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A Dozen Lucretian Emendations

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In this article, twelve new emendations are offered on the text of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*. At 1.454 *non tactus* is proposed for the unparalleled *intactus*; at 2.99 *et partim* is suggested for the awkward *pars etiam*; at 2.258 *quomque* (late-Republican *cumque*) is advanced for *quemque*; at 2.615 the metrically problematic *inuenti sint* is altered to *inueniantur*; at 2.733 the unique use of *nigrant* is dispensed with by reading the expected *nigra sunt*; at 3.267 *et tamen* is made more naturally adversarial as *at tamen*; at 3.774 *ne fessa* is altered to the more Lucretian *defessa* (reading *ne* for *et* earlier in the line); at 4.160 the unusual feminine *celer* (*his*) is altered to (*his*) *celeris*; at 4.306 (331) the difficult gerund *insinuando* is changed to the gerundive *insinuandis*; at 4.318 (343) *multisque* is replaced with the more idiomatic *multoque*; at 5.323 the stark phrase *deminui debet recreari* is reordered as *debet deminui et recreari*; finally, at 6.266 *uementes* is read for the otiose *uenientes*. The discussion proceeds on the basis of the universally accepted stemma, namely that the three Carolingian manuscripts (O, Q, S) are the sole manuscripts with textual authority. The more than fifty surviving Renaissance manuscripts ultimately derive from O, but they remain a fertile source for conjectures.

Keywords: Lucretius, textual criticism, transmission, Latin poetry, metre, Epicurean philosophy.

1. 1.454

coniunctumst id quod nusquam sine perinitiali
discidio potis est seiungi seque gregari,
pondus uti saxis, calor ignist, liquor aquae ui,
tactus corporibus cunctis, intactus inani. (1.451–454)

453 saxis Ω : saxist Wakefield ignist Bockemüller : ignibus Lambinus : ignis Ω aquae ui
Timpanaro : aquis est Leo : aquae stat Postgate : aquae sic Diels : aquarum Itali : aquai Ω
454 del. Lachmann

Here Lucretius introduces the concept of properties (*coniuncta* = Greek συμβεβηκότα), qualities which cannot be separated from the entities that possess them. Critical focus has fallen primarily on line 453, where the transmitted genitives *ignis* and *aquai* have resisted conversion to datives, in parallel to *saxis*, *corporibus* and *inani* (cf. also 449–450 *his coni-*

uncta duabus | rebus).¹ But 454 presents its own oddity: *intactus* is deployed here — and here alone in both the poem and Latin literature as a whole — as a noun, which must bear the meaning ‘intangibility.’² For Lambinus (1570, 52) the unparalleled *intactus* was a ‘mira compositio’; for Lachmann (1850, 40) it was quite incredible: ‘*intactus* recto casu, ut pro substantivo sit, Latine dici non potest.’ He argued that nouns formed from the privative prefix *in-* and the verbal supine are restricted to use in the ablative: *iniussu, incultu, inconsultu, inuocatu* etc., alongside adverbial forms of the kind *immerito, inopinato, intestato, indebito*. This unique deployment of a nominative noun *intactus* was thus dismissed as an impossible invention, however neat its parallelism to *tactus*.³ As a result, Lachmann deleted 454, attributing it to the work of his frequent nemesis, the ‘interpolator philosophus.’⁴ But the motivation for such an insertion is hard to apprehend, and the language is otherwise Lucretian. In his review of Lachmann’s edition, Spengel (1851, 783) defended the authenticity of 454 by replacing *intactus* with the substantive *intactile*. Although it is true that Lucretius, and only he, used the pair of adjectives *tactilis* (5.151) and *intactilis* (1.437), this emendation has not won subsequent support.

Perhaps we may find a better solution by looking at another binary opposition in the poem? To convey the technical business of sensation, Lucretius used (and, again, perhaps coined) the adjectival pair *sensilis* (2.888, 893, 895, 902) and *insensilis* (2.866, 870, 888, 902). However, when reaching for an opposite term to the standard noun *sensus*, he did not attempt the coinage **insensus*. Since that route seemed to be linguistically barred, he instead used the idiomatic option of *non* as a nominal modifier, to create the negative counterpart *non-sensus* (2.930 *scire licet gigni posse ex non sensibus sensus*; 931-932 *quod si forte aliquis dicet, dumtaxat oriri | posse ex non sensu sensus mutabilitate*). Later in Book 1, Lucretius will use a similar route to express the concept of the non-middle: *per medium, per non medium* (1075).⁵ I therefore suggest that in 454 Lucretius introduced the most natural opposing term to *tactus*, i. e. *non tactus*. The corruption of *non* to *in* would have been easy in context, and perhaps abetted by the following *inani*.

2. 2.99

quod quoniam constat, nimirum nulla quies est
reddita corporibus primis per inane profundum,

¹ It is impossible to construe *aquai* as a dative. Just as in other poets, the search in Lucretius for datives in *-ai* is fruitless: *patriai* at 1.41, *summai* at 1.953 and *fugai* at 1.1047 are genitives. Curiously, Charisius (16, 22–27 B.) mistakenly cites *aulai medio* (Verg. *Aen.* 3.354), *intus aquai* (Verg. *Aen.* 7.464) and <terrai> *frugiferai* (Enn. *Ann.* 510 Sk.) as his examples, although they are unanimously agreed to be genitives. While it is true that a dative in *-ai* did exist in Early Latin (as Quintilian noted at *Inst.* 1.7.18), its spondaic prosody is most improbable: Nigidius Figulus, cited by Aulus Gellius (13.26.4), regarded it as monosyllabic form, whereas Garrod (1914) made the case for a hypothetical iambic scansion. For further support of the conjecture *aquae ui*, see Timpanaro (1947) and Deufert (2018) 32–34.

