Horace

**Quintus Horatius Flaccus** (December 8, 65 BC – November 27, 8 BC), known in the English-speaking world as Horace (/ˈhɔrəs/), was the leading Roman lyric poet during the time of Augustus (also known as Octavian). The rhetorician Quintilian regarded his *Odes* as just about the only Latin lyrics worth reading: "He can be lofty sometimes, yet he is also full of charm and grace, versatile in his figures, and felicitously daring in his choice of words.\[nb 1\]

Horace also crafted elegant hexameter verses (*Satires* and *Epistles*) and caustic iambic poetry (*Epodes*). The hexameters are amusing yet serious works, friendly in tone, leading the ancient satirist *Persius* to comment: "as his friend laughs, Horace slyly puts his finger on his every fault; once let in, he plays about the heartstrings."\[nb 2\]

His career coincided with Rome's momentous change from a republic to an empire. An officer in the republican army defeated at the Battle of Philippi in 42 BC, he was befriended by Octavian's right-hand man in civil affairs, Maecenas, and became a spokesman for the new regime. For some commentators, his association with the regime was a delicate balance in which he maintained a strong measure of independence (he was "a master of the graceful sidestep\[1\] but for others he was, in John Dryden's phrase, "a well-mannered court slave\[2\]\[nb 3\].

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Horace can be regarded as the world's first autobiographer[3] – In his writings, he tells us far more about himself, his character, his development, and his way of life than any other great poet in antiquity. Some of the biographical writings contained in his writings can be supplemented from the short but valuable "Life of Horace" by Suetonius (in his Lives of the Poets).[4]

**Childhood**

He was born on 8 December 65 BC[4] in the Samnite south of Italy.[5] His home town, Venusia, lay on a trade route in the border region between Apulia and Lucania (Basilicata). Various Italic dialects were spoken in the area and this perhaps enriched his feeling for language. He could have been familiar with Greek words even as a young boy and later he poked fun at the jargon of mixed Greek and Oscan spoken in neighbouring Canusium.[6] One of the works he probably studied in school was the Odyssia of Livius Andronicus, taught by teachers like the 'Orbilius' mentioned in one of his poems.[7] Army veterans could have been settled there at the expense of local families uprooted by Rome as punishment for their part in the Social War (91–88 BC).[8] Such state-sponsored migration must have added still more linguistic variety to the area. According to a local tradition reported by Horace,[9] a colony of Romans or Latins had been installed in Venusia after the Samnites had been driven out early in the third century. In that case, young Horace could have felt himself to be a Roman[10][11] though there are also indications that he regarded himself as a Samnite or Sabellus by birth.[12][13] Italians in modern and ancient times have always been devoted to their home towns, even after success in the wider world, and Horace was no different. Images of his childhood setting and references to it are found throughout his poems.[14]

Horace’s father was probably a Venutian taken captive by Romans in the Social War, or possibly he was descended from a Sabine captured in the Samnite Wars. Either way, he was a slave for at least part of his life. He was evidently a man of strong abilities however and managed to gain his freedom and improve his social position. Thus Horace claimed to be the free-born son of a prosperous 'coactor'[15] The term 'coactor' could denote various roles, such as tax collector, but its use by Horace[16] was explained by scholia as a reference to 'coactor argentareus' i.e. an auctioneer with some of the functions of a banker, paying the seller out of his own funds and later recovering the sum with interest from the buyer.[17]

The father spent a small fortune on his son’s education, eventually accompanying him to Rome to oversee his schooling and moral development. The poet later paid tribute to him in a poem[18] that one modern scholar considers the best memorial by any son to his father.[nb 5] The poem includes this passage:

> If my character is flawed by a few minor faults, but is otherwise decent and moral, if you can point out only a few scattered blemishes on an otherwise immaculate surface, if no one can accuse me of greed, or of prurience, or of profligacy, if I live a virtuous life, free of defilement (pardon, for a moment, my self-praise), and if I am to my friends a good friend, my father deserves all the credit... As it is now, he deserves from me unstinting gratitude and praise. I could never be ashamed of such a father, nor do I feel any need, as many people do, to apologize for being a freedman’s son. *Satires 1.6.65–92*

He never mentioned his mother in his verses and he might not have known much about her perhaps she also had been a slave.[15]

**Adulthood**
Horace left Rome, possibly after his father's death, and continued his formal education in Athens, a great centre of learning in the ancient world, where he arrived at nineteen years of age, enrolling in The Academy. Founded by Plato, The Academy was now dominated by Epicureans and Stoics, whose theories and practises made a deep impression on the young man from Venusia.[19] Meanwhile, he mixed and lounged about with the elite of Roman youth, such as Marcus, the idle son of Cicero, and the Pompeius to whom he later addressed a poem.[20] It was in Athens too that he probably acquired deep familiarity with the ancient tradition of Greek lyric poetry, at that time largely the preserve of grammarians and academic specialists (access to such material was easier in Athens than in Rome, where the public libraries had yet to be built by Asinius Pollio and Augustus).[21]

Rome's troubles following the assassination of Julius Caesar were soon to catch up with him. Marcus Junius Brutus came to Athens seeking support for the republican cause. Brutus was feted around town in grand receptions and he made a point of attending academic lectures, all the while recruiting supporters among the young men studying there, including Horace.[22] An educated young Roman could begin military service high in the ranks and Horace was made tribunus militum (one of six senior officers of a typical legion), a post usually reserved for men of senatorial or equestrian rank and which seems to have inspired jealousy among his well-born confederates.[23][24] He learned the basics of military life while on the march, particularly in the wilds of northern Greece, whose rugged scenery became a backdrop to some of his later poems.[25] It was there in 42 BC that Octavian (later Augustus) and his associate Mark Antony crushed the republican forces at the Battle of Philippi. Horace later recorded it as a day of embarrassment for himself, when he fled without his shield,[26] but allowance should be made for his self-deprecating humour. Moreover, the incident allowed him to identify himself with some famous poets who had long ago abandoned their shields in battle, notably his heroes Alcaeus and Archilochus. The comparison with the latter poet is uncanny: Archilochus lost his shield in a part of Thrace near Philippi, and he was deeply involved in the Greek colonization of Thasos, where Horace’s die-hard comrades finally surrendered.[24]

Octavian offered an early amnesty to his opponents and Horace quickly accepted it. On returning to Italy, he was confronted with yet another loss: his father's estate in Venusia was one of many throughout Italy to be confiscated for the settlement of veterans (Virgil lost his estate in the north about the same time). Horace later claimed that he was reduced to poverty and this led him to try his hand at poetry,[27] in reality, there was no money to be had from versifying. At best, it offered future prospects through contacts with other poets and their patrons among the rich.[28] Meanwhile, he obtained the sinecure of scriba quaestorius, a civil service position at the aerarium or Treasury, profitable enough to be purchased even by members of the ordo equester and not very demanding in its workload, since tasks could be delegated to scribae or permanent clerks.[29] It was about this time that he began writing his Satires and Epodes.

Poet
The Epodes belong to iambic poetry. Iambic poetry features insulting and obscene language,[30][31], sometimes, it is referred to as blame poetry.[32] Blame poetry, or shame poetry, is poetry written to blame and shame fellow citizens into a sense of their social obligations. Horace modelled these poems on the poetry of Archilochus. Social bonds in Rome had been decaying since the destruction of Carthage a little more than a hundred years earlier, due to the vast wealth that could be gained by plunder and corruption.[33] These social ills were magnified by rivalry between Julius Caesar, Mark Antony and confederates like Sextus Pompey, all jockeying for a bigger share of the spoils. One modern scholar has counted a dozen civil wars in the hundred years leading up to 31 BC, including the Spartacus rebellion, eight years before Horace’s birth.[34] As the heirs to Hellenistic culture, Horace and his fellow Romans were not well prepared to deal with these problems:

“At bottom, all the problems that the times were stirring up were of a social nature, which the Hellenistic thinkers were ill qualified to grapple with. Some of them censured oppression of the poor by the rich, but they gave no practical lead, though they may have hoped to see well-meaning rulers doing so. Philosophy was drifting into absorption in self, a quest for private contentedness, to be achieved by self-control and restraint, without much regard for the fate of a disintegrating community”—V.G. Kiernan[35]
Horace’s Hellenistic background is clear in his Satires, even though the genre was unique to Latin literature. He brought to it a style and outlook suited to the social and ethical issues confronting Rome but he changed its role from public, social engagement to private meditation. Meanwhile, he was beginning to interest Octavian’s supporters, a gradual process described by him in one of his satires. The way was opened for him by his friend, the poet Virgil, who had gained admission into the privileged circle around Maecenas, Octavian’s lieutenant, following the success of his Eclogues. An introduction soon followed and, after a discreet interval, Horace too was accepted. He depicted the process as an honourable one, based on merit and mutual respect, eventually leading to true friendship, and there is reason to believe that his relationship was genuinely friendly, not just with Maecenas but afterwards with Augustus as well. On the other hand, the poet has been unsympathetically described by one scholar as “a sharp and rising young man, with an eye to the main chance.” There were advantages on both sides: Horace gained encouragement and material support, the politicians gained a hold on a potential dissident. His republican sympathies, and his role at Philippi, may have caused him some pangs of remorse over his new status. However most Romans considered the civil wars to be the result of contentio dignitatis, or rivalry between the foremost families of the city, and he too seems to have accepted the principate as Rome’s last hope for much needed peace.

In 37 BC, Horace accompanied Maecenas on a journey to Brundisium, described in one of his poems as a series of amusing incidents and charming encounters with other friends along the way, such as Virgil. In fact the journey was political in its motivation, with Maecenas en route to negotiate the Treaty of Tarentum with Antony, a fact Horace artfully keeps from the reader (political issues are largely avoided in the first book of satires). Horace was probably also with Maecenas on one of Octavian’s naval expeditions against the piratical Sextus Pompeius, which ended in a disastrous storm off Palinurus in 36 BC, briefly alluded to by Horace in terms of near-drowning. There are also some indications in his verses that he was with Maecenas at the Battle of Actium in 31 BC, where Octavian defeated his great rival, Antony. By then Horace had already received from Maecenas the famous gift of his Sabine farm, probably not long after the publication of the first book of Satires. The gift, which included income from five tenants, may have ended his career at the Treasury, or at least allowed him to give it less time and energy. It signalled his identification with the Octavian regime yet, in the second book of Satires that soon followed, he continued the apolitical stance of the first book. By this time, he had attained the status of equestre Romanus perhaps as a result of his work at the Treasury.

**Odes**

Odes 1–3 were the next focus for his artistic creativity. He adapted their forms and themes from Greek lyric poetry of the seventh and sixth centuries BC. The fragmented nature of the Greek world had enabled his literary heroes to express themselves freely and his semi-retirement from the Treasury in Rome to his own estate in the Sabine hills perhaps empowered him to some extent also yet even when his lyrics touched on public affairs they reinforced the importance of private life. Nevertheless, his work in the period 30–27 BC began to show his closeness to the regime and his sensitivity to its developing ideology. In Odes 1.2, for example, he eulogized Octavian in hyperboles that echo Hellenistic court poetry. The name Augustus, which Octavian assumed in January 27 BC, is first attested in Odes 3.3 and 3.5. In the period 27–24 BC, political allusions in the Odes concentrated on foreign wars in Britain (1.35), Arabia (1.29) Spain (3.8) and Parthia (2.2). He greeted Augustus on his return to Rome in 24 BC as a beloved ruler upon whose good health he depended for his own happiness (3.14).

The public reception of Odes 1–3 disappointed him however. He attributed the lack of success to jealousy among imperial courtiers and to his isolation from literary cliques. Perhaps it was disappointment that led him to put aside the genre in favour of verse letters. He addressed his first book of Epistles to a variety of friends and acquaintances in an urbane style reflecting his new social status as a knight. In the opening poem, he professed a deeper interest in moral philosophy than poetry but, though the collection demonstrates a leaning towards stoic theory, it reveals no sustained thinking about ethics. Maecenas was still the dominant confidante but Horace had now begun to assert his own independence, suavely declining constant invitations to attend his patron. In the final poem of the first book of Epistles, he revealed himself to be forty-four years old in the consulship of Lollius and Lepidus i.e. 21 BC, and “of small stature, fond of the sun, prematurely greyquick-tempered but easily placated.

According to Suetonius, the second book of Epistles was prompted by Augustus, who desired a verse epistle to be addressed to himself. Augustus was in fact a prolific letter-writer and he once asked Horace to be his personal secretary. Horace refused the secretarial role but complied with the emperor’s request for a verse letter. The letter to Augustus may have been slow in coming, being published possibly as late as 11 BC. It celebrated, among other things, the 15 BC military victories of his stepsons, Drusus and...
Tiberius, yet it and the following letter were largely devoted to literary theory and criticism. The literary theme was explored still further in *Ars Poetica*, published separately but written in the form of an epistle and sometimes referred to as *Epistles* 2.3 (possibly the last poem he ever wrote). He was also commissioned to write odes commemorating the victories of Drusus and Tiberius and one to be sung in a temple of Apollo for the Secular Games, a long abandoned festival that Augustus revived in accordance with his policy of recreating ancient customs *Carmen Saeculare*.

Suetonius recorded some gossip about Horace’s sexual activities late in life, claiming that the walls of his bedchamber were covered with obscene pictures and mirrors, so that he saw erotica wherever he looked. The poet died at 56 years of age, not long after his friend Maecenas, near whose tomb he was laid to rest. Both men bequeathed their property to Augustus, an honour that the emperor expected of his friends.

