

In Imitation of Lucretius-Bevil Higgons, 1670 to 1735

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Yet another random find.

When I saw that this was published posthumously I started to get my hopes up. Too salacious to let out in his lifetime? Sadly not. This poem should be called *Against Lucretius*. It's basically a systematic refutation of Lucretius' Epicureanism as expressed in the first part of DNR Book I. First there's the invocation of the biblical creator. Then a paean to the triumph of Britain; next, a nod toward atomism but bracketed by the claims that God is the designer of the atoms, and that materialism itself could never proceed past the point of random chaos.

All boiler-plate up to here, but then an interesting turn: an inversion of the crime of Agamemnon. After laying out his belief that all races are brothers (as all men are sons of Adam), it is *fratricide* that marks out the real crime. Slavery, suggests Higgons, is proof that man is hopelessly sinful without the guidance of God. He might as well have translated it literally—"to such heights of evil are men driven *without* religion."

And just a few other features of interest. His science is mostly adequate for its time, but with an oddity or two. If I'm reading it correctly, he says in one line that gravity causes heavier objects to fall faster than lighter objects—something even Lucretius knew was wrong. He also acknowledges the probable existence of life on other worlds, which is somewhat odd for someone who believes in the myths of Genesis.

Its a fairly quick read, but doesn't amount to much for us. A few pages of serviceable but uninspired heroic couplets.