

HORACE'S SATIRES

I

1

Maecenas, why is nobody content,
Whether his lot was brought by accident
Or reason, though for those who occupy
Themselves with other work one's praise is high?
The aged soldier, broken by excess
Of labour, says, "How full of happiness
The merchants are." The merchant, tossed about
By storms at sea, contrariwise will shout:
"Soldiering is the best. I'll tell you why:
Once battle's joined, a man will swiftly die 10
Or else enjoy a splendid victory."
A man who's trained in legal oratory
Will praise a farmer when upon his door
A client raps at cockcrow. Furthermore,
A man who's bound by bail and dragged to Rome
Perforce and has to leave his country home
Will claim that Romans are the happiest.
Such claims (and there are many more) would test
Loquacious Fabius. Lest I delay
You further, hear what I have got to say. 20
Maybe a god will say, "I will confer
Your wish upon you: you, who lately were
A soldier, will a merchant be. I vow
That you who were a lawyer will be now

A husbandman. So be it. Wait a bit,
Why do you just stand there?" They don't want it,
Although they could be happy. Why? Maybe
Jove puffs his cheeks in wrath deservedly
And swears that in the future he won't lend
A lenient ear to all the prayers they send. 30
Moreover, just in case I should survey
This subject in a less than serious way -
Yet why should tellers of the truth not be
Merry? – good-natured teachers formerly
Would give their pupils cakes to help them learn
Their ten-times table. But let us now turn
To serious things, ignoring raillery:
The man who ploughs the stubborn earth and he
Who keeps an inn and cheats his clientele,
The soldier and the sailor who pell-mell 40
Sails every sea, all labour, so they say,
That with substantial nest-eggs one sweet day
They'll reach secure old age. Likewise we see
The wee ant with colossal industry
Carrying in its mouth the maximum
That it can bear and adding to the sum
Upon the heap it's made with careful eye
Upon the future. But when by and by
Aquarius brings gloom to the changing year,
It wisely chooses not to scuttle here 50
And there but takes what's needed from his store,
While nothing can drive you from wanting more –
Hot summer, winter, fire, sword or sea:

You'll stop at nothing until you can be
The richest man on earth. Why have you found
It pleasurable to hide beneath the ground
Great chunks of gold and silver for your use?
Well, if you lessened them, they would reduce
To one brass farthing. But if that's not so,
What's good about a garnered hoard? Although 60
A hundred thousand bushelsful of grain
You've threshed, your belly yet cannot contain
More than can mine: likewise, if you were bound
To bear a basketful of bread around
Your fellow-slaves, you'd not get more than he
Who carried nothing. Will you tell to me
What is the difference to a farmer who
Within the bounds of nature will plough through
A hundred acres or p'raps fifty more?
"It's nice, though, to possess an ample store." 70
You let us from our meager store extract
The same amount and yet it is a fact
You praise your granaries more lavishly
Than our cornbaskets. Why? It seems to me
That if your need was merely to possess
An urn or jug of water, you'd profess,
"I'd rather take away the same amount
From some great river than from this small fount."
Well, rapid Aufidus sweeps clean away,
Together with its bank, all those who say 80
Abundance tops what's ethical. But he
Who only wants a fair sufficiency

Won't drink of muddy water or expire
Beneath the waves. Many, by false desire
Misled, will say, "Nothing can satisfy
Because we are appreciated by
What we possess." To people of that kind
What can be said? If they are so inclined,
Bid them be glum. There was a miserly
And wealthy man in Athens formerly, 90
They say, who scorned what people uttered thus:
"Though I'm derided by the populus,
I praise myself at home when all my money
I contemplate." Why do you find it funny
That Tantalus attempts with thirsty lips
To snatch the river's water as it slips
Away from him. But if you change the name
The tale becomes your own, though it's the same.
With moneybags piled on each side you sleep
And just as if they're sacred you must keep 100
From touching them or gaze at them as though
They're paintings to beguile you. Do you know
The value of your cash and how it may
Be useful to you? With it you can pay
For bread, herbs, wine and such necessities
As, when denied, would cause you much unease.
Why keep a watch both night and day, half-dead
With fear of fires or the wicked tread
Of burglars or your slaves in case they might
Plunder your property and then take flight? 110
I'd rather be, with blessings such as these,

The poorest of the poor. But if disease –
A cold or something else – should banish you
To your sick-bed, do you have someone who
Will sit by you, prepare your drugs and see
That your physician finds a remedy
To get you on your feet and then restore
You to your loving family once more?
Your wife won't want you well, nor will your son;
Your neighbours hate you, each and every one, 120
Acquaintances, boys, girls. It's no surprise,
Surely, since there is not a thing you prize
Above resources, since no-one loves you,
For their affection hardly is their due,
But if you wish with little ease to retain
Your friends, you're lost, as if a man can train
An ass to accept the rein and learn to run
In the arena. Finally, have done
With your complaints. When your assets increase,
Fear your privation less and start to cease 130
Your labour, having gained the things that you
Yearned for, and what Umidius did – don't do!
The tale is short: he was so rich that he
Measured his money and so miserly
He dressed no better than a slave would dress;
And even near the end his fearfulness
Made him oppressed by future penury.
His freedwoman (like the brave progeny
Of Tyndareus) divided him in two
With an axe. Therefore what would you have me do? 140

Should I live like a Naevius or be
A Nomentanus? You're so contrary!
I tell you not to be penurious,
Yet I don't wish to call you lecherous.
There is a contrast between Tanais
And old Vitellius' son-in-law: and this
Is noted everywhere, and boundaries
Exist, and upon either side of these
Virtue may not be seen. The theme that I
Took up I will resume: I wonder why 150
No-one, just like the miser, doesn't praise
Himself but rather loves the diverse ways
Of other folk; because the man who lives
Next door has got a nanny goat that gives
More milk, he pines, and he will not compare
Himself to other paupers but will wear
Himself quite out in his fierce rivalry.
A richer man is always bound to be
Ahead, as when the steeds begin to race,
Although the charioteer in vain gives chase 160
To those ahead, despising those behind.
And so it rarely happens that you'll find
A man who says he's found true happiness
In life and on his death-bed will confess
That he has been content, just like a guest
Who's satisfied. Enough of this! So, lest
You think purblind Crispinus' books I've had
My hands on, not one more word will I add.