**Works**

The dating of Horace’s works isn’t known precisely and scholars often debate the exact order in which they were first ‘published’. There are persuasive arguments for the following chronology:

- *Satires* 1 (c. 35–34 BC)
- *Satires* 2 (c. 30 BC)
- *Epodes* (30 BC)
- *Odes* 1–3 (c. 23 BC)
- *Epistles* 1 (c. 21 BC)
- *Carmen Saeculare* (17 BC)
- *Epistles* 2 (c. 11 BC)
- *Odes* 4 (c. 11 BC)
- *Ars Poetica* (c. 10–8 BC)

**Historical context**

Horace composed in traditional metres borrowed from Archaic Greece, employing hexameters in his *Satires* and *Epistles*, and iambic in his *Epodes*, all of which were relatively easy to adapt into Latin forms. His *Odes* featured more complex measures, including alcaics and sapphics, which were sometimes a difficult fit for Latin structure and syntax. Despite these traditional metres, he presented himself as a partisan in the development of a new and sophisticated style. He was influenced in particular by Hellenistic aesthetics of brevity, elegance and polish, as modeled in the work of Callimachus.

"As soon as Horace, stirred by his own genius and encouraged by the example of Virgil, Varius, and perhaps some other poets of the same generation, had determined to make his fame as a poet, being by temperament a fighter, he wanted to fight against all kinds of prejudice, amateurish slovenliness, philistine, reactionary tendencies, in short to fight for the new and noble type of poetry which he and his friends were endeavouring to bring about.”—Eduard Fraenkel

In modern literary theory, a distinction is often made between immediate personal experience (*Urerlebnis*) and experience mediated by cultural vectors such as literature, philosophy and the visual arts (*Bildungserlebnis*). The distinction has little relevance for Horace however since his personal and literary experiences are implicated in each other. *Satires* 1.5, for example, recounts in detail a real trip Horace made with Virgil and some of his other literary friends, and which parallels a Satire by Lucilius, his predecessor. Unlike much Hellenistic-inspired literature, however, his poetry was not composed for a small coterie of admirers and fellow poets, nor does it rely on abstruse allusions for many of its effects. Though elitist in its literary standards, it was written for a wide audience, as a public form of art. Ambivalence also characterizes his literary persona, since his presentation of himself as part of a small
community of philosophically aware people, seeking true peace of mind while shunning vices like greed, was well adapted to Augustus's plans to reform public morality, corrupted by greed – his personal plea for moderation was part of the emperor's grand message to the nation.[66]

Horace generally followed the examples of poets established as classics in different genres, such as Archilochus in the Epodes, Lucilius in the Satires and Alcaeus in the Odes, later broadening his scope for the sake of variation and because his models weren't actually suited to the realities confronting him. Archilochus and Alcaeus were aristocratic Greeks whose poetry had a social and religious function that was immediately intelligible to their audiences but which became a mere artifice or literary motif when transposed to Rome. However, the artifice of the Odes is also integral to their success, since they could now accommodate a wide range of emotional effects, and the blend of Greek and Roman elements adds a sense of detachment and universality.[67] Horace proudly claimed to introduce into Latin the spirit and iambic poetry of Archilochus but (unlike Archilochus) without persecuting anyone (Epistles 1.19.23–5). It was no idle boast. His Epodes were modeled on the verses of the Greek poet, as 'blame poetry', yet he avoided targeting real scapegoats. Whereas Archilochus presented himself as a serious and vigorous opponent of wrong-doers, Horace aimed for comic effects and adopted the persona of a weak and ineffectual critic of his times (as symbolized for example in his surrender to the witch Canidia in the final epode).[68] He also claimed to be the first to introduce into Latin the lyrical methods of Alcaeus (Epistles 1.19.32–3) and he actually was the first Latin poet to make consistent use of Alcaic meters and themes: love, politics and the symposium. He imitated other Greek lyric poets as well, employing a 'motto' technique, beginning each ode with some reference to a Greek original and then diverging from it.[69]

The satirical poet Lucilius was a senator's son who could castigate his peers with impunity. Horace was a mere freedman's son who had to tread carefully.[70] Lucilius was a rugged patriot and a significant voice in Roman self-awareness, endearing himself to his countrymen by his blunt frankness and explicit politics. His work expressed genuine freedom or libertas. His style included 'metrical vandalism' and looseness of structure. Horace instead adopted an oblique and ironic style of satire, ridiculing stock characters and anonymous targets. His libertas was the private freedom of a philosophical outlook, not a political or social privilege.[71] His Satires are relatively easy-going in their use of meter (relative to the tight lyric meters of the Odes)[72] but formal and highly controlled relative to the poems of Lucilius, whom Horace mocked for his sloppy standards (Satires 1.10.56–61)[nb 12]

The Epistles may be considered among Horace's most innovative works. There was nothing like it in Greek or Roman literature. Occasionally poems had had some resemblance to letters, including an elegiac poem from Solon to Minnemus and some lyrical poems from Pindar to Hieron of Syracuse. Lucilius had composed a satire in the form of a letter, and some epistolary poems were composed by Catullus and Propertius. But nobody before Horace had ever composed an entire collection of verse letters,[73] let alone letters with a focus on philosophical problems. The sophisticated and flexible style that he had developed in his Satires was adapted to the more serious needs of this new genre.[74] Such refinement of style was not unusual for Horace. His craftsmanship as a wordsmith is apparent even in his earliest attempts at this or that kind of poetry, but his handling of each genre tended to improve over time as he adapted it to his own needs.[70] Thus for example it is generally agreed that his second book of Satires, where human folly is revealed through dialogue between characters, is superior to the first, where he propounds his ethics in monologues. Nevertheless, the first book includes some of his most popular poems[75]

Themes

Horace developed a number of inter-related themes throughout his poetic career, including politics, love, philosophy and ethics, his own social role, as well as poetry itself. His Epodes and Satires are forms of 'blame poetry' and both have a natural affinity with the moralising and diatribes of Cynicism. This often takes the form of allusions to the work and philosophy of Bion of Borysthenes [nb 13] but it is as much a literary game as a philosophical alignment. By the time he composed his Epistles, he was a critic of Cynicism along with all impractical and "high-falutin" philosophy in general.[nb 14][76] The Satires also include a strong element of Epicureanism, with frequent allusions to the Epicurean poet Lucretius.[nb 15] So for example the Epicurean sentiment carpe diem is the inspiration behind Horace's repeated punning on his own name (Horatius ~ hora) in Satires 2.6.[77] The Satires also feature some Stoic, Peripatetic and Platonic (Dialogues) elements. In short, the Satires present a medley of philosophical programs, dished up in no particular order – a style of argument typical of the genre.[78] The Odes display a wide range of topics. Over time, he becomes more confident about his political voice.[79] Although he is often thought of as an overly intellectual lover, he is ingenious in representing passion.[80] The "Odes" weave various philosophical strands together, with allusions and statements of doctrine present in about a
third of the *Odes* Books 1–3, ranging from the flippant (1.22, 3.28) to the solemn (2.10, 3.2, 3.3). Epicureanism is the dominant influence, characterizing about twice as many of these odes as Stoicism. A group of odes combines these two influences in tense relationships, such as *Odes* 1.7, praising Stoic virility and devotion to public duty while also advocating private pleasures among friends. While generally favouring the Epicurean lifestyle, the lyric poet is as eclectic as the satiric poet, and in *Odes* 2.10 even proposes Aristotle's golden mean as a remedy for Rome's political troubles. Many of Horace's odes also contain much reflection on genre, the lyric tradition, and the function of poetry. *Odes* 4, thought to be composed at the emperor's request, takes the themes of the first three books of "Odes" to a new level. This book shows greater poetic confidence after the public performance of his "Carmen saeculare" or "Century hymn" at a public festival orchestrated by Augustus. In it, Horace addresses the emperor Augustus directly with more confidence and proclaims his power to grant poetic immortality to those he praises. It is the least philosophical collection of his verses, excepting the twelfth ode, addressed to the dead Virgil as if he were living. In that ode, the epic poet and the lyric poet are aligned with Stoicism and Epicureanism respectively, in a mood of bitter-sweet pathos. The first poem of the *Epistles* sets the philosophical tone for the rest of the collection: "So now I put aside both verses and all those other games: What is true and what befits is my care, this my question, this my whole concern." His poetic renunciation of poetry in favour of philosophy is intended to be ambiguous. Ambiguity is the hallmark of the *Epistles*. It is uncertain if those being addressed by the self-mocking poet-philosopher are being honoured or criticized. Though he emerges as an Epicurean, it is on the understanding that philosophical preferences, like political and social choices, are a matter of personal taste. Thus he depicts the ups and downs of the philosophical life more realistically than do most philosophers.

### Reception

The reception of Horace's work has varied from one epoch to another and varied markedly even in his own lifetime. *Odes* 1–3 were not well received when first 'published' in Rome, yet Augustus later commissioned a ceremonial ode for the Centennial Games in 17 BC and also encouraged the publication of *Odes* 4, after which Horace's reputation as Rome's premier lyricist was assured. His Odes were to become the best received of all his poems in ancient times, acquiring a classic status that discouraged imitation: no other poet produced a comparable body of lyrics in the four centuries that followed (though that might also be attributed to social causes, particularly the parasitism that Italy was sinking into). In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, ode-writing became highly fashionable in England and a large number of aspiring poets imitated Horace both in English and in Latin.

In a verse epistle to Augustus (Epistle 2.1), in 12 BC, Horace argued for classic status to be awarded to contemporary poets, including Virgil and apparently himself. In the final poem of his third book of Odes he claimed to have created for himself a monument more durable than bronze ("Exegi monumentum aere perennius", *Carmina* 3.30.1). For one modern scholar, however, Horace's personal qualities are more notable than the monumental quality of his achievement:

> ...when we hear his name we don't really think of a monument. We think rather of a voice which varies in tone and resonance but is always recognizable, and which by its unsentimental humanity evokes a very special blend of liking and respect.—Niall Rudd

Yet for men like Wilfred Owen, scarred by experiences of World War I, his poetry stood for discredited values:

> My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
> To children ardent for some desperate glory
> The Old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
> Pro patria mori [nb 16]
The same motto, Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori, had been adapted to the ethos of martyrdom in the lyrics of early Christian poets like Prudentius. These preliminary comments touch on a small sample of developments in the reception of Horace's work. More developments are covered epoch by epoch in the following sections.

Antiquity

Horace's influence can be observed in the work of his near contemporaries, Ovid and Propertius. Ovid followed his example in creating a completely natural style of expression in hexameter verse, and Propertius cheekily mimicked him in his third book of elegies. His Epistles provided them both with a model for their own verse letters and it also shaped Ovid's exile poetry. His influence had a perverse aspect. As mentioned before, the brilliance of his Odes may have discouraged imitation. Conversely, they may have created a vogue for the lyrics of the archaic Greek poet Pindar, due to the fact that Horace had neglected that style of lyric (see Pindar#Influence and legacy). The iambic genre seems almost to have disappeared after publication of Horace's Epodes. Ovid's Ibis was a rare attempt at the form but it was inspired mainly by Callimachus, and there are some iambic elements in Martial but the main influence there was Catullus. A revival of popular interest in the satires of Lucilius may have been inspired by Horace's criticism of his unpolished style. Both Horace and Lucilius were considered good role-models by Persius, who critiqued his own satires as lacking both the acerbity of Lucilius and the gentler touch of Horace. Juvenal's caustic satire was influenced mainly by Lucilius but Horace by then was a school classic and Juvenal could refer to him respectfully and in a round-about way as "the Venusine lamp".

Statius paid homage to Horace by composing one poem in Sapphic and one in Alcaic meter (the verse forms most often associated with Odes), which he included in his collection of occasional poems Silvae. Ancient scholars wrote commentaries on the lyric meters of the Odes, including the scholarly poet Caesius Bassus. By a process called derivatio, he varied established meters through the addition or omission of syllables, a technique borrowed by Seneca the Younger when adapting Horatian meters to the stage.

Horace's poems continued to be school texts into late antiquity. Works attributed to Helenius Acro and Pomponius Porphyrio are the remnants of a much larger body of Horatian scholarship. Porphyrio arranged the poems in non-chronological order, beginning with the Odes, because of their general popularity and their appeal to scholars (the Odes were to retain this privileged position in the medieval manuscript tradition and thus in modern editions also). Horace was often evoked by poets of the fourth century, such as Ausonius and Claudian. Prudentius presented himself as a Christian Horace, adapting Horatian meters to his own poetry and giving Horatian motifs a Christian tone. On the other hand, St Jerome, modelled an uncompromising response to the pagan Horace, observing: "What harmony can there be between Christ and the Devil? What has Horace to do with the Psalter?" By the early sixth century, Horace and Prudentius were both part of a classical heritage that was struggling to survive the disorder of the times. Boethius, the last major author of classical Latin literature, could still take inspiration from Horace, sometimes mediated by Senecan tragedy. It can be argued that Horace's influence extended beyond poetry to dignify core themes and values of the early Christian era, such as self-sufficiency, inner contentment and courage.