² *TLL* VII.1 2069.55: ‘status rei, quae tangi non potest.’

³ Elsewhere in the poem *intactus* is adjectival, meaning ‘untouched’ (3.813=5.358, 6.1060), or (if Bentley’s deletion of the verse, followed by Deufert’s Teubner edition (2019), is resisted) ‘intangible’ at 1.334. No support is given for the noun *intactus* by the two parallel Epicurean terms (reported by Sext. *Emp. Adv. Math.* 10.221), which are not cognate with each other: ἀντιπυρία (the ‘resistance’ of the tangible) and εἴζις (the ‘yielding’ of the intangible).

⁴ After the dismissal of line 454, the construction of 453 was subsequently normalised to genitives by introducing *saxist* alongside *ignis* and *aquai*.

⁵ Although this licence is not common in high-register Latin, elsewhere in philosophical literature Cicero reports Zeno’s concept of non-body as *non corpus* (*Ac.* 1.39).

sed magis adsiduo uarioque exercita motu
partim interuallis magnis confulta resultant,
pars etiam breuibus spatiis uexantur ab ictu. (2.95-99)

98 confulta Ω: conflicta F: compulsa Cippellarius: contusa Lambinus: conlata Reid

The incessant motion of atoms is subdivided in the last two lines between two types of *concilia*: those that allow for the wide-ranging movement of atoms after their initial compression (98), and those that force their atoms to move around within a tighter network. The subsequent lines (100–108) clarify that this distinction describes substances like air and sunlight on the one hand, and solids like stone and iron on the other. But the syntactic division between these two groups (*partim... pars...*) is most unusual: while Lucretius used both *partim... partim...* and *pars... pars...* in succession,⁶ their juxtaposition together is without parallel. Even those who wish to argue that such synesis is acceptable, on the basis that it is attested in other Latin authors,⁷ must acknowledge another oddity: in all other Lucretian cases, *pars* takes a singular verb, despite the subject referenced most often being plural in number.⁸ That this was Lucretian style is confirmed by the four cases (4.568, 570, 5.288, 6.1168) where the singular verb is guaranteed by metre.⁹ Lucretius should therefore have written *uexatur* for *uexantur* in 99 — but this change of number mid-sentence would create an unwelcome imbalance.

Real balance could be restored to these lines in two ways, either by reading (i) *partim* in 99, or (ii) *pars* in 98. The latter option may at first seem the better course, because of the existence of verse-initial *pars etiam* at 4.946 and 5.255.¹⁰ But the alteration introduces its own problems: *exercita* of 97 would no longer understand an implied *corpora* from *corporibus* in 96, but *pars* as its delayed subject. However, the singular *exercita* would lead even more strongly to reading singular verbs in both 98 and 99, contrary to the manuscripts. What is more, the text that immediately follows this sentence makes clear enough that *corpora* is in fact the plural subject: *et quaecumque magis condenso conciliatu | exiguis interuallis conuecta resultant* (100–101).¹¹ *Corpora*, explicitly stated in 104, is in actuality the subject throughout 97–108. We are left, then, with option (i) of reading *partim* in 99.¹² Strong support for this change is given by the fact that atomic *corpora* are likewise divided into two groups by *partim* at 1.483–484 and 4.54–57.¹³ Alteration of *pars* alone would introduce the collocation *partim*

⁶ *partim... partim*: 1.483–484, 4.55–57, 736–737, 917–918, 5.266–268 (*partim quod*), 6.20–23 (*partim quod*), 1058–1059, 1208–1211 (*partim... nonnulli... partim*); *pars... pars*: 4.568–571, 944–947 (x3), 5.251–256.

⁷ See further LHS II. 436.

⁸ *pars horum maxima* (4.464: tricks of the eye that deceive the mind), *pars uocum* (4.568: of the various sounds that emanate from an utterance; likewise 570), *pars glebarum* (5.255: of clods of soil), *pars horum* (5.288: of the sun's rays), *pars [hominum]* (5.1025), *pars hominum* (6.1168).

⁹ At 5.1025, transmitted as *sed bona magnaue pars seruabat foedera casti*, most editors reject Marullus' alteration to *seruabant*, preferring instead the Renaissance emendation to adverbial *caste*.

¹⁰ At 4.946, *pars etiam* appears as the third element after *pars* and *et... pars*; at 5.255, *pars etiam* opens a new sentence, introducing a different part of the land from *pars terrai nonnulla* (251).

¹¹ The combination of *exiguis interuallis* with *conuecta resultant* reveals that *uexantur ab ictu* of 99 balances both *confulta* (whether or not this *hapax* is retained or substituted with another conjectured participle) and *resultant* of 98.

¹² *partim* is frequently used in close succession, and in all but one case (3.917–918, where the *uis animae* is subdivided) with plural verbs.

