

productions, which lack a real context. It would have been useful if space could have been found for an explanation of why the costume and mask are of the form they are, what the designer/director was hoping to achieve and whether or how they relate to some of the themes that have been developed earlier. Given that the history of the performance of Greek tragedy up to the present day is now an area of fruitful research and interest, it is very valuable to have these modern examples on display. However some reference to the recent work in the area might have added significance, such as Rush Rehm's *Radical Theatre, Greek tragedy and the Modern World* (London 2002) – or any of his earlier works.

Greek art is, on the surface, so simple and direct in its impact that it can hardly fail to appeal. This exhibition does likewise. But the catalogue gives it an added depth and richness that makes it a much more seminal experience for those interested in the theatre and its origins, for those keen on the social context of theatre and its effects and those fascinated by the longevity of the themes employed and their ease of application to new and very different worlds. On top of that, we have a catalogue containing a superb collection of images of artifacts that can be used in any context to add interest, depth and colour to a discussion of the ancient world.

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Martin Ferguson Smith (tr.) *Lucretius: On the Nature of Things*, with introduction and notes; Hackett Indianapolis 2001; xxxvii +224 pp. ISBN 0 87220 587 8 (pb) \$US 9.95; ISBN 0 87220 588 6 (hb) \$US 34.95.

This is a slightly revised version of the author's little known and long out of print prose translation of 1969, written in his mid-twenties (vi); he is now Professor Emeritus of the University of Durham. It is accompanied by an expanded Introduction (c. 25 p.) and Notes. Smith (S) has added useful 1-2 page 'headnotes' or synopses to each book, an updated 3 page Bibliography (confined to English language titles), and a generous Index, the latter, unfortunately, confined to the poem itself. The translation is based upon the text that S himself prepared for the revised Loeb edition of

Lucretius of 1975, in which, however, he took over the old W.H.D.Rouse translation with only slight modifications.

The Introduction has four sections: on Lucretius' life and times; on the *De Rerum Natura* (*DRN*) itself; on Epicurus and Epicureanism; and on the structure of the poem. The reconstruction of Lucretius' life is necessarily short and speculative, but sensibly argued. *Inter alia* S suggests that Lucretius (L) spent a considerable amount of time in Rome. The section on the *DRN* is helpful, and largely uncontroversial. In it, S stresses L's pride in being a pioneer in expounding Epicurean philosophy in poetry (xiv), and rightly argues against a school of thought, more powerful in the Romantic period than today, perhaps, that L's poetic achievement would have been greater had he chosen less intractable subject matter. This is to underestimate the impact of L's missionary fervour upon his work (xv). L 'regards Epicurus as the spiritual and moral savior of himself and humanity. Epicurus is to him as Jesus is to a Christian' (xii). The Romantics were wrong. The *DRN* is a great poem because of L's Epicureanism, not despite it. Well said.

After outlining what we know of Epicurus himself S moves to a discussion of our sources for Epicureanism. Here he brings a special expertise to bear. Our knowledge of Epicureanism has been much enhanced in recent times, not only by the continuing publication of texts from the *Villa dei Papiri* at Herculaneum, but also by the excavation of the remains of a lengthy inscription setting out Epicurus' teachings found at Oinoanda in Lycia, a gift to the town of one Diogenes. Since 1968 S has been excavating and editing the fragments of this inscription, and the fruits of his expertise appear at intervals in the notes in this volume (See below). S follows Sedley in believing that Epicurus' *Peri Physeos* was L's main (if not his only) source for the physical exposition in the *DRN* (xxi).

S next furnishes a lucid summary of the main doctrines of Epicureanism, its epistemology, physics and ethics. Its historical context is important. With the rise of Macedon and the consequent loss of Greece's political autonomy, Epicurus offered the individual moral independence in its stead. His interest in science was not for its own sake: rather, it is a means to an ethical end, the attainment of happiness by removal of man's fear of death, and fear of the gods (xxii-xxiii). S has some useful things to say on *clinamen*, the famous 'atomic swerve', of which modern scientists are more respectful than their predecessors. He points out (xxvii) that Epicurus did not argue that this proved the existence of free will. Rather, as L's account makes clear, the fact of free will proves the existence of atomic swerve. He adds that unfortunately

our sources do not explain ‘how a random atomic movement makes possible actions performed by choice’!