II

Girl-flautists, quacks, mimes, blackguards, every bun,
All mourn the bard Tigellius, now quite dumb,
Since he was bountiful to them. Yet he,
Fearing the label of profligacy,
Won't help a needy friend to drive away
The cold and piercing hunger. Should you say,
"Why is it that your family's famed estate
In tasteless gluttony you dissipate,
With money that you've borrowed purchasing
Fine dainties?" he will say, in answering, 10
"I don't want to be thought penurious."
Some praise him, some blame him. Fufidius
Fears to be thought a spendthrift and roué,
Though rich in land and making others pay
Great interest; from the principal he takes
Sixty percent and so the more he rakes
From them, the more he harries them; and he
Hunts down the names of those who recently
Have donned the adult toga, suffering
Their fathers' harshness. Hearing such a thing, 20
Who does not say "Good Lord! But surely he
Lavishes on himself proportionately
What he acquires." Well, it's beyond belief
That he would bring upon himself such grief.
Indeed the father in that Terence play
Who, after his own son had run away,
Lived wretchedly, suffered less misery
Than did this man. Where is this leading me,

You ask? Well, fools try not to be impious
But err another way. For Maltinus 30
Walks with his garments trailing on the ground,
While fatuous Rufillus can be found
Smelling of perfume, while Gorgonius
Smells like a goat. There is no mean for us:
Some will not touch a likely date unless
She primly hides her feet beneath her dress,
Others unless a stinking house of shame
Is where she stands. From one of these there came
A well-known spark: "Continue on your way
Of virtue," good Cato was heard to say, 40
"For, once defiled by lust's disgusting juice,
Young men should do that rather than seduce
The wives of others." Cupiennius
Said, "I would not like praise for acting thus,"
For he admired the virtuous snatch. You who
Despise all rakes, it's profitable that you
Hear how they are beleaguered everywhere,
How pleasure, that for them is very rare,
Is tainted with much pain, and perils, too,
In great and harsh abundance. One man threw 50
Himself from off his roof, another whipped
Himself to death, another, fleeing, tripped
And fell among a gang of thieves. A fee
Was paid by yet another so that he
Could dodge a beating. Drudges took a piss
Upon another. Can you credit this? –
One had his bollocks butchered. "Justified!"

Said everyone, although Galba denied
That this was so. Goods that are second-hand
Are less precarious: I mean that band 60

A freedwoman – with them Sullustius
Evinces quite as mad a lustfulness
As that of libertines. But if he would
Decide to be magnanimous and good
As far as reason and his property
Would show the way, he'd give a sufficiency
And save himself from ruin and disgrace.
But no, he hugs himself in fond embrace
With love and praise because he's always said,
"I never touch a woman who is wed." 70

Origo's beau, Marsaeus, gave away
His family's farm to an actress, though he'd say,
"Men's wives I never meddle with," although
He did with actresses and whores, and so
Your reputation earns more injury
Than your estate. Is it abundantly
Sufficient to avoid the man and still
Not what he does, a universal ill?
To lose your reputation and to blow
Your father's wealth are equal evils. So 80
What is the difference if you're impious
With wives or prostitutes? Once, Villius,
The son-in-law of Sulla, was deceived
Just by the name of 'Fausta' and received
An ample (more than ample!) punishment
For he was punched and stabbed when he'd been sent

Outside while Longareus was within
With her. If he on seeing such great sin,
Would speak for his own prick and ask, "What might
You want? With my libido at its height, 90
Was I ever resolved to get to screw
A lass with robes of quality, one who
Was born of a great consul?" What would he
Reply to that? "Why, she's the progeny
Of an illustrious man. "But there are things
That are much better than rich nature brings
To mind if only you would wish to use
Them with integrity and not confuse
What you should shun and what you should pursue.
Does it, then, make no difference to you 100
Whether your sinfulness or destiny
Causes you grief? Therefore, that you'll not be
Repentant, leave off chasing wives – there's more
Distress from that than happiness in store.
That dame, Cerinthus, whom you chase, despite
Her weight of emeralds and snowy-white
Gems has no straighter leg or softer thigh
Than yours: indeed a better you could buy
From a whore, who anyway has merchandise
Unvarnished, nor will she try to disguise 110
Her wares, not boasting of the charms that she
May have but showing them quite openly,
While screening her defects. Thus wealthy men,
When buying horses, check them over when
They're covered, so that, as is oft the case,

The naïve buyer by a handsome face
Hiding a soft hoof is misled, while he
A fair rump, small head and high neck can see.
They do this well: don't be a Lynceus when
You judge a maid's best parts, but then again 120
Be like the blind Hypsaea when you view
What's not so good. "Oh, what a leg!" say you.
"What arms!" Her long nose you'll refuse to see,
Her skinny ass, short waist, the fact that she
Has splayed feet. You'll see not one single thing
In matrons but their faces. Everything
But them, lest they're called Catia, are hid
By their long dresses. If what men forbid
You seek (they make you mad, for they are bound
By ramparts) and so many things are found 130
That hinder you – sedans, guards, those who curl
Your hair and parasites, togas that furl
About a woman's frame down to her feet
And many other things that can defeat
Your chance of just one look; a maiden, though,
Will be no obstacle – her form will show
In Coan silk as though she were quite nude
As she displays her perfect pulchritude
With her fine legs and feet; you may peruse
Her beauty perfectly. Or would you choose 140
To be outwitted and, just when you pay,
Her wares unseen, have your cash whipped away?
As in deep snow a hunter tracks a hare
But will not touch it when it's placed right there

Before him, from adulterers you'll hear
"My love's like that: ignoring what is near,
It chases what flees from it." Through these verses
Is it your hope that all of your reverses
Will vanish from your heart? But shouldn't we
Decide on nature's boundaries, what she 150
Can tolerate or do without and break
Apart the void and dense? When you must slake
Your throat, do you want golden cups to drink from?
When you are faint with hunger, do you shrink from
All food but turbot and peacock? And why,
When you've a hard-on and there stands nearby
A little slave-boy or a passing wench
On whom your strong libido you may quench,
Would you prefer from lustfulness to burst?
So would not I, for I possess a thirst 160
For easy love-affairs. The lass who'll say
"Hold on", "More cash", "If my husband's away"
Is for the priests. Philodemus says that he
Prefers one who is cheap and speedily
Appears when called upon. Let her be fair
And poised and nice enough as not to care
To be more fair and taller. When she slips
Her legs, when we're alone, between my hips,
She's Ilia, Egeria, anything
I like; and I am never worrying, 170
While we are fornicating, that her spouse
Has left his farm and will be at your house
Forthwith, breaking the door down, while his hound

Is barking and the house echoes around,
And she is pale and leaps away: her maid
Cries out in abject misery, afraid
Of broken bones, she for her dowry, I
For my own self. Away, then, I must fly
Barefoot, my tunic loose, in deadly fear
For all my cash, my name, my naked rear. 180
To be caught out would make one nauseous:
I'll prove this even before Judge Fabius.

