

Who Was Lesbia?

The title of *Catullan Questions* was an allusion to Ludwig Schwabe's *Quaestiones Catullianae* of 1862, which I wanted to refute.

It was Schwabe who created the story about Catullus that most classicists believed for most of the twentieth century: that 'Lesbia', the woman he loved and hated, was Clodia, wife of Quintus Metellus Celer; that he met her in Verona in 62 BC, when Metellus was proconsul of Cisalpine Gaul; that their adulterous affair continued in Rome, presumably in 61 and 60; that Clodia then threw him over for Marcus Caelius Rufus, whose relationship with her is dealt with so entertainingly in Cicero's *Pro Caelio*. By the time of Caelius' trial in April 56, that relationship was over; Catullus, meanwhile, had been away on Gaius Memmius' staff in Bithynia during 57, and returned to Italy some time in 56. According to the Schwabe scenario, Catullus attempted a reconciliation with the now disgraced Clodia, but in vain; she descended into utter promiscuity, and his final message of farewell, poem 11, is securely dated to 55 BC.

It's a seductive story, and what makes it so is the apparent compatibility of the two portraits, that of Lesbia in Catullus' poems and that of Clodia Metelli in Cicero's speech. Surely there couldn't be *two* such women in Rome? Well, of course there could. But we are told by Apuleius, who probably had good sources, that Lesbia's real name was Clodia. That would be a knock-down argument, were it not for the fact that Clodia Metelli had two sisters, also with adulterous reputations.¹ It seemed to me a reasonable inference that Lesbia was one of the three Clodiae, but (*pace* Schwabe) there was no way of telling which one.

¹ Apuleius *Apologia* 10; Cicero *Ad familiares* 1.9.15, Plutarch *Cicero* 29.4 (sisters); Wiseman 1969.49–55.

1.1 Schwabe Rides Again

My objection to the Schwabe scenario was (and is) that it's inconsistent with what we know about the date of Catullus' poems. There are about 115–120 poems or fragments of poems in the collection, and thirteen of them are internally datable:

poem 4	56 or after	Bithynia
poem 10	56 or after	Bithynia
poem 11	55 or after	Caesar in Britain
poem 28	56 or after	Memmius
poem 29	55 or after	Caesar in Britain
poem 31	56 or after	Bithynia
poem 35	after 59	Novum Comum ²
poem 45	55 or after	campaigns to Syria and Britain
poem 46	56 or after	Bithynia
poem 52	56 or after	Vatinius 'consul' ³
poem 53	56 or after	Calvus' speech <i>In Vatinium</i> ⁴
poem 55	55 or after	Pompey's portico ⁵
poem 113	55	Pompey's second consulship

That's a good proportion, about 11 per cent, and the consistency of the dates is very impressive. The empirical conclusion is inescapable: the poems belong to the middle fifties BC. Of course it is possible that some of the 103 or so undated poems are earlier or later, but positive arguments would be needed to establish an earlier or later date. The default position is 56–55 BC, and the onus of proof is on whoever proposes a different date.⁶

Schwabe's scenario dates the love affair with Lesbia to the late sixties. Lesbia's husband is mentioned in two of the poems, and Metellus Celer died in 59. Remarriage was normal in the Roman aristocracy, but we know from the *Pro Caelio* that his widow Clodia had *not* remarried by April 56.⁷ We know nothing about the marital status of the other two sisters in the

² Founded in 59 BC (Suetonius *Divus Iulius* 28.3).

³ Cf. Cicero *In Vatinium* 6 (March 56 BC) for Vatinius' confidence of his future consulship.

⁴ Cicero *Ad Q. fratrem* 2.4.1; see Section 2.5 below for the full argument.

⁵ Attached to the theatre that was dedicated in 55 (Asconius 1C, Dio Cassius 39.38.1).

⁶ Cf. Skinner 2011.133: 'if we assume, just for the sake of argument, that Wiseman's chronological premise is correct . . .' But the dates of the poems are not just a hypothesis you can take or leave.

⁷ Cicero *Pro Caelio* 38 (*uidua*).

fifties BC, but the negative evidence we happen to have for Clodia Metelli makes her the *least* likely of the three to be 'Lesbia'.

