

***Horror vacui* in Lucretian biography**

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ABSTRACT: The scrappy ancient notices for Lucretius' life include a report by St Jerome that he committed suicide as a result of insanity brought on by a love-potion, and that Cicero 'emended' his poem, to which much undue credence has been given, often with the added detail (wrongly attributed to Jerome) that the potion was administered by one Lucilia. Not content with these fictions, modern writers have contended that Lucretius was descended from a patrician house prominent in the early Republic, the Lucretii Tricipitini, or at the other extreme a Gaulish or Celtiberian freedman; others again have made him a poor Roman, or supposed that the lofty tone of the poem reflects exalted station and social equality with Memmius. These hypotheses are rebutted on historical, epigraphic, and literary grounds; a warning is given against a priori readiness to accept accounts conforming to congenial patterns, whether relating to social status or to relations, if any, with the philosophical community at Herculaneum.

Cicero, *Ad Quintum fratrem* 2.10.3 [before 12 Feb. 54 BC]:

Lucreti poemata ut scribis ita sunt, multis luminibus ingeni, multae tamen artis; sed cum veneris. Virum te putabo si Sallusti Empedoclea legeris, hominem non putabo.

haec a criticis immerito vexata esse luculente docet Shackleton Bailey

Vita Virgilii [sic] *secundum Donatum* 6:

initium aetatis Cremonae egit usque ad virilem togam, quam XVII anno natali suo accepit isdem illis consulibus iterum, quibus erat natus, eventique ut eo ipso die Lucretius poeta decederet.

Jerome, *Chronica* s.a.Abr. 1923 = Ol. 171.3 (94 BC):

Titus Lucretius poeta nascitur. Qui postea amatorio poculo in furorem versus, cum aliquot libros per intervalla insaniae conscripsisset, quos postea Cicero emendavit, propria se manu interfecit anno aetatis XLVIII.

codici A haec sub anno MDCCCXXI vel MDCCCXXII referenti non esse quod credamus monet Helm, praef. XXIV a. necnon Philol. supp. 21/2 (1929), 33

Clm 14429 (s. x), fo. 225:

Titus lucretius poeta nascitur sub consulibus. ann(o) xx u-ii an(te) uirgilium
xx u-ii] *primum xxviii, deinde xxiii Usener*

I have set out the above, not because I have anything to say about the confusion into which Lucretius' and Vergil's chronologies have been thrown by arithmetically incompetent authors and copyists, but in order to display the sum total of the purported evidence for Lucretius' life available outside his poem. It is already suspicious that Lucretius should have been made to die on the same day as Vergil came of age; if the Florentine humanist Piero di Bartolomeo Del Riccio

Baldi, better known as Petrus Crinitus, could declare: ‘Qua in re benignitas atque propensio visa est Romanae eruditionis patrociniū suscepisse, ne deessent in re latina qui Graecorum ingeniis atque disciplinis non minores haberentur’,¹ others find in that very coincidence reason to doubt,² though since two Presidents of the United States of America died on 4 July 1826 and the Union won Gettysburg and captured Vicksburg on that date in 1863, we should not dismiss it with quite so great an a priori distrust as we do Greek synchronisms that require the matching of different cities’ calendars. However, there is much else to concern us.

Those who wish to know about poets’ lives—the common readers of antiquity and our own day—have been reluctant to give up such snippets of pretended information as have been passed down to us; witness the chatter about the love-potion, the lucid intervals of madness, the suicide, Cicero’s editing, and even the acceptance of the manifestly fictitious Borgia life.³ Modern scholars have added or substituted their own *Hirngespinnste*, which would be far more honestly presented in self-proclaimed works of fiction, as they are by Marcel Schwob, in whose *Vies imaginaires* Lucretius had grown up in the country with Memmius for childhood friend, or more recently by the translator turned novelist who represented the poet as that most un-Roman of phenomena, the acknowledged bastard with his father’s name.⁴

Lucretius and the love-potion

The poet’s mental health has been debated with contradictory results,⁵ and largely by persons unacquainted with clinical lunacy; since I am of their number I shall desist, save to say that I do not suppose the question would even have been raised were it not for Jerome’s story. This has seemed plausible as conforming to a familiar pattern, for the fatal philtre had been a recognised hazard since Deinaeira poisoned Heracles; the Areopagus was reputed to have acquitted a woman who had inadvertently killed her husband διότι οὐκ ἐκ προνοίας.⁶ As a far less innocent lady observed, ἀμφιβάλλειν εἶωθε τὰ φίλτρα καὶ ἀποσκήπτειν εἰς

¹ Pietro Crinito, *De honesta disciplina* 24.4, ed. Carlo Angeleri (Rome 1955) 453. He notes that some people referred *eo ipso die* to Vergil’s birth; Lambinus, alas, would be of their number.

² See e.g. G. O. Hutchinson, ‘The date of *De rerum natura*’ *CQ*² 51 (2001) 150–62 at 156 with n.15.

³ On which see Renata Fabbri, ‘La «Vita Borgiana» di Lucrezio nel quadro delle biografie umanistiche’ *Lettere italiane* 36 (1984) 348–66. The wretched thing is lent credence by C. Bailey, *ed. mai.* (3 vols, 1947) 1.2 *et alibi*.

⁴ Luca Canali, *Nei pleniluni sereni: autobiografia immaginaria di Tito Lucrezio Caro* (Milan 1995), kindly brought to my attention by M.F. Smith; cf. R. Syme, ‘Bastards in the Roman aristocracy’ *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 104 (June 1960) 323–7 = *Roman Papers* ii, ed. E. Badian (Oxford 1979) 510–17. A slave-woman’s son would be a slave, though Republican law apparently permitted the master to adopt and thereby free him, at least in Cato’s time (J. 1.11.12; see Alan Watson *The Law of Persons in the Later Roman Republic* (Oxford 1967) 96–8). Canali displays withal a disregard of chronology so thoroughgoing, nay positively Platonic, as to prove deliberate intention.

⁵ See G.D. Hadzsits, *Lucretius and his Influence* (New York 1935) 4–7.

⁶ [Arist.] *MM* 1.16.2, 1188^b32–8, cf. *EE* 2 9.2, 1125^b3–4. A more elaborate chain of events in the *controversia* at Quint. 7.8.2, Victor 378.11–12 Halm = 9.1–3 Giomini–Celentano.

