

Favorite Translation of Lucretius

Post by “Eikadistes” of January 26, 2023 at 10:48 AM

Another thing I noticed in Latin, speaking of repetition:

Book I 926-951

**avia Pieridum peragro loca nullius ante
trita solo. iuvat integros accedere fontis
atque haurire, iuvatque novos decerpere flores
insignemque meo capiti petere inde coronam,
unde prius nulli velarint tempora musae;
primum quod magnis doceo de rebus et artis
religionum animum nodis exsolvere pergo,
deinde quod obscura de re tam lucida pango
carmina musaeo contingens cuncta lepore.
id quoque enim non ab nulla ratione videtur;
sed vel uti pueris absinthia taetra medentes
cum dare conantur, prius oras pocula circum
contingunt mellis dulci flavoque liquore,
ut puerorum aetas improvida ludificetur
labrorum tenuis, interea perpetet amarum
absinthii laticem deceptaque non capiatur,
sed potius tali facto recreata valescat,
sic ego nunc, quoniam haec ratio plerumque videtur
tristior esse quibus non est tractata, retroque
volgus abhorret ab hac, volui tibi suaviloquenti**

**carmine Pierio rationem exponere nostram
et quasi musaeo dulci contingere melle;
si tibi forte animum tali ratione tenere
versibus in nostris possem, dum percipis omnem
naturam rerum qua constet compta figura.**

Sed quoniam docui...

"this is what impels me now to penetrate by power of intellect the remote regions of the Pierian maids, hitherto untrodden by any foot. Joyfully I visit virgin springs and draw their water; joyfully I cull unfamiliar flowers, gatherings for my head a chaplet of fame from spots whence the Muses have never before taken a garland for the brows of any person: first because I teach about important matters and endeavor to disentangle the mind from the strangling knots of superstition and also because of an obscure subject i compose such luminous verses, overspreading all with the charm of the Muses. For obviously my actual technique does not lack a motive. Doctors who try to give children foul-tasting wormwood first coat the rim of the cup with the sweet juice of golden honey; their intention is that the children, unwary at their tender age, will be tricked into applying their lips to the cup and at the same time will drain the bitter draught of wormwood--victims of beguilement, but not of betrayal, since by this means they recover strength and health. I have a similar intention now: since this philosophy of ours often appears somewhat off-putting to those who have not experienced it, and most people recoil back from it, I have preferred to expound it to you in harmonious Pierian poetry and, so to speak, coat it with the sweet honey of the Muses. My hope has been that by this means I might perhaps succeed in holding your attention concentrated on my verses, while you fathom the nature of the universe and the form of its structure. Now then..." (Smith 28-29)

Book IV 1-26

**Avia Pieridum peragro loca nullius ante
trita solo. iuvat integros accedere fontis
atque haurire, iuvatque novos decerpere flores
insignemque meo capiti petere inde coronam,
unde prius nulli velarint tempora musae;
primum quod magnis doceo de rebus et artis
religionum animum nodis exsolvere pergo,
deinde quod obscura de re tam lucida pango**

**carmina musaeo contingens cuncta lepore.
id quoque enim non ab nulla ratione videtur;
nam vel uti pueris absinthia taetra medentes
cum dare conantur, prius oras pocula circum
contingunt mellis dulci flavoque liquore,
ut puerorum aetas improvida ludificetur
labrorum tenuis, interea perpetet amarum
absinthii laticem deceptaque non capiatur,
sed potius tali facto recreata valescat,
sic ego nunc, quoniam haec ratio plerumque videtur
tristior esse quibus non est tractata, retroque
volgus abhorret ab hac, volui tibi suaviloquenti
carmine Pierio rationem exponere nostram
et quasi musaeo dulci contingere melle;
si tibi forte animum tali ratione tenere
versibus in nostris possem, dum percipis omnem
naturam rerum ac persentis utilitatem.**

Sed quoniam docui...

"I am penetrating the remote regions of the Pierian maids, hitherto untrodden by any foot. Joyfully I visit virgin springs and draw their water; joyfully I cull unfamiliar flowers, gathering for my head a chaplet of fame from spots whence the Muses have never before taken a garland for the brows of any person: first because I teach about important matters and endeavor to disentangle the mind from the strangling knots of superstition, and also because on an obscure subject I compose such luminous verses, overspreading all with the charm of the Muses. For obviously my actual technique does not lack a motive. Doctors who try to give children foul-tasting wormwood first coat the rim of the cup with the sweet juice of golden honey; their intention is that the children, unwary at their tender age, will be tricked into applying their lips to the cup and at the same time will drain the bitter draft of wormwood – victims of beguilement, but not of betrayal, since by this means they recover strength and health. I have a similar intention now: since this philosophy of ours often appears somewhat off-putting to those who have not experienced it, and most people recoil back from it, I have preferred to

expound it to you in harmonious Pierian poetry and, so to speak, coat it with the sweet honey of the Muses. My hope has been that by this means I might perhaps succeed in holding your attention concentrated on my verses, while you apprehend the nature of the universe and become conscious of the beneficial effect of my instruction. Well, now that..." (Smith 100-101)

I have, before, come across the suggestion that repetition found throughout Lucretius' verse lends credence to the proposition that we are only reading a draft of *De Rerum Natura* and **not** its author's anticipated final form. I had not realized this myself; *now* that I found 26 consecutive lines that are repeated almost identically, it seems likely to me (*unless there was a trend ancient poets adopted of heavily employing repetition as a rhetorical technique*) that Lucretius used this as a placeholder, likely, in my mind, to be re-visited upon meeting some other conditions.