

DAVID BUTTERFIELD
Christ's College,
Cambridge

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EMENDATIONS ON THE FIRST BOOK OF LUCRETIUS

Abstract: Emendations are offered upon six passages in the first book of Lucretius' *de rerum natura*: 32, 223, 554, 774, 796, 1060. In four instances (32, 223, 554, 1060) the transmitted text has not previously been questioned by scholars.

Although the first Book of Lucretius' *de rerum natura* has enjoyed the most editorial attention of the hexad,¹ I offer the following conjectures for the consideration of future editors and commentators.² Since I am of the firm resolve that the Italic manuscripts of Lucretius are dependent upon our extant ninth-century witnesses OQGV(U), I use them only as a repertory of conjectures.

1.28-33:

30 *quo magis aeternum da dictis, diua, leporem
effice ut interea fera moenera militiai
per maria ac terras omnes sopita quiescant;
nam tu sola potes tranquilla pace iuuare
mortales, quoniam belli fera moenera Mauors
armipotens regit,*

32 *fera moenera* Marc. Lat. XII 69 (et Lambinus suo Marte) : *feramonera* OQG : *fera moenia* Lact. Plac. in Stat. Theb. 3.296 33 *regit* Lact. Plac. l.c. : *regium* OQG

¹ Alongside commentaries and editions of the whole work, to date eight commentaries have been devoted exclusively to Book One; see C.A. Gordon (rev. E.J. Kenney), *A Bibliography of Lucretius* (Winchester, 21985) for the most accessible list, to which P.M. Brown, *Lucretius: De Rerum Natura I* (Bristol, 1984) should be added.

² I have elsewhere offered a few emendations on this Book: for *in* at 1,217 and 1,996 and *quamuis* at 1,703 see 'Supplementa Lucretiana', *Arctos* 42 (2008), 17-30, at 17-19; for *udis* at 1,720 see 'Six Lucretian Emendations', *Hyperboreus* 14 (2008), 1-7, at 1-2; for *quin id* (for *quo minus*) see 'Sigmatic Ethclipsis in Lucretius', *Hermes* 152 (2008), 188-205, at 196-197.

No scholar of Latin poetry can be unfamiliar with these lines from the poem's lofty proem, in which Lucretius asks Venus for the cessation of wars over land and sea, a favour to be obtained through her amorous relationship with Mars. In this opening passage (1-46), probably the most polished section of the whole unfinished work, I find the repetition of *fera moenera* at 29 and 32 (where it can be restored with certainty from Lactantius Placidus' Statian scholia) difficult to stomach.³ The differing dependent genitives, *militiai* and *belli*, provide no meaningful distinction in sense and leave the iteration of *fera moenera* lamentably flat. Given that Lucretius had a clear penchant for the repetition of a given adjective in close succession,⁴ I tentatively suggest that in 32 a noun has been ousted by *moenera* owing to a scribe's reminiscence of the phrase in 29. *proelia* is my suggestion. For *fera proelia belli* as a unit we can compare Suetonius 1.4-5Bl. *fera proelia belli* [Baehrens : *bello* mss] / *in Persas tetulere*); for the collocation *proelia belli*, cf. Verg. *Aen.* 11.541, Ov. *Tr.* 2.71; for *fera proelia*, cf. Ov. *Her.* 1.31, *Tr.* 5.6.9, *Pont.* 2.5.19, Mart. *Spect.* 28.7 and a number of Silian instances (1.266, 4.355, 10.427, 14.155, 15.667, 17.383). Lucretius consistently places the seven other occurrences of *proelia* throughout the poem in the fifth foot.

1.221-224:

*quod nunc, aeterno quia constant semina quaeque,
donec uis obiit, quae res diuerberet ictu
aut intus penetret per inania dissoluatque
nullius exitium patitur natura uideri.*

Scholars have generally conceded that the modification in 223 of *penetret* by *intus* (as word order demands) is otiose but have explained it as a superfluous touch not uncommon in Lucretius.⁵ It may well be that *intus* is correct. Yet with little alteration the banal transmitted adverb *intus* (for anything that penetrates necessarily does so internally) could be replaced by the emphatic *penitus*, 'deeply'. Leaving this instance aside, Lucretius employs *penitus* 24 times and *intus* 26 times in the work, but only *penitus* is combined with *pe-*

³ The possible defence, that the phrase was intended in either instance merely as a stop gap to be improved at a later date, is improbable in a passage otherwise so finely crafted.

⁴ Cf. my brief remarks in 'Emendations on the fifth Book of Lucretius', *MD* 60 (2008), 177-189, at 182.