ὄλεθρον.⁷ In addition, madness from so romantic a source is attractive to those who believe that

The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
Are of imagination all compact⁸

and that

Great wits are sure to madness near allied,
And thin partitions do their bounds divide.⁹

That is to say, it fits popular preconceptions about what we now call genius; it also pleases those who love dramatic deaths:

Nolunt autem eum, aut sua sponte mortem obiisse, aut alicuius morbi vi, vt fit, consumtum esse, sed, vt eius obitum τραγικότερον faciant, scribunt, eum sibi ipsum manus attulisse, alij tædio vitæ, quòd patriam suam ambitione, auaritia, luxuria, discordia, & similibus ciuitatum, quæ diu floruerunt, & iam senescunt, morbis æstuarè, atque afflicti videret: alij ægritudine animi, quòd Memmij sui, qui in exilium pulsus erat, tristem casum æquo animo ferre non posset: alij furore percitum, in quem Lucilia siue vxor, siue amica, amatorio poculo porrecto, cum imprudens adegerat, cùm ab eo amari, non ei necem inferre, aut bonam mentem adimere, vellet.¹⁰

None of that alters the fact that the argument ends where it began, with Jerome.

After recent demolitions of ancient poetical and philosophical biographies,¹¹ the onus must rest on those who would have us believe such documents even in their entirety, let alone summarised extracts from them. For Lucretius, despite a suggestion that the tale is implied in Philodemus *On Death*,¹² there are formidable obstacles to acceptance; indeed, the whole tale was torn to shreds by Konrat Ziegler, many of whose arguments reappear below only because they have not been heeded.¹³ First of all, not merely ought Vergil not to have called Lucretius *felix* nor Statius written so glibly of his *furor arduus*, but Ovid ought to have included his gruesome end, if not in *Ars amatoria* to support the warning at 2.106 that *philtrā nocent animis vimque furoris habent*, then in his *Ibis* along with that

⁷ Alciphron *Ep.* 4.10.5, in the name of the courtesan Myrrhine (ἀποσκήπτειν Aldina, -πειν codd., κἄν ἀποσκήψειν Meineke).

⁸ Shakespeare *A Midsummer Night's Dream* 5.1.7–8; and see the whole speech.

⁹ Dryden *Absalom and Achitophel* 1.163–4.

¹⁰ Lambinus (3rd edn Paris 1570) sigs. [d3]^v-[d4]^f.

¹¹ Janet Fairweather, 'Fictions in the biographies of ancient writers' *Ancient Society* 5 (1974) 231–75; *ead.* 'Traditional narrative, inference and truth in the *Lives* of Greek poets' *PLLS* 4 (1983) 315–69; Alice Riginos, *Platonica: The Anecdotes Concerning the Life and Works of Plato* (Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition 3, Leiden 1976); Mary Lefkowitz, *The Lives of the Greek Poets* (London 1981); *ead.* 'Pindar's Lives' *First-Person Fictions* (Oxford 1991) 89–110; Nicholas Horsfall, 'Virgil: his life and times' in *id.* (ed.) *A Companion to the Study of Virgil* (Leiden 1995) 1–25.

¹² Marcello Gigante, *Ricerche filodemea*² (Naples 1983) 147; *id.* (tr. Dirk Obbink) *Philodemus in Italy: The Books from Herculaneum* (Ann Arbor 1995) 44.

¹³ Konrat Ziegler, 'Der Tod des Lucretius' *Hermes* 61 (1936) 421–40.

of C. Helvius Cinna to wish upon his hapless enemy.¹⁴ Juvenal, too, might have exploited the story at 6.610–25. Nor is it hard to see how the story might have been concocted: on the one hand, given the traditional assumption that a poet finds his themes in personal experience, such an inference could easily be drawn from the ferocious polemic against emotional attachment in book 4 and from such phrases as *furorem animi proprium* at 3.828, even perhaps, however absurdly, from the reference to suicide at 3.79–82; on the other, a commonplace fault of copying, reading, or memory would confuse Lucretius with Lucullus, killed in just such a manner by his lovesick freedman Callisthenes.¹⁵ Another suggestion is that Serenus Sammonicus' lines on female sterility (603–8)

irrita coniugii sterilis si munera languent
 nec subolis spes est multos iam vana per annos
 (femineo fiat vitio res necne, silebo;
 hoc poterit magni quartus monstrare Lucreti)¹⁶
 sed natura tamen medicamine victa potenti
 saepe dedit fetus studio curante paratos

followed by gruesome remedies involving a hare's vulva, sheep's saliva, and (to ease labour-pains) vulture's dung, were carelessly read as implying that such things were inflicted on the poet by female fault.¹⁷

If Suetonius could transfer to Horace a tale told of Hostius Quadra (*Vita Horati* ~ Seneca *Naturales Quaestiones* 1.16.2), he could no doubt transfer one told of Lucullus to Lucretius; the motif itself is not foreign to him, for he reports that Gaius *creditur potionatus a Caesonia uxore amatorio quidem medicamento, sed quod in furorem verterit* (*Caligula* 50.2). However, if the story had been included in *De poetis*, one would have expected Lactantius, who abuses the poet with such incivilities as *illius* [sc. Epicuri] *enim sunt omnia quae delirat Lucretius* (*De opificio Dei* 6.1) and *quid hunc putet habuisse cerebrum cum haec diceret nec videret sibi esse contrarium?* (*De ira Dei* 10.17), both to insist that this insanity was a literal fact, and to dwell with no less relish on the miserable death of a blasphemer than he did on those of the persecutors. We are soonest out of the

¹⁴ Vv. 539–40 *conditor ut tardae laesus cognomine Myrrhae / urbis in innumeris inueniari locis*, explained by A.E. Housman, *JPh* 12 (1883) 167 = *Classical Papers* ed. J. Diggle and F.R.D. Goodyear (3 vols, Cambridge 1972) 1.9. The minority reading *urbis* is distinctly preferable to the hyperbolic *orbis*: the fragments of Cinna's corpse were discarded here and there in Rome by individual rioters as so much rubbish, not distributed throughout the Empire like the relics of a saint.

¹⁵ Nepos fr. 52 Marshall, cf. Pliny *Naturalis Historia* 25.25; see Julius Jessen, 'Zu Lucrez' Leben und Dichtung' in *Festgruß an die Kieler Gelehrten-Schule* (Kiel 1869) 52–60 at 53–4 (made available to me through the kindness of M.F. Smith) and L.P. Wilkinson, 'Lucretius and the love-philtre' *CR* 63 (1949) 47–8. Gifanius (edn. Antwerp 1566) sig. [**7]^v, remarks that 'Sæpè Lucilius, Lucretius & Lucullus, ut Caelius ac Cecilius alius in alterius locum vitiosè subiecti sunt' (see below, n.28), yet fails to suspect Jerome's tale on that account.