III

A common fault in singers is that they,
When asked to sing, refuse, yet one can't stay
Their mouths when they're *not* asked. This tendency
Tigellius possessed. Caesar, though he
Could have insisted, if he had bequested
A song (for his entreaty could have rested
On friendship with him and his father), would
Have found that his request had done no good. 10
But if he were disposed to sing, then he
Would go through 'lo Bacche' endlessly
From soup to nuts, now singing high, now low.
Always erratic, he could act as though
He fled an enemy or sometimes bore
A sacrifice to Juno: often ten score
Of slaves had he, but often merely ten.
He'd talk of kings and potentates but then,
From mighty topics, he'd say, "All I need

Is one three-legged table from which to feed, 20
A clean salt-cellar and, to keep away
The cold, a gown, though scratchy." Should you, say,
Give him ten grand, this moderate man, content
With little, would be left with not one cent
In just five days. He'll watch all night, then snore
All through the day; there's nothing that is more
Inconstant. Now someone may say to me,
"What about you? Are you completely free
From faults?" "I have some different ones," I'd say,
"Though lesser, p'raps." When Novius was away, 30
Manius found fault with him. Another man
Said, "Hah! What of yourself? You think you can
Badmouth one who's not here?" In his reply
Manius said, "Oh, myself I pardon." Why,
Such self-love's base and foolish and should be
Denounced when your own faults you oversee
With bleary eyes, why do you scrutinize
Those of your comrades with quite different eyes,
Those of an eagle or a snake? But they
Should look into your own. This man is, say, 40
A bit hot-headed, not fit to be near
Sharp-witted folk, while this man gets a sneer
Because his toga hangs down awkwardly
And he's shod with ill-fitting boots: yet he
Is good, none more so, yet your friend. Concealed
Within that rustic frame, to be revealed,
Lies great intelligence. Accordingly
Wake up and find out if iniquity

Is sewn in you by nature. For the fern,
Which gives no pleasure but to see it burn, 50
Storms through neglected fields. So let's conclude
Our detour: women's failings can elude
Their beaux and even please them (Agnus
Delighted her Balbinus). I would, then,
That we'd erred thus in friendship and that we
Had seen those failings by morality
Given a nicer name. Just as his son
A father should not castigate, no-one
Should castigate a friend. A father's lad
Who squints he calls a pretty, leering cad, 60
And he whose son's a little guttersnipe
(Once Sisyphus was known as such type)
Calls him a little sprout. A boy who walks
Upon distorted legs a father talks
Of as Varus, a cripple of some fame,
While a club-footed lad will earn the name
Of Scaurus from his doting dad, for he
Was famous too. Let him who tends to be
A little mean be 'frugal'. Then again
One who's improper and a little vain 70
Should be called entertaining; while this man
Is rather rude and fresh, he surely can
Be called sincere and valiant. Let one be
Called spirited who's rather peppery.
This unites friends. But we are keen to turn
Virtues around and foul a spotless urn.
If someone lives among us humble and good,

We call him stupid and as thick as wood.
One man avoids all traps, eager to stay
Far from all villains: but what do we say 80
Of him? Although we are surrounded by
These villains and the tally's very high
Of envy and false charges, all the same
We call this prudent man another name –
Subtle, and even false. Is there, maybe,
One less reserved than most (as frequently
I've been with you, Maecenas, hindering
A man who's reading or just pondering
With nonsense)? "He lacks commonsense," say we.
How rashly we ordain a harsh decree 90
Upon ourselves! Non-one is faultless: best
Of all of us is he who has been blest
With just the smallest faults. A man whom I
Consider a dear friend, if he should try
My faults against my good points, should he be
Keen still to be my friend, should reckon me
By the majority (as long as they
Are on the latter scale), and thus they may
Be similarly judged. You'd not upset
A friend with the tumours on your face? Then let 100
Him see you wink at his as well. To share
A pardon 'twixt you both is only fair.
Inasmuch as vices in humanity
Mayn't be excised, can't rationality
Not use its weights and scales to penalize
Each miscreant? If a man crucifies

A slave who, told to take away a dish,
Licks at the warm sauce and half-eaten fish,
Would then be called by level-headed men
Madder than Labeo. More crazy, then, 110
And heinous is your crime: your friend's misdeed
Is minuscule, and if you won't concede
To pardon him, people should estimate
You as unpleasant. Bitterly you hate
The man and try to fall from him, as you
Would from that shark Druso (if he can't screw
Capital or interest from you when the First,
That wretched First, comes round, then you are cursed,
Fated to hear the wretched tales that he
Recited with neck outstretched). A man may pee 120
Upon my bed while in his cups or toss
A jar carved by Evander: will this loss
Or else the fact that he took from my plate
Before I did, because he could not wait,
A chicken make him less a friend to me?
If he offends me with some thievery,
Betrays a confidence of mine or break
His word, what should I do? Those men who take
All faults as almost equal feel distress
When it comes to the truth, since righteousness,¹³⁰
Men's understanding and expediency,
Almost the mother of right and equity,
Rebel. When creatures from the new-formed land
First crawled, they were a mute and filthy band,
Fighting with tooth and nail for everything

They'd need, like food and caves, then battling
With clubs and, later, arms they'd fabricated,
Until both words and names they'd formulated
For cries and feelings, ceased hostilities
And fortified their towns and made decrees 140
To end all brigandage and thievery
And all those who embraced adultery.

Before Helen existed, many a whore
There was, a foul and dreadful cause of war,
But strangely they were slain, as by the head
Of some bull-herd another who has fed
On wanton love is killed. If you should read
The chronicles of the world, you must concede
That statutes are established due to fright
Of what's unjust. Discerning wrong from right 150
Is beyond Nature, although she knows well
What's good and what is not, and she can tell
What to avoid and what to seek, nor can
Intelligence prevail on any man
That cutting tender stalks of cabbage in
A neighbour's garden is as great a sin
As stealing sacred texts by night. So may
There be a rule that makes each sinner pay
A fitting penalty, for otherwise

You with a cat-o'-nine-tails might chastise 160
One who deserves a gentler whipping. I
Have no compunction that you might apply
The rod to one who's earned a penalty
Much greater, when you say that piracy

And pilfering are the same thing, threatening
To deal with sins both great and piffling
With the same hook, if mankind had given you
Sway over things like that. If a man who
Is rich, a good shoemaker and unique
In excellent good looks, why do you seek 170
What you already have? "You do not see
Chrysippus' meaning in the homily",
The Stoics say. "He who can never claim
To have made himself one shoe is all the same
A wise shoemaker." Huh? "Hermogenes
Is silent: nonetheless the man can please
By singing well. Subtle Alfenus cast
Away the instruments of his trade, closed fast
His shop and was a barber still. Thus he
Who's wise is a king in any capacity." 180
If bad lads pluck you by the beard, yet you
Don't cudgel them, you're jostled by a crew
Of folk, while you stand there and yell and snort,
O mighty king of kings. To cut things short,
While you go to the baths with not one man
Attending to you (well, no other than
That dolt Crispinus), although you may be
A king, my loving friends will pardon me,
Fool that I am, for anything I've done
To hurt them, while I'll pardon every one 190
Of them: I'll be, though I'm a private man,
Happier than a king like you are can.

