,
From the fourth foot, and second, not displac'd,
The steady spondee kindly it embrac'd;
Then in firm union socially unites,
Admitting the ally to equal rights.
Accius, and Ennius lines, thus duly wrought,
In their bold Trimeters but rarely sought:
Yet scenes o'erloaded with a verse of lead,
A mass of heavy numbers on their head,
Speak careless haste, neglect in ev'ry part.
Or shameful ignorance of the Poet's art.

"Not ev'ry Critick spies a faulty strain,
And pardon Roman Poets should disdain."
Idcircone vager, scribamque licenter? ut omnes
Visuros peccata putem mea; tutus et intra
Spem veniae cautus? vitavi denique culpam,
Non laudem merui.

Vos exemplaria Graeca
Nocturnâ versate manu, versate diurnâ.

At vestri proavi Plautinos et numeros, et
Laudavere sales; nimium patienter utrumque
(Ne dicam stultè) mirati: si modo ego et vos
Scimus inurbanum lepido seponere dicto,
Legitimumque sonum digitis callemus et aure.
Ignotum tragicae genus invenisse Camenae
Dicitur, et plaustris vexisse poëmata Thespis
Quae canerent agerentque, peruncti faecibus ora.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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