One new argument I was able to offer in *Catullan Questions* concerned poem 36:⁸

Volusius' *Annals*, shat-on pages, discharge a vow on my girl's behalf. For she vowed to holy Venus and to Cupid that if I were restored to her and stopped hurling fierce iambs, she'd give the choicest writings of the worst of poets to the lame-footed god, to be burned on ill-omened wood. Bad girl! She saw herself making this vow to the gods as an elegant joke.

So now, o goddess born from the sky-blue sea, you who dwell in holy Idalium and open Urii and Ancona and reedy Cnidos and Amathus and Golgi and Dyrachium, tavern of the Adriatic, make it that the vow is paid and received, if it's not lacking in elegance and charm. As for you, meanwhile, into the fire with you, full of clodhopping clumsiness, Volusius' *Annals*, shat-on pages.

The poem presupposes the love affair; we may infer a quarrel from line 4, but there is none of the bitterness and contempt found in the poems attributed to the late stages of the affair. When was it written? I suggested that the odd list of Venus's addresses in lines 12–15 might provide a *terminus post quem*.⁹ Idalium, Amathus, Golgi and Cnidos were all known cult centres of Aphrodite; Dyrachium, Urii and Ancona, on the other hand, were the three necessary ports of call for a ship sailing from Greece to Sirmio, as poems 4 and 31 show Catullus' vessel doing in the summer or autumn of 56 BC. I concluded that the poem was written after that date.

One of the supposed arguments in favour of the Schwabe scenario is the fact that two poems are addressed to a Caelius, and another two to a Rufus. But the combination of the two into the Marcus Caelius Rufus of the *Pro Caelio* won't work, because the Rufus poems (69 and 77) are hostile and the Caelius poems (58 and 100) are friendly. It remains possible that *either* the Rufus of the poems *or* the Caelius of the poems could be Caelius Rufus, but neither of those hypotheses is at all plausible.

⁸ *Annales Volusi, cacata charta, | uotum soluite pro mea puella. | nam sanctae Veneri Cupidinique | uouit, si sibi restitutus essem, | electissima pessimi poetae | scripta tardipedi deo daturam | infelicibus ustulanda lignis. | et hoc pessima se puella uidit | iocose lepide uouere diuis. | nunc o caeruleo creata ponto, | quae sanctum Idalium Vriosque apertos | quaeque Ancona Cnidumque harundinosam | colis quaeque Amathunta quaeque Golgos | quaeque Durrachium Hadriae tabernam, | acceptum face redditumque uotum, | si non illepidum neque inuenustum est. | at uos interea uenite in ignem, | pleni ruris et inficetiarum | annales Volusi, cacata charta.*

⁹ Wiseman 1969.42–5.

'Rufus' is a very common *cognomen*, and the man Catullus addresses by that name could be anyone; even with our limited information, we can immediately point to Caecilius Rufus, Egnatius Rufus, Herennius Rufus, Marcius Rufus, Mescinius Rufus, Messalla Rufus, Minucius Rufus, Numerius Rufus, Paquius Rufus, Pompeius Rufus, Pomponius Rufus, Quinctius Rufus, Sempronius Rufus, Sextilius Rufus, Titius Rufus, Tullius Rufus and Vibullius Rufus – and that's just counting senators.¹⁰

What about Caelius? Here are the two poems in which he features:¹¹

Caelius: my Lesbia, yes *Lesbia*, that Lesbia whom alone Catullus loved more than himself and all his kin, now on street-corners and down alleys peels the descendants of great-hearted Remus.

Caelius and Quintius, the flower of Veronese youth, are dying for (respectively) Aufillenus and Aufillena, one for the brother, one for the sister. That really is what they call sweet fraternal comradeship. Whose side should I be on? Yours, Caelius; for your friendship alone was tried by fire at the time when the mad flame was burning my marrow. Be lucky, Caelius, and potent in love.

In poem 58, *Lesbia nostra* in line 1 is often translated 'our Lesbia', as if it meant 'the woman we have both loved'. I find it implausible that Catullus would have used that tone of fellow-feeling to an ex-rival, but there is no need to rely on subjective impressions. We know from poem 100 that Caelius was Veronese (Caelius Rufus came from Interamnia Praetuttiorum),¹² and at the time Catullus was crazy about Lesbia he was a loyal friend. The identification just doesn't work.