IV

The poets Cratinus, Aristophanes
And Eupolis, who wrote the comedies
Of old, and others too, if anyone
Deserved to be labelled a son-of-a-gun,
Thief, lecher, cut-throat, well, just infamous,
Would roundly brand them all. Lucilius
Followed them, though the metre he'd replace,
A man of wit, acute, but lacking grace
In composition: for he was unsound
In this, for many times he would be found 10
Spouting two hundred lines effortlessly
In epic style in just one hour, and he
Would flow like mud, and you would always pray
That some of them at least he'd take away.
Wordy, he hated writing – writing well,
I mean – the lines he spouted. I won't dwell
Upon the *quantity*. He offers me
Long odds. "Here, take my tablets now," says he.
"The time, the lace, the judges specify,
Then let us find out if it's you or I 20
Who writes the most." I thank the gods who've made
Me diffident, a man who's apt to fade
Into the background, one whose words are rare
And few. So go on, imitate the air
That's blown through leather bellows. Constantly
Puffing and blowing until finally
The iron is by the fire liquefied.

Fannius, his books and portraits now inside
The Palatine, is happy, though no word
Of mine is read, for I fear to be heard 30
Spouting in public, since some people hate
Such poetry, for there are those who rate
Censure for it. Alright, select someone
Out of the mob: he is fixated on
Pure greed or gross ambition. Some are mad
For married women, some prefer a lad:
This man's bewitched by silver; Albius
Goggles at brass, for which he's covetous;
One trades from dawn to dusk; one's swept headlong
Through dangers, like dust in a swirling throng; 40
Another fears a loss or hopes to gain
Yet more: they all fear verses and disdain
All poets. "This one's horns are wrapped in hay, "
Someone will cry out, "so keep well away.
To amuse himself, there is no friend he'll spare;
His scribblings he'll make sure that he will share
With boys and crones leaving the bakery
Or well." Some few words to the contrary,
However, hear me speak. First, I omit
Myself from the ranks of poets, because it 50
Is not enough to tag a verse or write
What looks like conversation, as I might,
To earn the name of poet, although he
Who's witty with a touch of sanctity
Within his soul and has the gift of song,
Be surely be by you reckoned among

The ranks of poets. Some ask, "Is a comedy
A poem?" for there's no force or energy
In either style or matter. It's pure prose
Save in some measures. "But a father throws 60
A fit because his prodigal son boycotts
A massive dowry since he has the hots
For a whore and wanders round in the daylight
And carries torches, scandalously tight."
But would Pomponius hear less severe
Reproof from his father, if that man were here,
Still living on the earth? So it can't be
Enough to write just stylish poetry,
For, when you break it down, then anyone
Could, like the character, rave at his son. 70
If from these lines of mine and from them, too,
Composed once by Lucilius, if you
Should take away the metre and replace
The rear words at the front, you could not trace
The shredded poet's limbs, just as you'd shred
Those Ennian lines, *When discord, full of dread,*
Smashed the brass gates of war. This matter we
Let rest. Another opportunity
Will come to help us find the poem is true.
But now I'll merely ask you whether you 80
Are justly dubious of such poetry.
Caprius, raucous with toxicity,
And vicious Sulcius, both amble through
The crowds, their writs in hand, a terror to
All thieves. But if a man lives honestly,

He may despise them both. Though you may be
Like those freebooters Coelus and Birrus,
I'm hardly Caelius or Sulcius.

Why fear me, then? Let no bookshop contain
My works, allowing sweaty hands to stain 90
Their pages – no Hermogenes shall read
The words I write. Only to friends, indeed,
Do I recite, only when pressed – that's rare! –
Not just to anyone, or anywhere.

Within the forum there are many men
Declaiming. Or when bathing, for it's then
That voices resonate. This brings delight
To idiots, who don't question if it's right
Or timely. "But you upset folks," says he,
Both zealously and prejudiciously." 100

Whence comes this calumny? Can someone show
Himself, someone, perhaps, whom I might know?
Or who disparages an absent friend
Whom, when he's censured, he will not defend?
Who raised loud guffaws in his company
And is well-known for jocularitas,
Invents what he's not seen and has to tell
A secret? He is dangerous – keep well

Away, all Romans, from him! You might see,
When four dine at three tables, there will be 110
One who adores to badmouth everyone
Except the host, and, when the meal is done,
Him too, when he is drunk, for that is when
Frank Bacchus opens up the hearts of men:

To you he's full of great urbanity,
And yet of evil you're an enemy:
If I have laughed because dim Rufullus
Smells like a brothel and Gorgonius
Smell like a goat, do I to you appear
Spiteful and snappish? And if you should hear 120
About Petillius' theft, you would defend
The man. "Capitolinus has been friend
And aid to me since boyhood, and that he
Lives happily here in Rome brings joy to me,
But how he dodged that charge I cannot think."
Now that's pure venom, that's the jet-black ink
The cuttlefish squirts out. I take an oath
That such sin should be far away from both
My verse and mind (my mind especially)
If I should swear at all. If I should be 130
Too liberal or too glib in what I say,
Then grant forgiveness for my fault, I pray.
My excellent father trained me so that I,
By taking note of others' faults, might fly
From vice. He taught me to live frugally,
Content with what he had vouchsafed for me:
"Don't you see that the son of Albius
Is wretched? See the penury of Barrus!
A splendid lesson not to fritter away
Your patrimony," he to me would say. 140
He'd warn me from the love of a sluttish whore
With "Don't be like Sectanus anymore."
When I would press a more authentic suit

With hussies, "Think about the ill repute
Of Tribonus," he would say. "That man got caught!"
What to pursue and what to shun is taught
By wise men. For it is enough for me
To hold on to our old morality
And keep your life and reputation sound
While you yet need a guardian around; 150
Once you're mature, though, in both mind and limb,
You'll find that you won't need a cork to swim."
That's how he shaped my boyhood; thus when he
Gave me an order, "You've authority
For this," he'd say, and choose one from a list
Of special judges. But if he dismissed
Some wish of mine, he'd say, "Son, surely you
Don't think this is a worthy thing to do
When other men have done the very same
And all around them scandal is aflame." 160
Just as a nearby funeral troubles one
Who's sick and fat and leads him to be done
With gluttony, so often there will be
A tender soul scared by the infamy
Of others. Therefore I am clear of all
That brings destruction: though I am in thrall
Of lesser ills, you'd pardon me, although
These too I would essentially let go
With age, true friends and self-deliberation;
For, occupied in some perambulation 170
About the portico or when I lie
Upon my couch, "This I prefer, " say I,

True to myself; “by doing this I’ll be
A happier man; my friends agreeably
I’ll treat; ah, what a dreadful thing to do –
Would I be rash enough to do that, too?”
I brood in silence. When at liberty,
I fool with writing – one infirmity
Of those I spoke of. If you take a pass
On what I say, then may a mighty mass 180
Of poets come to offer aid to me –
For we are quite a multiplicity –
And, like the Jews all living here among
Us Romans, pressure you to join our throng.

