

# Catullus, Tibullus, Horace: From Republic to Empire

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# Catullus and His Times: Late Republican Rome

- 87-54 B.C.E. Born in the Sullan era and died in the era of the First Triumvirate
- Wealthy Equites Family; Father was friends with Caesar;
- Met Clodia (Lesbia); Pro Caelio vs P. Clodius
- Went to Bithynia in 57 as a Government official
- <http://www.adkline.freeuk.com/Catullus.htm#Toc531846733>

# Catullus 5, 7

- Hedonist; Live for the moment
- “Let us live, My Lesbia, and let us love, And let us care not a whit for the gossip of harsh old men.

The Sun may set and rise again:

For us, when the short light once has set  
Night perpetual must be slept.

Give me kisses, a thousand, then a hundred  
then a thousand more, then a second hundred,  
then, when we will have made a thousand more,  
we will confuse our counting, neither will we know,  
nor will any observer seeing our kisses so many  
be able to give us the evil eye.”

# Catullus 10

- Province of Bithynia (Asia Minor)
- Litter bearers (Slaves)
- Serapis; Egyptian-Greek God, instituted by Ptolemy as a god to unite the Greeks and Egyptians; Patron God of Alexandria; Popular in Rome in 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C.E.
- Conveys the privileged attitude of a member of an Empire

# Catullus 27

- Symposium song; Hedonist pleasure in wine and drunkenness
- “Serve out the old Felernian, boy,  
Fill my cups to the brim with stronger stuff,  
As the Law of Postumia, mistress of the revels,  
commands,  
She more drunk than a wine soaked grape.  
But you, Water, are forbidden,  
You bane of wine, go hang out with the upright  
folk.  
This is pure Thyonian.”

# Catullus 57 and 29

- Satirizes Caesar and his Praefectus Fabrum (Mamurra)
- Example of Invective
- Suetonius, *Life of Caesar*. After an apology by Catullus, Caesar invited him to dinner.

# Catullus 28

- The vagaries of Clientele
- “so much for chasing after powerful men...”
- Was Memmius a bad Praetor or a good one who watched out for the local treasury?
- Anger at not having made money, rather than criticism of his policies or actions.

# Tibullus, I.1. (54-19 B.C.)

<https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/Tibullus.php>

- Let others heap up gold treasures and others till the ground; they must worry about protecting it
- Let me be content with the little I have and be happy to live a rustic, simple life of a farmer
- He will offer what he can to the Lares
- He doesn't seek the wealth of his ancestors
- Messalla campaigns to enrich his home; but Tibullus must stay at home because he loves a girl, Delia.
- Delia will mourn him when his last hours comes
- As Fate allows, let he and Delia “be one in love”



# Tibullus I.6 Fickle Love

- Love draws him on but then turns cruel.
- He is caught in the net by Delia; yet, she has another lover though she denies it.
- “Poor wretch, it was I who taught her the ways of tricking her watchers, and now alas! By my own craft am I deceived.”
- Be wary of your wife if she talks with young men or goes out to “witness the rites of the Good Goddess which no male may observe”
- Delia, be faithful...The faithless woman will spend her old age drawing out the yarn and weaving...
- Venus looks upon her weeping and bids us to mark how sharp She is with the faithless.

# Quintus Horatius Flaccus: Poet of the Republic and the Empire

<https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/Horacehome.php>

- 65-8 B.C.E.
- Son of a Freedman in S. Italy (Apulia); auctioneer
- Studied in Rome; then Athens
- Joined the Army of Brutus as tribune, Civil Wars against Octavian and Marc Antony
- Fought at Philippi, 42
- Family farm was Proscripted
- Vergil introduced him to Maecenas, 39
- 35 Satires published
- 33, Acquired Sabine Farm
- 30, publication of Satires II and Epodes
- 23, Odes (imitates Aeolian poets, Sappho and Alkaios;).

# Philippi, Odes III.4

- “neither the broken line at Philippi, nor the cursed tree, nor Sicilian seas off Palinurus’ cape, have quite destroyed me,”

Ode II. 7: He describes his flight and how he left behind his shield, shamed

# Laments Fratricide, Epode 7

- [https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/Horace/EpodesAndCarmenSaeculare.php#anchor\\_Toc98670055](https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/Horace/EpodesAndCarmenSaeculare.php#anchor_Toc98670055)
- “A bitter fate pursues the Romans,  
and the crime of fratricide,  
since the blood of Remus ran on the  
earth,  
the bane of his successors.”

# Epode IX: A Toast to Actium

- Dear Maecenas, when in your noble house, as is
- Jove's pleasure, shall I delight
- With you in Caesar's triumph, drinking Caecuban
- Cellared for festive banquets,...
- As lately, when Pompey, driven from the sea,
- Had fled, with his ships destroyed,
- Having threatened the city with shackles he'd taken
- From those faithless slaves, his friends.
- A Roman, – you'll not credit it, posterity –
- Sadly, ups sticks and arms himself,
- For a woman's sake, and though a soldier, deigns
- To serve the withered eunuchs,

# Epicurean View of Life: Odes 1.9

- Observe Mount Soracte covered in snow as the trees strive to bear their burden
- Put logs in the fireplace and bring out the Sabine wine
- Lets the gods take care of the rest
- Don't try to guess the future and be happy for the days Fortune allots you
- While young, enjoy the dance and “the heart's sweet longings”

# Epicurean, Odes I.11

“Do not enquire, we may not know, what end  
The Gods will give, Leuconoe, do not attempt  
Babylonian calculations. The better course  
Is to bear whatever will be, whether Jove allot  
More winters or this is the last which exhausts  
The Tuscan sea with pumice rocks opposed.  
Be wise, decant the wine, prune back  
Your long-term hopes. Life ebbs as I speak:  
So seize each day, and grant the next no credit.”

- 1) **Distrust of the Future is Epicurean**
- 2) **Carpe Diem**
- 3) **Endure**

# Praise of the Augustan “Pax Romana”: Ode IV.5

- Caesar Augustus is guardian of the “race of Romulus” too long absent
- Restore the light the Romans lack
- When Caesar is present the land is bountiful
- He protects the faith of home and hearth
- Germans and Scythians and Parthians do not cause fear because of him
- The rustic farmer remembers Augustus at his evening meal and worship
- Long live the Lord!



# Critique of Excessive Wealth: Ode

## II.18

“No ivory or gilded  
Panels gleam in my house; no  
Beams from Hymettus  
Press on columns quarried in Africa’s  
Heartland; I have not  
Unexpectedly inherited a palace from Attalus;  
I have no retinue  
Of ladies trailing Laconian purple  
Robes. I am loyal, however  
And of a kindly humour: though poor,  
Am courted by the rich. Content  
with my Sabine farm, I make no more suits  
To my powerful friend,  
Seek nothing further from the Gods above...

# Summary

- 1) Latin Lyric Adapts the Meter and some of the themes and Metaphors of Greek poetry
- 2) Catullus and Horace represent two different political viewpoints, but a similar philosophy (Epicurean)
- 3) Despite being an Augustan poet, Horace's poetry retains a dignity not associated with propaganda
- 5) Catullus, despite using base language and themes, displays wit and a sense of beauty