These matters haven't much concerned Catullan scholars in recent years. Fashions change, and academics became more excited by the erotics of domination, the language of social performance and the poetics of Roman manhood.¹³ But ordinary readers are still interested in real lives, and the translators who make Catullus available to them still have to grapple with these traditional questions. When two really excellent Catullus translations appeared in 2002 (David Mulroy) and 2005

¹⁰ See the index to Broughton 1952.

¹¹ Catullus 58: *Caeli, Lesbia nostra, Lesbia illa, | illa Lesbia, quam Catullus unam | plus quam se atque suos amavit omnes, | nunc in quadriuis et angiportis | glubit magnanimi Remi nepotes.* Catullus 100: *Caelius Aufillenum et Quintius Aufillenam | flos Veronensum depereunt iuuenum, | hic fratrem, ille sororem. hoc est, quod dicitur, illud | fratrum uere dulce sodalicium. | cui faueam potius? Caeli, tibi: nam tua nobis | perspecta est igni tum unica amicitia, | cum uesana meas torreret flamma medullas. | sis felix, Caeli, sis in amore potens.*

¹² Cicero *Pro Caelio* 5. ¹³ Greene 1999, Krostenko 2001, Wray 2001.

(Peter Green), it turned out that *Catullan Questions* had to be argued about all over again – and I regret to report that the standards of empirical enquiry seem to be in sharp decline.¹⁴

David Mulroy begins his argument with a firm statement that ‘the identification of Lesbia with Clodia Metelli . . . is certainly the most likely of possible scenarios’. He then goes on to address the chronology question with the assertion that ‘Clodia Metelli became a widow in 59 BC and is not known to have remarried.’¹⁵ The relative order of two little words may seem a minor matter, but in fact it is crucial. What he should have said was ‘. . . and is known not to have remarried’, at least by 56 BC. What the widow Clodia’s marital status was at the time to which Catullus’ poems are datable is not the open question that he implies.

Mulroy then addresses poem 36. Accepting that the poem must be dated after Catullus’ return from Bithynia, he argues as follows:¹⁶

If Lesbia prayed for Catullus’ safe return from Bithynia, she must have had a relationship with him before he went to Bithynia. Furthermore, if her prayer was connected with the hope that he would ‘stop brandishing fierce iambs’, it is obvious that their relationship had run into stormy weather before Catullus set sail.

That is, we assume without argument that line 4 (‘if I were restored to her’) refers to Catullus’ return from abroad rather than to making up a quarrel, and that line 5 (‘and stopped hurling fierce iambics’) refers to attacks on Lesbia herself rather than political invectives like the iambic poem 29 on Caesar and Mamurra, which the reader of the collection has just read. And even if the inference were sound, it would take the affair back only to 58 BC, and not to the period when Clodia Metelli was a married woman. For Mulroy, however, it’s enough. ‘The identification of Lesbia with Clodia Metelli’, he concludes, ‘thus seems to me to acquire the status of high probability.’¹⁷

As for Peter Green, he assumes from the start that Apuleius’ statement that Lesbia’s real name was Clodia means that Lesbia was Clodia Metelli. He declares that ‘the Clodia painted by Cicero in his speech in defence of Caelius is Lesbia to the life’, and he knows without arguing that poem 58 is addressed to Caelius Rufus, and that Catullus ‘speaks of “our Lesbia” (*Lesbia nostra*), the woman who by then had been the lover of both, abandoning one only to be herself discarded by the other’.¹⁸ He explicitly

¹⁴ Mulroy 2002.xiii–xvi, Green 2005.6–7. ¹⁵ Mulroy 2002.xiii, xiv. ¹⁶ Mulroy 2002.xv.

¹⁷ Mulroy 2002.xvi. ¹⁸ Green 2005.5; ‘Lesbia to the life’ is borrowed from Quinn 1972.135.

endorses the whole Schwabe scenario, right down to the meeting in Verona in 62 BC,¹⁹ and he adds an absurdity, borrowed from Mulroy, that goes beyond even Schwabe's inventions: he announces, without evidence, that Caelius Rufus suffered from gout, and can therefore be identified as the gouty Rufus of the poems.²⁰

In a forty-one-page introduction, Green allows himself one sentence on the datable poems, and sweeps away, with a casual reference to Mulroy on poem 36, any idea that they count against his identification of Lesbia.²¹ He makes a novel contribution to the complex debate about the dates of Catullus' birth and death, citing Cornelius Nepos' *Life of Atticus* as proof that the poet was dead by the age of thirty-two.²² What the Nepos passage actually shows is that he was dead by 32 BC – not quite the same thing.