¹⁶ The 9th-c. MS Zürich Stadtbibliothek W 78 and the Aldine read *magni quartus*, the B family and two early editions *quartus magni*, the first edition *partus magni*, whence, with assistance from *Lucr.* 4.1251–3, the assertion in the Borgia life that the poet was 'matre natus diutius sterili'.

¹⁷ Raised in discussion at Leeds by Monica Gale, at the instance of the late D.P. Fowler.

woods if the story originated either with Jerome himself or with a writer shortly before his time.¹⁸

Lucretius and Lucilia

The assumption (not supported by Jerome) that the drug was administered by a woman is already found in the Borgia Life (*improbae feminae poculo*); Pomponius Laetus' language in the parallel fiction that he records (or invents), 'asserunt id ei accidisse ob amatum puerum: quem ob candorem et formam egregiam appellabat Asteri<s>con',¹⁹ suggests that it was not the *puer membris muliebribus* who administered the drug, but rather a jealous rival, perhaps indeed a wife or mistress. The legend received canonical form in Joannes Baptista Pius' edition of 1511:

Constat amatorio versum in furem ab uxore; sed quo nomine diceretur illa plurimum ambigitur. Sunt qui Luciliam velint, iis Hieronymi verbis adductis quae posita sunt in dissuasione contra Ruffinum. Liuia virum suum interfecit, quem nimis odit: Lucilia, quae nimis amavit. Illa sponte miscuit aconitum: Lucilia decepta furem propinavit pro amoris poculo.²⁰

The *Dissuasio Valerii ad Ruffinum philosophum ne uxorem ducat*, though long since incorporated into the collected works of St Jerome as blending the title of *Adversus Rufinum* with the misogyny of *Adversus Iovinianum*, was in fact composed in the twelfth century by Walter Map, dean of St Paul's and archdeacon of Oxford,²¹ where Map got Lucilia from, no one knows, unless it were his own imagination. Nevertheless, it was to become the approved name for the lady down to Tennyson,²² for Pius' paragraph, reworded but not credited, was frequently attached in editions of Lucretius to Crinitus' life of the poet, which we shall discuss below; since Pius' author Map was formerly believed to be the author of various goliardic poems, it is appropriate that his account was commonly taken to be Crinitus' own work despite the dividing formula 'Haec ille'.

¹⁸ Cf. Ziegler (n.13) 439: 'eine erst nach der Mitte des vierten Jahrhunderts entstehende christliche Tendenzgeschichte über einen heidnischen Dichter.'

¹⁹ See J. Woltjer, 'De anno natali T. Lucretii poetae' *NJbb* 129 (1884) 134–8 at 134 n.1, who adds: 'unde id hausit Pomponius ipse παιδεραστίας accusatus? ipsene finxit an alius? nomen Astericos nusquam inuenitur, ni fallor.' For a fuller citation see *id.* 'Studia Lucretiana' *Mnemosyne*² 23 (1895) 221–33 at 224.

²⁰ Edn. Bologna 1511, sig. A1^r.

²¹ The *Dissuasio* had already circulated widely when it was incorporated in Map's *De nugis curialium*, which did not circulate at all; see Walter Map, *De nugis curialium: Courtiers' Trifles* ed. and tr. M.R. James, rev. C.N.L. Brooke and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford 1983) xxix, xlvi–xlix, 288–312; the names Valerius and Rufinus, other influences apart (*ibid.* 388 n.2), recall the Diocletianic martyrs of Soissons culted on 14 June. For our passage see p.304: 'Liuia uirum suum interfecit, quem nimis odit: Lucilia suum, quem nimis amavit. Illa sponte miscuit aconitum: hec decepta furem propinavit pro amoris poculo.' It was soon rewritten by Peter of Blois, *ep.* 69 (*PL* 207.244 C), 'Liuia uirum suum interfecit, quem nimis habebat exosum: Lucilia suum, quem uehementissime diligebat: haec poculo amatorio, illa ueneno.'

²² Whose 'Lucretius', cited below, was published in 1869. In Marcel Schwob's *Vies imaginaires* she becomes 'une femme africaine, belle, barbare et méchante'; Canali makes her the Flora of Philodemus' famous epigram.

Lucretius edited by Cicero

But what of *quos postea Cicero emendavit*? The conventional understanding is ‘di cui Cicerone dopo la sua morte (*postea*) curò la pubblicazione (*emendavit*)’.²³ The verb *emendare*, in connection with books, has a wide range of meanings: Donatus, in his life of Vergil, uses it of authorial correction, *impositurus Aeneidi summam manum statuit ... triennioque continuo nihil amplius quam emendare* (*Vita Donati* 35), and editorial copy-editing, *edidit autem auctore Augusto Varius, sed summatim emendata, ut qui versus etiam imperfectos sicut erant reliquerit* (§41); but he also exhibits a pregnant use: *heredes fecit ... ex reliqua [sc. parte] L. Varium et Plotium Tuccam, qui eius Aeneida post obitum iussu Caesaris emendaverunt* (§37), that is to say ‘corrected and published’.²⁴ And that is how Jerome himself uses it s.a.Abr. 2000:

Varius et Tucca, Vergilii et Horatii contubernales, poetae habentur inlustres. qui Aeneidum postea libros emendarunt sub lege ea ut nihil adderent.

We shall therefore have no doubt that the verb has the same sense in *quos postea Cicero emendavit*, and does not, as Bailey was duped by the Borgia Life into supposing, denote improvements suggested to the poet ‘inter legendum’.²⁵ That indeed makes nonsense of *postea*, albeit (as the last citation shows) Jerome uses the word with more frequency than care. So far as Lucretius is concerned, there is no telling whether the adverb means ‘postquam mortuus est’ or ‘postquam scribere desiit’, be it from the poetical death of madness, disgust with Memmius, or any other cause; however, failing such hypotheses we should expect a living poet to do his own emending.

