

Attempts to Identify the Translator of the Daniel Brown Edition

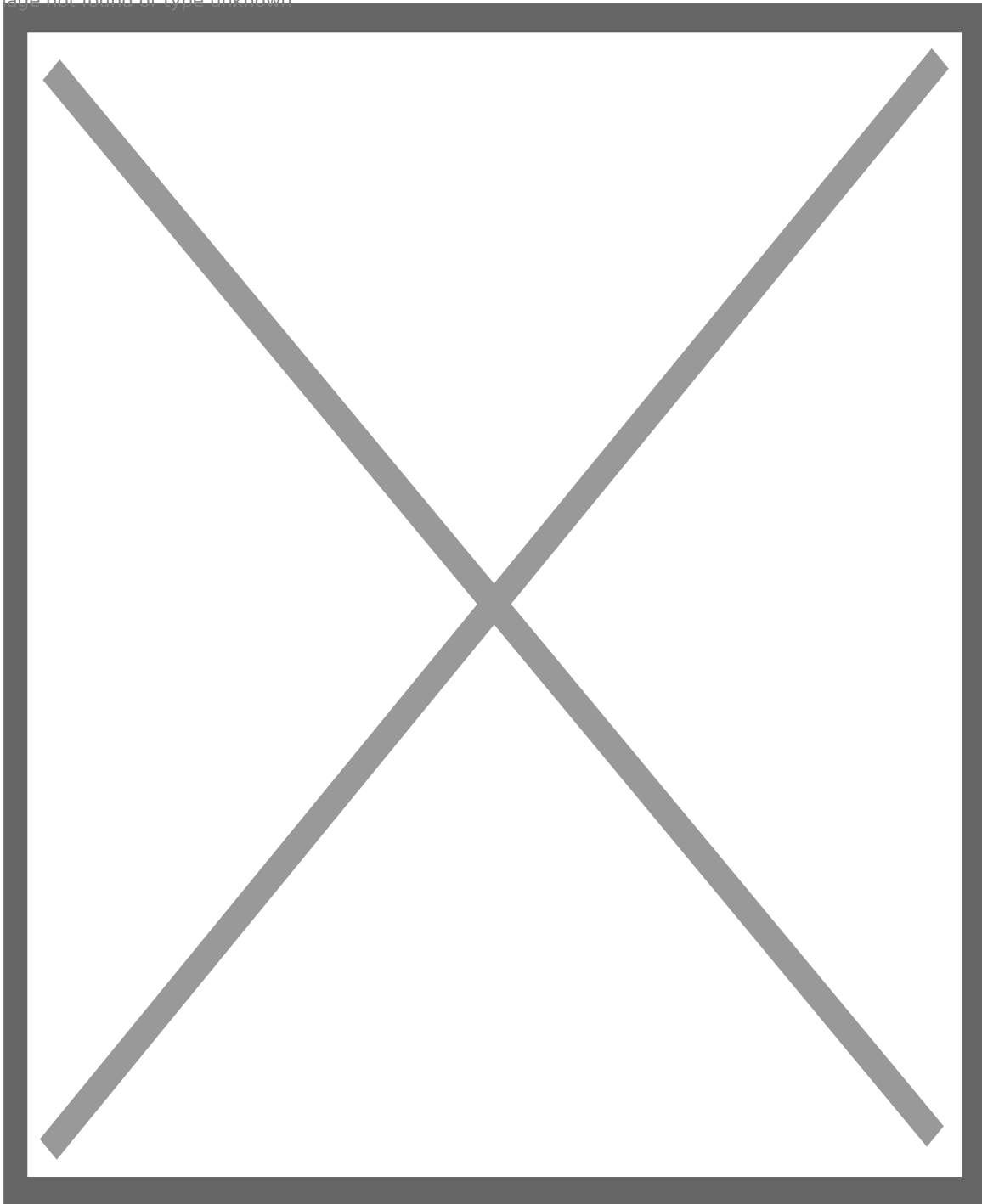
Post by “Joshua” of November 30, 2022 at 2:01 PM

One of our favored public domain translations of Lucretius is an anonymous prose translation published by Daniel Brown in London in 1743.

