

Lucretius' Appearance - Research into What He Looked Like

Post by “Joshua” of January 25, 2023 at 10:16 PM

Don, you're a wizard! Thank you very much for looking for that, I'll add it to my source collection.

I also want to add two passages from *The Swerve* by Stephen Greenblatt, regarding the motives of Italian humanists like Petrarch, Salutati, Leonardo Bruni, Niccolo Niccoli, and Poggio Bracciolini.

Quote

They saw themselves as adventurous explorers both in the physical world—the mountains they crossed, the monastic libraries they investigated, the ruins they dug up—and in their inner world of desire. The urgency of the enterprise reflects their underlying recognition that there was nothing obvious or inevitable about the attempt to recover or imitate the language, material objects, and cultural achievements of the very distant past. It was a strange thing to do, far stranger than continuing to live the ordinary, familiar life that men and women had lived for centuries, making themselves more or less comfortable in the midst of the crumbling, mute remains of antiquity.

Those remains were everywhere visible in Italy and throughout Europe:

bridges and roads still in use after more than a millennium, the broken walls and arches of ruined baths and markets, temple columns incorporated into churches, old inscribed stones used as building materials in new constructions, fractured statues and broken vases. But the great civilization that left these traces had been destroyed. The remnants could serve as walls to incorporate into new houses, as reminders that all things pass and are forgotten, as mute testimony to the triumph

of Christianity over paganism, as literal quarries to be mined for precious stones and metals. Generations of men and women, in Italy and elsewhere in Europe, had developed effective techniques for the recycling of classical fragments, in their writing as well as their building. The techniques bypassed any anxiety about meddling with the leftovers of a pagan culture: as broken shards whether of stone or of language, these leftovers were at once useful and unthreatening. What more would anyone want with the rubble over which the living had clambered for more than a thousand years?

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Quote

Niccoli was one of the first Europeans to collect antiquities as works of art, prized possessions with which he surrounded himself in his Florentine apartments. Such collecting is by now such a familiar practice among the very rich that it is easy to lose sight of the fact that it was once a novel idea. Pilgrims to Rome in the Middle Ages had long been accustomed to gawking at the Colosseum and other “marvels” of paganism on their way to worshipping at the places that actually mattered, the revered Christian shrines of saints and martyrs. Niccoli’s collection in Florence represented a very different impulse: not the accumulation of trophies but the loving appreciation of aesthetic objects. As word got round that an eccentric man was willing to pay handsomely for ancient heads and torsos, farmers who might in the past have burned any marble fragments that they ploughed up for the lime they could extract from them or used the old carved stones for the foundations of a pigsty began instead to offer them for sale. On display in Niccoli’s elegant rooms, along with antique Roman goblets, pieces of ancient glassware, medals, cameos, and other treasures, the sculptures inspired in others the impulse to collect.

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