However, Green's translation is brilliant, a book that will surely *be* Catullus for at least a generation of English-speaking readers. And riding on its success will go the unlikely figure of Ludwig Schwabe, a ghost from the age of the kings of Prussia, his fallacies still flourishing after more than a century and a half.

1.2 A Better Idea

The article on Clodia Metelli in the standard modern work of classical reference duly reports her traditional identification as 'Lesbia'.²³ Marilyn Skinner's *Companion to Catullus* regards it as 'probably correct', and in her monograph on Clodia Metelli the chapter entitled 'Lesbia' gives the reader no cause to doubt the identification.²⁴ The students who use Julia Dyson Hejduk's sourcebook are invited to take it as read.²⁵ So too are the mass-market readers of Daisy Dunn's biography of Catullus.²⁶ Even the new

¹⁹ Green 2005.6 ('they probably met for the first time in 62/1'), 22 ('in essence Schwabe was right')

²⁰ Green 2005.5, 255–6 (cf. Mulroy 2002.xiii–xiv). ²¹ Green 2005.6 (cf. Mulroy 2002.xiv–xvii).

²² Green 2005.2, citing Nepos *Atticus* 12.4.

²³ Stegmann 2003.463–4: 'the plausible identification of C[lodia] with Lesbia, the mistress of the poet Catullus'.

²⁴ Skinner 2007.3 ('the identification of Clodia Metelli as Catullus' mistress is not wholly certain, but there is a reasonable probability that it is correct'), referring to Dyson 2007.254 ('it is most probable that the commonly accepted equation of Lesbia with Clodia Metelli ... is correct'); Skinner 2011.126–36.

²⁵ Hejduk 2008.4: 'In her promiscuity, her intelligence, her charm, and her status as the poet's equal or even superior, the poetic fiction called "Lesbia" would appear to have much in common with the femme fatale of Cicero's speech.' The next three pages try to explain away the arguments against.

²⁶ Dunn 2016.272 (an unobtrusive endnote): 'Clodius had three sisters. Scholars have therefore disputed the precise identity of Catullus' "Lesbia"... The eldest Clodia was married to a politician called Quintus Caecilius Metellus Celer until 59 BC, and contemporary descriptions of her involvement in the politics of Clodius, and her interests as a poet herself, seem to chime with

Cambridge Companion to Catullus finds ‘a measure of broad but not complete consensus focused on the patrician Clodia Metelli’.²⁷ It is all very unsatisfactory, and in retrospect I blame myself.

In *Catullan Questions*, assuming that ‘Pulcher’ in poem 79 was Publius Clodius, I made two over-confident assertions:²⁸

Whichever one of the sisters Lesbia was, she was the daughter of Ap. Claudius Pulcher [consul 79 BC] and Metella... No woman of the family is known to have spelt her name in this way except the three sisters.

I did at least concede, in a footnote to the latter sentence, that Clodia the wife of D. Brutus Callaicus (consul in 138 BC) evidently belonged to the Claudii Marcelli,²⁹ but I offered no reason why the Claudii Pulchri should have been more strict – or strict at all – about using the spelling ‘Clodius/Clodia’. On the strength of this argument from silence I took the identification of Lesbia to be merely a ‘one-in-three chance’, one or other of the sisters of Clodius,³⁰ and forty years later that was still what set the terms of the debate, as in Julia Haig Gaisser’s excellent general introduction to Catullus:³¹

The spelling of her name (Clodia, not Claudia) tells us that she was a sister of the infamous demagogue Publius Clodius Pulcher, who used the ‘popular’ spelling. But it is not clear which sister she was. Clodius had three sisters, all named Clodia, the feminine form of their *nomen*.

Since the sisters had been married to the consuls of 74, 68 and 60 BC, any of the available choices would make Lesbia older than the poet.

Now at last that unnecessary assumption has been queried. In the *Cambridge Companion* Ian Du Quesnay and Tony Woodman point out what should have been obvious to everyone, including me: ‘Catullus very frequently refers to his beloved as his *puella*, a word which implies youth rather than middle age.’³² They note a recent suggestion, unpublished

Catullus’ portrait.’ (For Clodia as a poet, see Cicero *Pro Caelio* 64: *fabella ueteris et plurimarum fabularum poetriae*.)

