

Lucretius' Appearance - Research into What He Looked Like

Post by “Joshua” of January 26, 2023 at 12:10 AM

[Onenski](#) made a very good point in our conversation this evening, when he mentioned that urbane Romans of the republic period did not customarily wear beards. [This](#) page from Lacus Curtius is an excellent summary of the situation; it outlines several conditions under which Roman men would cease shaving, a trend that started with Scipio Africanus who Pliny records as the first Roman to shave daily.

Roman men might not shave if:

- They are in mourning. Like wearing black, an unshaved beard in the Roman republic might mean that someone has died or something tragic has happened.
- They are of the lower classes. Not every Roman man could afford the time or money spent on a daily shave.
- They lived outside of the Capital city of Rome. These trends are seldom universal, and people who lived away from the main city might shave less often, or whenever they traveled to the city.
- They are boys who have not yet legally come of age. The ritual 'first shave' was part of the ceremony for assuming the *Toga virilis*.
- They are young men at the very end of the late republic period, and wear their beards short and well-trimmed. Cicero describes a certain class of Catiline conspirators this way;

Quote

There is a last class, last not only in number but in the sort of men and in their way of life; the especial body-guard of Catiline, of his levying; yes, the friends of his embraces and of his bosom; whom you see with carefully combed hair, glossy, beardless, or with well-trimmed beards; with tunics with sleeves, or reaching to the ankles; clothed with veils, not with robes; all the industry of whose life, all the labour of whose watchfulness, is expended in suppers lasting till daybreak. [23]

In these bands are all the gamblers, all the adulterers, all the unclean and shameless citizens. These boys, so witty and delicate, have learnt not only to love and to be loved, not only to sing and to dance, but also to brandish daggers and to administer poisons; and unless they are driven out, unless they die, even should Catiline die, I warn you that the school of Catiline would exist in the republic. But what do those wretches want? Are they going to take their wives with them to the camp? how can they do without them, especially in these nights? and how will they endure the Apennines, and these frosts, and this snow? unless they think that they will bear the winter more easily

because they have been in the habit of dancing naked at their feasts. O war much to be dreaded, when Catiline is going to have his bodyguard of prostitutes!