

# ANCIENT AUTHORS

**Apicius:** (fourth century AD) is the name traditionally given to the author of a collection of recipes, *de Re Coquinaria* (*On the Art of Cooking*). Marcus Gavius Apicius was a gourmet who lived in the early first century AD and wrote about sauces. Seneca says that he claimed to have created a *scientia popinae* (snack bar cuisine).

**Appian:** Appianos (late first century AD–AD 160s) was born in Alexandria, in Egypt, and practised as a lawyer in Rome. His history of Rome is written in Greek.

**Apuleius:** Lucius Apuleius (c.AD 155) was born in Africa and lived in Carthage. He was the author of the *Metamorphoses*, also known as *The Golden Ass*, a novel about the adventures of a young man who is turned into an ass. He gave lectures on philosophy and a collection of excerpts from these survives, called *Florida* (*Anthology*).

**Augustus:** Augustus (63 BC–AD 14) was born Gaius Octavius, and became Gaius Iulius Caesar Octavianus when he was adopted by his great-uncle, Julius Caesar. He was known by the title Augustus after 27 BC when he became Rome's first emperor. The *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* (*Deeds of the Divine Augustus*) is an account of the career of Augustus written in the first person. Augustus left the document with his will, with instructions to the Senate to set up the text as an inscription. It was engraved on a pair of bronze pillars in front of Augustus' tomb in the Campus Martius. The original has not survived, but copies were carved in stone on monuments and temples all over the Roman Empire, and parts of these have survived.

**Aulus Gellius:** Aulus Gellius (c.AD 130–180) lived in Rome and Athens, although his birthplace

is unknown. His *Attic Nights* is a collection of essays on a variety of topics, based on his reading of Greek and Roman writers and the lectures and conversations he had heard. The title *Attic Nights* refers to Attica, the district in Greece around Athens, where Gellius was living when he wrote the book.

**Cassius Dio** (also Dio Cassius): Cassius Dio Cocceianus (c.AD 150–235) was born in Bithynia. He had a political career as a consul in Rome and governor of the provinces of Africa and Dalmatia. His history of Rome, written in Greek, covers the period from Aeneas' arrival in Italy to AD 229.

**Cato:** Marcus Porcius Cato (234–139 BC) was born at Tusculum, a town about 16 miles from Rome. He had a distinguished military and political career, reaching the consulship and the office of censor, despite not being born into a senatorial family. He wrote a book on farming, *de Agri Cultura* (*On Agriculture*). Cato was famous for his strictness and his criticism of contemporary morality. He wanted to return to the old Roman values of frugality and simplicity.

**Catullus:** Gaius Valerius Catullus (c.84–54 BC) was born in Verona, in northern Italy, in a wealthy family. Very little is known about his life. He came to Rome as a young man and spent some time in the province of Bithynia on the staff of the governor. He is best known for his love poems.

**Cicero:** Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 BC) was a politician and lawyer, who was a leading figure in events at the end of the Roman Republic. He was born in a town not far from Rome and came to Rome to study. Although not born into the senatorial class, he reached the highest office of state, the consulship. He was executed on the orders of Mark Antony during the unrest following the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 BC. His surviving writings include

speeches for the law courts, political speeches, philosophical essays, and personal letters to friends and family.

**Columella:** Lucius Iunius Moderatus Columella (wrote c.AD 60–65) was born at Gades (modern Cadiz) in Spain and served in the Roman army in Syria. He wrote a treatise on farming, *de Re Rustica* (*On Farming*).

**Diodorus Siculus:** Diodorus (wrote c.60–30 BC) was a Greek from Sicily who wrote a history of the world centred on Rome, from legendary beginnings to 54 BC. Much of the original forty books survives only in fragments. He wrote in Greek.

**Dionysius of Halicarnassus:** Dionysius (c.60 BC–some time after 7 BC) was a Greek historian from Halicarnassus in Asia Minor (modern Bodrum in Turkey). He lived in Rome for many years from about 30 BC. His history of Rome, *Roman Antiquities*, is written in Greek. It started with Rome's legendary beginnings and went up to 264 BC, the First Punic War. Much of it is lost, and the surviving part finishes in 441 BC.

**Frontinus:** Sextus Iulius Frontinus (c.AD 30–104) had a distinguished career as consul and governor of Britain. After becoming supervisor of the water supply (*cūrātor aquarum*) in Rome in AD 97, he wrote an account of the city's aqueducts and water supply, *On the Waters of Rome*, as a handbook for his successors.