V

I left great Rome. Aricia welcomed me,
Though there was so-so hospitality
In my hotel. My fellow-traveller
Was Heliodorus, quite the connoisseur
In Greek, a rhetorician, too. And then
We went to Forum-Appi, stuffed with men
Who plied the streams and stingy blokes who ran
An inn. We dawdled for a two-day span
Thither, though keen folks make the trip in one:
The Appian Way is easier when it’s done 10
Slowly. The food was foul there, and therefore
I waged war with my belly, waiting for
My friends to end their meals, myself unfed
And restless. Now the night began to spread

Shadows across the earth and in the sky
Display her stars. We then heard an outcry
Among the slaves and bargees: "Come on, stow
Them hither", "That's three hundred of them", "No,
Enough!". The fare is paid, the mule is tied,
An hour has now passed by, our sleep denied 20
By bloody gnats and swamp-frogs. A bargee
Who's stinking drunk starts up a melody
About his absent girl; a traveller teams
Up with him but soon joins the land of dreams,
Dead with fatigue; the mule is then released
By the lazy waterman that it may feast
On grass, the rope tied to a stone. There lay
The bargee, snoring, on his back, while day
Approached. We made no progress in the skiff
Till one hothead leapt onto land and – biff! 30
His willow cudgel thumped mule and bargee.
At the fourth hour we landed finally.
Feronia's waters cleansed us. Having dined,
We crept three miles and reached Anxur, which shined
Far off with white rocks. Two men were to make
A journey thither, each to undertake
Important business, bringing harmony
To foes – these were the splendid deputy
Maecenas and Cocceius. It was here
My eyes got sore and I was forced to smear 40
Black ointment on them. Meanwhile Cocceius,
Maecenas and the cultured Fonteius,
Mark Antony's best friend, arrived. Then we

Abandoned Fundi very willingly:
We'd had a laugh at the ridiculous
Regalia of Aufidius Fuscus,
His purple robe, broad stripe and incense-pan –
He called himself a praetor, silly man!
We rested next in Formiae wearily,
Where we were offered hospitality 50
By Murena and where Capito cooked for us.
Next day for us proved most harmonious:
By Vergil at Sinuessa we were met
And Plotius and Varius (the world has yet
To breed such splendid souls, nor is there one
To whom I'm more obliged beneath the sun).
What hugs! What joys! While I'm not round the bend,
I compare nothing to a loyal friend.
Near the Campanian Bridge we lodged that night,
Where caterers provided, as was right 60
By law, both wood and salt. The mules then bent
To drop the luggage, while Maecenas went
To play at ball, although Vergil and I
Retired, because that game is hindered by
Weak eyes and ill health. From there Cocceius'
Luxurious abode admitted us,
Above the Caudian inns. Now, Muse, for me
Recount the argument, summarily,
Of Sarmentus the clown and Messius
Cicerrus; tell of their illustrious 70
Messius-Oscan race. The clown's mistress
Was still alive. To think such nobleness

Resorts to fighting! First, Sarmentus: "Hey,
You're like mad horse." We guffawed. "OK,"
The other said, his head wagged up and down.
"But if your horn were still there," said the clown,
"What would you do if, mutilated thus,
You bully so?" Indeed a hideous
Scar upon his shaggy forehead one
Could see. He then cracked many jokes upon 80
His 'Campanian' disease and many more
Upon his face, and then he clamoured for
The Polyphemus dance since he required
No mask or buskin. Messius then fired
A mass of volleys: had he dedicated
His chain to his Lares? Although he rated
A scribe's wage, yet his mistress' property
Was by no means less large; then finally
He asked why he had fled, since he'd been born
Both lank and lean, and so a pound of corn 90
A day was ample. There was such delight
In this that we ate well into the night.
Then straight to Beneventum: it was here
That our industrious host came very near
To scalding himself upon his barbecue
While roasting some lean thrushes: falling through
The ancient kitchen's floor, an errant flame
Spread quickly through the room and almost came
Up to the roof; this you would have discerned
Those dinners snatched away and almost burned 100
By hungry guests and frightened slaves who tried

To douse the fire. In Apulia I spied
Its famed peaks, scorched by Atabulus' blast,
And over which we never would have passed
Had Trivicum not received us, but a heap
Of burning branches caused our eyes to weep
As we went by a hearth. Here, at the height
Of idiocy, I waited till midnight
For a lying girl, but as I mused about
A night of sex, sleep came and knocked me out. 110
Then foul wet dreams, as on my back I lay,
Stained my nightshirt and belly. Then away
Upon a cart for twenty-four miles we went,
And in a little village we had meant
To stay, impossible to pronounce in verse,
But here's a clue: although there's nothing worse
Than its water, yet they sell it. But the bread
Is so fine that, in order to be fed
En route, the thoughtful tourist will convey
It on his shoulders, for I have to say 120
Canusium's bread is gritty and can't claim
To taste better than water. This town's fame
Derives from stalwart Diomedes, he
Who built it long ago. Unhappily
Varius left us here – his friends all wept.
Then into Rubi wearily we crept –
The trip was long and by incessant rain
Made more annoying. Next day once again
Was brighter, though the road was worse till we
Reached Barium which smelt like a fishery. 130

Next – Gnatia, frowned on by the nymphs, which made
Us laugh, for people there tried to persuade
Us frankincense can melt without a flame
On temple steps. Apella may think the same
(He’s Jewish) but I don’t. For I was taught
The gods are tranquil and, if nature’s wrought
Anything wonderful, then anxiously
They send it from heaven’s high canopy.
That was my long trip to Brundisium
And this account to whose end I have come. 140

