

Toward a New Interlinear Gloss of De Rerum Natura

Post by “Joshua” of June 3, 2021 at 4:35 PM

The argument for throwing it out was in my opinion never very strong. The early critics believed that it involved Lucretius in an unpardonable contradiction, given his preceding appeal to Venus. But an Epicurean (ie. not merely academic) reading of the poem resolves all hint of a problem. In a later book Lucretius explains that invoking the names of the gods metaphorically—Bacchus for wine, Ceres for grain—does not bring trouble so long as it does not lead to confusion about the way things are. To invoke "nurturing Venus" as a muse is to draw one's inspiration from the restless, erotic, generative power of nature herself—a power coexistent with the eternal recombination of the atoms.

And beside all that, Lucretius re-uses text elsewhere as well; most notably in the passage regarding the administration of nauseous wormwood.