Sicco Polentonius of Padua, who writing in the early fifteenth century knew Jerome but not Lucretius, supposed that parts of the poem, not written during lucid intervals, were jumbled and disorganised, thus needing Cicero to put them in order: ‘emendavit preterea Cicero Lucrecii, Romani poetae libros, quod scripti cum insaniret ille interdum confuse ac minus composite viderentur’.²⁶ That was the most rational hypothesis so long as the poem lay unread, but ‘scripti confuse ac minus composite’ is precisely the impression that the transmitted text has made on the many readers who have either sought to remedy it by transposition and deletion, or supposed, with or without recourse to the poet’s alleged insanity, that the work was left unfinished at his death. While *Lucretius* was read at Varro *De Lingua Latina* 5.17, Pius could write: ‘Vnus uir doctissimus undecumque Varro dubio procul ostendit plures edidisse libros. Sed qui fortassis incohati non perfecti

²³ V.E. Alfieri, *Lucrezio* (Florence 1929) 7.

²⁴ Donatus’ other pupil Servius writes *Aeneidem . . . nec emendavit nec edidit*, but also *Augustus vero, ne tantum opus periret, Tuccam et Varium hac lege iussit emendare, ut superflua demerent, nihil adderent tamen*.

²⁵ Bailey (n.3) 1.20–1. Pontanus, the real author of this romance, was in turn deceived by the attribution to Cicero of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. Canali has it both ways by making Lucretius take Cicero’s advice during composition and send the finished work off to him as if to a modern publisher.

²⁶ *Sicconis Polentoni Latinae linguae libri XVIII* ed. B.L. Ullman (American Academy in Rome 1928), 445 ll.21–3, in bk.16.

reiecti sunt a censore sollertissimo Marco Tullio',²⁷ but Gifanius' correction to *Lucilius*²⁸ leaves only Crinitus' interpretation: 'verisimile est: propter importunum obitum ab eo imperfectum atque inemendatum relictum.'²⁹

It is inherently improbable that Cicero, long before Caesar's victory and Tullia's death had turned him into a philosophical author, would spend time and trouble editing (however superficially) a poem expounding a system he found absurd and repugnant, by a person to whom he lay under no obligation; if it were as a favour to Atticus, he might have occasionally quoted the odd phrase back at him, all the more so since, as Ziegler remarks, he would have employed his services for copying and distribution. Moreover, the believers' proof-text, that letter of February 54 BC (*Ad Quintum fratrem* 2.10) in which Cicero concurs with his brother's judgement of *poemata* (§3) by Lucretius, no more entails their maximalist interpretation, that he knew *De rerum natura* in its entirety, than the minimalist alternative that Quintus had quoted extracts, perhaps passed on by a friend of a friend.³⁰ It does not prove that Lucretius was dead, however convenient that would be for saving Donatus' credit and sparing Lucretius the knowledge of his patron's spectacular disgrace in the summer's consular elections. We may surmise that death explained (but would it?) why Cicero made no mention of the poet when urging Memmius to do the decent thing in respect of Epicurus' house at Athens, but a surmise it remains to be weighed against four others: that Memmius had scorned Lucretius' offering; that Cicero had forgotten about it; that the lines he had seen did not include the dedication,³¹ that the dedicatee was not the praetor of 58 BC, C. Memmius L. f., but the tribune of 54 BC, C. Memmius C. f.³²

In any case, Cicero gives no more than a summary judgement like that on Sallustius' *Empedoclea*, reading which will prove Quintus a he-man but not

²⁷ Edn. (n.20) sig. A1^v.

²⁸ See Gifanius *loc. cit.* (n.15), who observes: 'Quid ergo? pro Lucretio, Lucilium olim scriptum fuisse existimo'; also Ausonius Popma, *M. Terentii Varronis operum quae exstant noua editio* (Leiden 1601) 518. M. Vertranius Maurus, *M. Terentii Varronis pars librorum quattuor et viginti de lingua Latina* (Lyon 1563) 221–2 had already dissociated this passage from the poet of *De rerum natura*; at p.309, on 7.94, he posited either another Lucretius or a corruption of *Lucilium*. Scaliger, having corrected the latter passage at *Coniectanea in M. Terentium Varronem de lingua Latina* (Paris 1565) 184, observed at *In Sex. Pompei Festi de verborum significatione castigaciones* ([Heidelberg] 1575) cxvi, s.v. Oufentina, 'Perperam Lucretius pro Lucillius [sic], vt apud Varronem'; this does not justify L. Spengel and his successors in crediting him with the correction of *LL* 5.17.

²⁹ *De poetis Latinis* (Impressum Florentiae per Philippum Iuntam. Kaleñ Februarii. M.D.V. = 1506 modern style; dedication dated 'Kaleñ. Nouembris. M.D.V.') sig. B3^f.

³⁰ F.H. Sandbach, 'Lucreti poemata and the poet's death' *CR* 54 (1940) 72–7: esp. p.76: 'It seems, then, that the exact meaning of *Lucreti poemata* is uncertain. It might be translated "the poetry of Lucretius", "the passages of Lucretius", or "the passage of Lucretius".' There is no need to suppose that Cicero knew more of Lucretius than his brother had sent him, or to defend the 'complicated hypothesis' rejected by Hutchinson (n.2) 153, 'that Cicero and Quintus had both [sc. independently] read a particular group of extracts'.

³¹ If as Hutchinson (n.2) argues the proem presupposes the outbreak of civil war, then since proems may be written last we have a *terminus ante quem* for other parts of the poem, but no compelling need to suppose that the *poemata* are unattested lost works (*ibid.* 154).

³² As suggested by Hutchinson (n.2) 158–9. The reader who finds merit in this proposal is invited to bear it in mind at future references to Memmius.