²⁷ Gibson 2021.93: e.g. Harrison 2021.358 on ‘Lesbia’s likely alternative lover Caelius Rufus (cf. poem 58)’.

²⁸ Wiseman 1969.57, 59.

²⁹ Cicero *Ad Atticum* 12.22.2 (Cicero was collecting precedents for enduring the loss of a child): *scribes ad me cum scies . . . num Clodia D. Bruto consulari filio suo mortuo uixerit. id de Marcello . . . sciri potest*. Note also Cn. Lentulus Clodianus, praetor in 59 BC (Cicero *In Vatinius* 27, *Ad Atticum* 1.19.3), evidently a Clodius before adoption; what would his sister or daughter have been called?

³⁰ Wiseman 1969.60, repeated in Wiseman 1985.136.

³¹ Gaisser 2009.3, citing Wiseman 1969.50–60.

³² Du Quesnay and Woodman 2021.3: Catullus 2.1, 3.3–4, 3.17, 8.4, 8.7, 8.12, 11.15, 13.11, 36.2, 36.9, 37.11. Note too the mini-biography of Catullus by Gerolamo Squarzacico in the first printed

except for a brief reference at second hand, that she might be a daughter of Appius Claudius Pulcher (consul in 54 BC).³³ Appius had two daughters, married, respectively, to Marcus Brutus, the later assassin, and Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus, Pompey's elder son.³⁴ Did either or both of them spell the family name as 'Clodia'? We don't know, but it's possible.

As John Ramsey has noted, Catullus' poem 83 may be an argument for Gnaeus Pompeius as Lesbia's husband:³⁵

Lesbia constantly insults me in her husband's presence. He's an idiot, and this gives him great delight. Aren't you aware of anything, you mule? If she forgot about me and said nothing, *then* she'd be well.

Of course, a lover's view of a husband shouldn't be taken too literally, but even so, there is a striking parallel in a letter of Gaius Cassius to Cicero early in 45 BC, when Gnaeus Pompeius was leading a rebellion against Caesar in Spain:³⁶

I'd rather have the mild old master than try a cruel new one. You know what an idiot Gnaeus is, how he thinks cruelty is bravery, how he thinks we're always mocking him. My fear is that like a lout he may want to sneer back at us with his sword.

Perhaps Catullus' poem was an example of that mockery; on the other hand, for all we know he could have said the same about Marcus Brutus.

A further argument for Lesbia being one or other of Appius' daughters is provided by poem 79, which begins *Lesbius est pulcher*.³⁷ Appius had no

edition (Venice, 1472), which may have used material from Suetonius' *De poetis* (evidently still extant in 1460): *amauit hic puellam primariam Clodiam, quam Lesbiam suo appellat in carmine*. See Wiseman 1985.189–90, 207–8; Gaisser 1993.26 and Kiss 2021.293 assume without argument that Squarzafo's only sources were Jerome and the fifteenth-century biographer Sicco Polenton, but this sentence does not come from either of those texts.

³³ Hutchinson 2012.56 n. 16 (cited by Du Quesnay and Woodman 2021.3 n. 12): 'In a lecture in Oxford in 2010 Professor J. D. Morgan argued that Lesbia was not a mature *materfamilias* but a young bride (cf. Poems 2, 3 and 72). She was rather to be identified with the daughter (*RE* no. 388) of Ap. Claudius Pulcher (*cos.* 54 BC), as Professor J. T. Ramsey had suggested to him in 2007.'

³⁴ Cicero *Ad familiares* 3.4.2 (51 BC). The marriages are not datable; cf. Tatum 1991, who argues for 56 BC in the case of Cn. Pompeius.

³⁵ Catullus 83.1–4: *Lesbia mi praesente uiro mala plurima dicit: | haec illi fatuo maxima laetitia est. | mule, nihil sentis? si nostri oblita taceret, | sana esset.*

³⁶ Cassius in Cicero *Ad familiares* 15.19.2, pointed out by Ramsey to Morgan (n. 33 above) in 2007: *malo ueterem et clementem dominum habere quam nouum et crudelem experiri. scis Gnaeum quam sit fatuus, scis quo modo crudelitatem uirtutem putet, scis quam se semper a nobis derisum putet; ueeor ne nos rustice gladio uelit ἀντιμικτηρίσαι*. The letter is (mis)quoted by the elder Seneca (*Suasoriae* 1.5) as referring to Pompeius' *stultitia*.