¹³ 1.483–484 *corpora sunt porro partim primordia rerum, | partim concilio quae constant principiorum*; 4.54–57 (see below).

etiam,¹⁴ a pairing not otherwise found in Lucretius but common in Cicero. While *partim etiam* is intelligible as an extension of the *corpora adsiduo uarioque exercita motu* (97), the sense would flow more idiomatically without any additional adverb. It may therefore be that Lucretius simply wrote *et partim*, a pairing that opens the Lucretian line elsewhere (4.918, 5.952, 1083), most notably in a very similar context at 4.54–57:

principio quoniam mittunt in rebus apertis
corpora res multae, partim diffusa solute,
robora ceu fumum mittunt ignesque uaporem,
et partim contexta magis condensaque, ...

Perhaps the elements *par*, *et*, *tim* were confused when the line was copied as a unit, or perhaps the loss of *et* (easy at the beginning of the verse) led to the simple repair of the line's faulty metre, with *partim* inevitably placed first, as in 98.¹⁵

3. 2.258

unde est haec, inquam, fatis auolsa uoluntas,
per quam progredimur quo ducit quemque uoluptas,
declinamus item motus nec tempore certo
nec regione loci certa, sed ubi ipsa tulit mens? (2.257–260)

257 uoluntas *Marullus* : uoluptas Ω : potestas *Lachmann* 258 uoluptas *ABF* : uoluntas Ω

Lines 257–258 are well known for the requisite reversal of the near-homophonous nouns transmitted at the end of each verse. But a further corruption may lurk in 258: while *quemque* is perfectly intelligible as the object of *ducit* ('where pleasure leads each [of us: cf. *progredimur* and *declinamus*]'), greater force would be given by reading *quomque* (the Lucretian orthography for *cumque*): 'to wherever pleasure leads'. In seventeen other places Lucretius splits *quicumque* and cognate adverbs with tmesis of *cumque* in the fifth foot.¹⁶ Of the six other cases of adverbial *quocumque*,¹⁷ the closest in sense is 6.299 *quocumque tulit uis* (understanding the object *fulmen*). For *ducere* without a stated object, we may compare 4.680–682,¹⁸ but we need only look at the close of 260 in the very sentence under discussion to see the ellipse of an object: *sed ubi ipsa tulit mens*. The corruption of sepa-

¹⁴ The elision would not be greatly different from *inferiorem etiam* (4.937), *mobilitatem etiam* (6.341) and *paulatim et* (5.535)

¹⁵ I have wondered whether a defence could be made for reading *partim iam*: it is a Lucretian idiom when introducing new instances or examples to deploy *iam*, apparently without any obvious temporal force: 2.426 *sunt etiam quae iam nec leuia iure putantur | esse*, 431 *fecula iam quo de genere est inulaeque sapes*, 447 *in quo iam genere in primis adamantina saxa*, 3.481 *et iam cetera de genere hoc quaecumque sequuntur* (cf. 2.171, 744), 4.87 *sunt igitur iam formarum uestigia certa*, 185 *in quo iam genere est solis lux et uapor eius*, 6.1080 *cetera iam quam multa licet reperire!* At 4.116 *iam* appears alongside *partim*: *primum animalia sunt iam partim tantula*. However, as with the other potential alteration to *partim tam breuibus*, the line is really more hindered than helped by any such adverb.

¹⁶ 1.510, 873, 2.21, 404, 865, 3.550, 1075, 4.737, 5.289, 6.19, 85, 389, 738, 867, 876, 1004, 1033.

¹⁷ 3.51, 4.166, 424, 5.285, 6.299, 882.

¹⁸ At 2.172 (*ipsaque deducit dux uitae dia uoluptas*) *mortalis* is understood as the object from the previous line.

rated *quomque* to *quemque* would have been very easy in context, not least because of the common confusion of *e* and *o*.¹⁹

4. 2.615

Gallos attribuunt quia, numen qui uiolarint
Matris et ingrati genitoribus inuenti sint,
significare uolunt indignos esse putandos,
uiuam progeniem qui in oras luminis edant. (2.614–617)

sint *Odo* : sunt Ω

Amid his colourful depiction of the Magna Mater cult, Lucretius explains why the eunuch *Galli* have a special role: it is because those who have violated the Great Mother's godhead and been found to be ungrateful to their parents do not deserve to propagate their own offspring.²⁰ But it is the metre, not the matter, of line 615 that requires comment here. Its spondaic close *inuenti sint* may seem a perfectly possible variation for a poet such as Lucretius. However, the actual evidence offers little support: the *De rerum natura* contains 32 lines exhibiting a fifth-foot spondee, i. e. one every 230 lines. The great majority (26=81%) of these cases involve a word of four syllables (including those ending with enclitic *-que*);²¹ five of the remaining six involve the close pairing of a monosyllable before a trisyllable (1.1077 *cum uenere* 2.475 *ac mansuescat*, 3.191 *est natura*, 417 *et mortalis*) or a trisyllabic equivalent (2.309 *sint in-motu*).²² The one remaining exception is 2.615 above, where *inuenti sint*²³ closes the line.