On Epicurean gods S rightly rejects Long and Sedley’s view that they are merely ‘our own instinctive thought-constructs’: they have a separate existence ‘out in space’, but their images serve to convey to worshippers in the right frame of mind a vision of ethical perfection (xxix and n.29). Other observations, such as that, although they are not named, L is frequently directing his arguments against the Stoics, are justified against other scholars chiefly in the notes.

The somewhat curiously placed section on the structure of the poem serves mainly to allow S to argue against the notion, largely based on the description of the plague at the end of Book VI, that L was a pessimist. Verbal parallels connect the passage to the beginning of Book VI: even the highly civilised Athenians cannot deal with crisis; the plague symbolises the moral inadequacy of those ignorant of Epicurean philosophy. But L, through Epicurus, offers heaven on earth. I find the particular argument persuasive, and the conclusion is surely right.

An earlier reviewer, Robert Todd, (in the *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, 2002.02.08.) has criticised S harshly for alleged shortcomings on the philosophical side, recommending John Godwin’s revision of the Penguin version of Latham (1994) instead. I am no philosopher, but found S very helpful in this regard. Todd’s review drew an indignant response both from the author and from an admirer (*BMCR* 2002.03.09), the latter of whom labelled the offending review ‘dyspeptic’. (The curious may follow the debate at <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/bmcr/>. I might add that periodical checking of this electronic review site is an excellent way of keeping up with the latest in classical scholarship).

The heart of the problem is that the *BMCR* reviewer wishes to regard Lucretius as valuable mainly as a source for Epicurean philosophy (!), while S, quite reasonably, in my view, sought to strike a balance in his translation and notes between Lucretius’ philosophy and his poetry. Paradoxically, perhaps, given the venom of Todd’s review, the quality of the translation, in the end, was not so contentious. But, here, I confess to being less impressed.

Lucretius poses a formidable challenge for any translator. Whatever the expectations of his ancient audience, we moderns do not look for a passionate exposition of a philosophical system cast in the form of epic poetry. In a famous passage, the poet explains his decision: like doctors who coat the rim

of a cup of wormwood with honey, L, realising that 'this philosophy of ours often appears somewhat off-putting to those who have not experienced it ... preferred to expound it ... in harmonious Pierian poetry, and, so to speak, coat it with the sweet honey of the Muses' (I 936-947). In the hands of the master poet, the discrete atoms of doctrine and honey for the most part blend brilliantly, as Quintus and Marcus Cicero (M. Cicero, *Letters to Quintus* 2.9) and Ovid (*Amores* I 15.23) would have agreed, but it is not so easy to combine the two elements in contemporary English prose, and their juxtaposition can jar. I grew up with the Penguin translation of Ronald Latham to guide my reading of the original, and it still strikes me as a marvellous achievement.

I would like to say the same of the translation under review, but while by no means unsuccessful, it often suffers by comparison with Latham's. Take the wonderful Prologue to Book I:

Aeneadam genetrix, hominum divomque voluptas
 alma Venus, caeli subter labentia signa
 quae mare navigerum, quae terras frugiferentis
 concelebras, per te quoniam genus omne animantum
 5 concipitur visitque exortum lumina solis:
 te, dea, te fugiunt venti, te nubila caeli
 adventum tuum, tibi suavis daedala tellus
 summittit flores, tibi rident aequora ponti
 placatumque nitet diffuso lumine caelum.
 10 nam simul ac species patefactast verna diei
 et reserata viget genitabilis aura favoni,
 aerae primum volucres te, diva, tuumque
 significant initem percussae corda tua vi.
 inde ferae(,) pecudes persultant pabula laeta
 15 et rapidos tranant amnis

Latham renders it thus:

'Mother of Aeneas and his race, delight of men and gods, life-giving Venus, it is your doing that under the wheeling constellations of the sky all nature teems with life, both the sea that buoys up our ships and the earth that yields our food. Through you all living creatures are conceived and come forth to look upon the sunlight. Before you the winds flee, and at your coming the clouds forsake the sky. For you the inventive earth flings up sweet flowers. For you the ocean levels laugh, the sky is calmed and glows with diffused radiance. When first the day puts on the aspect of spring, when in all its force the fertilizing breath of Zephyr is unleashed, then, great goddess, the birds give the first intimation of your entry; for yours is the power that has pierced

them to the heart. Next the cattle run wild, frisk through the lush pastures and swim the swift-flowing streams...