⁵ E.g., A. Ernout, *Lucrèce: De Rerum Natura. Commentaire exégétique et critique*, I (Paris, 1926), *ad loc.*: "pléonasme"; C. Bailey, *Titi Lucreti Cari De Rerum Natura Libri Sex*, II (Oxford, 1947), comm. *ad loc.*: "a favourite adverb with Lucr., who frequently uses it otiosely as here to give emphasis to a verb."

netrare elsewhere: 1.529 *possunt nec porro penitus penetrata retexi*, 2.539 *ut penitus nequeat penetrari*, and 6.698 *et penetrare mari penitus res cogit aperto*. If perhaps the initial letters *pe* were lost,⁶ *nitus* would instantly have been ‘corrected’ to *intus*; the corruption may have occurred, however, via a simple banalisation of the rarer adverb to the commoner.⁷ Finally, the resultant alliteration and assonance of *penitus penetret per* would be a welcome addition to the formidable list the poem provides.⁸

1.551-555:

*denique si nullam finem natura parasset
frangendis rebus, iam corpora materiai
usque redacta forent aeuo frangente priore,
ut nil ex illis a certo tempore posset*

555 *conceptum summum aetatis peruadere finem.*

555 *summum* mss : *summa* Lachmann : *ad summum* Keller : *ad summae* Brieger : *primum* Lotze : *summae* Francken : *in summum* García Calvo *finem* Q¹ : *fine* QG : *finis* O : *florem* Marullus (nisi prius) : *ad auctum* Munro : *fini* Francken (et Ellis suo Marte) : *limen* Lotze (et Reid suo Marte) : *floris* Merrill : *robur* Hidén : *rursum* Frerichs : *ad horam* Everett

I here have nothing new to offer with regard to the much-disputed 555, beyond my observing that if a form of *finis* is retained, *peruadere* requires a preposition to make good sense alongside *summum finem* (the attractive correction of Q¹). Whatever the exact reading of 555, the meaning of the verse is clear. I therefore can see no obvious purpose as to why *a* is prefixed to *certo tempore* in the preceding line. This phrase would naturally mean “from a fixed time”, which can make no sense in context; the commentators’ wish to take it as “(with)in a fixed point of time” lacks firm support either within or without the poem. Likewise, comparison with *tempore ab omni* at 1.767 is irrelevant, for there it possesses the appropriate inceptive force, i.e. “from the beginning of time”.⁹ The expected sense of “at a

⁶ If Isaac Voss’ *saepe* is correct at 6.223, this same pair of letters was lost at the close of a word.

⁷ According to the *PHI* 5 disk, *intus* is 40% more frequent than *penitus* in the core classical authors.

⁸ See esp. I. Schneider, *De Alliterationis apud T. Lucretium Carum usu ac vi* (Bamberg, 1897), *passim* but esp. p.50.

⁹ The case against taking *a certo tempore* in this fashion is made cogently by H. Frerichs, *Quaestiones Lucretianae* (Progr. Oldenburg, 1892), pp. 4-5, although I do not support his retention of *a* in 554 and emendation in 555 (for which see app. crit. above).

fixed point in time” could be obtained by reading *in* for *a*. If, as seems quite probable, Keller’s *ad* is a correct supplement after *conceptum* of 555, the corruption of *in* to *a* in 554 could have been motivated by the supralinear addition of *ad*, a scribal correction which came to affect the line above rather than below in the subsequent phase of transmission. I take the phrase *in certo tempore* to modify *conceptum* primarily: if there were no fixed bounds to the destruction of bodies, at no fixed time could new life come into being to enjoy their own span of life. Cf. 1.563-565 *refici rem quamque uidemus / et finita simul generatim tempora rebus / stare, quibus possint aevi contingere florem* and 5.822-823 [*Tellus*] *genus ipsa creauit / humanum atque animal prope certo tempore fudit*.

1.770-774:

770 *sin ita forte putas ignis terraeque coire
corpore et aerias auras roremque liquoris,
nil in concilio naturam ut mutet eorum,
nulla tibi ex illis poterit res esse creata,
non animans, non exanimo cum corpore, ut arbos.*

774 *animans* Itali quidam (A¹B sed Pontano tributum) : *animas* OQG *exanimo* OQG : *exsanguis* Bockemüller : *ex animo* Pius (et Brieger suo Marte) *ut arbos* OQG (*arbor* olim Bailey) : *ut ardor* uel *et orbo* uel *aceruus* Romanes¹⁰ *non animas ex non anima* Wakefield uers. del. Purmann

Here Lucretius argues that natural philosophers (foremost Empedocles) who supposed that four principal elements (air, fire, earth, water) could combine to form creatures without changing their own nature were misguided, for this would mean that nothing, whether animate or inanimate, could exist (and yet they manifestly do). The final appendix *ut arbos* in 774 is, however, incredible: having covered the whole ground of all animate (*animans*) and inanimate (*exanimo cum corpore*) entities,¹¹ why ever would Lucretius introduce but a single example, and furthermore that of a tree? Not only would this be a remarkable focusing upon an individual, banal and philosophically unimportant object, but also, if it is intended to provide an example of something inanimate (as the order of the verse suggests),

¹⁰ Romanes recorded *aceruus* in his own copy of *Further Notes on Lucretius* (Oxford, 1935). For my treatment of the work on Lucretius by this independent scholar, see ‘N.H. Romanes and the text of Lucretius’, *ICS* 31 (2006), pp. 75-115.

