

Lesson 9

Lucretius, *De rerum natura* 5.783-794b

Principio genus herbarum viridemque nitorem
terra dedit circum collis camposque per omnis,
785 florida fulserunt viridanti prata colore
arboribusque datumst variis exinde per auras
crescendo magnum inmissis certamen habenis.
ut pluma atque pili primum saetaeque creantur
quadripedum membris et corpore pennipotentum,
790 sic nova tum tellus herbas virgultaque primum
sustulit, inde loci mortalia saecla creavit
multa modis multis varia ratione coorta.
nam neque de caelo cecidisse animalia possunt
nec terrestria de salsis exisse lacunis.

Translation A W. H. D. Rouse (Loeb) 1982 (1975)

In the beginning the earth gave forth the different kinds of herbage and bright verdure about the hills and all over the plains, and the flowering meadows shone with the colour of green; then to the various kinds of trees came a mighty struggle, as they raced at full speed to grow up into the air. As feathers and hair and bristles first grow on the frame of four-footed creatures or the body of strong-winged birds, so then the new-born earth put forth herbage and saplings first, and in the next place created the generations of mortal creatures, arising in many kinds and in many ways by different processes. For animals cannot have fallen from the sky, nor can creatures of the land have come out of the salt pools.

Translation B E. E. Latham (Penguin) 1951

First of all, the earth girdled its hills with a green glow of herbage, and over every plain the meadows gleamed with verdure and with bloom. Then trees of every sort were given free rein to join in an eager race for growth into the gusty air. As feathers, fur and bristles are generated at the outset from the bodies of winged and four-footed creatures, so then the new-born earth first flung up herbs and shrubs. Next in order it engendered the various breeds of mortal creatures, manifold in mode of origin as in form. The animals cannot

have fallen from the sky, and those that live on land cannot have emerged from the briny gulfs.

Questions

1. Identify the forms of the following nouns; give their dictionary form and meaning/range of meanings; and find the equivalents in translation A above.

1. *prata* (line 785): what other word agrees with this?
2. *arboribus* (line 786): what other word agrees with this?
3. *quadripedum* (line 789)
4. *tellus* (line 790)

2. Which words 'go with' each other, in terms of matching case, number and gender, in lines 791-2? Use scansion to help with vowel lengths in endings.)

3. “and the flowering meadows shone with the colour of green”

1. Find the Latin equivalent and translate.
2. Compare the Latin with both translation A (above) and translations B and C below:
 - a. "the meadows gleamed with verdure and with bloom" (as translated by Latham)
 - b. "the flowering fields gleamed in their green hue " (as translated by Bailey)

4. Translate lines 783-4.

Compare the Latin with translations A, B and C. Can you find an explanation for the way B divides the sentence up?

5. Using the translation (A) of the whole sentence to help you, find in the Latin the subject of *creavit* (line 79§).

The phrase *inde loci* as this is used here may be translated roughly as “from that point on” (*inde* = “from there”, *loci*: gen. of *locus*, = “of place”).

Translate lines 791 (from *inde loci...*) to 792. Compare the Latin with translations A, B and C.

6.
 1. What case, number and gender does the subject of *datumst* need to be? Find this subject (and anything that agrees with it) and translate.
 2. What case is *crescendi*? What will *crescendum* mean?
 3. Find the Latin equivalent of "to various kinds of trees".
What case is this, and why?
 4. What else agrees with *inmissis*? Translate these two words. Find their equivalents in all three translations, and comment on these as renderings of the Latin.
 5. Translate the phrase *exinde per auras*, find the equivalents in translations A, B and C, and comment on these as renderings of the Latin.
 6. Looking at lines 786-7 as a whole, compare the Latin with the two translations.