Aware of this genuine oddity, Lachmann suggested reversing these two words to *sint inuenti* (with *genitoribus* suffering sigmatic ecthipsis). Although no editor has adopted the change,²⁴ it was simply untrue of Bailey (1947 II. 904) to dismiss it as 'gratuitous'. Since there is nothing to obstruct the combination of the true perfect *uiolarint* with a generalised present,²⁵ perhaps *inueniantur* could be read. The whole passage summarises the cult's practices in a present-day context: devotees give (*tribuunt*) the Magna Mater eunuchs, because they wish (*uolunt*) to signal (*significare*) that those who have violated (*uiolarint*) her majesty and are found (*inueniantur*) to be unworthy of their parents are (*esse*) to be deemed (*putandos*) unworthy of issuing (*edant*) new offspring. Verbal forms (including participles, gerunds and gerundives) consisting of five syllables close the line 116 times

¹⁹ See 1.932, 2.301, 928, 4.577, 581, 696, 879, 5.654, 675, 906, 997, 1068, 1150, 6.13, 51, 589, 1040.

²⁰ I follow the interpretation of Benario (1973), which takes *et* to be a genuine conjunction, rather than serving an explanatory role (as if *id est*).

²¹ 1.60, 64, 586, 616, 991, 1116, 2.295, 302, 397, 1053, 1147, 3.198, 249, 253, 545, 907, 963, 4.125, 187, 198, 975, 978, 5.190, 425, 1156, 1265. Forms of the type *dissoluuntur* (1.764, 3.706), *dissoluantur* (1.519, 3.330), *dissoluensque* (1.559), *dissoluique* (3.815, 5.360), *dissoluitque* (6.446) and *exsoluatur* (1.811), achieve a five-syllabled close by the regular Lucretian licence of diaeresis. Despite any precise parallel, I suspect that Lucretius invoked this licence with *inuolentes* at 5.971.

²² Lachmann suggested rewriting *omnia cum rerum primordia sint in motu* as *omnia cum sint in motu primordia rerum*: it is fair to wonder why Lucretius did not write the line thus, given that *primordia* in 75% (55/71) of its other occurrences falls in the fifth foot, with *primordia rerum* closing the line 24 times.

²³ Editors adopt the necessary subjunctive first conjectured (c.1460) in Milan Ambros. E 125 sup. by Pietro Odo.

²⁴ The closest call came with Flores, who recorded in his apparatus (2002, 180) 'fort. recte'.

²⁵ The allusion to this passage in Paulus' epitome of Festus echoes this true perfect s.v. *Galli* (95 M.): *alii putant, ideo eos sibi genitalia incidere, quia violauerint numen patris matrisve, ne possint ipsi fieri parentes.*

elsewhere in the poem, including the cognate *inuenientes* at 1.736.²⁶ If this suggestion is correct, the corruption to *inuenti sint* would have been easily catalysed by the preceding perfect *uiolarint*, which stands directly above in 614.

5. 2.733

nunc age dicta meo dulci quaesita labore
 percipe, ne forte haec albis ex alba rearis
 principiis esse, ante oculos quae candida cernis,
 aut ea quae nigrant nigro de semine nata. (2.730–733)

Lucretius advances his argument that atoms are colourless: white and black objects, for instance, are not made of white and black atoms. In 733 we find the verb *nigrant*, which must bear the sense of ‘are black’. Yet in its one other occurrence in Classical Latin some 150 years later (Stat. *Siluae* 2.6.82–83 *atros | nigrasset planctu... lacertos*) it has the expected transitive, causative sense of ‘make black’.²⁷ The minor emendation to *nigrent*, i. e. the archaic verb *nigreo*, would introduce the more expected form of a stative, intransitive verb, but in its only two occurrences the verb possesses the inchoative sense of ‘become black’, as if *nigresco*.²⁸ The question therefore arises, could Lucretius have written a closer parallel to the preceding *alba* and *candida*, viz *nigra sunt*?²⁹ The pyrrhic scansion of *nigra*, attested in poets of the subsequent generation,³⁰ can be supported by Lucretius’ practice with analogous words: alongside the long initial syllable for forms of *migrare* (2.775, 3.757 5.830), he scans *remigrant* with a short second syllable at 2.966. As for the artistic juxtaposition of two different scansions of *nigr-* in the same line, we may compare 4.1222: *quae patribus patres tradunt a stirpe profecta*.³¹ Given the prevalence of the adjective *nigrans* in other Classical authors, the slip from *nigra sunt* to *nigrant* could have been easily made.

6. 3.267

quod genus in quouis animantum uiscere uolgo
 est odor et quidam color et sapor, et tamen ex his
 omnibus est unum perfectum corporis augmen... (3.266–268)

267 color *R* : calor Ω

²⁶ Since such a list has not been recorded before, I give the passages here to spare others the tedium: 1.113, 180, 251, 291, 317, 390, 391, 400, 501, 519, 535, 736, 764, 811, 818, 876, 909, 939, 968, 996, 1026, 1043, 1085, 2.26, 42, 145, 234, 346, 450, 506, 531, 551, 568, 684, 792, 914, 922, 948, 981, 1008, 1074, 1138, 1162, 3.26, 71, 148, 210, 248, 330, 352, 364, 478, 485, 601, 613, 639, 671, 689, 692, 698, 706, 722, 729, 738, 780, 782, 796, 864, 937, 1028, 4.14, 51, 70, 259, 271, 278, 306, 628, 668, 697, 776, 1030, 1202, 5.15, 44, 73, 140, 167, 289, 316, 332, 342, 376, 384, 428, 533, 971, 1320, 1426, 1453, 6.112, 164, 189, 424, 648, 653, 802, 889, 955, 1032, 1040, 1066, 1133, 1263, 1277, 1286 (the last line of the poem as transmitted).