As a matter of idle speculation, I thought there might be some interest in trying to identify the responsible party. The two main approaches that occur to me at the moment are to a.) Locate individuals from that time period who display an interest in Lucretius, and b.) Review other contemporaneous translations of Latin authors for signs of similarity.

This is very much an exercise of throwing things against the wall and seeing what sticks, so with that in mind I present my first contender;

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[Christopher Pitt - Wikipedia](#)

en.m.wikipedia.org

Dates: 1699-1748

Other translations:

-Lucan's *Pharsalia*

-Virgil's *Aeneid*

From wikipedia: His father translated a portion of Lucretius (the plague in Athens) for Thomas Creech¹ in verse, and his brother translated five books of *Paradise Lost* into Latin. After 1740 when he finished Virgil, no major work is listed. This gives him three years to complete Lucretius, alongside his clergy work and poetry.

¹I had no idea Creech had a contributor!

Post by “Charles” of November 30, 2022 at 3:32 PM

Here's the engraver, Guernier, named after his father, another engraver.

[Louis Du Guernier - Wikipedia](#)

An interesting, unrelated sidenote, I read the referenced book by George Vertu on the state of painting and engraving in England in the 18th century, and one of the entries was of Claude de Bosc (mentioned in Guernier's page above). One of his works was a "Cartoon" for other printsellers. Vertu cites this entry at the bottom of a page with:

* *One Epicier and Baron assisted him.*

The word Epicier is interesting, it seems to be from the french épicier which means grocer. épicier itself is derived from the french word épice meaning spice, hence grocer = spice - er. There are various other forms of french words that come from the late latin word speciēs, and while this might seem very off-topic for the thread, and I might move it should this prove a credible finding, I cannot help but notice the similarity between these french words and "Epicure". Perhaps that's another link in the connotation between Epicurus and food, and where the modern culinary definition of Epicurean is derived from.

[épicer - Wiktionary](#)

Edit: Just saw the post you made in the original 1743 thread last month about Guernier. In the meantime, I've just been going down the rabbit hole of the various Creech editions. The 1712 edition of Creech, published by Jacob Tonson, however, is the source of most of the illustrations and engravings of the Browne edition.

Post by “Joshua” of November 30, 2022 at 5:25 PM

Quote

Edit: Just saw the post you made in the original 1743 thread last month about Guernier.

Ha! I thought I vaguely recalled looking into this recently. I often write up a post or a new thread and then decide to delete it without submitting, so I thought it was that.

Post by “Cassius” of November 30, 2022 at 6:46 PM

This issue is well worth keeping alive. The Brown translation is head and shoulders above that of Creech and someone really deserves credit for the advancement.

And the Pharsalia poem is one we don't discuss often, given its very different topic, but the last I looked at it I can surely see the attraction that it holds for someone who likes Lucretius. If I recall correctly it's a very "romantic" tribute to the "republican" side that I would expect most of the Epicureans sided with and I can see a very strong "what might have been" attraction in translating both poems.

Post by “Cassius” of November 30, 2022 at 7:05 PM

I remember when I came across Pharsalia maybe six years ago I downloaded a text version and ran it through a text-to-speech converter and listened to the whole thing.

Most of it was blood and guts and makes the Plague of Athens section in Lucretius Book 6 sound like a walk in the park. I remember thinking that I had never heard so many creative ways to slash the bodies of soldiers into pieces.

However I also remember that there was a section devoted to Pompey's defeat that went on and on about how terrible the result was -- something to the effect that the whole world was crying that Pompey had lost and what might have been if he had won the battle. I wish I could find that as it would be a good section to post and perhaps illustrate a parallel in sentiment if not in subject matter. If I come across it I will.

Post by “Bryan” of January 31, 2025 at 12:23 AM

[Quote from Charles](#)

The 1712 edition of Creech, published by Jacob Tonson

The next year, Jacob Tonson and John Watts published another version with engravings by Guernier, but this time by with the text edited by Michael Maittaire (French classicist) and funded by Richard Mead (doctor to the crown and patron of the classics).