³⁷ This point too has evidently been current but unpublished since 2010 (n. 33 above). John Morgan confirms it was his idea (email to author, 10 February 2021); I first heard of it from Armand D'Angour in 2019.

sons of his own, but his brother Gaius had two; Appius adopted his elder nephew, whose name thus changed from C. Claudius C.f. to Ap. Claudius Ap.f.; but since Gaius' younger son was called Appius,³⁸ the two young men, brothers by birth and cousins by adoption, now both had the same distinctive *praenomen*.³⁹ They could be distinguished as *Appius maior* and *Appius minor*,⁴⁰ but it seems clear that the elder also used 'Pulcher' as a *praenomen* to differentiate himself from his brother.⁴¹ So if Lesbia were his adoptive sister, as one of the daughters of the consul of 54, *Lesbius est Pulcher* would be precisely true, and not just a general reference to the family name.

A young Lesbia changes the dynamic of the story – and a story is always what people want.⁴² This one belongs, as the evidence shows, in 56–54 BC. Imagine her as seventeen or eighteen, three or four years into marriage,⁴³ heiress to generations of pride and privilege, beautiful, lively and intelligent, perhaps with little formal education. Imagine Catullus six or seven years older, brought up in a quite different Roman tradition,⁴⁴ well-off but family 'in trade', funny, quarrelsome and brilliantly talented. Her world, in particular, was one of casual arrogance and hedonism that requires an imaginative effort to understand.⁴⁵

The *beau monde* of Lesbia and her lovers was on the brink in the mid-fifties BC. So too was that of Lady Diana Cooper (*née* Manners) in the Edwardian age, whose memoirs offer a useful parallel. These lines echo in them like a *Leitmotiv*.⁴⁶

³⁸ Ap. Claudius C.f. Pulcher, consul in 38 BC (*CIL* 10.1423–4).

³⁹ Asconius 34C (*duo adulescentuli qui Appii Claudii ambo appellabantur*), 38C (*a duobus Appiis Claudis adulescentibus*); both were active in the prosecution of Milo in 52 BC.

⁴⁰ Asconius 39, 41C (*Appius maior*); Caelius in Cicero *Ad familiares* 8.8.2 (*Appius minor*).

⁴¹ Suetonius *De grammaticis* 10.3 (*Appio quoque et Pulchro Claudis fratribus*), cf. *CIL* 1².775 = *ILLRP* 401 (*[Pulcher Clau]dus et Rex Mar[cius]*, heirs of Appius the consul of 54). I no longer believe, as I did fifty years ago (Wiseman 1970.210–13 = 1987.45–8), that the Pulcher Claudius in Suetonius was the son of P. Clodius named as 'Pulcher' at Valerius Maximus 3.5.3; that hypothesis, based on the convenient assumption that when Suetonius said 'brothers' he meant 'cousins' (*fratres patruales*), was refuted by Kaster 1995.143–5.

⁴² Holzberg 2002.19–23 ('The Catullus Novel'), Gaiser 2009.201–3, 212–14 ('Story Telling'); even now, literary analysis is happy to morph into rom-com mode (e.g. Schafer 2020.127, 194). See Chapter 7 below for fictional elaborations of the Schwabe version.

⁴³ See Shaw 1987 for the evidence on the usual age of Roman girls at marriage.

⁴⁴ See Section 5.3 below on the *Transpadani*, Wiseman 1985.92–115 on the contrasting attitudes.

⁴⁵ For repeated attempts, see Wiseman 1979.122–5, 1985.38–53, 2009.201–5; Cicero *Pro Caelio* 21–2 is a key text.

⁴⁶ Cooper 1958 (born 1892, youngest daughter of the eighth Duke of Rutland); the lines were taken from Thomas Gray's poem *The Bard* (1757) and illustrated in a famous painting by William Etty (1832).

Fair laughs the morn, and soft the zephyr blows,
While proudly riding o'er the azure realm,
In gallant trim, the gilded vessel goes,
Youth on the prow and Pleasure at the helm,
Unmindful of the sweeping whirlwind's sway,
That, hushed in grim repose, expects his evening prey.

Over to you, novelists!