VI

Of all the Lydians who in Tuscan land
Have ever lived, no family is as grand
As yours, Maecenas; of your ancestry
Your forefathers have held autonomy
Over great legions; yet it’s not in you
To sneer, as many people often do,
At humble folk like me, a freedman’s son.
It has no consequence for anyone
Who were his parents just as long as he
Is upright; you aver quite truthfully 10
That prior to the reign of Tullius,
Who was a slave’s son, there were numerous
Ignoble men who were exemplary
And earned great honours, while, contrarily,
Laevinus Valerius, who dispossessed
Tarquinius Superbus, was assessed

As not one farthing more, as people say
Whom you know well, who often cast away
Honours on those who are incompetent,
For foolishly they are subservient 20
To statues, rank and fame. So what are we
To do, so far from low society?
Well, let's agree that people would acclaim
Laevinus but not Decius, whose name
Is little-known yet, and that Appius
Should echo his job and be censorious
And cross me off the role should he find me
Of low-born parentage – deservedly
Since I'd not rest in my condition. Fame
Treats the obscure and noble folk the same, 30
All in her shining chariot enchained.
So, Tillius, what was it that you gained
As tribune, having lost your purple stripe
Of senatorhood? Then was your envy ripe.
If you had not been in the public eye
It had been less. For once a crazy guy
Dons those black buskins reaching to the knee
And wraps his robe about him, instantly
You'll hear. "Who *is* this man? Who was his dad?"
If someone had the sickness Barrus had, 40
Keen to be thought good-looking, everywhere
He went, among the women he'd take care
To ask about his physiognomy –
Face, leg, foot, teeth, hair and the quality
Of each. This anyone who will commit

To care for Italy and all that it
Contains – its empire and each sanctuary
Housing the gods - must force the citizenry
To be concerned about his father's name
And duly question if his mother came 50
From lowly stock. "Would you, sir, dare to throw
Citizens from the Tarpeian Rock, although
The son of Dama or Dionysius
Or Syrus? Would you give them to Cadmus
For execution?" "By but one degree
My colleague Novius comes after me,
For he is what my father was." "And so
You think that therefore everyone should know
You as Paulus or Messalla, eh?
Well, if two hundred carriages should sway 60
Into three funerals, Naevius could shout
So loudly he could easily drown out
Their horns and trumpets. Such ability
At least has weight with us." Now back to me,
A freedman's son, a thing that everyone
Disparages ("Oh, just a freedman's son!"):
They do it now because I recently
Became your intimate, but formerly
Because as tribune I had the command
Of a Roman legion. You must understand, 70
However, that these reasons aren't the same:
Anybody would be envious of my fame
As tribune, but that you are friends with me
Is quite a different thing, especially

As you are provident only to choose
Good men unsoiled by base, ambitious views.
I cannot say, though, that I have been graced
With luck, as though by accident I was placed
Among your friends. It was not luck which cast
Me in your way. Fine Vergil in the past 80

And Varus later on told you of me.
When first I met you, I spoke haltingly
But little – saying more would have made me
Bashful. I didn't say my pedigree
Was noble or that I was used to ride
On a fine horse around the countryside:
I just said what I was, and, as you do,
You, too, said little. Nine months later you
Commanded me to join your company
Of friends. I thought it excellent to be 90
Pleasing to you to distinguish bad
From good, and not because a person's had
A famous father but because he's kind
In everything, but if someone should find
Me guilty of a fault or two, but pure
In all else (as if someone's skin's allure
Is tainted by a wart which causes you
To frown) and if nobody, speaking true,
Accuses me of filthiness or greed
Or else frequenting brothels, if I lead 100

A pure and decent life, good company
To friends, my father distilled this in me:
He worked a scrawny farm and had no care

To send me to the school of Flavius, where.
Their satchels and their tablets draped around
Their shoulders, great centurions' sons were found,
Each paying on the Ides his schooling fee.
Instead my father had the bravery
To send his son to Rome where he could learn
What knights and senators could in their turn 110
Teach to *their* sons. If anyone had caught
Sight of my garb and slaves, he would have thought
In such a mighty city as is Rome,
That they all came from some ancestral home.
That honest guardian was never away
From all my tutors. What more's there to say?
He kept me chaste (virtue's first rule) and spared
Me from all foul fault-finding, never scared
Of blame should I decide on a career
With meager gains, perhaps an auctioneer 120
Or dues-collector, as he long ago
Once was. I would have been content. We owe
Him praise, and special thanks he's earned from me.
While sane, I'll never feel ignominy
For such a father, nor, as many others
Have done, saying their fathers or their mothers
Were not high-born, disclaiming all the blame,
Defend myself, for I am not the same
As them at all in speech and views. Therefore,
If nature ordered us to go once more 130
Through some parts of our life and nominate
New parents such as folks would designate

Through pride, I would not choose those who had won
Great honours: though the mob would have their fun
And call me mad, yet you would call me sane,
I think: I'd not be willing to sustain
A heavy burden. Then more currency
I'd need, more friends, someone to take with me
On walks lest I should go abroad alone,
Or to the country. I would have to own 140
More horses, servants, coaches. As things are,
However, I may travel quite as far
As Tarentum with a bob-tailed mule, his sides
Marred by the bags, his neck by him who rides
Upon him. No-one will disparage me,
Tullius, for the gross vulgarity
You show as praetor on the Tibur road,
Surrounded by five slaves who bear a load
Of objects which one's kitchen would supply
And baskets full of wine. Famed senator, I, 150
Compared to you and many thousands more,
Live in more comfort. If I hanker for
A walk, I go alone, the price of bread
And cabbages I ask about, I tread
The artful Circus, often wandering through
The forum in the evening, listening to
The seers, and then I go back home to feed
On chickpeas, leeks and pancakes, and my need
Is served by only three slaves. Two cups stand,
Next to the ladle, on a white slab, and 160
A cheap bowl, saucer, cruet – earthenware

Out of Campania. I then repair
To bed, untroubled that I have to rise
At dawn and visit Marsyas, who denies
He bears young Novius' face. I lie in bed
Till ten. I move about and, having read
Or written something that's delighted me,
I smear myself with oil, emphatically
Unlike the nasty Natta when he's done
Filching the lanterns. When the burning sun 170
Prompts me to bathe myself, I keep away
From the Campus Martius, nor will I play
At ball, and then I eat a small repast
To ease an empty gut that I might last
Till night, then mess about unhurriedly
At home. This is the life of people free
From miserable, weighty pushiness.
I'm heartened that I'll find truer happiness
Than if a member of my family
Had taken on a praetor's ministry. 180

VII

Just how the mongrel Persius repaid
The filthiness and venom that was laid
On him by "King" Rupilius you'll find,
I think, is known by all men who are blind
And barbers, too. He was a wealthy guy
With weighty business at Clazomenae
And with the King had irksome litigation,