I recently got a 1713 edition of this for only £40. The text is Latin-only, but does contain one page of English, which is more-or-less an Enlightenment era copywrite.

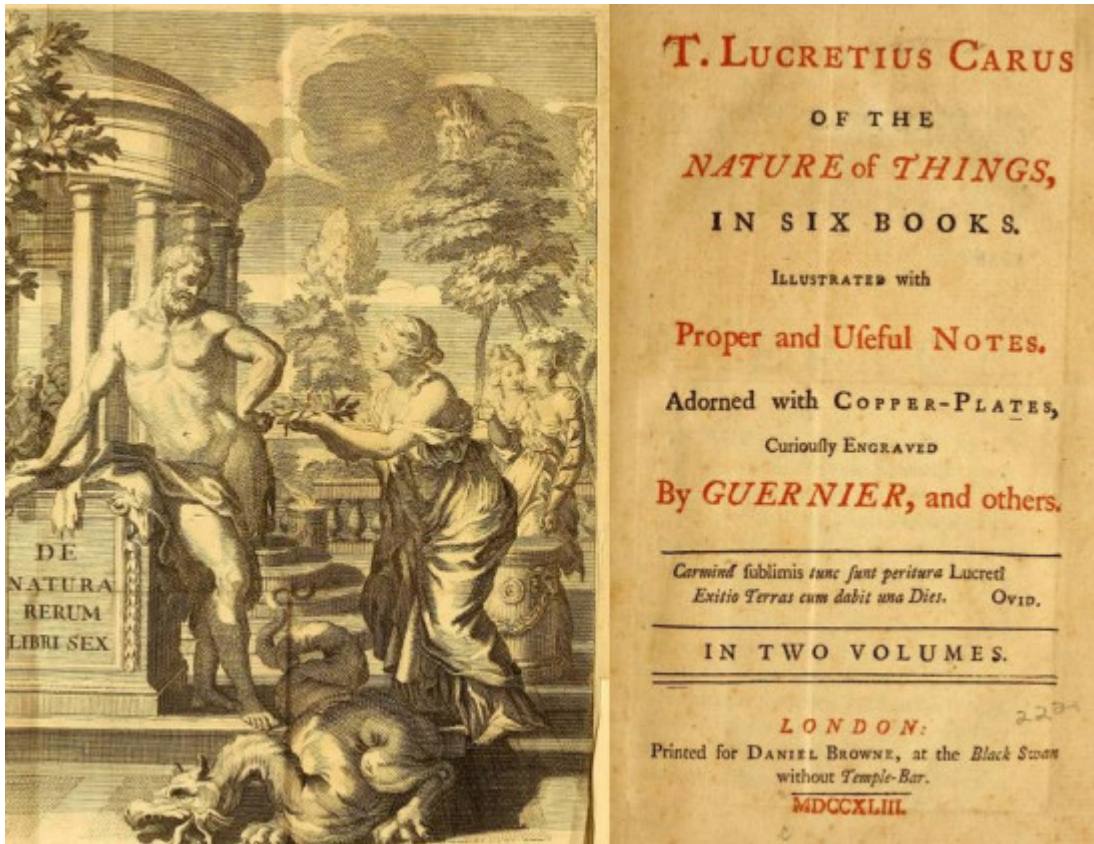
ANNE R. = Anne Regina = Queen Anne

Post by “Cassius” of January 31, 2025 at 6:42 AM

Interesting *fourteen* year copyright!

Post by “Cassius” of January 31, 2025 at 6:44 AM

For those who come across this thread you'll want to read the follow-up here:



Article

[Giving Credit Where It Is Due: Samuel Dunster, Likely Author of the 1743 Prose Translation of Lucretius](#)

For over two hundred years, obscurity has surrounded the identity of the anonymous translator of one of the first readable prose editions of Lucretius in the English language. In this article, Joshua tracks down the evidence and concludes that it points in one direction.



Joshua

July 18, 2024 at 3:07 PM