Middle Ages and Renaissance

Classical texts almost ceased being copied in the period between the mid sixth century and the Middle Ages. Horace's work probably survived in just two or three books imported into northern Europe from Italy. These became the ancestors of six extant manuscripts dated to the ninth century. Two of those six manuscripts are French in origin, one was produced in Alsace, and the other three show Irish influence but were probably written in continental monasteries (Lombardy for example). By the last half of the ninth century, it was not uncommon for literate people to have direct experience of Horace's poetry. His influence on the Carolingian Renaissance can be found in the poems of Heiric of Auxerre and in some manuscripts marked with neumes, mysterious notations that may have been an aid to the memorization and discussion of his lyric meters. Ode 4.11 is neumed with the melody of a hymn to John the Baptist, Ut queant laxis, composed in Sapphic stanzas. This hymn later became the basis of the solfege system (Do, re, mi...)—an association with western music quite appropriate for a lyric poet like Horace, though the language of the hymn is mainly Prudentian. Lyons argues that the melody in question was linked with Horace's Ode well before Guido d'Arezzo fitted Ut
Influences can be found in the diversity of the people interested in his works, both among readers and authors. The mixing of influences is shown for example in one poet's pseudonym, Horace Juvenal, indicating that variety, as first modelled by Horace, was considered a fundamental aspect of the lyric genre. The content of his poems was restricted to simple piety. Among the most successful imitators of Satires and Epistles was another Germanic author, calling himself Sextus Amarcius, around 1100, who composed four books, the first two exemplifying vices, the second pair mainly virtues.

Petrarch is a key figure in the imitation of Horace in accentual meters. His verse letters in Latin were modelled on the Epistles and he wrote a letter to Horace in the form of an ode. However he also borrowed from Horace when composing his Italian sonnets. One modern scholar has speculated that authors who imitated Horace in accentual rhythms (including stressed Latin and vernacular languages) may have considered their work a natural sequel to Horace's metrical variety. In France, Horace and Pindar were the poetic models for a group of vernacular authors called the Pléiade, including for example Pierre de Ronsard and Joachim du Bellay. Montaigne made constant and inventive use of Horatian quotes. The vernacular languages were dominant in Spain and Portugal in the sixteenth century, where Horace's influence is notable in the works of such authors as Garcilaso de la Vega, Juan Boscán Sá de Miranda, Antonio Ferreira and Fray Luis de León, the latter for example writing odes on the Horatian theme beatus ille (happy the man). The sixteenth century in western Europe was also an age of translations (except in Germany, where Horace wasn't translated until well into the seventeenth century). The first English translator was Thomas Drant, who placed translations of Jeremiah and Horace side by side in Medicinable Morall, 1566. That was also the year that the Scot George Buchanan paraphrased the Psalms in a Horatian setting. Ben Jonson put Horace on the stage in 1601 in Poetaster, along with other classical Latin authors, giving them all their own verses to speak in translation. Horace's part evinces the independent spirit, moral earnestness and critical insight that many readers look for in his poems.

Age of Enlightenment

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, or the Age of Enlightenment, neo-classical culture was pervasive. English literature in the middle of that period has been dubbed Augustan. It is not always easy to distinguish Horace's influence during those centuries (the mixing of influences is shown for example in one poet's pseudonym, Horace Juvenal). However a measure of his influence can be found in the diversity of the people interested in his works, both among readers and authors.
New editions of his works were published almost yearly. There were three new editions in 1612 (two in Leiden, one in Frankfurt) and again in 1699 (Utrecht, Barcelona, Cambridge). Cheap editions were plentiful and fine editions were also produced, including one whose entire text was engraved by John Pine in copperplate. The poet James Thomson owned five editions of Horace’s work and the physician James Douglas had five hundred books with Horace-related titles. Horace was often commended in periodicals such as The Spectator, as a hallmark of good judgement, moderation and manliness, a focus for moralising.[nb 27] His verses offered a fund of motifs, such as *simplicex munditiae* (elegance in simplicity) *splendide mendax* (nobly untruthful), *sapere aude, nunc est bibendum, carpe diem* (the latter perhaps being the only one still in common use today).[94] Quoted even in works as prosaic as Edmund Quincy’s *A treatise of hemp-husbandry* (1765). The fictional hero Tom Jones recited his verses with feeling.[109] His works were also used to justify commonplace themes, such as patriotic obedience, as in James Parry’s English lines from an Oxford University collection in 1736.[110]

What friendly Muse will teach my Lays
To emulate the Roman fire?
Justly to sound a Caesar’s praise
Demands a bold Horatian lyre.

Horatian-style lyrics were increasingly typical of Oxford and Cambridge verse collections for this period, most of them in Latin but some like the previous ode in English. John Milton’s Lycidas first appeared in such a collection. It has few Horatian echoes[nb 28] yet Milton’s associations with Horace were lifelong. He composed a controversial version of *Odes* 1.5, and *Paradise Lost* includes references to Horace’s ‘Roman’ *Odes* 3.1–6 (Book 7 for example begins with echoes of *Odes* 3.4).[111] Yet Horace’s lyrics could offer inspiration to libertines as well as moralists, and neo-Latin sometimes served as a kind of discrete veil for the risqué. Thus for example Benjamin Lovelng authored a catalogue of Drury Lane and Covent Garden prostitutes, in Sapphic stanzas, and an encomium for a dying lady “of salacious memory”.[112] Some Latin imitations of Horace were politically subversive, such as a marriage ode by Anthony Alsp that included a rallying cry for the Jacobite cause. On the other hand, Andrew Marvell took inspiration from Horace’s *Odes* 1.37 to compose his English masterpiece *Horatian Ode upon Cromwell’s Return from Ireland*, in which subtly nuanced reflections on the execution of Charles I echo Horace’s ambiguous response to the death of Cleopatra (Marvell’s ode was suppressed in spite of its subtlety and only began to be widely published in 1776). Samuel Johnson took particular pleasure in reading *The Odes*.[nb 29] Alexander Pope wrote direct *Imitations* of Horace (published with the original Latin alongside) and also echoed him in *Essays* and *The Rape of the Lock*. He even emerged as “a quite Horatian Homer” in his translation of the *Iliad*. Horace appealed also to female poets, such as Anna Seward (*Original sonnets on various subjects, and odes paraphrased from Horace*, 1799) and Elizabeth Tolet, who composed a Latin ode in Sapphic meter to celebrate her brother’s return from overseas, with tea and coffee substituted for the wine of Horace’s *Iliad*.

Horace’s *Ars Poetica* is second only to Aristotle’s *Poetics* in its influence on literary theory and criticism. Milton recommended both works in his treatise of *Education*. Horace’s *Satires* and *Epistles* however also had a huge impact, influencing theorists and critics such as John Dryden.[117] There was considerable debate over the value of different lyrical forms for contemporary poets, as represented on one hand by the kind of four-line stanzas made familiar by Horace’s Sapphic and Alcaic *Odes* and, on the other, the loosely structured Pindarics associated with the odes of Pindar. Translations occasionally involved scholars in the dilemmas of censorship. Thus Christopher Smart entirely omitted *Odes* 4.10 and re-numbered the remaining odes. He also removed the ending of *Odes* 4.1. Thomas Creech printed *Epodes* 8 and 12 in the original Latin but left out their English translations. Philip Francis left out both the English and Latin for those same two epodes, a gap in the numbering the only indication that something was amiss. French editions of Horace were influential in England and these too were regularly bowdlerised.
Most European nations had their own 'Horaces': thus for example Friedrich von Hagedorn was called *The German Horace* and Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski *The Polish Horace* (the latter was much imitated by English poets such as Henry Vaughan and Abraham Cowley). Pope Urban VIII wrote voluminously in Horatian meters, including an ode on gout.[118]

### 19th century on

Horace maintained a central role in the education of English-speaking elites right up until the 1960s.[119] A pedantic emphasis on the formal aspects of language-learning at the expense of literary appreciation may have made him unpopular in some quarters[120] yet it also confirmed his influence—a tension in his reception that underlies Byron's famous lines from *Childe Harold* (Canto iv, 77).[121]

> Then farewell, Horace, whom I hated so  
> Not for thy faults, but mine; it is a curse  
> To understand, not feel thy lyric flow,  
> To comprehend, but never love thy verse.

William Wordsworth’s mature poetry, including the preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, reveals Horace’s influence in its rejection of false ornament[122] and he once expressed "a wish / to meet the shade of Horace...".[nb 30] John Keats echoed the opening of Horace’s *Epodes 14* in the opening lines of *Ode to a Nightingale*.[nb 31]

The Roman poet was presented in the nineteenth century as an honorary English gentleman. William Thackeray produced a version of *Odes 1.38* in which Horace’s questionable ‘boy’ became ‘Lucy’, and Gerard Manley Hopkins translated the boy innocently as ‘child’. Horace was translated by Sir Theodore Martin (biographer of Prince Albert) but minus some ungentlemanly verses, such as the erotic *Odes 1.25* and *Epodes 8* and 12. Lord Lytton produced a popular translation and William Gladstone also wrote translations during his last days as Prime Minister[123]

Edward FitzGerald’s *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, though formally derived from the Persian *ruba’i*, nevertheless shows a strong Horatian influence, since, as one modern scholar has observed,"...the quatrains inevitably recall the stanzas of the ‘Odes’, as does the narrating first person of the world-weary, ageing Epicurean Omar himself, mixing sympotic exhortation and ‘carpe diem’ with splendid moralising and ‘memento mori’ nihilism.”[nb 32] Matthew Arnold advised a friend in verse not to worry about politics, an echo of *Odes 2.11*, yet later became a critic of Horace’s inadequacies relative to Greek poets, as role models of Victorian virtues, observing: “If human life were complete without faith, without enthusiasm, without energy, Horace...would be the perfect interpreter of human life.”[124] Christina Rossetti composed a sonnet depicting a woman willing her own death steadily, drawing on Horace’s depiction of ‘Glycera’ in *Odes 1.19.5–6* and Cleopatra in *Odes 1.37.*[nb 33] A. E. Housman considered *Odes 4.7*, in Archilochian couplets, the most beautiful poem of antiquity[125] and yet he generally shared Horace’s penchant for quatrains, being readily adapted to his own elegiac and melancholy strain.[126] The most famous poem of Ernest Dowson took its title and its heroine’s name from a line of *Odes 4.1*, *Non sum qualis eram bonae sub regno Cynarae*, as well as its motif of nostalgia for a former flame. Kipling wrote a famous parody of the *Odes*, satirising their stylistic idiosyncrasies and especially the extraordinary syntax, but he also used Horace’s Roman patriotism as a focus for British imperialism, as in the story *Regulus* in the school collection *Stalky & Co.*, which he based on *Odes 3.5*.[127] Wilfred Owen’s famous poem, quoted above, incorporated Horatian text to question patriotism while ignoring the rules of Latin scansion. However, there were few other echoes of Horace in the war period, possibly because war is not actually a major theme of Horace’s work.[128]

*Ode 1.37,*

Both W.H.Auden and Louis MacNeice began their careers as teachers of classics and both responded as poets to Horace’s influence. Auden for example evoked the fragile world of the 1930s in terms echoing *Odes 2.11.1–4*, where Horace advises a friend not to let worries about frontier wars interfere with current pleasures.

> And, gentle, do not care to know  
> Where Poland draws her Eastern bow,  
> What violence is done;  
> Nor ask what doubtful act allows  
> Our freedom in this English house,
Our picnics in the sun.[nb 34]

The American poet, Robert Frost, echoed Horace's Satires in the conversational and sententious idiom of some of his longer poems, such as The Lesson for Today (1941), and also in his gentle advocacy of life on the farm, as in Hyla Brook (1916), evoking Horace's fons Bandusiae in Ode 3.13. Now at the start of the third millennium, poets are still absorbing and re-configuring the Horatian influence, sometimes in translation (such as a 2002 English/American edition of the Odes by thirty-six poets)[nb 35] and sometimes as inspiration for their own work (such as a 2003 collection of odes by a New Zealand poet)[nb 36]

Horace's Epodes have largely been ignored in the modern era, excepting those with political associations of historical significance. The obscene qualities of some of the poems have repulsed even scholars[nb 37] yet more recently a better understanding of the nature of iambic poetry has led to a re-evaluation of the whole collection.[129][130] A re-appraisal of the Epodes also appears in creative adaptations by recent poets (such as a 2004 collection of poems that relocates the ancient context to a 1950s industrial town).[nb 38]

Translations

- John Dryden successfully adapted three of the Odes (and one Epode) into verse for readers of his own age
- Samuel Johnson favored the versions of Philip Francis. Others favor unrhymed translations.
- In 1964 James Michie published a translation of the Odes—many of them fully rhymed—including a dozen of the poems in the original Sapphic and Alcaic metres.
- More recent verse translations of the Odes include those by David West (free verse), and Colin Sydenham (rhymed).
- Ars Poetica was first translated into English by Ben Jonson and later by Lord Byron.
- Horace's Odes and the Mystery of Do-Re-Mi

See also

- Horatia (gens)
- Otium
- Prosody (Latin)
- Translation

Notes

1. Quintilian 10.1.96. The only other lyrical poet Quintilian thought comparable with Horace was the now obscure poet/metrical theorist, Caesius Bassus (R. Tarrant, Ancient Receptions of Horace 280)
2. Translated from Persius' own 'Satires' 1.11617: "omne vafer vitium ridenti Flaccus amico / tangit et admissus circum praecordia ludit."
4. The year is given in Odes 3.21.1 ("Consule Manlio"), the month in Epistles 1.20.27, the day in Suetonius' biography Vita (R. Nisbet, Horace: Life and Chronology 7)
5. "No son ever set a finer monument to his father than Horace did in the sixth satire of Book I...Horace's description of his father is warm-hearted but free from sentimentality or exaggeration. See before us one of the common people, a hard-working, open-minded, and thoroughly honest man of simple habits and strict convictions, representing some of the best qualities that at the end of the Republic could still be found in the unsophisticated society of the Italian municipid"—E. Fraenkel, Horace, 5–6
6. *Odes* 3.4.28: “hec (me extinxit) Sicula Palinurus unda”; “nor did Palinurus extinguish me with Sicilian waters”. Maecenas’ involvement is recorded by Appian *Bell. Civ.* 5.99 but Horace’s ode is the only historical reference to his own presence there, depending however on interpretation. (R. Nisbet *Horace: life and chronology* 10)

7. The point is much disputed among scholars and hinges on how the text is interpreted. *Epodes* 9 for example may offer proof of Horace’s presence if ‘ad hunc fermeníti’ (‘gnashing at this’ man i.e. the traitorous Roman) is a misreading of ‘at hunc...verterent’ (but hither.they fled) in lines describing the defection of the Galatian cavalry that hunc fermeníti verterunt bis mille equos / Galli canentes Caesarem’ (R. Nisbet *Horace: life and chronology* 12).