human. Yet Cicero, having little else to say (§1), could reasonably have written at greater length had he any detailed comments to make, rather than await Quintus' arrival (*sed cum veneris*); one derives the impression of a topic that only politeness bade him take up. Such allusions to *De rerum natura* as have been asserted for Cicero—most plausibly, in respect of *deus ille fuit, deus, inclute Memmi* (5.8) as underlying the sneer at *Tusculanae Disputationes* 1.48—would indicate knowledge only of the purple patches; indeed at *primum erit hoc quasi prouincias atomis dare, quae recte, quae oblique ferantur* (*De finibus* 1.20) he is contradicted by Lucretius 2.243–5 *quare etiam atque etiam paulum inclinare necessest / corpora; nec plus quam minimum, ne fingere motus / obliquos uideamur et id res vera refutet*. Or, if it be objected that Cicero might be casually denying a distinction he found artificial—to swerve *is* to move obliquely, and there's an end on't—the argument of *De finibus* 2.98 *sin autem ad animum* [sc. *pertinentibus praeteritis gaudes*], *falsum est quod negas animi ullum esse gaudium quod non referatur ad corpus* is refuted by Lucretius 3.145–6, concerning the entity variously known as *consilium*, *mens*, and *animus*: *idque sibi solum per se sapit, id sibi gaudet, / cum neque res animam neque corpus commouet una*.³³ Perhaps it is too much to ask that a corrector should remember such details after nine or even five years in a poem whose style must have impressed him far more than its content; nevertheless, Cicero's failure to notice Lucretius in his philosophical writings, when *De rerum natura* was in the public domain, must indicate either that he really had not read more than a few highlights, or that he preferred to ignore it. But if he had not read it, he had not edited it; and if he had edited it, the fact would have been too well known in the small literary world of Rome for him to wear the mask of ignorance. We should do better, then, to disbelieve the tale as a false inference from the letter to Quintus; if the poet had gone mad, someone else must have brought the poem to public attention; Cicero is the only contemporary in whose writings a reference is found; *argal*.³⁴

Lucretius the aristocrat

Belief in the philtre, the madness, and Cicero's editing, however misguided, does at least rest on ancient assertion, though in other walks of life one would not call it evidence; there is another fantasy that rests on no ancient report whatever,

³³ Since *unā* would yield the sense 'when *anima* and body are each subject to more than one stimulus', we need either to adopt the humanistic conjecture *ulla*, 'when no single thing stirs either soul or body' (Bailey's translation, though his text reads *una*), or understand the adverb *unā*, 'together with the *animus*' (not with each other, as in Bailey's commentary); this in turn entails understanding *res* either an unparalleled anticipation of *rien* (but why did the poet not write *quidquam?*), or as *ea res quae animum mouet*.

³⁴ See Ziegler (n.13) 440; cf. D.E.W. Wormell, 'The personal world of Lucretius' in D.R. Dudley (ed.), *Lucretius* (London 1965) 35–67 at 37, who perhaps over-ingeniously finds polemic intent in the story: 'It seemed appropriate to the opponents of Epicureanism that its chief poet should go mad and commit suicide, and that his poem should be given to the world by one whose philosophical leanings were in the direction of the New Academy and of Stoicism, and who had little use for Epicurus and his school.'

the notion that Lucretius was of aristocratic birth. This is based variously on his name, his sentiments, and his style.

The honoured name

Besides the well-known *De honesta disciplina*, Petrus Crinitus also wrote a five-book work of biography and criticism of the Latin poets; the first poet treated in book 2 is Lucretius, whose life begins with the words: ‘T. Lucretius Charus ex Lucretiorum familia natus creditur. quae Romae insignis: & peruetusta habita est.’³⁵ The distinction and antiquity are obviously owed to the Lucretii Tricipitini, a great patrician house of the early Republic; according to tradition, indeed, the Republic itself was founded in revolutionary response to the outrage offered by the Crown Prince Sex. Tarquinius against one of that clan’s womenfolk. Thereafter the patrician Lucretii provided consuls and consular tribunes in every generation down to the Gaulish invasion; one of them, in the second year of the Republic, even bore the *praenomen* Titus.³⁶ Unfortunately, the last we hear of them is in 381 BC; no bearer of the *nomen* is on record until the quaestor L. Lucretius is ambushed by Hannibal in 218 BC. Thereafter several Lucretii are known; but whereas in the middle and later Republic new *stirpes* of other patrician *gentes* make room for themselves, such as the Aemilii Scauri, the Cornelii Dolabellae, and most spectacularly the Iulii Caesares,³⁷ these Lucretii are plebeian; if the by now rare *praenomen* Spurius borne by the praetors of 205 and 172 BC claims kinship with the patrician house, it is no less mendacious than the genealogies concocted in more recent times for persons desirous of boasting Norman blood. Not even in the antiquarian and phileupatrid reign of Augustus, when in successive years (if their pedigrees were genuine) the Furi Camilli and Sulpicii Camerini emerged from centuries of obscurity to reclaim the consulate over 300 years after they had last enjoyed it,³⁸ did a patrician Lucretius trouble the chroniclers of public affairs.

The patriciate, though still conscious of itself, was only one segment of that *nobilitas* which held the consulate polluted if a *novus homo* were elected.³⁹ To this *nobilitas* the plebeian Lucretii did not belong, none having advanced beyond the praetorship. Even that was last achieved in 171 BC, about a century before our poet came of age, by the praetor C. Lucretius Gallus, whose career ended in the disgrace of a million-as fine (Livy 43.8.10); although Sp. Lucretius, the praetor of

³⁵ *De poetis Latinis* (n.29) sig. B2^v-3^r; in subsequent editions this is ch. 19.

³⁶ The lady’s father, Sp. Lucretius, was squeezed into the *fasti* as suffect to L. Iunius Brutus in the first year of the Republic, by Varronian dating 509 BC; his brother (one supposes) T. Lucretius T. f. is recorded as consul in 508 and 504, and the latter’s son Lucius in 462. Hostus Lucretius was consul in 429, his son Publius served as consular tribune ten years later. The line ends with L. Lucretius Flavus Tricipitinus, *consul suffectus* in 393 and consular tribune in 391, 388, 383, and 381.

³⁷ First known respectively from the consul of 115 (virtually a *novus homo*: Asconius 23C), the consul of 283, and the praetor of 208.

³⁸ M. Furius P. f. Camillus, *cos.* AD 8, Q. Sulpicius Q. f. Camerinus, *cos.* AD 9; their families’ last consulates had been respectively 325 and 345 BC.

³⁹ Sall. *Cat.* 23.6. On its composition see now D.R. Shackleton Bailey, ‘Nobiles and novi reconsidered’, *AJP* 107 (1986) 255–60.