And Smith:

'Mother of Aeneas' people, delight of human beings and the gods, Venus, power of life, it is you who beneath the sky's sliding stars inspirit the ship-bearing sea, inspirit the productive land. To you every kind of living creature owes its conception and first glimpse of the sun's light. You, goddess, at your coming hush the winds and scatter the clouds; for you the creative earth thrusts up fragrant flowers; for you the smooth stretches of the ocean smile, and the sky, tranquil now, is flooded with effulgent light. Once the door to spring is flung open and Favonius' fertilizing breeze, released from imprisonment, is active, first, goddess, the birds of the air, pierced to the heart with your powerful shafts, signal your entry. Next wild creatures and cattle bound over rich pastures and swim rushing rivers....'

The Latin aside (for the moment), it is striking how easily the Latham version flows, in natural, unforced English – though 'diffused radiance' may give momentary pause. By contrast, I jibbed at Smith's almost from the start. Neither 'human beings' for 'men' (self-consciously 'politically correct'; vi), nor the definite article before 'gods', would worry one unfamiliar with Latham's translation, but 'power of life' seems a slightly awkward epithet beside Latham's, and the 'sky's sliding stars', even if one suspects an attempt to reproduce Lucretian alliteration, sounds decidedly odd. But 'inspirit the ship-bearing sea, inspirit the productive land' is downright jarring. Thereafter I think S does rather better, while not matching Latham.

But what of their 'accuracy'? Both translations are free, and necessarily so, but never (or seldom), I think, do defiance to the Latin – and I speak here of the whole of them. For instance, 'inventive earth' and 'creative earth' translate *daedala tellus* (7), and obviate the need for a note on Daedalus, which S must furnish for Favonius four lines below. At 14-15, *ferae(,) pecudes* the difference in the rendering (one subject in Latham, two in S) is a matter of interpretation: is *ferae* an adjective ('wild'), or noun ('wild beasts')? S thinks the latter, and that L is emphasising the universality of the excitement of spring; Latham perhaps shrinks from having wild beasts and domestic cohabiting on *pabula*, 'pasturelands'. Neither translator here attempts to reproduce the alliteration in the original.

Moving from the honey to some wormwood, Latham translates I 215-16 (*Huc accedit uti quidque in sua corpora rursus / dissolvat natura neque ad*

nilum interemat res) thus: 'The second great principle is this: *nature resolves everything into its component atoms and never reduces anything to nothing.*'

And S: 'The complement of the foregoing doctrine is the principle that, although nature resolves everything in its constituent particles, she never annihilates anything.'

Here it seems to me that S, as he not infrequently does, in his attempt to do justice to the seriousness of L's purpose, translates too wordily and pretentiously. Sometimes his translation is too free: e.g., at IV 1166-7, *cum vivere non quit prae macie*, which Latham renders 'when she is almost too skinny to live', becomes in S, 'when she is a victim of consumption', which image an earlier translator had more appropriately used for the next example in L's catalogue of euphemisms. But what may look at first sight like over-translation: e.g., at I 21, 'stand at the helm of nature's ship' for *rerum naturam gubernas* ('govern the nature of things'; cf. *gubernator*, 'helmsman'), turns out to be perfectly appropriate. In the next line, *luminis oras*, 'shores of light', immediately justifies the bringing out of the nautical metaphor. Elsewhere, however, Latham's rendering of L's repeated *ratio sagax* as 'keen insight' (e.g. at I 130) is infinitely preferable to S's 'penetrative reasoning'. On the other hand I like S's 'the wild wind awakened whips the waves of the sea' at I 271, for *venti vis verberat* etc. (where S accepts the emendation *pontum*).

S's Notes are detailed and helpful, and all the more so because they are footnotes, unlike the 'end-notes' of the revised Penguin edition. The very first is an excellent pithy explication of the whole preamble. Most are explanatory, although S is not loath to incorporate judgments (e.g. 11, n.26, his high praise of L's argument for the existence of invisible atoms at I 271-297). As already observed, the notes are enriched by his knowledge of Diogenes of Oinoanda, where parallel passages in the two writers can aid in interpreting L's text; e.g. at V 1050, where S translates *cogere* by 'assemble' rather than 'compel' (Godwin/Latham has 'subdue' without a note). S's wide knowledge of English literature also enables him to cite imitations of Lucretius in Shelley, Wordsworth and Matthew Arnold, amongst others.

Enough has been said, I trust, to indicate that both the Hackett and the revised Penguin Lucretius are worthy publications. While I prefer Latham's translation, Smith's Introduction and Notes have attributes unmatched by its rival. Each will have its admirers.

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