8. Suetonius signals that the report is based on rumours by employing the terms “tradituidicitur” / “it is reported...it is said” (E. Fraenkel, *Horace*, 21)

9. According to a recent theory the three books of *Odes* were issued separately possibly in 26, 24 and 23 BC (see G. Hutchinson (2002), *Classical Quarterly* 52: 517–37)

10. 19 BC is the usual estimate but c. 11 BC has good support too (see R. Nisbet *Horace: life and chronology* 18–20

11. The date however is subject to much controversy with 22–18 BC another option (see for example R. Syme *The Augustan Aristocracy* 379–81

12. “[Lucilius]...remains a man whose only concern is to force / something into the framework of six feet, and who daily produces / two hundred lines before dinner and another two hundred after-- Satire 1.10.59–61 (translated by Niall Rudd *The Satires of Horace and Persius* Penguin Classics 1973, p 69)

13. There is one reference to Bion by name in *Epistles* 2.2.60, and the clearest allusion to him is in *Satire* 1.6, which parallels Bion fragments 1, 2, 16

14. *Epistles* 1.17 and 1.18.6–8 are critical of the extreme views of Diogenes and also of social adaptations of Cynic precepts, and yet *Epistle* 1.2 could be either Cynic or Stoic in its orientation (J. Moles *Philosophy and ethics* p. 177


16. Wilfred Owen, *Dulce et decorum est* (1917), echoes a line from *Carmina* 3.2.13, “it is sweet and honourable to die for one’s country”, cited by Stephen Harrison, *The nineteenth and twentieth centuries* 340.

17. Propertius published his third book of elegies within a year or two of Horace’s *Odes* 1–3 and mimicked him, for example, in the opening lines, characterizing himself in terms borrowed from Odes 3.1.13 and 3.30.13–14, as a priest of the Muses and as an adaptor of Greek forms of poetry (R. Tarrant, *Ancient receptions of Horace* 279)

18. Ovid for example probably borrowed from Horace’s *Epistle* 1.20 the image of a poetry book as a slave boy eager to leave home, adapting it to the opening poems of *Tristia* 1 and 3 (R. Tarrant, *Ancient receptions of Horace*), and *Tristia* 2 may be understood as a counterpart to Horace’s *Epistles* 2.1, both being letters addressed to Augustus on literary themes (A. Barchiesi, *Speaking Volumes*, 79–103)

19. The comment is in Persius 1.114–18, yet that same satire has been found to have nearly 80 reminiscences of Horace; see D. Hooley *The Knotted Thong* 29

20. The allusion to *Venusine* comes via Horace’s *Sermones* 2.1.35, while *lamp* signifies the lucubrations of a conscientious poet. According to Quintilian (93), howeversome people in Flavian Rome preferred Lucilius not only to Horace but to all other Latin poets (R. Tarrant, *Ancient receptions of Horace* 279)

21. Prudentius sometimes alludes to the *Odes* in a negative context, as expressions of a secular life he is abandoning. Thus for example male pertinax employed in Prudentius’s *Praefatio* to describe a wilful desire for victory is lifted from *Odes* 1.9.24, where it describes a girl’s half-hearted resistance to seduction. Elsewhere he borrows aux bone from *Odes* 4.5.5 and 37, where it refers to Augustus, and applies it to Christ (R. Tarrant, *Ancient receptions of Horace*, 282


23. *Odes* 3.3.1–8 was especially influential in promoting the value of heroic calm in the face of danger; describing a man who could bear even the collapse of the world without fear of fractus illabatur orbis,/impavidum ferient ruinae. Echoes are found in Seneca’s *Agamemnon* 593–603, Prudentius’s *Peristephanon* 4.5–12 and Boethius’s *Consolatio* 1 metrum 4 (R. Tarrant, *Ancient receptions of Horace* 283–85)

24. Heiric, like Prudentius, gave Horatian motifs a Christian context. Thus the character Lydia in *Odes* 3.19.15, who would willingly die for her lover twice, becomes in Heiric’s *Life* of St Germaine of Auxerre a saint ready to die twice for the Lord’s commandments (R. Tarrant, *Ancient receptions of Horace* 287–88)
25. According to a medieval French commentary on the *Satires*: "...first he composed his lyrics, and in them, speaking to the young, as it were, he took as subject-matter love affairs and quarrels, banquets and drinking parties. Next he wrote his *Epodes*, and in them composed invectives against men of a more advanced and more dishonourable age...He next wrote his book about the *Ars Poetica*, and in that instructed men of his own profession to write well...Later he added his book of *Satires*, in which he reproved those who had fallen a prey to various kinds of vices. Finally he finished his oeuvre with the *Epistles*, and in them, following the method of a good farmer he sowed the virtues where he had rooted out the vices." (cited by K. Friis-Jensen, *Horace in the Middle Ages* 294–302)

26. 'Horace Juvenal' was author of *Modern manners: a poem* 1793

27. see for example *Spectator* 312, 27 Feb. 1712; 548, 28 Nov. 1712; 618, 10 Nov. 1714

28. One echo of Horace may be found in line 69: "Were it not better done as others use,/ To sport with Amaryllis in the shade/Or with the tangles of Neaera's hair?, which points to the Neara in *Odes* 3.14.21 (Douglas Bush, *Milton: Poetical Works*, 144, note 69)

29. Cfr. James Boswell "The Life of Samuel Johnson" Aetat. 20, 1729 where Boswell remarked of Johnson that Horace's *Odes* "were the compositions in which he took most delight."

30. The quote, from *Memorials of a Tour of Italy* (1837), contains allusions to *Odes* 3.4 and 3.13 (S. Harrison, *The nineteenth and twentieth centuries* 334–35)


32. Comment by S. Harrison, editor and contributor to *The Cambridge Companion to Horace* (S. Harrison, *The nineteenth and twentieth centuries* 337)

33. Rossetti's sonnet, *A Study (a soul)*, dated 1854, was not published in her own lifetime. Some lines: "She stands as pale as Parian marble stands / Like Cleopatra when she turns at bay" (C. Rossetti, *Complete Poems*, 758)

34. Quoted from Auden's poem *Out on the lawn I lie in bed* 1933, and cited by S. Harrison, *The nineteenth and twentieth centuries* 340

35. Edited by McClatchy reviewed by S. Harrison *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 2003.03.05


37. 'Political' Epodes are 1, 7, 9, 16; notably obscene Epodes are 8 and 12. E. Fraenkel is among the admirers repulsed by these two poems, for another view of which see for example Dee Lesser Clayman, 'Horace's Epodes VIII and XII More than Clever Obscenity?', *The Classical World* Vol. 6, No. 1 (September 1975), pp 55–61 JSTOR 4348329 (http://www.jstor.org/stable/4348329)


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**Further reading**


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- The works of Horace at The Latin Library
- Carmina HoratianaAll Carmina of Horace in Latin recited by Thomas Bervoets.
- Selected Poems of Horace
- Works by Horace at Perseus Digital Library
- Biography and chronology
- Horace’s works text, concordances and frequency list
- SORGLL: Horace, Odes I.22, read by Robert Sonkowsky
- Translations of several odes in the original meters (with accompaniment).
- A discussion and comparison of three different contemporary translations of Horace’s Odes
- Some spurious lines in the Ars Poetica?
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- Horace MS 1a Ars Poetica and Epistulae at OPenn


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Wilfred Edward Salter Owen, MC (18 March 1893 – 4 November 1918) was an English poet and soldier. He was one of the leading poets of the First World War. His war poetry on the horrors of trenches and gas warfare was heavily influenced by his mentor Siegfried Sassoon, and stood in stark contrast both to the public perception of war at the time and to the confidently patriotic verse written by earlier war poets such as Rupert Brooke. Among his best-known works – most of which were published posthumously – are "Dulce et Decorum est", "Insensibility", "Anthem for Doomed Youth", "Futility", "Spring Offensive" and "Strange Meeting".

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Early life

Owen was born on 18 March 1893 at Plas Wilmot, a house in Weston Lane, near Oswestry in Shropshire. He was the eldest of Thomas and Harriet Owen's four children; his siblings were Harold, Colin, and Mary Millard Owen. When Wilfred was born, his parents lived in a comfortable house owned by his grandfather, Edward Shaw.

After Edward's death in January 1897, and the house's sale in March,[1] the family lodged in the back streets of Birkenhead. There Thomas Owen temporarily worked in the town employed by a railway company. Thomas transferred to Shrewsbury in April 1897 where the family lived with Thomas' parents in Canon Street.[2]

Thomas Owen transferred back to Birkenhead, again in 1898 when he became stationmaster at Woodside station[2] The family lived with him at three successive homes in the Tranmere district,[3] They then moved back to Shrewsbury in 1907.[4] Wilfred Owen was educated at the Birkenhead Institute[5] and at Shrewsbury Technical School (later known as the Wakeman School).
Owen discovered his poetic vocation in about 1904 during a holiday spent in Cheshire. He was raised as an Anglican of the evangelical type, and in his youth was a devout believer, in part due to his strong relationship with his mother, which lasted throughout his life. His early influences included the Bible and the "big six" of romantic poetry, particularly John Keats.

Owen's last two years of formal education saw him as a pupil-teacher at the Wyle Cop school in Shrewsbury. In 1911 he passed the matriculation exam for the University of London, but not with the first-class honours needed for a scholarship, which in his family's circumstances was the only way he could have afforded to attend.

In return for free lodging, and some tuition for the entrance exam (this has been questioned), Owen worked as a lay assistant to the Vicar of Dunsden near Reading. During this time he attended classes at University College, Reading (now the University of Reading), in botany and later, at the urging of the head of the English Department, took free lessons in Old English. His time spent at Dunsden parish led him to disillusionment with the Church, both in its ceremony and its failure to provide aid for those in need.

From 1912 he worked as a private tutor teaching English and French at the Berlitz School of Languages in Bordeaux, France, and later with a family. There he met the older French poet Laurent Tailhade, with whom he later corresponded in French. When war broke out, Owen did not rush to enlist - and even considered the French army - but eventually returned to England.

### War service

On 21 October 1915, he enlisted in the Artists Rifles Officers' Training Corps. For the next seven months, he trained at Hare Hall Camp in Essex. On 4 June 1916, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant (on probation) in the Manchester Regiment. Initially Owen held his troops in contempt for their loutish behaviour, and in a letter to his mother described his company as "expressionless lumps." However, his imaginative existence was to be changed dramatically by a number of traumatic experiences. He fell into a shell hole and suffered concussion; he was blown up by a trench mortar and spent several days unconscious on an embankment lying amongst the remains of one of his fellow officers. Soon afterward, Owen was diagnosed as suffering from neurasthenia or shell shock and sent to Craiglockhart War Hospital in Edinburgh for treatment. It was while recuperating at Craiglockhart that he met fellow poet Siegfried Sassoon, an encounter that was to transform Owen's life.

Whilst at Craiglockhart he made friends in Edinburgh's artistic and literary circles, and did some teaching at the Tynecastle High School, in a poor area of the city. In November he was discharged from Craiglockhart, judged fit for light regimental duties. He spent a contented and fruitful winter in Scarborough, North Yorkshire, and in March 1918 was posted to the Northern Command Depot at Ripon. While in Ripon he composed or revised a number of poems, including "Futility" and "Strange Meeting". His 25th birthday was spent quietly at Ripon Cathedral, which is dedicated to his namesake St. Wilfrid of Hexham.

Owen returned in July 1918, to active service in France, although he might have stayed on home-duty indefinitely. His decision to return was probably the result of Sassoon's being sent back to England, after being shot in the head in an apparent "friendly fire" incident, and put on sick-leave for the remaining duration of the war. Owen saw it as his duty to add his voice to that of Sassoon, that the horrific realities of the war might continue to be told. Sassoon was violently opposed to the idea of Owen returning to the trenches, threatening to "stab [him] in the leg" if he tried it. Aware of his attitude, Owen did not inform him of his action until he was once again in France.

