

Threads of Epicureanism in Art and Literature

Post by “Joshua” of May 9, 2024 at 11:41 AM

Quote

Maybe! The problem is I remember so little--only the rough outline of a passing vignette...

I think;

-That it was a poem (rough start, I know!)

-The poem was written by a British man.

-And was written in the Victorian period or earlier.

-The speaker of the poem is intoxicated, possibly by opium or laudanum, or maybe by absinthe or wine. In any case, there's delirium.

-The speaker meets an 'exotic' man, and tries to speak to him.

-When English fails, the speaker switches to ancient Greek, possibly by reciting a few lines from Homer.

That's all I've got! I thought it was Thomas de Quincey (1785-1859), who wrote Confessions of an English Opium Eater, but he was an essayist. His Greek, however, was very good.

Display More

I finally found it, and it was in De Quincey's book.

Quote

My knowledge of the Oriental tongues is not remarkably extensive, being indeed confined to two words—the Arabic word for barley and the Turkish for opium (madjoon), which I have learned from Anastasius; and as I had neither a Malay dictionary nor even Adelung's Mithridates, which might have helped me to a few words, I addressed him in some lines from the Iliad, considering that, of such languages as I possessed, Greek, in point of longitude, came geographically nearest to an Oriental one. He worshipped me in a most devout manner, and replied in what I suppose was Malay. In this way I saved my reputation with my neighbours, for the Malay had no means of betraying the secret.