172 BC, continued in the public service, being last heard of on the mission to curb Seleucid power that ended in the assassination of Cn. Octavius, no subsequent Lucretius is known to have attained a curule magistracy in Republican times, unless (as has been suggested) the Q. Lucretius Afella put to death by Sulla for illegally aspiring to the consulate had held office during the *Cinnanum tempus*.⁴⁰ Otherwise we must make do with the *aedilis plebi* of 133 BC, L. Lucretius, who earned the *cognomen* Vespillo by flinging Tiberius Gracchus' corpse in the Tiber; his son Quintus, proscribed by Sulla; Quintus' son, also Quintus, who was proscribed by the triumvirs, concealed by his wife Turia, and made consul in 19 BC; a tribune of 54 BC probably identical with the garrison commander who failed to hold Sulmo against Caesar;⁴¹ M. Lucretius, a senator manifestly sympathetic to Verres; and two moneyers, probably grandfather and grandson, with the *cognomen* Trio.⁴² Even if all these persons belonged to the same family,⁴³ it had missed its chance of greatness; even if the poet was a member of it, he was not on a par with a Metellus or a Lentulus. Nor, in an age when many a *nobilis* with a distinctive *cognomen* promoted it in place of the *nomen* shared with persons of the lowest social status,⁴⁴ is it conceivable that had the patrician Lucretii survived, even in reduced circumstances, they would have discarded the name Tricipitinus that alone marked them for what they were. Nevertheless, the 'aristocratic', even patrician, Lucretius continues to hold the imagination, partly at least for the sheer snobbish pleasure of studying an author out of the top social drawer: if scholars from the fifteenth to the twentieth century have sought Aulus Gellius' kindred amongst the not particularly distinguished consuls of that name,⁴⁵ how much more attractive an ancestry is a founding family of the Republic!

⁴⁰ See G.V. Sumner, *The Orators in Cicero's Brutus: Prosopography and Chronology* (Toronto 1973) 106–7.

⁴¹ Sometimes but implausibly also identified with the Vespillo last mentioned.

⁴² Cn. Lucretius Trio is dated to 136 BC by M.H. Crawford, *Roman Republican Coinage* (2 vols, Cambridge 1970) 62, 269 no. 237, Lucius to 76 BC *ibid.* 404–5 no. 390. For their coins see vol. 2, pls. XXXVI and XLIX; H.A. Grueber, *Coins of the Roman Republic in the British Museum* (3 vols, London 1970) i. 132–3, 396–8.

⁴³ Some relation between the Lucretii Vespillones and Afella is implied by Cic. *Brut.* 178; but why should the marine imagery used by L. Lucretius Trio be aimed at rehabilitating C. Lucretius Gallus, even if the moneyer had inherited the latter's estate at Antium (Livy 43.4.6)? More attractive is Crawford's suggestion that the boy on the dolphin is Palaemon son of *Leucothea*, metonymically recalling *Lucretius*.

⁴⁴ See R. Syme, 'Imperator Caesar: a study in nomenclature' *Historia* 7 (1958) 172–88 at 172–3 = *Roman Papers* i, ed. E. Badian (Oxford 1979) 361–77 at 361–2. *Gentes* no longer counted for much; it is a joke, not a boast, when Cicero calls King Ser. Tullius his *gentilis* (*Tusc.* 1.38) despite the gratifying scene of *Pro Sestio* 123.

⁴⁵ Sicco Polentonius (n.26), bk.8 (219.10–13 Ullman): 'Romanus quippe iste cuius Gelliorum e familia nobili et antiqua natus est'; cf. Luigi Rusca (ed.), *Aulo Gellio: Notti attiche* (2nd edn, Milan 1992) i. 70: 'Gellio dovette essere romano come sembra indicare il fatto che la *gens* Gellia era romana già da lungo tempo.' Other scholars, e.g. J.C.R. Rolfe (Loeb edn i, pp.xi–xii), have hedged their bets, listing prominent Gellii and then admitting that the miscellanist makes no claim of kinship.

Crinitus' life, with its confident assertions that Lucretius was a little senior to Varro and Cicero,⁴⁶ and that his dedicatee was the son of the man who had conquered Achaia,⁴⁷ was reprinted with minor variations in Petrus Candidus' Juntine of 1512/13; having been ignored in Andreas Naugerius' Aldine of 1515 it was restored in Henricus Petrus' Basle edition of 1531,⁴⁸ with as we have seen an additional paragraph taken unacknowledged from Pius. The theme of false ascription continues, for the last item in Crinitus proper is a reference to the *Lucretius comicus* of Fulgentius *Expositio sermonum antiquorum* 62, commonly dismissed as a figment of that writer's humour; though if any choose to believe in him,⁴⁹ his profession would prove him no kinsman of the senatorial Lucretii in whose heyday he must have written.

Obertus Gifanius, in the 'Vita T. Lucretii' preposed to his Antwerp edition of 1566, noted that the name of the Lucretii was most famous and ancient in Roman records; he had found 'Tricipitinos, Cinnas,⁵⁰ Vispillones, et Ofellas',⁵¹ but declined to suggest what relationship there might have been between him and the Q. Lucretius of contemporary politics;⁵² it was enough to speculate that Lucretius wrote his poem and killed himself on observing Memmius' disgrace and the ruin of the state.⁵³ Lambinus, who in his first edition of 1563/4 had ignored biographical matters, and whose second or pocket edition of 1565 had reproduced the current expansion of Crinitus' life, riposted in his third edition of 1570 with his own account of poet and poem asserting: 'Porro autem gens Lucretia quam clara atque antiqua fuerit, argumento sunt Lucretii Tricipitini, Triones, Ofellae, Vespillones, Galli.' He was inclined to see in the poet the non-political brother of a Vespillo or an 'Ofella' who bore a second *cognomen* 'vel propter ingenii magnitudinem, et praestantiam, vel propter morum suavitatem, et comitatem, vel

⁴⁶ Crinitus (n.29) sig. B2^v: 'paulo antiquior fuit Terentio Varrone & M. Tullio: ut quidam scripserunt: quod est obseruatum diligenter. quoniam in his Annalibus (quos a graecis habemus) complura falso exposita sunt: contraque rationem temporum peruerse signata.' This plaudit for inverting the chronological sequence in Jerome's chronicle excludes the charitable interpretation that Varro is Atacinus and not Reatinus.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* sig. B3^f: 'non me praeterit alios in hac re dissentire. Sed hi quidem dum parum diligenter temporum rationem obseruant. facile refelli possunt.' To be sure *Mummius* was commonly corrupted to *Memmius* at that date.

⁴⁸ *T. Lucretii Cari poetae, nec minus philosopho vetustissimi, de rerum natura libri sex. Ad verorum exemplarium fidem accuratè castigati* (Basle 1531) sigs. A1^v-3^f.

⁴⁹ Ubaldo Pizzani, *Fabio Planciade Fulgenzio: Definizione di parole antiche* (Rome 1968) 210 does not entirely exclude genuineness: 'Resta però sempre aperta la possibilità che Fulgenzio abbia qui riportato un frammento di un comico ignoto (magari con l'errata indicazione del nome) che potrebbe essere stato un pedissequo imitatore di Plauto; in tal caso nulla proverebbero i citati riscontri contro l'autenticità del frammento.'