At the very end of August 1918, Owen returned to the front line - perhaps imitating Sassoon's example. On 1 October 1918 Owen led units of the Second Manchesters to storm a number of enemy strong points near the village of Joncourt. For his courage and leadership in the Joncourt action, he was awarded the Military Cross, an award he had always sought in order to justify himself as a war poet, but the award was gazetted until 15 February 1919. The citation followed on 30 July 1919:


For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty in the attack on the Fonsomme Line on 1st/2nd October 1918. On the company commander becoming a casualty, he assumed command and showed fine leadership and resisted a heavy counter-attack. He personally manipulated a captured enemy machine gun from an isolated position and inflicted considerable losses on the enemy. Throughout he behaved most gallantly.
Owen was killed in action on 4 November 1918 during the crossing of the Sambre–Oise Canal, exactly one week (almost to the hour) before the signing of the Armistice which ended the war, and was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant the day after his death. His mother received the telegram informing her of his death on Armistice Day, as the church bells in Shrewsbury were ringing out in celebration. Owen is buried at Ors Communal Cemetery, Ors, in northern France. The inscription on his gravestone, chosen by his mother Susan, is based on a quote from his poetry: “SHALL LIFE RENEW THESE BODIES? OF A TRUTH ALL DEATH WILL HE ANNUL” WO.

Owen is regarded by many as the greatest poet of the First World War, known for his verse about the horrors of trench and gas warfare. He had been writing poetry for some years before the war, himself dating his poetic beginnings to a stay at Broxton by the Hill when he was ten years old. The Romantic poets Keats and Shelley influenced much of his early writing and poetry. His great friend, the poet Siegfried Sassoon, later had a profound effect on his poetic voice, and Owen's most famous poems ("Dulce et Decorum est" and "Anthem for Doomed Youth") show direct results of Sassoon's influence. Manuscript copies of the poems survive, annotated in Sassoon's handwriting. Owen's poetry would eventually be more widely acclaimed than that of his mentor. While his use of pararhyme with heavy reliance on assonance was innovative, he was not the only poet at the time to use these particular techniques. He was, however, one of the first to experiment with it extensively.

His poetry itself underwent significant changes in 1917. As a part of his therapy at Craiglockhart, Owen's doctor, Arthur Brock, encouraged Owen to translate his experiences, specifically the experiences he relived in his dreams, into poetry. Sassoon, who was becoming influenced by Freudian psychoanalysis, aided him here, showing Owen through example what poetry could do. Sassoon's use of satire influenced Owen, who tried his hand at writing "in Sassoon's style". Further, the content of Owen's verse was undeniably changed by his work with Sassoon. Sassoon's emphasis on realism and "writing from experience" was contrary to Owen's hitherto romantic-influenced style, as seen in his earlier sonnets. Owen was to take both Sassoon's gritty realism and his own romantic notions and create a poetic synthesis that was both potent and sympathetic, as summarised by his famous phrase "the pity of war". In this way, Owen's poetry is quite distinctive, and he is, by many, considered a greater poet than Sassoon. Nonetheless, Sassoon contributed to Owen's popularity by his strong promotion of his poetry, both before and after Owen's death, and his editing was instrumental in the making of Owen as a poet.

Owen's poems had the benefit of strong patronage, and it was a combination of Sassoon's influence, support from Edith Sitwell, and the preparation of a new and fuller edition of the poems in 1931 by

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"Anthem for Doomed Youth"

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?  
Only the monstrous anger of the guns.  
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle  
Can patter out their hasty orisons.

No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells,  
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs, -  
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;  
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

What candles may be held to speed them all?  
Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes  
Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.  
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;  
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,  
And each slow dusk a drawing down of blinds.

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Edmund Blunden that ensured his popularity, coupled with a revival of interest in his poetry in the 1960s which plucked him out of a relatively exclusive readership into the public eye.[8] Though he had plans for a volume of verse, for which he had written a "Preface", he never saw his own work published apart from those poems he included in *The Hydra*, the magazine he edited at Craiglockhart War Hospital, and "Miners", which was published in *The Nation*.

There were many other influences on Owen's poetry, including his mother. His letters to her provide an insight into Owen's life at the front, and the development of his philosophy regarding the war. Graphic details of the horror Owen witnessed were never spared. Owen's experiences with religion also heavily influenced his poetry, notably in poems such as "Anthem for Doomed Youth", in which the ceremony of a funeral is re-enacted not in a church, but on the battlefield itself, and "At a Calvary near the Ancre", which comments on the Crucifixion of Christ. Owen's experiences in war led him further to challenge his religious beliefs, claiming in his poem "Exposure" that "love of God seems dying".

Only five of Owen's poems were published before his death, one in fragmentary form. His best known poems include "Anthem for Doomed Youth", "Futility", "Dulce Et Decorum Est", "The Parable of the Old Men and the Young" and "Strange Meeting". However, most of them were published posthumously: *Poems* (1920), *The Poems of Wilfred Owen* (1931), *The Collected Poems of Wilfred Owen* (1963), *The Complete Poems and Fragments* (1983); fundamental in this last collection is the poem *Soldier's Dream*, that deals with Owen's conception of war.

Owen's full unexpurgated opus is in the academic two-volume work *The Complete Poems and Fragments* (1994) by Jon Stallworthy. Many of his poems have never been published in popular form.

In 1975 Mrs. Harold Owen, Wilfred's sister-in-law, donated all of the manuscripts, photographs and letters which her late husband had owned to the University of Oxford's English Faculty Library. As well as the personal artifacts, this also includes all of Owen's personal library and an almost complete set of *The Hydra* – the magazine of Craiglockhart War Hospital. These can be accessed by any member of the public on application in advance to the English Faculty librarian.

The Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin holds a large collection of Owen's family correspondence.

An important turning point in Owen scholarship occurred in 1987 when the *New Statesman* published a stinging polemic "The Truth Untold" by Jonathan Cutbill,[23] the literary executor of Edward Carpenter, which attacked the academic suppression of Owen as a poet of homosexual experience.[24] Amongst the points it made was that the poem "Shadwell Stair", previously alleged to be mysterious, was a straightforward elegy to homosexual soliciting in an area of the London docks once renowned for it.

**Relationship with Sassoon**

Owen held Siegfried Sassoon in an esteem not far from hero-worship, remarking to his mother that he was "not worthy to light [Sassoon's] pipe". The relationship clearly had a profound impact on Owen, who wrote in his first letter to Sassoon after leaving Craiglockhart "You have fixed my life – however short". Sassoon wrote that he took "an instinctive liking to him",[25] and recalled their time together "with affection".[26] On the evening of 3 November 1917 they parted, Owen having been discharged from Craiglockhart. He was stationed on home-duty in Scarborough for several months, during which time he associated with members of the artistic circle into which Sassoon had introduced him, which included Robbie Ross and Robert Graves. He also met H. G. Wells and Arnold Bennett, and it was during this period he developed the stylistic voice for which he is now recognised. Many of his early poems were penned while stationed at the Clarence Garden Hotel, now the Clifton Hotel in Scarborough's North Bay. A blue tourist plaque on the hotel marks its association with Owen.

Robert Graves[27] and Sacheverell Sitwell[28] (who also personally knew him) stated that Owen was homosexual, and homoeroticism is a central element in much of Owen's poetry.[29][30][31][32] Through Sassoon, Owen was introduced to a sophisticated homosexual literary circle which included Oscar Wilde's friend Robbie Ross, writer and poet Osbert Sitwell, and Scottish writer C. K. Scott Moncrieff, the translator of Marcel Proust. This contact broadened Owen's outlook, and increased his confidence in incorporating homoerotic elements into his work.[33][34] Historians have debated whether Owen had an affair with Scott Moncrieff in May 1918; he had dedicated various works to a "Mr W.O.",[35] but Owen never responded.[36]
Throughout Owen's lifetime and for decades after, homosexual activity between men was a punishable offence in British law, and the account of Owen's sexual development has been somewhat obscured because his brother Harold removed what he considered discreditable passages in Owen's letters and diaries after the death of their mother. Andrew Motion wrote of Owen's relationship with Sassoon: "On the one hand, Sassoon's wealth, posh connections and aristocratic manner appealed to the snob in Owen: on the other, Sassoon's homosexuality admitted Owen to a style of living and thinking that he found naturally sympathetic."

Sassoon and Owen kept in touch through correspondence, and after Sassoon was shot in the head in July 1918 and sent back to England to recover, they met in August and spent what Sassoon described as "the whole of a hot cloudless afternoon together." They never saw each other again. About three weeks later, Owen wrote to bid Sassoon farewell, as he was on the way back to France, and they continued to communicate. After the Armistice, Sassoon waited in vain for word from Owen, only to be told of his death several months later. The loss grieved Sassoon greatly, and he was never "able to accept that disappearance philosophically."

### Memory

There are memorials to Owen at Gailly, Ors, Oswestry, Birkenhead (Central Library) and Shrewsbury.

On 11 November 1985, Owen was one of the 16 Great War poets commemorated on a slate stone unveiled in Westminster Abbey's Poet's Corner. The inscription on the stone is taken from Owen's "Preface" to his poems: "My subject is War, and the pity of War. The Poetry is in the pity." There is also a small museum dedicated to Owen and Sassoon at the Craiglockhart War Hospital, now a Napier University building.

The forester's house in Ors where Owen spent his last night, Maison forestière de l'Ermitage, has been transformed by Turner Prize nominee Simon Patterson into an art installation and permanent memorial to Owen and his poetry, which opened to the public on 1 October 2011.

Susan Owen's letter to Rabindranath Tagore marked, Shrewsbury, 1 August 1920, reads: "I have been trying to find courage to write to you ever since I heard that you were in London – but the desire to tell you something is finding its way into this letter today. The letter may never reach you, for I do not know how to address it, tho' I feel sure your name upon the envelope will be sufficient. It is nearly two years ago, that my dear eldest son went out to the War for the last time and the day he said goodbye to me – we were looking together across the sun-glorified sea – looking towards France, with breaking hearts – when he, my poet son, said those wonderful words of yours – beginning at ‘When I go from hence, let this be my parting word’ – and when his pocket book came back to me – I found these words written in his dear writing – with your name beneath."

### Wilfred Owen Association

To commemorate Wilfred's life and poetry, The Wilfred Owen Association was formed in 1989. Since its formation the Association has established permanent public memorials in Shrewsbury and Oswestry. In addition to readings, talks, visits and performances, it promotes and encourages exhibitions, conferences, awareness and appreciation of Owen's poetry. The Association President is Peter Owen, Wilfred Owen's nephew. Dr Rowan Williams (Archbishop of Canterbury 2002–2012), Sir Daniel Day-Lewis and Grey Ruthven, 2nd Earl of Gowrie are Patrons. The Association presents a biennial Poetry Award to honour a poet for a sustained body of work that includes memorable war poems; previous recipients include Sir Andrew Motion (Poet Laureate 1999-2009). In November 2015, actor Jason Isaacs unveiled a tribute to Owen at the former Craiglockhart War Hospital in Edinburgh where Owen was treated for shell shock during WW1. In June 2017, the association in conjunction with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) and military charity Glen Art, were awarded the people's choice award and a silver medal for Gardening Scotland. The garden commemorates the centenary of the CWGC and the 1.7 million Commonwealth servicemen and women who lost their lives during both world wars, across more than 150 countries.

### Depictions in popular culture
In print and film

Stephen MacDonald's play Not About Heroes (first performed in 1982) takes as its subject matter the friendship between Owen and Sassoon, and begins with their meeting at Craiglockhart during World War I.\[^{[58]}\]

Pat Barker's historical novel Regeneration (1991) also describes the meeting and relationship between Sassoon and Owen,\[^{[59]}\] acknowledging that, from Sassoon's perspective, the meeting had a profoundly significant effect on Owen. Owen's treatment with his own doctor, Arthur Brock, is also touched upon briefly. Owen's death is described in the third book of Barker's Regeneration trilogy, The Ghost Road (1995). In the 1997 film Regeneration, Stuart Bunce played Owen.\[^{[61]}\]

Owen is the subject of the BBC docudrama Wilfred Owen: A Remembrance Tale (2007), in which he is played by Samuel Barnett.\[^{[62]}\]

Owen was mentioned as a source of inspiration for one of the correspondents in the epistolary novel, The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society (2008), by Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows.\[^{[63]}\]

Harry Turtledove's multi-novel Southern Victory Series has the title of its third volume, Walk in Hell, taken from a line in "Mental Cases". This part of the series is set during an alternate history version of World War I which sees Canada invaded and occupied by United States troops. Owen is acknowledged on the title page as the source of the quote.

A film named The Burying Party is currently in its final stages of production, which depicts Owen's final year from Craiglockhart Hospital to the Battle of the Sambre. Matthew Staite stars as Owen and Joyce Branagh as his mother Susal.\[^{[64]}\][[65]]

In music

His poetry has been reworked into various formats. For example, Benjamin Britten incorporated eight of Owen's poems into his War Requiem, along with words from the Latin Mass for the Dead (Missa pro Defunctis). The Requiem was commissioned for the reconsecration of Coventry Cathedral and first performed there on 30 May 1962.\[^{[66]}\] Derek Jarman adapted it for the screen in 1988, with the 1963 recording as the soundtrack.\[^{[67]}\]

The Ravishing Beauties recorded Owen's poem "Futility" in an April 1982 John Peel session.\[^{[68]}\]

Also in 1982, 10,000 Maniacs recorded a song titled "Anthem for Doomed Youth", loosely based on the poem, in Fredonia, New York. The recording appeared on their first EP release Human Conflict Number Five and later on the compilation Hope Chest. Also appearing on the Hope Chest album was the song "The Latin One", a reference to the title of Owen's poem "Dulce et Decorum Est" on which the song is based.