**Horace:** Quintus Horatius Flaccus (65–8 BC) was born in Apulia, in the south of Italy. He was of humble origins, the son of a freedman who worked as a collector of payments at auctions. His father sent him to Rome and Athens to be educated, and he became one of the most celebrated poets of his day. Maecenas, the friend and adviser of Emperor Augustus, was his patron. His most famous works

are the *Odes*, short poems on a variety of subjects, but he also wrote *Epodes*, *Satires*, and *Epistles*.

**Julius Caesar:** Gaius Iulius Caesar (100–44 BC), the general, politician, and dictator, belonged to an aristocratic Roman family. He was assassinated on the Ides (15th) of March 44 BC, by a group of senators who feared that he intended to put an end to the republican system of government and keep supreme power for himself and his family. Caesar wrote an account of his campaigns in Gaul and Britain (58–52 BC), the *Commentaries* (also known as the *Galic Wars*). They are written in the third person, as if to give an objective account of events.

**Juvenal:** Decius Iunius Iuvenalis (early second century AD) was born in a town in Italy, but lived in Rome. He was the author of sixteen *Satires*, long poems criticizing and attacking the vices of his fellow Romans. The *Satires* have a bitter humour and pessimistic attitude, and there is much exaggeration. Nevertheless, Juvenal sheds light on contemporary Roman society and provides lots of detail about everyday life.

**Livy:** Titus Livius (59 BC–AD 17) was born at Patavium (modern Padua) in north-east Italy. Little is known about his life, but he probably came to Rome as an adult. He wrote *A History of Rome*, starting with its foundation and going up to his own lifetime. Originally there were 142 books, of which about twenty-five have survived.

**Martial:** Marcus Valerius Martialis (c. AD 40–c. AD 96) was born in Spain, and came to live in Rome in about AD 64. He is best known for his short poems, known as *Epigrams*, which often criticize and mock the faults and vices of his fellow Romans.

**Minucius:** Marcus Minucius Felix (early third century AD) was a Christian who wrote a defence of Christianity, *Octavius*, in the form of a discussion between two Christian converts, Minucius and Octavius, and Caecilius, a pagan. Minucius defends Christianity against the criticisms of Caecilius, and at the end Caecilius is converted.

**Ovid:** Publius Ovidius Naso (43 BC–AD 17) was born in a town near Rome and educated in the city. He abandoned a public career to become a poet. Emperor Augustus banished him to Tomi on the Black Sea (in modern Romania). According to Ovid, there were two reasons for his exile, *carmen* (a poem) and *error* (a mistake). The poem was *Ars Amatoria* (*The Art of Love*), advice on how to conduct a love affair, which fell foul of laws introduced by Augustus to improve the morals of contemporary society. The mistake was probably connected to the love affairs of Augustus' granddaughter, Julia. Among his works are love poems such as the *Amores* (*Loves*) and a long epic poem, *The Metamorphoses*, which is a collection of stories from mythology, bound together by the theme of transformation.

**Petronius:** Petronius Arbiter (died AD 65) was a provincial governor and consul. He then became Emperor Nero's *arbiter elegantiae* (arbiter of taste), a play on his name; this meant he advised Nero on what was tasteful or elegant. He was falsely accused of being involved in a plot to kill Nero, and committed suicide. Petronius was the author of the *Satyricon*, a novel about the adventures of three young men travelling in southern Italy. The main episode is the *cēna Trimalchiōnis* (*Trimalchio's Dinner Party*). Trimalchio is a wealthy freedman to whose dinner party the three main characters are invited. Petronius mocks and grotesquely exaggerates the

vulgar extravagance and bad taste of Trimalchio, and his ostentatious display of wealth.

**Plautus:** Titus Maccius Plautus (c. 250–184 BC) wrote comedies which were based on Greek originals, adapted for a Roman audience, but set in Greece.

**Pliny the Elder:** Gaius Plinius Secundus (AD 23/24–79) was born at Comum (modern Como) in northern Italy. He is known as Pliny the Elder to distinguish him from his nephew, known as Pliny the Younger. He had a career in military and government service, serving as procurator in several provinces before his final post as commander of the fleet at Misenum in Italy. He dedicated his spare time to research and writing, and among his many learned works is his *Natural History*, an encyclopaedic collection of facts and stories about a huge variety of subjects. It is a very useful source of information on many aspects of Roman life. In *Suburani* 'Pliny' refers to Pliny the Younger.