²⁷ Tertullian, in c.207 AD, used the verb metaphorically: *nigrati ignorantiae tenebris* (*Adv. Marc.* 4.8); Probus later defined *nigro* as *nigrum facio* (*GLK* IV 202,7).

²⁸ Pac. 88 R., Acc. 260 R.

²⁹ The gloss of Lambinus ad loc. (1570, 171) is, in fact, ‘*nigra sunt*’

³⁰ Verg. *Aen.* 8.353 (*nigrantem*), Prop. 4.6.83 (*nigras*), Ov. *Her.* 2.72 (*nigri*), Man. 1.222 (*nigris*).

³¹ Cf. also *sacra* repeated with different prosody in 5.1163–1164.

Lucretius here draws an analogy for how the commingling of heat, air, wind and the nameless fourth element creates the sensation of life in the human soul (269–272): despite the separate presence of a given scent, colour and flavour in the flesh of living creatures, Lucretius argues that one complete body nevertheless grows from them. Given the contrast in play, did he follow the two instances of *et* in 267, which join the flesh's three distinct elements, with *et tamen*? If so, the sequence of sound *est... et... et... et... ex...* gives the line a misleadingly unifying balance.³² We may also note that in the sixteen other instances of the collocation, *et tamen* is restricted to the first foot of the line.³³ More probable in this context would be for Lucretius to mark the contrast with *at tamen*, a pairing that he uses mid-sentence earlier in the book (3.172);³⁴ *at* is deployed both mid-sentence and mid-verse nine times elsewhere.³⁵ The corruption to *et* would have been particularly easy after the two preceding instances of the conjunction.

7. 3.774

quidue [sc. uis animi ex 771] foras sibi uolt membris exire senectis?
 an metuit conclusa manere in corpore putri,
 et domus aetatis spatio ne fessa uetusto
 obruat? (3.772–775)

Lucretius here asks, with impatient sarcasm, why the spirit — if it really were immortal — would wish to leave an elderly body at the point of death. In 773 he turns to ask whether it ‘fears to remain trapped in a rotting body and (fears) that its house, wearied by the aged span of time, may collapse?’ As commentators note, this requires that *metuit* govern first an infinitive, then a dependent *ne* clause, an awkward combination not paralleled elsewhere. In fact, the sentence expresses only one fear — that the spirit may suffer from bodily collapse if it stays too long — not two: *et* thus has no purpose. A neater form in which Lucretius may have written the lines is offered by comparing the last clause of Book 2: *nec tenet omnia paulatim tabescere et ire | ad capulum spatio aetatis defessa uetusto*. The phrase *spatio defessa uetusto* again closes the line at 5.827, where the earth is compared to a woman beyond childbearing age. If *ne fessa* represents a corruption of *defessa*,³⁶ the verse could have begun with the expected *ne*:³⁷ ‘or does the house fear to remain trapped in a rotting body, in case the house...’³⁸

³² In the two other cases of five-fold alliteration in a line (1.200 *non potuit, pedibus qui pontum per uada possent*; 5.94 *tris species tam dissimilis, tria talia texta*), both verses convey a single unified thought.

³³ 1.1050, 2.331, 898, 3.267, 923, 4.473, 612, 811, 1149, 5.213, 476, 768, 1125, 1177, 1421, 6.603.

³⁴ *si minus offendit uitam uis horrida teli | ossibus ac neruis disclusis intus adacta, | at tamen insequitur languor terraeque petitus | suauis* (3.170–173). The collocation recurs elsewhere with words interposed: *at non esse tamen* (2.459), *at locus ille tamen* (3.536), *at tepefacta tamen* (6.322).

³⁵ 2.74 (with *contra*), 388, 392 (with *contra*), 3.312, 406, 1018, 4.473, 611, 6.1171.

³⁶ *defessus* occurs six times elsewhere (2.1174, 5.827, 1129, 1145, 6.1162, 1177), *fessus* five times (1.257, 2.1038, 3.458, 4.848, 5.308).

³⁷ While Lucretius does use *neu* alongside *neue* (as at 2.414, 6.599), its deployment here would again give the unwelcome sense of two distinct fears. It is perhaps worth repeating ‘Kenney’s First Law’, that any opening monosyllable of Latin verse can be corrupted into any other monosyllable.

³⁸ For the most recent defence of the unusual intransitive (or, more probably, elliptically transitive) use of *obruat*, see Deufert (2018) 176–177.

8. 4.160

ergo multa breui spatio simulacra genuntur,
ut merito celer his rebus dicatur origo. (4.159–160)

159 genuntur *Lambinus* : geruntur Ω

The feminine *celer* has parallels in early Latin (Liv. Andr. 40 Bl. *celer hasta*; Enn. *Ann.* 420 Sk. *acer hiemps*). Yet, although there is no other nominative form of *celer* to compare, Lucretius draws a clear distinction between masculine *acer* (3.503, 4.304, 420, 6.128, 658, 1184, 1212) and feminine *acris* (1.246, 3.65, 477, 741). The expected feminine *celeris* would thus be in line with Lucretius' treatment of this type of adjective, and it would restore a perceptible caesura to the third foot. Half a millennium ago, Pius (1511) read *celeris rebus*, but some deictic marker to refer to the particular *simulacra* under discussion is clearly required.³⁹ Perhaps Lucretius wrote *his celeris rebus*? For the regular separation of *his* from *rebus*, see 1.449, 2.44, 184, 216, 581, 891, 1089, 3.28, 4.865, 5.16, 480, 6.423, 543, 647; *merito* is similarly elided at 2.698 (before *ex*), 3.715 (*in-*) and 953 (*in-*). Whether *his* and *celeris* were accidentally transposed so that *his* stood alongside *rebus*, or *celeris* was miswritten as *celer his*, the transmitted text would have been the natural outcome.