Additionally in 1982, singer Virginia Astley set the poem "Futility" to music she had composed.\[^{[69]}\]

In 1992, Anathema released The Crestfallen EP, with the song "They Die" quoting lines from Owen's poem "The End", which also formed the epitaph on his grave in Ors.

Wirral musician Dean Johnson created the musical Bullets and Daffodils, based on music set to Owen's poetry, in 2010.\[^{[70]}\]

In 2015 British indie rock band The Libertines released an album entitled Anthems For Doomed Youth; this featured the track "Anthem for Doomed Youth", named after Owen's poem.

His poetry is sampled multiple times on the 2000 Jedi Mind Tricks album Violent by Design. Producer Stoupe the Enemy of Mankind has been widely acclaimed for his sampling on the album, and inclusion of Owen's poetry.

References

35. Hibberd, p. 155.
41. Sassoon, Siegfried: "Siegfried's Journey", p. 72, Faber and Faber 1946.
50. http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/clips/z9ckwmm
52. http://www.dailymail.co.uk/scotland-now/legendary-ghost-war-poet-returns-10695439
External links

- Profile and poems at Poets.org
- The Wilfred Owen Collection in The First World War Poetry Digital Archive by Oxford University
- The Wilfred Owen resource page at warpoetry.co.uk
- Works by Wilfred Owen at Project Gutenberg
- Works by or about Wilfred Owen at Internet Archive
- Works by Wilfred Owen at LibriVox (public domain audiobooks)
- Wilfred Owen at BBC Poetry Season
- Selected Poetry of Wilfred Owen—Biography and 7 poems (Anthem for Doomed Youth, Arms and the Boy Dulce et Decorum Est, Exposure, Futility, Spring Offensive, Strange Meeting)
- Wilfred Owen Association
- the Dunsden Owen Association, including a trail app
- Anthems For Doomed Youth radio
- Wilfred Owen at the British Library


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Wilfrid Wilson Gibson (2 October 1878 – 26 May 1962) was a British Georgian poet, associated with World War I but also the author of much later work.

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Early work

Gibson was born in Hexham, Northumberland and left the north for London in 1914 after his mother died. He had been publishing poems in magazines since 1895, and his first collections in book form were published by Elkin Mathews in 1902. His collections of verse plays and dramatic poems The Stonefolds and On The Threshold were published by the Samurai Press (of Cranleigh) in 1907, followed next year by the book of poems, The Web of Life.[1]

Despite his residence in London, and later in Gloucestershire, many of Gibson's poems both then and later, have Northumberland settings: Hexham's Market Cross; Hareshaw; and The Kielder Stone. Others deal with poverty and passion amid wild Northumbrian landscapes. Still others are devoted to fishermen, industrial workers and miners, often alluding to local ballads and the rich folk-song heritage of the North East.

It was in London that he met both Edward Marsh and Rupert Brooke, becoming a close friend and later Brooke's literary executor (with Lascelles Abercrombie and Walter de la Mare).[2] This was at the period when the first Georgian Poetry anthology was being hatched. Gibson was one of the insiders.[3]

During the early part of his writing life, Wilfrid Wilson Gibson wrote poems that featured the "macabre." One such poem is Flannan Isle, based on a real life mystery.

Gibson was one of the founders of the so-called "Dymock poets", a community of writers who settled briefly, before the outbreak of the Great War, in the village of Dymock, in north Gloucestershire.[4]

Reputation

His reputation was eclipsed somewhat by the Ezra Pound-T. S. Eliot school of Modernist poetry,[5][6] his work remained popular
Further reading

- Dominic Hibberd, *Wilfrid Gibson and Harold Monro, the Pioneers* (Cecil Woolf, 2006)

Notes

1. “Young men who knew that the age demanded something new in poetry were impressed by the austerity of his little ‘working class’ plays”. (Joy Grant, *Harold Monro & the Poetry Bookshop* (1966), p.19. Whistler p.281 remarks on the colloquial, homespun realism that at first was admired in Gibson.

2. Gibson met de la Mare, and quite a number of other poets, through Marsh (Theresa Whistler, *Imagination of the Heart: The Life of Walter de la Mare* (1993), p.205 and 208) in 1912. It was with de la Mare that Gibson was to make the closest friendship. Gentle and unlucky he himself best fitted Brooke’s description of those good-hearted and simple and nice poets he wanted to protect.


4. *Famous People of Herefordshire, Monmouthshire and Royal Forest of Dean* at royalforestofdean.info

5. The *Literary Encyclopedia* states that his reputation plummeted. Whistler p.282 has Gibson’s was the saddest fate of all the Georgians. Once acclaimed as the leader of an exciting new movement, when that movement came into derision the critics found in him the epitome of its vices.

6. Arthur Clutton-Brock (TLS, 24 February 1927, *Five Modern Poets*) considers Gibson alongside Eliot, AE, Herbert Read and James Stephens (pp 113-114). It is concluded there that “Mr Gibson’s poetry, has its own specific qualities and is, in its essentials unique”. In 1942 Philip D’imlinson refers to Gibson as “this distinguished poet” (TLS 31 January 1942 p.57).

External links

- Wikipedia has original media or text related to this article Wilfrid Wilson Gibson (in the public domain in Canada)
- Media related to Wilfrid Wilson Gibson at Wikimedia Commons
- Page at Spartacus
- Elizabeth Whitcomb Houghton Collection containing letters by Gibson
- Gloucestershire Poets, Writers and Artists Collection University of Gloucestershire Archives and Special Collections
- Works by Wilfrid Wilson Gibson at Project Gutenberg
- Works by Wilfrid Wilson Gibson at Faded Page (Canada)
- Works by or about Wilfrid Wilson Gibson at Internet Archive
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- Archival material at Leeds University Library


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Margaret Cole

Dame Margaret Isabel Cole, DBE (née Postgate; 6 May 1893 – 7 May 1980) was an English socialist politician, writer and poet. She wrote several detective stories in conjunction with her husband, G. D. H. Cole. She went on to hold important posts in London government in the period after the Second World War.

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Life

Daughter of John Percival Postgate and Edith (née Allen) Postgate, Margaret was educated at Roedean School and Girton College, Cambridge. While at Girton, through her reading of H. G. Wells, George Bernard Shaw and others, she came to question the Anglicanism of her upbringing and to embrace socialism after reading notable books on the subject.[1]

Upon successfully completing her course (Cambridge did not allow women to graduate formally until 1947), Margaret became a classics teacher at St. Paul's Girls' School. Her poem The Falling Leaves, a response to the First World War, and currently on the OCR English Literature syllabus at GCSE, shows the influence of Latin poetry in its use of long and short syllables to create mimetic effects.

During World War I, her brother Raymond Postgate sought exemption from military service as a socialist conscientious objector, but was denied recognition and jailed for refusing military orders. Her support for her brother led her to a belief in pacifism. During her subsequent campaign against conscription, she met G. D. H. Cole, whom she married in a registry office in August 1918.[1] The couple worked together for the Fabian Society before moving to Oxford in 1924, where they both taught and wrote. In the early 1930s, Margaret abandoned her pacifism in reaction to the suppression of socialist movements by the governments in Germany and Austria and to the events of the Spanish Civil War.

In 1941, she was co-opted to the Education Committee of the London County Council, on the nomination of Herbert Morrison, and became a champion of comprehensive education. She was an alderman on London County Council from 1952 until the Council's abolition in 1965.[2] She was a member of the Inner London Education Authority from its creation in 1965 until her retirement from public life in 1967. Harold Wilson had given her an OBE in 1965 and she became a Dame when she was awarded DBE in 1970.[1]

She wrote several books including a biography of her husband. Margaret's brother Raymond was a labour historian, journalist and novelist. Margaret and her husband jointly authored many mystery novels.[3] Margaret and her husband created a partnership, but not a marriage. Her husband took little interest in sex and he regarded women as a distraction for men. Cole documented this
comprehensively in a biography she wrote of her husband after his death[4].

Detective stories

- Cole, G. D. H. and Cole, M. I. (1925) *The Death of a Millionaire*
- Cole, G. D. H. and Cole, M. I. (1934) *Death in the Quarry*

Bibliography

- Cole, Margaret (1949), *Growing up into Revolution*
- See under G. D. H. Cole for joint works

References


**External links**

- "Archival material relating to Margaret Cole" UK National Archives 

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Robert W. Service

Robert William Service (January 16, 1874 – September 11, 1958) was a British-Canadian poet and writer who has often been called "the Bard of the Yukon". He is best known for his poems "The Shooting of Dan McGrew" and "The Cremation of Sam McGee", from his first book, Songs of a Sourdough (1907; also published as The Spell of the Yukon and Other Verses). His vivid descriptions of the Yukon and its people made it seem that he was a veteran of the Klondike gold rush, instead of the late-arriving bank clerk he actually was. Although his work remains popular, Service's poems were initially received as being crudely comical works.

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Life

Early life

Service was born in Preston, Lancashire, England, the third of ten children. His father, also Robert Service, was a banker from Kilwinning, Scotland, who had been transferred to England.

When he was five, Service was sent to live in Kilwinning with his three maiden aunts and his paternal grandfather, the town's postmaster. There he is said to have composed his first verse, a grace, on his sixth birthday.

At nine, Service re-joined his parents who had moved to Glasgow. He attended Glasgow's Hillhead High School.

Robert Service

Robert W. Service, c. 1905

Born
- January 16, 1874
- Preston, Lancashire, England

Died
- September 11, 1958 (aged 84)
- Lancieux, Côtes-d'Armor, France

Resting place
- Lancieux, Côtes-d'Armor, France

Occupation
- writer, poet,
- Canadian Great North adventurer

Alma mater
- Hillhead High School in Glasgow,
- University of Glasgow and McGill University

Genre
- Poetry, Novel

Notable works
- Songs of a Sourdough,
- Rhymes of a Red Cross Man,
- The Trail of '98

Spouse
- Germaine Bourgoin

Children
- Iris Service

Relatives
- Charlotte Service-Longépé

Parents
- Robert Service (senior)
After leaving school, Service joined the Commercial Bank of Scotland which would later become the Royal Bank of Scotland. He was writing at this time and reportedly already “selling his verses”. He was also reading poetry: Browning, Keats, Tennyson, and Thackeray.

When he was 21, Service travelled to Vancouver Island, British Columbia, with his Buffalo Bill outfit and dreams of becoming a cowboy. He drifted around western North America, “wandering from California to British Columbia,” taking and quitting a series of jobs: “Starving in Mexico, residing in a California bordello, farming on Vancouver Island and pursuing unrequited love in Vancouver.” This sometimes required him to leech off his parents’ Scottish neighbours and friends who had previously emigrated to Canada.

In 1899, Service was a store clerk in Cowichan Bay, British Columbia. He mentioned to a customer (Charles H. Gibbons, editor of the Victoria Daily Colonist) that he wrote verses, with the result that six poems by "R.S." on the Boer Wars had appeared in the Colonist by July 1900 – including "The March of the Dead" that would later appear in his first book. (Service's brother, Alick, was a prisoner of the Boers at the time. He had been captured on November 15, 1899, alongside Winston Churchill.)

The Colonist also published Service's "Music in the Bush" on September 18, 1901, and "The Little Old Log Cabin" on March 16, 1902.

In her 2006 biography Under the Spell of the Yukon, Enid Mallory revealed that Service had fallen in love during this period. He was working as a “farm labourer and store clerk when he first met Constance MacLean at a dance in Duncan B.C., where she was visiting her uncle.” MacLean lived in Vancouver, on the mainland, so he courted her by mail. Though he was smitten, “MacLean was looking for a man of education and means to support her” so was not that interested. To please her, he took courses at McGill University's Victoria College, but failed.

In 1903, down on his luck, Service was hired by a Canadian Bank of Commerce branch in Victoria, British Columbia, using his Commercial Bank letter of reference. The bank "watched him, gave him a raise, and sent him to Kamloops in the middle of British Columbia. In Victoria he lived over the bank with a hired piano, and dressed for dinner. In Kamloops, horse country, he played polo. In the fall of 1904, the bank sent him to their Whitehorse branch in Yukon. With the expense money he bought himself a raccoon coat.”

Throughout this period, Service continued writing and saving his verses: “more than a third of the poems in his first volume had been written before he moved north in 1904.

Yukon period

Whitehorse was a frontier town, less than ten years old. Located on the Yukon River at the White Horse Rapids, it had begun in 1897 as a campground for prospectors on their way to Dawson City to join the Klondike Gold Rush. The railroad that Service rode in on, the White Pass and Yukon Route, had reached Whitehorse only in 1900.

Settling in, “Service dreamed and listened to the stories of the great gold rush.” He also took part in the extremely active Whitehorse social life. As was popular at the time he recited at concerts – things like 'Casey at the Bat' and 'Gunga Din', but they were getting stale.
One day (Service later wrote), while pondering what to recite at an upcoming church concert he met E.J. “Stroller” White, editor of the Whitehorse Star. White suggested: “Why don’t you write a poem for it? Give us something about our own bit of earth. We sure would appreciate it. There’s a rich paystreak waiting for someone to work. Why don’t you go in and stake it?”[1]

Returning from a walk one Saturday night, Service heard the sounds of revelry from a saloon, and the phrase “A bunch of the boys were whooping it up” popped into his head. Inspired, he ran to the bank to write it down (almost being shot as a burglar), and by the next morning "The Shooting of Dan McGrew” was complete.[1]

"A month or so later he heard a gold rush yarn from a Dawson mining man about a fellow who cremated his pal.” He spent the night walking in the woods composing "The Cremation of Sam McGee", and wrote it down from memory the next day.[1]

Other verses quickly followed. "In the early spring he stood above the heights of Miles Canyon ... the line ‘I have gazed on naked grandeur where there’s nothing else to gaze on’ came into his mind and again he hammered out a complete poem, 'The Call of the Wild'."[1] Conversations with locals led Service to write about things he had not seen (some of which had not actually happened) as well.[2] He did not set foot in Dawson City until 1908, arriving in the Klondike ten years after the Gold Rush when his renown as a writer was already established.