**Pliny the Younger:** Gaius Caecilius Plinius Secundus (AD 61/62–113) was the nephew of Pliny the Elder. He was born at Comum (Como) in northern Italy. He had a successful career as a lawyer, politician, and administrator, and his final post was as governor of the province of Bithynia. His letters to friends, family, and colleagues include an exchange with Emperor Trajan when he was governor of Bithynia. The letters offer a fascinating glimpse into the lives, attitudes, and politics of the society of his time. Pliny wrote with the intention of publishing his letters, and at regular intervals during his lifetime he published collections of them. Although they are real personal letters, many of them resemble short essays on various themes. In *Suburani* 'Pliny' refers to Pliny the Younger.

**Plutarch:** Ploutarchos (c. AD 46–120) was a Greek biographer, historian, and philosopher. He took the name Lucius Mercius Plutarchus when he became a Roman citizen. Plutarch visited Rome, where he taught and gave lectures, but spent most of his life in his native Greece. Among his many works are biographies of famous Greek and Roman politicians and soldiers, the *Parallel Lives*, so called because they are arranged in pairs of Greek and Roman so that the subjects can be compared. He also wrote biographies of the Roman emperors. His biographies of Galba and Otho survive in full, and there are fragments of his lives of Tiberius and Nero.

**Propertius:** Sextus Propertius (c. 50 BC–after 16 BC) was born at Assisium (modern Assisi) in central Italy, and educated at Rome. He wrote poems known as *Elegies*, many of them love poems.

**Seneca:** Lucius Annaeus Seneca (c. 4 BC–AD 65) is sometimes known as Seneca the Younger to distinguish him from his father of the same name, who was also a writer. He was born in Cordoba, in Spain, and came to Rome to be educated. He was Nero's tutor and, when Nero became emperor, Seneca became his political adviser. In AD 65, after he had retired from public life, he was implicated in a conspiracy to overthrow Nero and was forced to commit suicide. Seneca was a philosopher, politician, and dramatist. Among his many writings are several works of moral philosophy which contain interesting details about life in Rome in the first century AD. Some of these are in the form of letters to friends and family, including one to his mother, Helvia.

**Servius:** Marius Servius Honoratus (early fifth century AD) wrote commentaries on Latin literature.

**Strabo:** Strabo (64 BC–after AD 24) was a Greek from Pontus who came to Rome in 44 BC to finish his education, then visited the city several times afterwards. His *Geography*, written in Greek, is a description of the main countries in the Roman world, including physical geography, history, and economic development. There is also much incidental detail about customs, animals, and plants.

**Suetonius:** Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus (born c. 70 AD) was a secretary at the imperial palace. He wrote biographies of Julius Caesar and the first eleven emperors, *Lives of the Caesars*. Although his position gave him access to the state archives, he is not very reliable in his use of sources, and his work relies heavily on uncritical reporting of gossip and anecdote. His other works include lives of teachers of literature and rhetoric, *On the Grammarians* and *On Rhetoricians*; only parts of these have survived.

**Tacitus:** Publius (or Gaius) Cornelius Tacitus (AD 56/57–after 117) may have been born in Gallia Narbonensis. He had a successful political career in Rome and wrote two major works of history. *Annals* covered the period AD 14–68, from the death of Augustus to the death Nero, and *Histories* continued with the years AD 69–96. Only parts of these works survive. He also wrote a biography of his father-in-law Agricola, the general and governor of Britain. Tacitus used as his sources the writings of earlier historians, official records, and his own experience. Tacitus was a supporter of the republican system of government and a harsh critic of the emperors and the imperial system. He claims to write without prejudice, but his bias is often evident.

**Varro:** Marcus Terentius Varro (115–27 BC) was born near Rome in Sabine territory. Among his many literary works, only *de Re*

*Rustica* (*On Farming*) survives in complete form. About half of *de Lingua Latina* (*On the Latin Language*) also survives.

**Vergil** (also Virgil): Publius Vergilius Maro (70–19 BC) was born at Mantua in Cisalpine Gaul and educated at Cremona, Mediolanum (modern Milan), and Rome. Maecenas, the friend and adviser of Emperor Augustus, was his patron, and he became the most celebrated poet of his day. His greatest work is the *Aeneid*, an epic poem which tells the story of the founding of the Roman race by the Trojan hero Aeneas. The poem is a celebration of the origin and growth of the Roman Empire and of the achievements of Augustus. Vergil also wrote the *Eclogues*, pastoral poems about the life of shepherds, and the *Georgics*, a poem about farming.

**Vitruvius:** Vitruvius Pollio (first century BC), an engineer and architect, wrote *On Architecture*.