9. 4.306 (331)

praeterea splendor quicumque est acer adurit
saepe oculos ideo quod semina possidet ignis
multa, dolorem oculis quae gignunt insinuando. (4.304–306 (329–331))

Lucretius here recounts how bright objects cause pain to the eyes because of their seeds of fire. In 306, *oculis* can be read as the dative indirect object of *dolorem gignunt*. But *insinuando* is left unusually weak and isolated as a closing word, which must be understood not only intransitively but also without any supporting prepositional construction. The observation of Godwin (1986, 113) will hardly do: '*insinuando* is poised at the end of the sentence, suggesting the end of the process.' Elsewhere in Lucretius, *insinuare* displays a remarkable range of constructions: it is transitive in five instances, taking the accusative of the object that enters (2.436 *sese*, 6.860 *suum aestum*) or the object that is entered (1.409 *latebras*, 5.73 *pectora*), or both simultaneously (1.116 *se, pecudes*); in addition, there are 19 cases of the verb used personally in the passive, describing what has (been) inserted, often with an almost middle force (1.113, 2.684, 3.671, 689, 698, 722, 729, 738, 780, 782, 4.525, 1030, 6.234, 277, 355 bis, 802, 955, 1031); there is also one instance of the impersonal gerundive (5.44). This leaves four intransitive instances, three (6.89 = 385, 778) qualified by *per*, and one used absolutely: 3.485–486 *paulo si durior insinuarit | causa*. On the basis of this last case, editors have retained *insinuando* as transmitted, but its syntactical and rhythmic separation is appreciably more stark. Can anything be done to incorporate it more closely with the preceding text? While it is true that writing *oculos* for the dative *oculis* would provide a natural object for *insinuando*, the resultant commingling of verbs and their objects is not Lucretian. But for a poet who often made productive use of the

³⁹ This problem was apprehended by Cartault (1898, 56), but his suggestion of *celeris rei* introduces an unwelcome singular number for *res*.

gerundive, it may be a neater route to retain the transmitted *oculis* and modify it with *insinuandis*.⁴⁰ For this instrumental use of the gerundive we may compare 4.1209–1210: *et commiscendo cum semine forte uirilem | femina uim uicit*. A scribe could easily have normalised the word into the commoner form and syntax of the gerund.

10. 4.318 (343)

e tenebris autem quae sunt in luce tuemur
 propterea quia, cum propior caliginis aer
 ater init oculos prior et possedit apertos,
 insequitur candens confestim lucidus aer,
 qui quasi purgat eos ac nigras discutit umbras
 aeris illius; nam multis partibus hic est
 mobilior multisque minutior et mage pollens. (4.312–318 (327–343))

Lucretius describes how we can see objects in the light when we ourselves are in the dark: bright air is able to dispel the black air that reached our eyes first, because it is faster (*mobilior*), made of smaller elements (*minutior*) and more powerful (*mage pollens*). The first of these adjectives is modified by ‘many degrees’ (*multis partibus*), the last by a mere ‘more’ (*mage*, the byform of *magis* used by Lucretius thrice elsewhere: 4.81, 756, 5.1203). The intervening comparative *minutior* is preceded by *multis*, which must be construed as understanding *partibus* from 317. Editors have been content with this reading, but a more balanced sequence would be achieved by reading Lucretius’ typical intensifier of a comparative — *multo*, deployed in this role 27 times elsewhere. That Lucretius may have preferred such triple variation here is suggested by the one other passage where he used the unusual combination *multis partibus*, 1.734–735: *hic tamen et supra quod diximus inferiores | partibus egregie multis multoque minores*. *Multoque* would have easily been corrupted under the influence of the *multis* that comes both before and above it.

11. 5.323

nam quodcumque alias ex se res auget alitque,
 deminui debet, recreari cum recipit res. (5.322–323)
 323 deminui O : diminui Q

The striking hendiadys *debet, recreari* is all the more striking when contrasted with its parallel phrase *auget alitque* in the preceding verse. Lucretius’ one other analogous pair of asyndetic verbs is found at 4.1199: *subat ardet*;⁴¹ of nouns, we may cite the pair *pro-*

⁴⁰ It should be noted, of course, that Lucretius had a particular penchant for gerundival phrases in the dative plural: 1.24 *scribendis uersibus*, 184 *augendis rebus*, 203–204 *rebus... gignundis*, 547 *rebus reparandis*, 552 *frangendis rebus*, 577–578 *frangendis... corporibus*, 707 *gignundis... rebus*, 746–747 *secandis | corporibus*, 844 *corporibus... secandis*, 2.855 *gignundis rebus*, 5.181 *gignundis rebus*.