A hardened man who could in execration
 Outdo him, cool, bluff, acrimonious
 In speech (the blood-relations of Burrus 10
 And of Sisenna he could overcome
 With ease). No, when no moratorium
 Could be arranged between these testy men
 (For when a war has broken out, it's then
 That warriors are as prickly as they're bold:
 For Hector and Achilles, so we're told,
 Raged at each other so that death alone
 Could part them, for no other way was known –
 Each was so valorous. If strife divides
 Two cowards or if on unequal sides 20
 Two men are matched in fight, as happened when
 Diomedes met Glaucus, the lesser then
 Will quit and offer gifts), when Brutus ran
 Rich Asia, these two parried man to man,
 As well-matched as Bithus and Battius.
 They hastened to the cause, impetuous,
 Both men a splendid sight. Persius the spat
 Began but by the rest was sniggered at;
 He praised both Brutus and his men, the sun
 Of Asia Brutus called and every one 30
 Of his companions stalwart stars – well, all
 But one – the King: him he was moved to call
 The dog-star farmers loathe: at a fearful rate
 He rushes on just like a wintry spate
 Where axes are but seldom seen. This king
 From Praeneste would keep up a sprinkling

Of jibes squeezed from the vineyard, for his field
Is reaping grapes, a man who'll never yield,
A man who's hardened (travellers indeed
Have very often been compelled to cede 40
To him and cease the 'cuckoo' they would yell).
This Greek, though, once he had been sprinkled well
With Italian vinegar, cried out, "Brutus, please
Hear me, you who have toppled monarchies,
Why don't you slit this monarch's throat? Trust me,
A job like this becomes you perfectly."

VIII

I was a wild fig-tree's trunk formerly,
Quite useless, when the man who fashioned me,
Uncertain whether he should make a stool
Or me, preferred to turn his sculpting tool
Towards the latter. Thus a god am I,
A threat to brigands and all things that fly.
On my right hand the bloody-looking spar
That pokes out from my groin keeps thieves afar,
But detrimental birds are filled with dread
Once they have seen the reed upon my head - 10
It keeps them from these new parks. In the past
A slave would bring his co-slaves' corpses, cast
From narrow dungeons, that they might be laid
In paltry coffins; one large tomb was made
Here for the rabble, like Pantolabus
The joker and the rake Nomentanus.

In front a thousand feet have been assigned
By a column and three hundred feet behind
Towards the field, nor may this burial-ground
Fall to the heirs. Now one may walk around 20
The sunny lane on the brisk Esquiliae
Where lately those sad travellers would spy
The dread field's white bones, though I do not care
About the brigands and the wild beasts there
As much as those viragoes who provoke
With drugs and incantations human folk.
I cannot slay or foil them, for as soon
As there appears the beauteous, wandering moon,
Their bones and foul herbs they'll start gathering.
Myself I saw Canidia wandering, 30
Her sable robe about her thighs – her hair
Was all dishevelled and her feet were bare –
Yelling at old Sagana, ghostly white
The both of them, a truly ugly sight.
They clawed the earth and then began to shred
A black ewe with their teeth. The blood was shed
Into a ditch that they might force each shade
To answer them. Two images were made,
The one of wool, the other one of wax –
The larger wool one was designed to tax 40
The smaller with chastisement. Hecate
One called upon, the fierce Tisiphone
The other. Servile-like, the wax one stood,
As though prepared to yield. Right then you would
Have seen infernal snakes and bitches stray

About, the blushing moon hiding away
In shame behind the tombs. If just one bit
Of what I say is false, may ravens shit
On me, and may that queen Pediatius
And Julius and that robber Voranus 50
Both shit *and* piss on me. Why should I tell
In detail how those ghostly shades would yell
Sadly and piercingly, alternatively
With Sagana, and how they stealthily
Bury the beard of a wolverine beneath
The earth, and a multi-coloured serpent's teeth,
And how upon that waxen effigy
Great flames arose and how I quaked to see
Their deeds and hear the yelling of those two?
Yet I had my revenge, for then I blew, 60
Right through my woody crack, a fart as great
As some burst bladder, and they scampered straight
Into the city. You'd have then caught sight
Of Canidia's dentures and the lofty height
Of Sagana's hairpiece fall upon the ground
And all the herbs and magic bracelets round
Their arms as well. Ah, such a sight to see
And celebrate with jocularly!

IX

I walked along the Sacred Way and mused
Upon some trifle, as I'm often used
To do, wholly engrossed: a man I knew

Only by name approached me. "How are you,
Old man?", grasping my arm, he said to me.
"I'm fine, " I said, "as things are presently.
I wish you all the best. Is there something
You want?" I said, since he kept following.
"I am a learned man" was his reply.
"You are aware of me." "Therefore," said I, 10
"I'll prize you all the more." Miserably
I itched to get away: more speedily
I walked; and I stopped dead occasionally
To whisper to my slave. Sweat dripped from me
Down to my ankles. To myself I spoke
These words: "Bolanus, you're a lucky bloke
To be quick-tempered," while he chattered on,
Praising the streets, the city. Then, upon
My not replying, he said, "You ache so
To get away – I saw it long ago, 20
But it's no good, for I will stick to you.
May I enquire where you're going to?"
"You have no need to be so dragged around:
To see a certain person I am bound,
Unknown to you," I said. "He's far from here.
His home's across the river Tiber, near
The emperor's gardens." "I've nothing to do
And I'm not lazy – I will follow you."
Just like a donkey that's cantankerous
Because his burden is more onerous 30
Than usual, I dropped my ears. Then he
Began: "Viscus and Varius can't be

More prized by you than I, if I know well
The qualities I have. For can you tell
What man there is who writes more poetry
More quickly? Who can dance more gracefully?
Hermogenes would envy how I sing.”
Here came my chance of discontinuing
His flow: “Have you a mother – any kin –
Who cares about you?” “All of them are in 40
Their graves, for I’ve interred them, every one.”
“They’re lucky. Kill me, then, and I am done
With you. For death is close at hand for me,
For when I was a boy, some sorcery
Was practiced on me: turning her urn about,
A Sabine sorceress said, “Neither gout,
Sword, poison, pleurisy nor cough shall take
Him off; oh no, a babbler shall make
Away with him, and so this boy should shun
All babblers, if he’s wise, until he’s done 50
With boyhood.” Vesta’s shrine was now in view,
Now well past nine, and here his case was due;
His absence would have come at quite a cost,
As luck would have it, for he would have lost.
“Wait here a bit if you love me, “ he said.
“If I can stand by you, may I drop dead:
I know no law. I’m in a hurry, too,
And you know whither.” “What am I to do –
Desert my case or you?” “Me, please,” I said.
“I’ll not leave you,” he said and went ahead 60
Of me. I followed, since it’s hard to fight

