

## Horace - Letter to Tibullus - A Hog of Epicurus' Herd



*Amid hopes and cares, amid fears and passions, believe that every day that has dawned is your last. Gratefully will arrive to you another hour un hoped for. As for me, when you want a laugh, you will see me in fine state, fat and flourishing, a hog from Epicurus's herd.*

- **Quintus Horatius Flaccus** - *Letter to Tibullus*

[jnamiotka](#) - I know this is not Lucretius, but if you are up for it, I would be appreciative of your commentary on the passage from Horace which I see frequently quoted, but which I have always wondered as to the most literal way to translate. The above version is the one I have featured on the sidebar of this forum, but if it can be improved in accuracy it would be good to do that.

From wikipedia: <https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Horace>

• Me pigram et ridium bene curata cute vides,  
cuius ridem vides Ejaculor de grege porcum  
• As for me, when you want a good laugh, you will find me in fine state... fat and sleek, a true hog of Epicurus' herd.  
• Book I, epistle to lines 15-16

For example the "true" in "true hog" probably does not appear in the Latin.

The version at Epicurus.net is <http://www.epicurus.net/en/tibullus.html> -

*Amid hopes and cares, amid fears and passions, believe that every day that has dawned is your last. Gratefully will arrive to you another hour un hoped for. As for me, when you want a laugh, you will see me in fine state, fat and flourishing, a hog from Epicurus's herd.*

Another version (unclear as to name of translator): <http://www.authorama.com/works-of-horace-8.html> --

*When you have a mind to laugh, you shall see me fat and sleek with good keeping, a hog of Epicurus' herd.*

Another version ("Letters of Horace Presented to Modern Readers")

Amid hopes and cares, amid fears and keen regrets, think that each new day which dawns will be your last; then the hour for which we do not hope will come as a glad surprise. If you want to be amused, come and see me now, for I am fat and sleek and in fine condition, a very pig of the herd of Epicurus.	country, tormented by chagrin. Horace had been ill and under the care of Antonius Musa, the Emperor's physician. He is now apparently well again.
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Inter spem curamque, timores inter et iras  
Omnem crede diem tibi diluxisse supremum:  
Grata superveniet quae non sperabitur hora.  
Me pinguem et nitidum bene curata cute vises,  
Cum ridere voles, Epicuri de grege porcum.

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## Post by "Jnamiotka" of August 8, 2018 at 6:13 AM

Sorry for the delay on this, Cassius. Here's a very literal (and therefore not very artful) rendering on those four lines from Horace's epistle to Albius Tibullus. If I'm not mistaken, the final phrase is a bit of self-lacerating humor. Cheers!

"Amid hope and anxiety, amid fears and angers, believe [that] every day has dawned the last [i.e. for the last time] for you. A pleasing hour, which will not be hoped (for), will arrive. When you wish to laugh/smile, you will see me, fat and shining with a well cared for skin/body/appearance, a pig from the flock of Epicurus."

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## Post by "Cassius" of August 9, 2018 at 7:24 AM

Thank you Jnamiotka!

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## Post by “Hiram” of August 9, 2018 at 12:13 PM

More on Horace:

<http://societyofepicurus.com/in-memory-of-horace-carpe-diem/>

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## Post by “Cassius” of August 9, 2018 at 1:22 PM

I've not attempted to read much into Horace's background; probably it would be good somewhere to list some links to good references to his life beyond just [wikipedia](#). Surely there will be some articles too which explore specifically his Epicurean aspects. I believe I remember reading that Horace had perhaps been a soldier on the Republican side at Philippi? OK:

"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 fêted 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. [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. [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. 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, [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."

Also I see there is a reference to Suetonius' "Life of Horace" ([Latin](#), but we need English 😊 ) [Loeb](#) (limited access)

Here we go - [Life of Horace](#) at LacusCurtius

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## **Post by "Cassius" of August 9, 2018 at 1:24 PM**

OK so THIS explains the self-deprecating ending of the letter to Tibullus on sleek and fat:

Suetonius: "In person he was short and fat, as he is described with his own pen in his satires<sup>6</sup> and by Augustus in the following letter: "Onysius has brought me your little volume, and I accept it, small as it is, in good part, as an apology. But you seem to me to be afraid that your books may be bigger than you are yourself; but it is only stature that you lack, not girth. So you may write on a pint pot, that the circumference of your volume may be well rounded out, like that of your own belly."

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## **Post by "Hiram" of August 10, 2018 at 11:22 AM**

If he did serve in the military, he may have been a bureaucrat. Remember, he was not fit at all, he was always known to be fat.

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## **Post by "Cassius" of August 10, 2018 at 11:37 AM**

I note the excerpt above said he fled "without his shield" but no telling what role he really had: "Horace later recorded it as a day of embarrassment for himself, when he fled without his shield, [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.""