⁴¹ Richter (1974, 94–95) plausibly suggested that *ardet* fell into the text as a gloss of the rare *subat* (of animals ‘on heat’), ousting a word such as *ignis* (a genitive dependent on *abundans*, although Lucretius elsewhere construes *abundo* with the ablative); an adverb such as *intus* may be more probable. At 1.680–681 we find three verbs with one connective: *quaedam discedere abire | atque alia adtribui*, although Bockemüller’s *ab igne* is worthy of consideration in lieu of *abire*; at 3.395, the same structure is found in *concurrere coire*

elia pugnas (2.118, 4.1009), although longer lists appear without connectives (1.663–634, 685 = 2.1021, 1.744, 2.553–554, 670, 726 = 5.441, 4.458, 784, 1132).⁴² But while asyndeton is a feature of Lucretian style, it seems unusually harsh here, not least when *recreari* differs from *deminui* in carrying its own dependent clause *cum recipit res*.⁴³ Unsurprisingly, the other pairs of passive infinitives in the poem exhibit the usual connection: cf. 1.661 *omnia denseri fierique ex omnibus unum*, 681 *atque alia attribui mutarique ordine quaedam*, 2.1069 *geri debent nimirum et confieri res*, 3.484 *at quaecumque queunt conturbari inque pediri*, 4.555 *plane exaudiri discernique articulatum*, 4.676 *et fluere et mitti uolgo spargique putandumst*, 6.922 *perpetuo fluere ac mitti spargique necessest*. It is fair to wonder, therefore, whether Lucretius did not write something else.

Initial possibilities emerge to be dead-ends: *recrearique* would give the required connective, but would demand the introduction of *ut* for *cum*, a conjunction that Lucretius does not employ with a temporal sense.⁴⁴ Alternatively, a gerundive *recreandum* (agreeing with the subject *quodcumque*) may give the desired sense ‘(which is) due to be restored’, but this anticipatory usage is not Lucretian. Since both verbs are equally dependent upon *debet*, the simplest solution would be to insert *et* between them. Yet *deminui et debet* would unhappily separate the modal verb with its second infinitive. A more probable option is that Lucretius wrote *debet deminui et recreari cum recipit res*. To the reader versed in Augustan poetry, this rhythm will sound inevitably clunky. But it is worth reminding ourselves of two quirks of the Lucretian hexameter:

- (i) *et* regularly opens the third foot (thus depriving it of any perceptible caesura):⁴⁵ what is more, 64 (79 %) of the 81 cases involve the elision of the preceding word, presumably because the syllable lost in elision gives the feel of a quasi-caesura. *Et* stands in this position after a passive infinitive twice (3.661 *tortari et*, 4.400 *uersari et*), and after an active infinitive eleven times.⁴⁶
- (ii) As a self-contained opening spondee, *debet* reflects a rhythm that Lucretius often employed. Although he could not have written the opening words I conjecture

et dissultare. At 3.156 we have the three balanced elements *caligare oculos, sonere aures, succidere artus*. At 3.1013–1014 we find the sequence *reges expugnant, capiuntur, proelia miscent, | tollunt clamorem*. The pairing *alut auget* is read by some editors at 5.257, but Lambinus’ *alid auget* (paralleling *alias res auget* at 5.322) is more probable: *alut* is wrongly transmitted for *alid* at 1.263, 407 (Q), 3.970, 5.1456 (Q). The verse 1.873 (*praeterea tellus quae corpora cumque alut auget*) is deleted by many editors as an interpolated variant of 1.867 (*praeterea quaecumque e terra corpora crescunt*); in contrast to the asyndetic pair *alut auget*, we find a conjunction at 1.228 (*alut atque auget*) and 859 (*auget corpus alitique*).

⁴² At 1.455–456 seven nouns are joined in asyndeton, although the third element carries a *-que*.

⁴³ It has long been observed that Lucretius owes a debt in 5.318–323 to a famous fragment of Pacuvius’ *Chryses* (90–92 R., itself echoing Euripides’ *Chrysippus*), which includes the asyndetic sequence of verbs *animat format alut auget creat | sepelit recipitque*. But since the closest verbal echo of the passage comes in *auget alitique*, which patently carries a connection, it would seem unwise to use Pacuvius to defend the asyndeton of 323.

⁴⁴ The two exceptions involve the combination of the clarificatory adverb *semel* (1.1030, 4.610); Lachmann’s *et* is consequently read for *ut* at 6.234.

⁴⁵ (An asterisk denotes elision of the preceding word) 1.129*, 55*, 58*, 162, 220*, 333*, 351*, 397*, 730, 777, 801*, 826*, 889*, 994*, 2.94*, 124*, 566*, 674*, 678*, 699*, 845*, 1063, 1143*, 3.138*, 281*, 395*, 435*, 534*, 609*, 629*, 635*, 640*, 661*, 681, 693, 696*, 743, 818*, 920, 4.139*, 143*, 232*, 377*, 400*, 418*, 491, 732*, 930*, 969*, 982*, 1060*, 1131*, 1174, 1179*, 1214*, 1243*, 5.12*, 40, 115*, 262*, 363*, 375*, 417*, 431, 497, 653*, 668*, 737, 817*, 890*, 1317*, 6.338, 410*, 539*, 619*, 858*, 1134*, 1159, 1211, 1269*, 1282*.