¹¹ For a similar use of *cum*, cf. 1.347, 3.807 (=5.352), 5.364, 6.631, 6.1059, 6.1268.

then a living and growing entity is a troubling example to select. Nonetheless, Purmann's wholesale dismissal of the verse seems too extreme (particularly given Lucretius' use of *corpore in exanimo* at 3.714) and I prefer the more gentle course of emending the out-of-place *ut arbos*. I am not at all attracted to Romanes' palaeographically neat but logically impossible *ut ardor*, and his later suggestion *aceruus*, inspired by *acerui* in the following line and independently offered in García Calvo's remarkable edition of the work,¹² is ingenious but problematic: Lucretius is not asserting that an inanimate concatenation of elements is impossible but rather that a new macroscopic entity could not be created out of them. Accordingly, *aceruus* is a word that cannot stand at the close of this claim.

A more productive route in 774, rather than seeking a unique, specific example of the basic concepts of living or non-living entities, would be to regard *ut arbos* as a marginal gloss¹³ (probably to provide a more complicated example of an animate entity), which encroached from there upon the close of the hexameter. In its place it would be quite possible that a participle qualifying *nulla... res* of the preceding line has been lost. I conjecture *creta* (cf., e.g., 2.906, 4.1228, 5.6, 5.60, 5.1116), which seems more attractive than the likewise possible *nata* or *facta*: "nothing could have been created for you out of these things, made neither animate nor of inanimate matter."

1.794-797:

795 *qua propter quoniam quae paulo diximus ante*
 in commutatum ueniunt, constare necessest
 ex aliis ea, quae nequeant conuertier usquam
 ne tibi res redeant ad nilum funditus omnes.

usquam in 796 is a slight surprise, since we expect the relative clause that deals with immutable, that is eternally unchanging, entities to contain a temporally-focused adverb. Are we either to retain *usquam* and to render it generously as "in any case", or is this is a simple corruption (perhaps aided by *necessse* above and *funditus* below) of the more forceful *umquam*? *usquam* is too common an adverb for the employment of the dictum *lectio difficilior potior* to have any force.

¹² A. García Calvo, *Lucrecio: De Rerum Natura / De La Realidad. Edición crítica y versión rítmica* (Zamora, 1997).

¹³ It should be remembered that the *capitula* transmitted throughout the poem took their origin as a reader's marginal aids to the progression of the work. Therefore the intrusion of glosses (such as *epicuri* at 2.42) cannot be dismissed as an improbability.

I find that this adverb, though not mentioned by any editor since that of the Tauchnitz edition (Leipzig, 1833; 1874), first appeared in the text of Lucretius in Gifanius' first edition (Antwerp, 1565).

1.1052-1060:

*illud in his rebus longe fuge credere, Memmi,
in medium summae quod dicunt omnia niti,
atque ideo mundi naturam stare sine ullis*

1055 *ictibus externis neque quoquam posse resolui,
summa atque ima, quod in medium sint omnia nixa,
ipsum si quicquam posse in se sistere credis,
et quae pondera sunt sub terris omnia sursum
nitier in terraque retro requiescere posta,*

1060 *ut per aquas quae nunc rerum simulacra uidemus.*

Lucretius here dismisses the notion that there could be Antipodes beneath the known side of the planet, wherein creatures are able to cling to the earth 'upside down'. The change I wish to make to this passage is a very small one: *nunc* in 1060 adds a strange temporal emphasis to the *ut* clause that I am unable to explain, since indicative *uidemus* precludes any jussive or hortatory sense. Since we humans on the known side of the planet are being brought into direct contrast with the Antipodean race (supposed to exist simultaneously),¹⁴ it seems more probable that the geographical contrast was highlighted in this aside. Therefore, in place of *nunc* I suggest that, as commonly, Lucretius has inserted an emphatic *nos* before the appearance of a first person plural verb.¹⁵ The corruption of *nos*, perhaps taken as *nūc*, is by no means difficult.¹⁶

¹⁴ Whether or not the transposition of 1061 (*et simili ratione animalia suppa uagari*) before 1060, as suggested by Oppenrieder and independently by Housman, is adopted, the force of the relative clause in 1060 is unchanged.

¹⁵ With *uidemus*, cf. 1.754, 2.540, 6.187; with other verbs, cf. 2.56 (= 3.88, 6.36), 3.139, 3.865, 4.317, 5.349, 6.702, 6.1133. By contrast, *nunc* is only once used with a verb of seeing (and the form *uidemus* alone occurs 70 times in the poem), at 3.1057, where Lucretius clearly alludes to the depression of many men around him in contemporary Rome.

¹⁶ I take this opportunity to append a list of conjectures in the first book made by other scholars which I think deserve further consideration by editors: 1.70 *uirtus* (Bockemüller), which could arguably be improved by writing *acris* at the close of 69; 122 *permanent* (Pontanus), necessarily correct; 149 *cuius* transposed before *principium* (Avancius); 158 *queant* (Bockemüller); 165 *isdem* (Woltjer); 190 *crecendoque* (Marullus); 289 *ruit quoque* (García Calvo); 352 *totis* (Orth); 356 *quae* for *qua* (Fayus); 391 *immutabile* (Marullus); 645 *possint* (Munro); 761 *uenena* (O²); 996 *inferneque* (Reid, in lectures, before Postgate); 1082 *concilio* (Itali quidam).