

A Roman's Death at Sea*

Shipwrecked, a sailor finds another...
Who knows what lies beyond this shore
 a farmer,...crops ruined by hail,
Across the wide expanse of space
 a whole year's labour...
And time the galaxies do soar
 ...a body turns in a gentle eddy
Ignoring the travails of our race.
 and drifts to the shore.

 “You have been at the mercy of the fish
But She who weaves the endless shroud
 and other horrible creatures.
For those who pierce Her airy veil
 Go now, mortals,
And dare to fly beyond the clouds
 and fill your hearts with great schemes.
Will never touch Her fertile soil.
 Go and carefully invest your ill-gotten gains.

 “Yesterday he must have looked
Could some of us but learn to read
 at the accounts of his investments,
Once more Her cryptic alphabet of scents
 he must have imagined the day
Perhaps we mortals then could lead
 he would reach his hometown.
Eurydice from Hades' dens
 O, how far away he lies from his destination!

 “Yet it is not only the seas
To join the joyful commonwealth of saints
 that serve mortals like this.
Who learnt to stop the wheel of death and life
 Weapons play a man false in wartime;
And, gone beyond desire, fear and pain
 the collapse of his family shrine
Destroyed the tools of poverty and strife.
 buries a man giving thanks to heaven;
Transcend the crude simplicity of names
 a man falls from his carriage
And braided digits in a crystal box.
 and gasps his last.

Food chokes the glutton;
Renounce the engines of commercial gains
abstinence the abstemious...
And weapons bearing epidemic pox.

“There is shipwreck everywhere...
Return to the Maiden’s lustful lore
It matters not what destroys a...corpse
Beneath the splendour of Her waxing moon
--fire, water, or time!
Inside Her perfumed grotto to explore
--Whatever you do,
The secret essence of Her runes.
--all...come to the same...”

But as a child I saw my father’s corpse
At funerals the bereaved
Forever lost to me inside his pall
weep in concert –
Race to the flames then turn to dust
Death, the leveller.
His final goal alas unknown to all.
We too will hammer at the stars
And I remain an orphan in this land
with antiphonal complaints...
Where once a better man did stand.
as prayers, when linked,
fly more bravely.

* © Pastiche composed in Montreal by Pascual Delgado on February 4th 2003. Text of original poem by Pascual Delgado are in Calibri font.

All texts in Times New Roman font are from the text and Fragment XXXII, Gaius Petronius, *The Satyricon*, late 1st century A.D., John Sullivan’s translation (1965).