

Was Shakespeare an Epicurean?

Post by “Joshua” of May 6, 2024 at 12:08 AM

Quote

CASSIUS: Be thou my witness that against my will, | As Pompey was, am I compell'd to set | Upon one battle all our liberties. | You know that I held Epicurus strong | And his opinion: now I change my mind, | And partly credit things that do presage

This apparent change of heart at witnessing the allegedly supernatural also echoes Horace's repudiation of Epicureanism;

Quote

A remiss and irregular worshiper of the gods, while I professed the errors of a senseless philosophy, I am now obliged to set sail back again, and to renew the course that I had deserted. For Jupiter, who usually cleaves the clouds with his gleaming lightning, lately drove his thundering horses and rapid chariot through the clear serene; which the sluggish earth, and wandering rivers; at which Styx, and the horrid seat of detested Tænarus, and the utmost boundary of Atlas were shaken. The Deity is able to make exchange between the highest and the lowest, and diminishes the exalted, bringing to light the obscure; rapacious fortune, with a shrill whizzing, has borne off the plume from one head, and delights in having placed it on another.

-Odes, Book I Ode 34