Lucy Hutchinson (1620-1681)
Meaghan Nielson
LAT 501

I. Background/Habitus
   A. Father – Sir Allen Apsley
   B. Husband – Sir John Hutchinson
   C. Puritan
   D. Civil unrest in England between 1640 and 1650
   E. Not a feminist:
      1. “Had it bene a worke that had merited glory, or could my sex, (whose
         more becomming vertue is silence,) derive honor from my writing, my
         aspiring Muse would not have sought any other Patrone then your
         lordship…” (Preface)

II. Her Translation of De Rerum Natura
   A. First to translate the text into English in its entirety ca. 1650; not published until
      1996 (Goldberg 2006: 275)
   B. Preface written in 1675 (Norbrook 2000: 198)
      1. “… translated it only out of youthfull curiositie, to understand things I
         heard so much discourse of at second hand” (Preface)
2. “unworthy Translation” (Preface)
3. “Afterward, being convinc'd of the sin of amusing my selfe with such vaine Philosophy (which even at the first I did not employ any serious studie in, for I turnd it into English in a roome where my children practizd the several qualities they were taught, with their Tutors, & I numbred the sillables of my translation by the threds of the canvas I wrought in, & sett them downe with a pen & inke that stood by me; How superficially it must needs be done in this manner; the thing itself will shew,) but I say afterwards as my judgement grew riper, & my mind was fixt in more profitable contemplations, I thought this booke not worthy either of review or correction, the whole worke being one fault.” (Preface)

III. Why did she translate this text?
   A. Superstition vs. religion (Goldberg 2006: 276)
   B. Lucretius is anti-war (Goldberg 2006: 276)
   C. A return to first principles (Norbrook 2000: 189)
   D. “… attraction to his intellectual radicalism, and particularly his scathing attacks on war-mongering, priestcraft, superstition, and courtly luxury…” (Hopkins 2010: 90)

IV. Lucy Hutchinson as a Translator
   A. Her work is not without errors (difficult and corrupt manuscript)
   B. Style
      1. Rhyming couplets in pentameter
      2. Enjambed lines and uneven line length (Barbour & Norbrook 2012: c)
      3. Like Lucretius, uses long words at the ends of lines (Norbrook 2000: 188).
      4. Frequent heavy elisions (Barbour & Norbrook 2012: xcvii)
      5. Accurate and concise (Barbour & Norbrook 2012: xcvi)
      6. 99% of her lines have 10 syllables
      7. Multiple terms for the same Lucretian word
      8. Predictable adjectives
      9. Uses the same rhymes multiple times (Barbour & Norbrook 2012: xcviii)
10. Her version has approximately 20 percent more lines than the original
(Barbour & Norbrook 2012: xcvi)

C. Foreignization – Appositions and relative temporal clauses (DeQuehen 1996: 295)

D. Bowdlerization – Omits lines from DRN:
1. “The cause and effects of Love which he makes a kind of dreame but much here was left out for a midwife to translate whose obsceane art it would better become than a nicer pen.” (Goldberg 2006: 289)

E. Destruction of Idioms and Substitution – Tones down explicitly sexual language
(Barbour & Norbrook 2012: lxiii)

F. Ennoblement and Expansion - 1.153 “God neuer aniething of nothing made;”

*De Rerum Natura* Translated by Lucy Hutchinson: 1.153-73

God neuer aniething of nothing made;
But soe are mortall men restreind with dread,
As seing severall works in heaven, and earth,
And ignorant of the cause that gives them birth,
They thinke a power devine brings forth those things;
Then we shall soone perceiue how things are made
And whence they flow, without deviner ayd.
If things were made of nothing, they would need
Noe proper seeds, all things would all things breed.
The sea would men produce, from earth would rise
Birds, and the scaly race; flocks, from the skies,
And heards from heaven would come, beasts would confound
Their seuerall kinds, in wild and pasture ground.
Trees would not still yeild the same fruietes, but bring
Forth change, and all things would from all things spring.
If generative bodies were not in each kind,
How could a certeine mother be to things assignd?
But since each species from its owne seed grows,
Only first bodies things to light expose,
Who take their being where their matter flows.

Bibliography