

1777

Motum ex Metello consule civicum
bellique causas et vitia et modos
ludumque Fortunae gravesque
principum amicitias et arma

nondum expiatis uncta cruoribus,
periculosae plenum opus aleae,
tractas et incedis per ignes
suppositos cineri doloso.

paulum severae Musa tragoediae
desit theatris: mox, ubi publicas
res ordinaris, grande munus
Cecropio repetes Cothurno,

insigne maestis praesidium reis
et consulenti, Pollio, curiae,
cui laurus aeternos honores
Delmatico peperit triumpho.

iam nunc minaci murmure cornuum
perstringis auris, iam litui strepunt,
iam fulgor armorum fugaces
terret equos equitumque vultus.

audire magnos iam videor duces,
non indecoro pulvere sordidos,
et cuncta terrarum subacta
praeter atrocem animum Catonis.

Iuno et deorum quisquis amicior
Afris inulta cesserat impotens
tellure, victorum nepotes
rettulit inferias Iugurthae.

quis non Latino sanguine pinguior
campus sepulcris impia proelia
testatur auditumque Medis
Hesperiae sonitum ruinae?

qui gurgis aut quae flumina lugubris
ignara belli? quod mare Daunia
non decoloravere caedes?
quae caret ora cruore nostro?

sed ne relictis, Musa procax, iocis
Caeae retractes munera neniae,
mecum Dionaeo sub antro
quaere modos levioere plectro.

You are treating of the civil conflict that began
with Metellus' consulship, the causes of war,
its evils, and its phases, and Fortune's game,
grievous compacts of leaders, and arms

still stained with blood as yet unexpiated--
a work full of dangerous hazard--
and you are walking over fires
concealed beneath treacherous ash.

For a brief time only let your Muse of stern tragedy
be absent from the stage; but soon, when you have
set in order affairs of state, resume your lofty calling
in the Attic buskin,

Pollio, distinguished support of anxious clients
and the Senate in its councils,
you, for whom, too, the laurel brought forth
lasting glory in the Dalmatian triumph.

Even now the threatening blast of horns
strikes my ear, now the trumpets sound,
now the gleam of weapons strikes terror
into the fleeing horses and the faces of the horsemen.

Now I seem to see the great captains
soiled with no inglorious dust
and the whole world subdued
except fierce Cato's soul.

Juno, and whoever of the gods, friendlier
to Africa, had helplessly withdrawn,
powerless to avenge the land,
have borne back as sacrificial offerings to Jugurtha
the grandsons of his conquerors.

What plain, enriched with Latin blood,
does not bear witness with its tombs
to our unholy wars and to the sound
of Hesperia's fall, heard even by the Medes?

What pool or what river is unaware of
our mournful war? What sea has Italian
slaughter not discolored?
What shore lacks our blood?

But lest, O wanton Muse, you abandon light themes
and take up again the office of the Cean dirge,
seek with me in the Dionaeon grove
measures of a lighter strain.

CAPN A. J. J. J. J.