⁴⁶ 1.220, 397, 994, 2.124, 674, 3.534, 818, 4.139, 418, 982, 5.558.

in a different order, we may consider those cases where he could have: there are 51 verses in the poem which begin with a spondaic word although it would have been metrically, grammatically and stylistically acceptable to avoid that rhythm by rearranging the opening two or three words.⁴⁷ In some cases, the reason for preferring the more unusual rhythm may be emphasis (e. g. 1.66 *primum Graius homo*, 101 *tantum religio*, 473 *numquam Tyndaridis*); in others, it may be euphony (1.262 *ludit lacte mero mentes percussa nouellas*, 4.1020 *multi mortem obeunt*, 6.444 *uertex conradens ex aere semina nubis*). In the majority of cases, however, there seems to me no reason for this less common rhythm, as with the recurrent opening *debent nimirum* (1.592, 2.161, 340). A similar deployment of a spondaic finite verb can be found at 3.1060: *exit saepe foras magnis ex aedibus ille*.⁴⁸ In the present instance, however, where Lucretius could not both write *deminui debet* and provide a conjunction for *recreari*, the natural way to open the line would have been *debet deminui et recreari*.

For the scribe copying in units of half-lines or full lines, *debet deminui et* could have been accidentally reversed to the rhythmically typical *deminui debet*, with the consequent loss of the homophonous syllable *et*.

12. 6.266

sic igitur supra nostrum caput esse putandumst
 tempestatem altam. neque enim caligine tanta
 obruerent terras, nisi inaedificata superne
 multa forent multis exempto nubila sole;
 nec tanto possent uenientes opprimere imbri,
 flumina abundare ut facerent camposque natate,
 si non extractis foret alte nubibus aether. (6.262–268)

266 tanto... imbri Ω : tanti... imbres *Lambinus*

Verse 266 has long caused editors problems: the subject of *possent*, modified by *uenientes*, is unstated but can only conceivably be ‘clouds.’ While *nubila* of 265 points to that interpretation, feminine *nubes* instead needs to be taken in anticipation from *nubibus* (268) later in the sentence, just as *obruerent* (264) awaits its subject in *nubila* (265). The line of thought is that clouds could not cause great flood damage unless the sky had them ‘piled high’ *extractis... alte*.⁴⁹ *Lambinus*’ emendation of *tanto... imbri* to *tanti... imbres* can therefore be passed over: the ablative *imbri* performs this same role at 1.282 and 286. In order to provide an express object for *opprimere*, Watt (1990, 126) emended *uenientes* to *umentes*,

⁴⁷ 1.66, 101, 128, 150, 261, 454, 473, 560, 592, 813, 1065, 2.54, 161, 328, 340, 614, 617, 645, 875, 938, 1052, 3.264, 785, 1060, 4.352, 705, 871, 968, 991, 1013, 1014, 1015, 1018, 1020, 1026, 1027, 1104, 5.129, 234, 321, 393, 418, 429, 521, 804, 6.1, 293, 444, 515, 1031, 1178. (At 4.743, 5.443, 691, 6.775 and 990 prepositional *propter* opens the line but could have been placed between the following two words that it governs.)

⁴⁸ At. 6.689 Lucretius wrote *tollit se ac rectis ita faucibus eicit alte*, where he could have written *se tollit rectisque ita faucibus eicit alte*.

⁴⁹ Lucretius had already used similar language for the origin of thunderbolts: *fulmina gignier e crassis alteque putandumst | nubibus extractis* (246–247). There is thus no need to adopt Bockemüller’s alteration to the nominative *extractus*.

understanding *terras* from 264;⁵⁰ while the earth is naturally understood as the verb's object, it is idle to specify its already moist state, let alone with a word unattested in Lucretius. In fact, 6.285–286 provide us with a clear parallel for *opprimere* used of burst thunderclouds without any stated object: *displosa repente | opprimere ut caeli uideantur templa superne*.

Still, the participial *uenientes* is decidedly odd: does the arrival or coming of the clouds carry sufficient relevance or force to introduce the large-scale floods that follow? How could any storm emerge from clouds that are not 'coming'? Instead, the passage's focus lies on the power that these clouds can unleash in the form of mighty downpours. Could Lucretius therefore have written *uementes*? It is 'violent' clouds that overpower the land with such extreme downpours. As he writes later in this book: *sed uemens imber fit, ubi uementer utraque | nubila ui cumulata premuntur* (517–518). The misreading of *m* as *ni*, particularly easy in minuscule script, can be paralleled in Lucretius as in other classical authors.⁵¹ It may be added that, if Pluygers' emendation is accepted at 1.285–286 — *ne ualidi possunt pontes uementis (uenientis W) aquai | uim subitam tolerare* — we have an exact parallel for this slight corruption.⁵²

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⁵⁰ Lambinus' first route to correction was to suggest *uiuentes* or *animantes*, making humans the verb's object. By contrast, Godwin (1991, 114) tentatively suggests that the transmitted *uenientes* should be taken as an accusative: 'people travelling'.

⁵¹ For confusion between *m* and *in*, examples are provided individually by the two complete ninth-century mss: 4.710 *qum* (O) for *quin* (corr. O²: *qur* Q), 5.1082 *quo in* (Q) for *quom* (O), 6.1175 *inerrans* (Q) for *mersans* (Ω).

⁵² Pluygers 1875, 5–6.