⁵⁰ For this ghost *cognomen*, bestowed by Jerome s.a.Abr. 1998 or 1999 on the consul in whose year Vergil died, see *CIL* i².89.

⁵¹ A false spelling for *Afella* based on Greek Ὀφέλλας, used till recently by persons who would never have corrupted *Dolabella* to conform with Δολοβέλλας.

⁵² Sig. **5^f.

⁵³ *Ibid.* sigs. [**5]^v-[**6]^f.

propter aliquid tale'.⁵⁴ Subsequent editors, if they concerned themselves with the matter at all, were long content to transcribe Gifanius, Lambinus, or both, or in the case of Daniel Paré to present Gifanius' conjectures, recast in the third person, as his own work.⁵⁵ Giovanni Nardi, in his Florentine edition of 1647, combined his predecessor's conjectures with his own *amplificatio* to produce a model of brief popular biography:

Nascitur Romae Titus Lucretius Carus L. Licinio Crasso, & Q. Mutio Scæuola Conss., anno ab V.C.I.O <C>LVIII Claris parentibus, prouidisque sublimis ingenij promotoribus, qui adolescentem Athenas tempestiuè erudiendum mittunt. Redux verò Lucretius, Epicuri se contulit ad Hortos; his verò tunc præerant Zeno, Phędrusque, vel Tullij testimonio, humanissimus. Locum frequentabant Atticus, Cassius, Pætus, Velleius, plurimique in R.P. præstantes Ciues: quibus noster Titus ob suauissimos mores, nitidamque eloquentiam Carus, Memmio verò, cui præsens dicauit opus, vel etiam percarus. Nihil obfuit grauissimo, atque disertissimo Scriptori inuidia, sed amor: qui zelotypæ Luciliæ, nostri Poëtæ vxori, vel amicæ, suasit, vt philtum incauto propinaret. Exarsit ille confestim, & quæ prona est via ab amore in furorem, furit Lucretius: donec exsiccatis præ incendio iam medullis, arefactoque iecore, in cinerem concedit, anno ætatis suæ xxxxiij, ea ipsa die (vt ferunt) qua virilem togam sumpsit Virgilius.⁵⁶

Romantic fiction about Lucretius has retained its hold on writers to this day.

That the Tricipitini were patricians and the other Lucretii plebeians was apparently a distinction too subtle for the sixteenth century; they appear in both Gifanius and Lambinus as merely one *stirps* among many of the supposedly unitary *gens Lucretia*. By the early nineteenth century, even a literary Frenchman knew better, though in the manner of his kind he cited the fact with the loftiest disdain:

Les fastes de Rome offrent un grand nombre de consuls et de sénateurs de ce nom; cependant, selon les recherches des savans avides de détails minutieux, l'illustre famille de Lucrèce devint plébeienne; que ce fait soit plus ou moins fondé, il ne peut inspirer aucun intérêt, lorsqu'il s'agit d'en faire l'application à un philosophe qui montra le mépris le plus absolu pour le préjugé de naissance.⁵⁷

By contrast, Eichstädt and Forbiger, contemptible as they were in textual matters, dismissed the lives constructed for the poet by Gifanius and Lambinus as resting on pure conjecture;⁵⁸ Lachmann left the poet's social standing alone, and it was in his least scholarly book that Mommsen assigned Lucretius to the best circles of

⁵⁴ Sigs. d1^r-e1^v: 'T. Lucretii Cari patria, genus, vitæ studium, ingenium, mortis genus et tempus, librorum ab eo scriptorum numerus, consilium poetæ, argumentum et inscriptio operis, D. Lambino auctore', at sig. d1^v.

⁵⁵ Edn. Frankfurt 1631, 10.

⁵⁶ Edn. Florence 1647, 3.

⁵⁷ Jean-Baptiste Sanson de Pongerville (trans.), *Lucrèce, De la nature des choses* (2 vols, Paris 1823) i, pp. xxxix-xl.

⁵⁸ H.C.A. Eichstädt, edn. i (Leipzig 1801) lvi-lx; paraphrased by A. Forbiger, edn. (Leipzig 1828) xxx. Misled by the order in which Havercamp had cited the lives, edn. (Leiden 1725) i, sigs. m3^v-n2^r, they supposed that Lambinus wrote first.

Roman society, a usefully vague expression perhaps meaning no more than he might have been expected to seek and obtain political office:

Es ist das Lehrgedicht des Titus Lucretius Carus (655–699 99–55) ›Vom Wesen der Dinge‹, dessen Verfasser, den besten Kreisen der römischen Gesellschaft angehörig, vom öffentlichen Leben aber, sei es durch Kränklichkeit, sei es durch Abneigung ferngehalten, kurz vor dem Ausbruch des Bürgerkrieges im besten Mannesalter starb.⁵⁹

Tennyson, with his poet's privilege of shaping history to match his imagination, adopted Pius' Lucilia, who 'found her master cold' and

watchful, petulant,
Dreaming some rival, sought and found a witch
Who brew'd the philtre which had power, they said,
To lead an errant passion home again,

but his raving poet does not expressly claim community of blood with the virtuous Lucretia, only of name and spirit:

And what man,
What Roman would be dragg'd in triumph thus?
Not I; not he, who bears one name with her
Whose death-blow struck the dateless doom of kings,
When, brooking not the Tarquin in her veins,
She made her blood in sight of Collatine
And all his peers, flushing the guiltless air,
Spout from the maiden fountain in her heart,
And from it sprang the Commonwealth, which breaks
As I am breaking now!⁶⁰

If the poetic imagination needed defence, we might adduce the psychological effect in 44 BC on the plebeian M. Brutus of sharing a name with the patrician (and terminator of his own lineage) L. Iunius Brutus.

By then, however, H.A.J. Munro, who was a scholar, not a poet, but was also the illegitimate son of a Scots laird, had declared in his edition, so justly admired in other respects, that Lucretius 'may well have belonged to the high patrician gens of the Lucretii Tricipitini whose glories were chiefly linked with the early history of the commonwealth and were doubtless in great measure legendary, but not the less valued perhaps on that account'.⁶¹ His arguments are no more than that literary distinction in Lucretius' day belonged almost entirely to the upper classes, and that it was not unknown for the *cognomen* to vary within the same family, as Licinius Macer was the father of Licinius Calvus; between premisses and conclusion there lies a vast and uncharted ocean, yet Munro's assertion, which goes behind Gifanius and Lambinus to state explicitly what Crinitus had merely implied, has been adopted without even his residual reservation by more than one subsequent editor. Yet Cicero had said all that need be said against it when he included amongst the figments of Roman history transitions to the plebs, *ut si ego*

⁵⁹ Th. Mommsen, *Römische Geschichte* (1904, rep. Munich 1976) v.259.