After having collected enough poems for a book, Service “sent the poems to his father, who had emigrated to Toronto, and asked him to find a printing house so they could make it into a booklet. He enclosed a cheque to cover the costs and intended to give these booklets away to his friends in Whitehorse” for Christmas. His father took the manuscript to William Briggs in Toronto, whose employees loved the book. “The foreman and printers recited the ballads while they worked. A salesman read the proofs out loud as they came off the typesetting machines.”[11] An “enterprising salesman sold 1700 copies in advance orders from galley proofs.”[12] The publisher "sent Robert’s cheque back to him and offered a ten percent royalty contract for the book.”[11]


(In the United States, the book would be given the more Jack London-ish title, The Spell of the Yukon and Other Verses).

"When copies of the book reached Whitehorse, Robert’s own minister took him aside to let him know how wicked were his stories. Service hung his head in shame…. But, that summer, tourists from the south arrived in Whitehorse looking for the famous poet; and he autographed many of his books.[11]

"In 1908, after working for the bank for three years in Whitehorse, he was sent outside on mandatory paid leave for three months, a standard practice for bank employees serving in the Yukon." According to Enid Mallory, he went to Vancouver and looked up Constance MacLean. Now that he was a successful author, she agreed to become engaged to him.[10]

Following his leave, in 1908 the bank transferred Service to Dawson, where he met veterans of the Gold Rush, now ten years in the past: “they loved to reminisce, and Robert listened carefully and remembered." He used their tales to write a second book of verse, Ballads of a Cheechako in 1908. "It too was an overwhelming success."[11]

In 1909, when the bank wanted Service to return to Whitehorse as manager, he decided to resign. "After quitting his job, he rented a small two-room cabin on Eighth Avenue in Dawson City from Mrs. Edna Clarke and began his career as a full-time author."[16] He immediately "went to work on his novel…. He went for walks that lasted all night, slept till mid-afternoon, and sometimes didn't come out of the cabin for days. In five months the novel, called The Trail of ‘98, was complete and he took it to a publisher in New York." Service's first novel also "immediately became a best-seller"[11]

Newly wealthy, Service was able to travel to Paris, the French Riviera, Hollywood, and beyond. He returned to Dawson City in 1912 to write his third book of poetry, Rhymes of a Rolling Stone (1912).[11] During that time he became a freemason, being initiated into Yukon Lodge No. 45 in Dawson[17].
It is unclear what happened between Service and Constance MacLean as no known letters between them exist after Service's departure for Dawson City. In 1912 she "married Leroy Grant, a surveyor and railroad engineer based in Prince Rupert."[10]

**Later life**

Service left Dawson City for good in 1912.[11] From 1912 to 1913 he was a correspondent for the *Toronto Star* during the Balkan Wars.[17]

In 1913, Service moved to Paris, remaining there for the next 15 years. He settled in the Latin Quarter, posing as a painter. In June 1913, he married Parisienne Germaine Bourgoin, daughter of a distillery owner, and they purchased a summer home at Lancieux, Côtes-d'Armor, in the Brittany region of France.[18] Thirteen years younger than her husband, Germaine Service survived him by 31 years, dying aged 102 in 1989.

Service was 41 when World War I broke out; he attempted to enlist, but was turned down "due to varicose veins."[5] He briefly covered the war for the *Toronto Star* (from December 11, 1915, through January 29, 1916), but "was arrested and nearly executed in an outbreak of spy hysteria in Dunkirk." He then "worked as a stretcher bearer and ambulance driver with the Ambulance Corps of the American Red Cross until his health broke." Convalescing in Paris, he wrote a new book of mainly war poetry, *Rhymes of a Red Cross Man*, in 1916. The book was dedicated to the memory of Service's "brother, Lieutenant Albert Service, Canadian Infantry, Killed in Action, France, August 1916."[18] Robert Service received three medals for his war service: 1914–15 Star, British War Medal and the Victory Medal.[19]

With the end of the war, Service "settled down to being a rich man in Paris.... During the day he would promenade in the best suits, with a monocle. At night he went out in old clothes with the company of his doorman, a retired policeman, to visit the lowest dives of the city."[18] During his time in Paris he was reputedly the wealthiest author living in the city, yet was known to dress as a working man and walk the streets, blending in and observing everything around him. Those experiences would be used in his next book of poetry, *Ballads of a Bohemian* (1921): "The poems are given in the persona of an American poet in Paris who serves as an ambulance driver and an infantryman in the war. The verses are separated by diary entries over a period of four years.[18]

In the 1920s, Service began writing thriller novels. *The Poisoned Paradise, A Romance of Monte Carlo* (New York, 1922) and *The Roughneck. A Tale of Tahiti* (New York, 1923) were both later made into silent movies.[18] During the winter season, Service used to live in Nice with his family, where he met British writers, including H.G. Wells, A.K. Bruce, Somerset Maugham, Rex Ingram, Franck Scully, James Joyce, Franck Harris, and Frieda Laurence, who all spent their winters in the French Riviera, and he wrote that he had been lucky to have had lunch with Colette.[20]

In 1930, Service returned to Kilwinning, to erect a memorial to his family in the town cemetery.[5] He also visited the USSR in the 1930s and later wrote a satirical "Ballad of Lenin's Tomb".[21] For this reason his poetry was never translated into Russian in the USSR, and he was never mentioned in Soviet encyclopedias.[22]

Service's second trip to the Soviet Union "was interrupted by news of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact. Service fled across Poland, Latvia, Estonia and the Baltic to Stockholm. He wintered in Nice with his family, then fled France for Canada." Not long after, the Nazis invaded France, and "arrived at his home in Lancieux ... looking specifically for the poet who had mocked Hitler in newspaper verse."[23]

During World War II, Service lived in California, "and Hollywood had him join with other celebrities in helping the morale of troops – visiting US Army camps to recite his poems. He was also asked to play himself in the movie *The Spoilers* (1942), working alongside Marlene Dietrich, John Wayne and Randolph Scott.[24] "He was thrilled to play a scene with Marlene Dietrich."[23] After the war, Service and his wife returned to his home in Brittany, to find it destroyed. They rebuilt, and he lived there until his death in 1958, though he wintered in Monte Carlo.
Robert Service wrote the most commercially successful poetry of the century. Yet his most popular works "were considered doggerel by the literary set." During his lifetime, he was nicknamed "the Canadian Kipling" – yet that may have been a double-edged compliment. As T. S. Eliot has said, "we have to defend Kipling against the charge of excessive lucidity," "the charge of being a 'journalist' appealing only to the commonest collective emotion," and "the charge of writing jingles." All those charges, and more, could be levelled against Service's best known and best loved works.

Certainly Service's verse was derivative of Kipling's. In "The Cremation of Sam McGee", for instance, he uses the form of Kipling's "The Ballad of East and West". In his E. J. Pratt lecture "Silence In the Sea," critic Northrop Frye argued that Service's verse was not "serious poetry," but something else he called "popular poetry": "the idioms of popular and serious poetry remain inexorably distinct." Popular poems, he thought, "preserve a surface of explicit statement" – either being "proverbial, like Kipling's 'If' or Longfellow's 'Song of Life' or Burns's 'For A' That,'" or dealing in "conventionally poetic themes, like the pastoral themes of James Whitcomb Riley or the adventurous themes of Robert Service."

Service himself did not call his work poetry. "Verse, not poetry, is what I was after ... something the man in the street would take notice of and the sweet old lady would paste in her album; something the schoolboy would spout and the fellow in the pub would quote. Yet I never wrote to please anyone but myself; it just happened. I belonged to the simple folks whom I liked to please." In his autobiography, Service described his method of writing at his Dawson City cabin. "I used to write on the coarse rolls of paper used by paper-hangers, pinning them on the wall and printing my verses in big charcoal letters. Then I would pace back and forth before them, repeating them, trying to make them perfect. I wanted to make them appeal to the eye as well as to the ear. I tried to avoid any literal quality."

One remarkable thing about both of Service's best-known ballads is how easily he wrote them. When writing about composing "The Shooting of Dan McGrew", 'easy' was exactly the word he used: "For it came so easy to me in my excited state that I was amazed at my facility. It was as if someone was whispering in my ear." And this was just after someone had tried to shoot him. He continued: "As I wrote stanza after stanza, the story seemed to evolve itself. It was a marvelous experience. Before I crawled into my bed at five in the morning, my ballad was in the bag."

Similarly, when he wrote "The Cremation of Sam McGee", the verses just flowed: "I took the woodland trail, my mind seething with excitement and a strange ecstasy.... As I started in: There are strange things done in the midnight sun, verse after verse developed with scarce a check ... and when I rolled happily into bed, my ballad was cinched. Next day, with scarcely any effort of memory I put it on paper."

In 1926, Archibald MacMechan, Professor of English at Canada's Dalhousie University, pronounced on Service's Yukon books in his *Headwaters of Canadian Literature*: 

"... and visited Whitehorse and Dawson City, which by then was becoming a ghost town. Service could not bring himself to go back. He preferred to remember the town as it had been."
The sordid, the gross, the bestial, may sometimes be redeemed by the touch of genius; but that Promethean touch is not in Mr. Service. In manner he is frankly imitative of Kipling’s barrack-room balladry; and imitation is an admission of inferiority. ‘Sourdough’ is Yukon slang for the provident old-timer ... It is a convenient term for this wilfully violent kind of verse without the power to redeem the squalid themes it treats. The Ballads of a Cheechako is a second installment of sourdoughs, while his novel The Trail of ’98 is simply sourdough prose.[31]

MacMechan did give grudging respect to Service’s World War I poetry, conceding that his style went well with that subject, and that "his Rhymes of a Red Cross Man are an advance on his previous volumes. He has come into touch with the grimmest of realities; and while his radical faults have not been cured, his rude lines drive home the truth that he has seen."[31]

Reviewing Service’s Rhymes of a Rebel in 1952, Frye remarked that the book "interests me chiefly because ... I have noticed so much verse in exactly the same idiom, and I wonder how far Mr Service's books may have influenced it. There was a time, fifty years ago, he added," when Robert W. Service represented, with some accuracy, the general level of poetic experience in Canada, as far as the popular reader was concerned. There has been a prodigious, and, I should think, a permanent, change in public taste.[32]

Service has also been noted for his use of ethnonyms that would normally be considered offensive “slurs”, but with no insult apparently intended. Words used in Service’s poetry include jerry (Germans), dago (Italian), pickaninny (in reference to a Mozambican infant), cheechako (newcomer to the Yukon and Alaska gold fields, usually from the U.S.), nigger (black person), squaw (Aboriginal woman), and Jap (Japanese).

Recognition

Robert W. Service has been honoured with schools named for him including Service High School in Anchorage, Alaska, Robert Service Senior Public School (Middle/Jr. High) in Toronto, Ontario,[33] and Robert Service School in Dawson City.[34]

He was also honoured on a Canadian postage stamp in 1976. The Robert Service Way, a main road in Whitehorse, is named after him.

Additionally, the Bard & Banker public house in Victoria is dedicated to him, the building having at one time been a Canadian Bank of Commerce branch where Service was employed while residing in the city.

Service’s first novel, The Trail of ’98, was made into a movie by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, directed by Clarence Brown[18] “Trail of ’98 starring Dolores del Río, Ralph Forbes and Karl Dane in 1929 ... was the first talking picture dealing with the Klondike gold rush and was acclaimed at the time by critics for depicting the Klondike as it really was.”[16]

In 1968 Canadian-born country singer Hank Snow recorded recitations of eight of Service’s longer poems for an album entitled Tales of the Yukon. The album was released by RCA Victor. Snow and other musicians including Chet Atkins and Chubby Wise provided background music.[35]

Folksinger Country Joe McDonald set some of Service’s World War I poetry (plus “The March of the Dead” from his first book), to music for his 1971 studio album, War War War.

The Canadian whiskey Yukon Jack incorporated various excerpts of his writings in their ads in the 1970s, one of which was the first four lines of his poem, "The Men Who Don’t Fit In"[36]

The town of Lancieux, where he used to come every summer, organized several recognitions to the memory of Robert W. Service. One of the streets of Lancieux has been called Robert Service Street. On July 13, 1990, a commemorative tablet was unveiled at the Lancieux Office du Tourisme by the daughter of the poet: Iris Service. An evening of celebration was organized afterwards with a dinner attended by many guests from Scotland and the Yukon. A few years later, on May 18, 2002 the school of Lancieux in Brittany.
took the name of “École Robert W. Service”. Charlotte Service-Longépé the great granddaughter and the granddaughter of the poet attended the dedication ceremony and made a speech. Since 2000, the towns of Lancieux and Whitehorse are sister cities, due to Robert W. Service’s life and work in both places.


Margaret Rutherford recited most of “The Shooting of Dan McGrew” in the 1963 Ealing Studios film *Murder Most Foul*.

