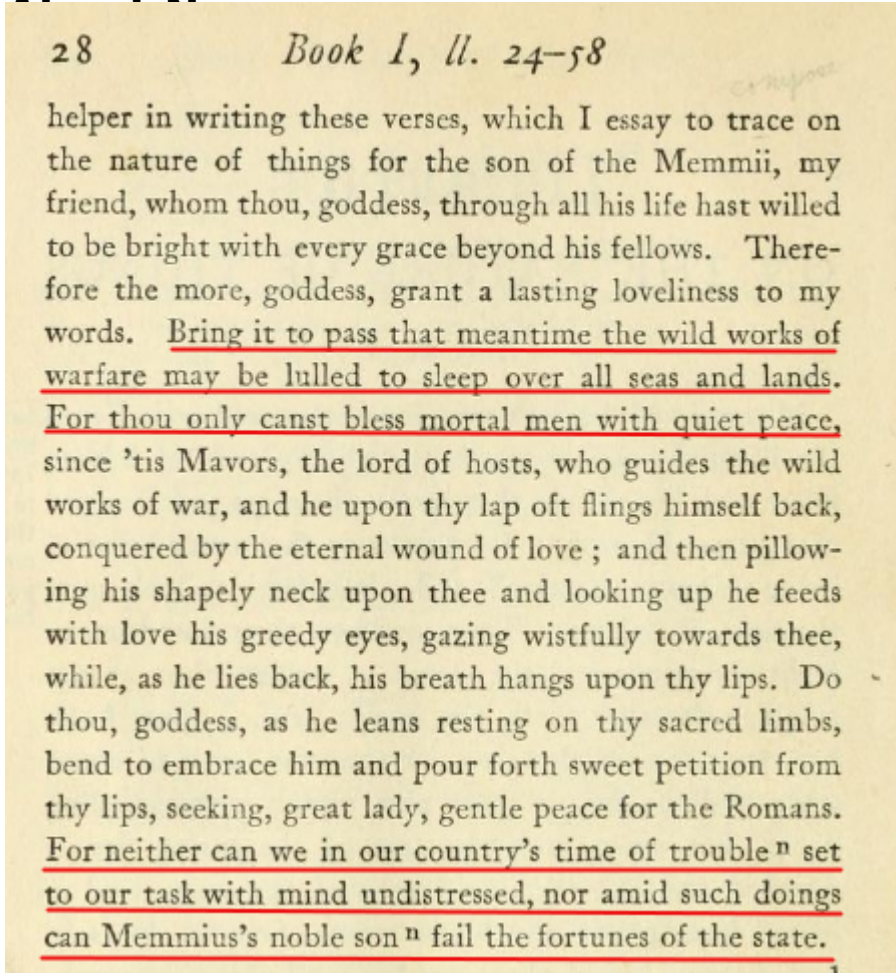


## A Passage That Seems Particularly Appropriate



Interesting to consider:

(1) Is Lucretius appealing figuratively, or literally, to the goddess of pleasure to bring peace to his world?

(2) Is Lucretius also saying that it is true and appropriate BOTH that (a) his own mind cannot work on the poem unburdened by distress, AND (b) that Memmius cannot fail but to participate in the actions of his time?

This is the Bailey translation:

<https://archive.org/stream/onnatur...age/28/mode/2up>

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**Post by "Joshua" of June 19, 2020 at 12:55 PM**

When I have more time I'd like to write a critique of Tennyson's *Lucretius*; a poetic exploration of St. Jerome's slander. Tennyson's poem bears in interesting ways on the questions you raise. What did Lucretius mean to convey by addressing Venus

*In lays that will outlast thy deity?*

Lucretius' Venus is a deeply complex figure. The personification of pleasure and sexual generation; the figurative mother of the city of Rome; the vital energy of endless and beginningless re-creation. The sometime lover and sometime rival of human strife, and the endower of human qualities.

Because the world of Epicurean philosophy is a world of human will amidst ceaseless and random Nature, we can infer that the power of Venus to calm the bloodlust of Mars is a token of the power of humans to choose Venus, and not Mars; to—and I'm quoting Tennyson again—keep *themselves*

*from the lust of blood*

*That makes a steaming slaughter-house of Rome.*

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### **Post by “Cassius” of June 19, 2020 at 1:38 PM**

Great points. I am now beginning to focus myself on the second part of my post about what Lucretius would have expected Memmius to understand him to be saying. Sounds like Lucretius is contemplating that Memmius would be somehow involved in the events, which is good evidence against the "live in a cave" viewpoint, but it certainly doesn't seem clear to me what Lucretius is suggesting that Memmius do or not do, or whether Lucretius is registering approval or disapproval. Since he is writing this apparently in hope of patronage from Memmius in the future, I would not expect his reference to mean disapproval, and of course I am always going to take the position that Lucretius means what he says and is not guilty of saying just what he might think that Memmius would want to hear. So I would think that Lucretius must have had something particular in mind that he would expect to register in Memmius's response to what he had written.

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### **Post by “Godfrey” of June 19, 2020 at 2:40 PM**

The Martin Ferguson Smith translation footnotes this passage "*A probable allusion to Memmius' praetorship of 58 B.C.*" Wikipedia notes that Memmius was an orator and writer of erotic poetry. All news to me as I've never looked into him before.

So it would seem that Memmius is involved in the events, but there's no indication as to what Lucretius is asking of him other than perhaps to work for peace. But maybe that's obvious. 😊

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### **Post by "Joshua" of June 19, 2020 at 3:56 PM**

I seem to recall that Cicero mentions Memmius' ownership of an Epicurean property in Athens. Theory goes that Lucretius wanted it preserved for the school.

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### **Post by "Cassius" of June 19, 2020 at 5:07 PM**

As to Joshua's comment I need to check but what I am remembering is that the commentators think that Memmius eventually part some part of what was either Epicurus' home or garden (I gather these were actually two locations) and was going to demolish it, and that some Epicureans wanted to intervene to persuade Memmius not to do this. So I am thinking that the commentators think that there is no evidence that Lucretius was successful to the extent that he was hoping to "convert" Memmius, and that there is very little known that can be said good about Memmius. But I am working from memory and that may not be correct.