One with the upper hand. "Are things alright
With you and Maecenas? He's very wise
And penetrating and can utilize
Chance very well," said he. "I'm sure that you
Would have an efficacious Number Two
If you would introduce us. Bigger me
If you would not supplant them all." "Well, we
Live there not as you think: we're guileless there
And free from ill – none more so. I don't care 70
If I am poorer or less clever than
Another: each role's suited to each man."
"Amazing! Unbelievable!" "However,
It's so." "Now you inflame me more than ever
To reach him." "Only wish it can be done
And by your excellence he will be won.
He can be, but the first approach you'll find
Is hard." "I will not fail: his slaves I'll bind
With lots of presents; should I be locked out
Today, I'll not give up. I'll search about 80
For openings: throughout the streets of Rome
I'll 'chance' to meet him, I will walk him home.
All men must toil a lot." As he ran on,
My friend Fuscus Aristius came upon
Us both. He knows the fellow well. So we
Came to a stop. Where are you going?" asked he,
"And where have you come from?" Then I began
To twitch his stubborn arm and nod at the man,
Scrunching my eyes that he might rescue me.
Pretending not to understand, though, he 90

Laughed archly, while my gall began to swell
With rage. "You said you had something to tell
To me," I said. "I did, yes, but I'll say
It at a more auspicious time. Today
Is the Thirtieth Sabbath. Would you dare make fun
Of Jews?" "I have no qualms." "But I am one
Who does, one of the many, I'm so weak.
So pardon me: another time I'll speak
Of it." A black day this had been for me.
He goes and leaves me helpless. Luckily 100
The plaintiff comes. "Where are you going to,
You swine?" He loudly shouts, and then, "Hey you!
Will you be witness?" "Yes, I will," say I.
He yanks him off to court; a hue and cry
Is raised, with folks arriving frantically,
And thus Phoebus Apollo rescued me.

X

Indeed I said Lucilius' verses run
In awkward fashion. Is there anyone
Among his fans who won't say this is true?
But in the self-same poem he's lauded, too,
Because he scoured Rome with splendid wit.
But though I grant him that, I will not quit
My views about his verse, for then I would
Think even Laberius' mimes are very good.
Therefore it's not sufficient just to raise
A grin, although that's worthy of our praise. 10

One must be brief so that the lines may run
And never tax the ears of anyone.
One may be grave, but sometimes jocular
To suit the poet or the character
Who's speaking, sometimes one who can with ease
Curb or extend his polished qualities.
Jibes top severity and can dispose
Important matters many times, and those
Who in the ancient times wrote comedies
Agreed, and therefore we should copy these 20
Old playwrights, though their plays have not been read
By fair Hermogenes, it must be said,
Nor by that ape whose skill is but to sing
Of Calvus and Catullus. "What a thing
He's done, though," you might say, "in mixing Greek
With Latin!" Your late education's weak:
Is that so hard and wonderful to you,
Something even Pitholeon could do?
"The two tongues blent result in elegance,
As Chian and Falernian enhance 30
The taste." When writing verse, this must I ask:
If you have taken on the arduous task
Of Petillius' case, would you then quite forget
Your father and your land, while others sweat –
Poplicola, Corvinus, Pelius – ,
Preferring to mix in extraneous
Expressions, which are used by those who come
From that bilingual place, Canusium?
When I, born here, was writing poetry

In the Greek tongue, Romulus came to me 40
Beyond midnight when every dream is true
And said in a forbidding voice, "If you
Should carry logs into a wood, you'd be
Less mad than joining that great company
Of Grecian bards." While Memnon's throat is slashed
By windy Furius and while he splashed
About at Tiber's head, I mess around
With these satires, though they must never sound
In Phoebus' temple where they'd have competed
Under Judge Tarpa; they won't be repeated, 50
Run after run, in theatres. None alive,
Fundanius, is more skilled than you who thrive
On writing chatty comedies which present
A harlot and a Davos who torment
A venerable Chremes; Pollio sings
In tragic iambs of the deeds of kings;
Fine Varius treats of manly epic – none
Can equal him, while stylishness upon
Vergil the Muses whom the countryside
Delights bestow, though Atax's Varro tried, 60
With others, georgic verse but fruitlessly.
(I've had success there, but less happily
Than he who wrote it first – I'd not make bold
To take his worthy crown). But I have told
Of this man's muddy flow and how he'd add
So many things that we would all be glad
To see removed. A learned man, do you
Not find some faults in mighty Homer, too?

Does not Lucilius change some Accius?

Does he not mock the works of Ennius, 70

Which are too light for serious themes, although

He thinks himself less than the faults they show?

What stops me when I read Lucilius

From asking if the theme's too arduous,

Or if it's he, for it to smoothly run

And be more consummate, as if someone,

Content to write hexameters, should adore

Writing two hundred lines of verse before

His breakfast and as many more once he

Has eaten: Cassius of Tuscany 80

Had such a genius – his verse would flow

As swiftly as a river. Those who know

Report that he upon his funeral pyre

Was with his works and books burned in the fire.

Lucilius, I grant you, was a man

Of wit and elegance, more stylish than

The graceless bard who writes verse unpursued

Even by Greeks and than the multitude

Of older bards. But if he had been brought

Into our era, then he would have sought 90

To rub a great deal out and shorten what

Had gone too far, scratching his head a lot,

His nails cut to the quick. You who are led

To write works that are worthy to be read

More than just once make changes frequently

And take no pains for popularity,

Content with but few fans. Would you be fool

Enough to be read in a minor school
Or two for study? That is not for me –
It's quite sufficient that the knights should be 100
Admirers, as, when she was roundly hissed,
The proud Arbuscula said as she dismissed
The rabble from her feelings. Should I care
What that insect Pantilius may air
About me? While Demetrius behind
My back casts his aspersions, should I mind?
And that daft sidekick of Tigellius –
What is his name, now? Ah, yes, Fannius –
You think he troubles me? Let Plotius,
Maecenas, Vergil, Varius, Valgus 110
And great Octavius admire me
In these sermons. Both of the Visci
I hope will praise them. And Pollio, you
I, flattery aside, would welcome too.
Messalla and your brother, Bibulus
And Servius and candid Furnius
And many others, whom I purposely
Omit though learned and good friends to me,
I trust they make you smile, such as they are.
But if you should admire them somewhat far 120
Beyond my hopes, I'd grieve. Go, then, and weep,
Demetrius and Tigellius, as you sweep
Among your lady students. Instantly,
Boy, add this satire to the rest for me.

