

# Episode Ninety-Two - The Plague of Athens, and the End of the Poem

Post by "Cassius" of October 5, 2021 at 9:01 AM

Another aspect of this to consider is the opening of Book Two:

## Quote

'Tis pleasant, when a tempest drives the waves in the wide sea, to view the sad distress of others from the land; not that the pleasure is so sweet that others suffer, but the joy is this, to look upon the ills from which yourself are free. It likewise gives delight to view the bloody conflicts of a war, in battle ranged all over the plains, without a share of danger to yourself: But nothing is more sweet than to attain the serene 'tho lofty heights of true philosophy, well fortified by learning of the wise, and thence look down on others, and behold mankind wandering and roving every way, to find a path to happiness; they strive for wit, contend for nobility, labor nights and days with anxious care for heaps of wealth, and to be ministers of state.

O wretched are the thoughts of men! How blind their souls! In what dark roads they grope their way, in what distress is this life spent, short as it is! Don't you see Nature requires no more than the body free from pain, she may enjoy the mind easy and cheerful, removed from care and fear?

As bad as our current troubles might be, they are nothing compared to what they might be in a plague, and we can take comfort in realizing that at least for the moment we are safe from these harms -- and with the study of nature and application of that knowledge we may even have confidence of avoiding them.

I wonder also if there might be a "Horror Movie" aspect of this -- to use the last passages to shock people out of their complacency as they end the poem, and back to the realization that despite the ultimate death sentence, we ourselves have time to make more good use of our lives to live pleasantly:

VS47. I have anticipated thee, Fortune, and I have closed off every one of your devious entrances. And we will not give ourselves up as captives, to thee or to any other circumstance; but when it is time for us to go, spitting contempt on life and on those who cling to it maundering, we will leave from life singing aloud a glorious triumph-song on how nicely we lived.

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