**Dawson City cabin**

Robert Service lived from 1909 to 1912 in a small two-room cabin on 8th Avenue which he rented from Edna Clarke in Dawson City. His prosperity allowed him the luxury of a telephone. Service eventually decided he could not return to Dawson, as it would not be as he remembered it. He wrote in his autobiography:

> "Only yesterday an air-line offered to fly me up there in two days, and I refused. It would have saddened me to see dust and rust where once hummed a rousing town; hundreds where were thousands; tumbledown cabins, mouldering warehouses."[16]

After Service left for Europe, the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire (I.O.D.E.) took care of the cabin until 1971, preserving it. In 1971 it was taken over by Parks Canada, which maintains it, including its sod roof, as a tourist attraction.

Irish-born actor Tom Byrne created *The Robert Service Show* which was presented in the front yard of the cabin, starting in 1976. This was very popular for summer visitors and set the standard for Robert Service recitations. A resurgence in sales of Service's works followed the institution of these performances. Byrne discontinued the show at the cabin in 1995, moving it to a Front Street storefront. Since 2004 the show has been held at the Westmark Hotel in Dawson City during the summer months.

At the Service Cabin, local Dawson entertainers dressed in period costumes and employed by Parks Canada offer biographical information and recite Service's poetry for visitors.

**Publications**

**Poetry**

- “Carry On!” (date missing)
- *Songs of a Sourdough* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1907)
- *Songs of the Yukon and Other Verses* (New York: Barse & Hopkins, 1907; Also Dodd, Mead & Company, 1907 & 1916)
- *Songs of the Yukon* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1913) – miniature book, reprinting two poems from *Songs of a Sourdough*
- *Ballads of a Bohemian* (Toronto: G. J. McLeod, 1921)
- *Twenty Bath-Tub Ballads* (London: Francis, Day and Hunter, 1939)
- *Bar-Room Ballads* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1940)
- *Songs of a Sun-Lover A Book of Light Verse* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1949)
- *Songs for my Supper* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1953)
- *Carols of an Old Codger* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1955)[23]
- *Rhymes for My Rags* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1956)[23]

### Collections

- *Songs of the High North* (London: E. Benn, 1958)
- *The Song of the Campfire* illustrated by Richard Galaburr (New York: Dodd Mead, 1912, 39, 78)
- *The Shooting of Dan McGrew and Other Favorite Poems* jacket drawing by Eric Watts (Dodd Mead, 1980)
- *Servicewise and Otherwise: a selection of extracts in prose and verse from the works of Robert W Service, which may serve as an introduction to the virile writings of that celebrated author* collected and arranged by Arthur H. Stewart

### Fiction

- *The Poisoned Paradise: A Romance of Monte Carlo* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1922)[18]
- *The Roughneck, A Tale of Tahiti* (New York: Barse and Hopkins, 1923)[18]
- *The Master of the Microbe: A Fantastic Romance* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1926)[23]

### Non-fiction

- *Why Not Grow Young? or Living for Longevity* (London: Ernest Benn, 1928)[23]
- *Ploughman of the Moon, An Adventure Into Memory* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1945) – autobiography[23]

### Music

- *Twenty Bath-Tub Ballads* (London: Francis, Day and Hunter1939)
- *Tripe and Trotters* (words and music, 1939)
- *The Amorous* (Square words and music, 1939)
- *If you can't be Good be Careful* (words and music, 1939)
- *My old School Tie* (words and music, 1939)

### See also

- List of ambulance drivers during World War I

### References

20. "Бёрд оф the Yukon" Свердруп Роберт Уильям
25. See Selected Works – Poetry
27. Brun, Raphael (September 30, 2015). "C'était un poète aventurier" L’Observateur de Monaco
Further reading

- Elle Andra-Warner: Robert Service a great Canadian Poets romance with the North, Amazing Stories.

External links

- Robert Service’s war poetry.
- Robert Service at Electric Scotland.
- Works by Robert W. Service at Project Gutenberg.
- Works by Robert William Service at Faded Page (Canada).
- Works by or about Robert W. Service at Internet Archive.
- Works by Robert W. Service at LibriVox (public domain audiobooks).
- Robert W. Service at Find A Grave.
- Works by Robert W. Service at Open Library.
Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae, MD (November 30, 1872 – January 28, 1918) was a Canadian poet, physician, author, artist and soldier during World War I, and a surgeon during the Second Battle of Ypres, in Belgium. He is best known for writing the famous war memorial poem "In Flanders Fields". McCrae died of pneumonia near the end of the war.

## Biography

McCrae was born in McCrae House in Guelph, Ontario to Lieutenant-Colonel David McCrae and Janet Simpson Eckford; he was the grandson of Scottish immigrants. His brother, Dr. Thomas McCrae, became professor of medicine at Johns Hopkins Medical School in Baltimore and close associate of Sir William Osler. His sister Geills married a lawyer Kilgour, and moved to Winnipeg.[1]

McCrae attended the Guelph Collegiate Vocational Institute. He took a year off his studies due to recurring problems with asthma.

Among his papers in the John McCrae House in Guelph is a letter he wrote on July 18, 1893 to Laura Kains while he trained as an artilleryman at the Royal Military College of Canada in Kingston, Ontario. "I have a manservant.. Quite a nobby place it is, in fact .. My windows look right out across the bay, and are just near the water’s edge; there is a good deal of shipping at present in the port; and the river looks very pretty"

He was a resident master in English and Mathematics in 1894 at the Ontario Agricultural College in Guelph.[2]

McCrae returned to the University of Toronto and completed his B.A., then returned again to study medicine on a scholarship. While attending university he joined the Zeta Psi Fraternity (Theta Xi chapter; class of 1894) and published his first poems.
At medical school, McCrae tutored other students to help pay his tuition. Two of his students were among the first female doctors in Ontario.\(^3\)

McCrae graduated in 1898. He was first a resident house-officer at Toronto General Hospital, then in 1899 at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland.\(^4\) In 1900 McCrae served in South Africa as a lieutenant in the Canadian Field Artillery during the Boer War (1899 to 1902). McCrae served in the artillery during the Second Boer War, and upon his return was appointed professor of pathology at the University of Vermont, where he taught until 1911; he also taught at McGill University in Montreal, Quebec.

In 1902, he was appointed resident pathologist at Montreal General Hospital and later became assistant pathologist to the Royal Victoria Hospital in Montreal, Quebec. In 1904, he was appointed an associate in medicine at the Royal Victoria Hospital. Later that year, he went to England where he studied for several months and became a member of the Royal College of Physicians

In 1905, McCrae set up his own practice although he continued to work and lecture at several hospitals. The same year, he was appointed pathologist to the Montreal Foundling and Baby Hospital. In 1908, he was appointed physician to the Alexandra Hospital for Contagious Diseases. In 1910, he accompanied Lord Grey, the Governor General of Canada, on a canoe trip to Hudson Bay to serve as expedition physician.

McCrae was the co-author, with J. G. Adami, of a medical textbook, *A Text-Book of Pathology for Students of Medicine* (1912; 2nd ed., 1914).

### World War I

When Britain declared war on Germany at the start of World War I, Canada, as a Dominion within the British Empire, was at war as well. McCrae was appointed as Medical Officer and Major of the 1st Brigade CFA (Canadian Field Artillery).\(^5\) He treated wounded during the Second Battle of Ypres in 1915, from a hastily dug, 8 foot by 8 foot bunker dug in the back of the dyke along the Yser Canal about 2 miles north of Ypres.\(^6\) McCrae’s friend and former militia pal, Lt. Alexis Helmer,\(^7\) was killed in the battle, and his burial inspired the poem, “In Flanders Fields”, which was written on May 3, 1915 and first published in the magazine *Punch*.

"In Flanders Fields" appeared anonymously in *Punch* on December 8, 1915, but in the index to that year McCrae was named as the author. The verses swiftly became one of the most popular poems of the war used in countless fund-raising campaigns and frequently translated (a Latin version begins *In agro belgico...*). "In Flanders Fields" was also extensively printed in the United States, which was contemplating joining the war, alongside a 'reply' by R. W. Lillard, ("...Fear not that you have died for naught, / The torch ye threw to us we caught...").

For eight months the hospital operated in Durbar tents (donated by the Begum of Bhopal and shipped from India), but after suffering from storms, floods, and frosts it was moved in February 1916 into the old Jesuit College *Boulogne-sur-Mer*. 
McCrae, now "a household name, albeit a frequently misspelt one",[9] regarded his sudden fame with some amusement, wishing that "they would get to printing 'In F.F.' correctly: it never is nowadays"; but (writes his biographer) "he was satisfied if the poem enabled men to see where their duty lay".[10]

On January 28, 1918, while still commanding No. 3 Canadian General Hospital (McGill) at Boulogne, McCrae died of pneumonia with "extensive pneumococcus meningitis".[11] He was buried the following day in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission section of Wimereux Cemetery,[12] just a couple of kilometres up the coast from Boulogne, with full military honours.[13] His flag-draped coffin was borne on a gun carriage and the mourners – who included Sir Arthur Currie and many of McCrae's friends and staff – were preceded by McCrae's charger, "Bonfire", with McCrae's boots reversed in the stirrups. Bonfire was with McCrae from Valcartier, Quebec until his death and was much loved.[6][13] McCrae's gravestone is placed flat, as are all the others in the section, because of the unstable sandy soil.[14]

"In Flanders Fields"

A collection of his poetry, In Flanders Fields and Other Poems,[15] (1918), was published after his death.

"In Flanders Fields"
In Flanders fields the poppies blow
   Between the crosses, row on row
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below

We are the dead, short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

Though various legends have developed as to the inspiration for the poem, the most commonly held belief is that McCrae wrote "In Flanders Fields" on May 3, 1915, the day after presiding over the funeral and burial of his friend Lieutenant Alexis Helmer, who had been killed during the Second Battle of Ypres. The poem was written as he sat upon the back of a medical field ambulance near an advance dressing post at Essex Farm, just north of Ypres. The poppy, which was a central feature of the poem, grew in great numbers in the spoiled earth of the battlefields and cemeteries of Flanders.

In 1855, British historian Lord Macaulay, writing about the site of the Battle of Landen (in modern Belgium, 100 miles from Ypres) in 1693, wrote "The next summer the soil, fertilised by twenty thousand corpses, broke forth into millions of poppies. The traveller who, on the road from Saint Tron to Tirlemont, saw that vast sheet of rich scarlet spreading from Landen to Neerwinden, could hardly help fancying that the figurative prediction of the Hebrew prophet was literally accomplished, that the earth was disclosing her blood,[16] and refusing to cover the slain."
The Canadian government has placed a memorial to John McCrae that features "In Flanders Fields" at the site of the dressing station which sits beside the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Essex Farm Cemetery. The Belgian government has named this site the "John McCrae Memorial Site".

Legacy

McCrae was designated a Person of National Historic Significance in 1946.[17]

McCrae was the great-uncle of former Alberta MP David Kilgour and of Kilgour's sister Geills Turner, who married former Canadian Prime Minister John Turner.

In 1918, Lieut. John Philip Sousa wrote the music to "In Flanders Fields the poppies grow" words by Lieut.-Col John McCrae.[18]

The Cloth Hall of the city of Ieper (Ypres in French and English) in Belgium has a permanent war museum[19] called the 'In Flanders Fields Museum', named after the poem. There are also a photograph and a short biographical memorial to McCrae in the St George Memorial Church in Ypres. In May 2007, to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the writing of his best-known poem with a two-day literary conference.[20]

Several institutions have been named in McCrae's honour, including John McCrae Public School in Guelph, John McCrae Public School in Markham, John McCrae Senior Public School in Toronto and John McCrae Secondary School in Ottawa, Ontario.

A bronze plaque memorial dedicated to Lt. Col. John McCrae was erected by the Guelph Collegiate Vocational Institute[21]

McCrae House was converted into a museum. The current Canadian War Museum has a gallery for special exhibits, called The Lieutenant-Colonel John McCrae Gallery

In May 2015, a statue of McCrae by Ruth Abernathy was erected on Green Island (Rideau River) in Ottawa, Ontario. McCrae is dressed as an artillery officer and his medical bag nearby, as he writes. The statue shows the destruction of the battlefield and, at his feet, the poppies which are a symbol of Remembrance of World War I and all armed conflict since. A copy of that statue was erected at Guelph Civic Museum in Guelph in 2015.

The street next to the cemetery where he is buried is named in his honour though the street is called "Rue Mac Crae".

Notes and references

2. Peddie
8. Prescott, p. 99
11. Holt, pp 54–62
12. CWGC: John McCrae(http://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/84214/McCRAE,%20JOHN)
15. In Flanders Fields, and Other Poems at Project Gutenberg
16. Isaiah 26:21, “For behold, the L ORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.” (KJV)
19. In Flanders Fields(http://www.inflandersfields.be)


Further reading


External links

- Guelph Civic Museum McCrae House
- Biography at theDictionary of Canadian Biography Online
- Works by John McCraeat Project Gutenberg
- Works by John McCrae at Faded Page (Canada)
- Works by or about John McCrae at Internet Archive
- Works by John McCrae at LibriVox (public domain audiobooks)
- John McCrae in Flanders Fields—Historical Essay illustrated with many photographs of McCrae
- For occurrences of In Flanders Fields in film, see John McCrae on IMDb
- "In Flanders Fields" museum Ypres.
- Lost Poets of the Great War, a hypertext document on the poetry of World War I by Harry Rusche, of the English Department, Emory University. It contains a bibliography of related materials
- John McCrae Veteran's Affairs
- John McCrae's page at Poeticous.com


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