⁶⁰ *Tennyson: Poems and Plays* ed. T. Herbert Warren, rev. Frederick Page (Oxford 1965) 150, 153.

⁶¹ *T. Lucreti Cari de rerum natura libri sex* 2nd edn (Cambridge 1866) 310.

me a M'. Tullio esse dicerem, qui patricius cum Servio Sulpicio consul anno X post exactos reges fuit (*Brutus* 62). In fact, given the nature of Roman *gentilicia* there is no more reason to make the poet T. Lucretius Carus a relation of even the later Lucretii, let alone of semi-mythical personages from the early Republic, merely because he bears the same *nomen*, than the soldier M. Canuleius Carus attested at Rome in AD 70 a relation of the praetor L. Canuleius Dives, colleague of C. Lucretius Gallus in 171 BC, or of the more famous C. Canuleius who as tribune in 443 BC had forced the repeal of the Twelve Tables' prohibition on intermarriage between the orders.⁶²

The lordly tone

No doubt one may, if so disposed, see in Lucretius' explication of toiling Sisyphus as the perpetual candidate who can never wring political office from the voters a comment on personal or familial experience; but that is to argue on the same inferential basis on which T.P. Wiseman erected his humble jack-of-all-trades whose escape from manual labour to the clientage of Memmius proved less prudent a career move than it had seemed.⁶³ Those who really care about such things, particularly when expectation of office is their birthright, express themselves in the manner of Sallust's Catiline, *non dignos homines honore honestatos videbam* (35.3).

It is this note, however, that certain scholars seem to hear in Lucretius' poetry, whose lofty tone is said to prove a high aristocratic outlook itself proving a high aristocratic background and patrician status even though not bespoken by his name and rightly denied to the imperial Valerii, Maximus and Flaccus, who share both *nomen* and *cognomen* with patrician magistrates well known to Roman history. This lofty tone is sometimes said to be manifested in his contempt for the common herd: 'le ton injurieux sur lequel il parle de la plèbe';⁶⁴ an allusion, I suppose, to his observation that one recovers from fever no sooner on embroideries and purple *quam si plebeia ueste cubandum est* (2.36), and that the latter is just as good as fine clothes for keeping out the cold (5.1426–9). The substantive *plebes* is absent from his poem; *volgus* is present, but the passages commonly cited as demonstrating disdain for the lower orders do no such thing. The *volgus* that shudders from Epicurean teaching (1.945) is not the *faex urbis* so disdained by Cicero the consular (*In Pisonem* 9), but the unenlightened majority from the *principes civitatis* downwards; the same viewpoint is assigned to the devotees of the Great Mother who bang their drums and blow their pipes and brandish their sickles to affright *ingratos animos atque impia pectora volgi* (2.622), that is to say the undevout.

⁶² For M. Canuleius Carus see Th. Mommsen, *Inscriptiones regni Neapolitani Latinae* (Leipzig 1852) 6769 iii 24. Though found by the arch of Septimius Severus, it was preserved in the Museo Borbonico at Naples, now called the Museo Nazionale Archeologico.

⁶³ T.P. Wiseman, 'The two worlds of Titus Lucretius' *Cinna the Poet and Other Roman Essays* (Leicester 1974) 11–43.

⁶⁴ A. Ernout, edn. (⁸Paris 1948) i, p.x; this enables him to conclude that 'On peut sans trop d'in vraisemblance conjecturer que Lucrèce appartenait à cette famille [the *gens Lucretia*], bien que le cognomen Carus n'ait été porté par aucun autre de ses membres, et sans doute aux Tricipitini.'

Nor should we be seduced by such assertions as:

Il tono disdegnoso e distaccato con cui egli guarda al resto dell'umanità, l'ebbrezza della solitudine spirituale, l'accento alto e profetico, il ripudio di toni bonari e umoristici che non siano sarcastici, tutto lo avvicina alla famiglia dei grandi spiriti aristocratici, come Pindaro e Dante, Alfieri e Byron, i quali riflettono nell'opera la nobiltà dell'origine e delle tradizioni.⁶⁵

The lofty tone that Lucretius takes towards the generality of mankind in their ignorance and blindness is no proof of aristocracy, let alone of patrician rank; it is the mark of those who have found THE TRUTH, and are driven to share it with the rest of us who, like C. Memmius, have no particular desire to hear it. An aristocrat who scorned the masses would have no wish to save them; I have never yet encountered a street preacher whose bearing induced me to seek his kindred in the House of Lords. The exaltation in such persons' tone comes from the conviction of knowing better than their betters.

If, however, Lucretius was no Diogenes of Oenoanda, but wished only to win Memmius, so that the two together might continue to enjoy that greatest among pleasures, watching the benighted ways of others (2.7–13), that would not prove him an aristocrat of birth, only of temperament; the inutility of *nobilitas* asserted in 2.11, 38 proves nothing either way. Or, if Lucretius cared nothing for either Epicurus or the saving of Memmius, being rather a Roman Aratus or a Nicander, who had found or been told his topic and undertaken to render it in verse, then if his philosophical commitment was but borrowed plumage, why not his airs? And even if the despised *volgus* were the common masses, a lofty tone towards them is more easily arrogated than any refinement of etiquette by those whose *de* is not in the *Almanach de Gotha*. When Cicero the *novus homo*, the *inquilinus civis urbis Romae*, permits a scornful emphasis to fall on the names of M. Terpolius and C. Fiducianus Falcula,⁶⁶ not only their politics or their characters are at issue.⁶⁷ In Wilhelmine Berlin, it was the middle-class Geheimrat Hermann Diels who stood bolt upright as if he had swallowed a poker, whereas Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff would sit on the floor amidst his books.⁶⁸ The fraudulent Sinologist Sir Edmund Backhouse declared that Mallarmé had 'just a little touch of the *bourgeois*'; the Swiss professor to whom he made this remark naïvely took it as the tone of the English nobleman, but Hugh Trevor-Roper, as he was then, observed that 'An Englishman is more likely to regard it as the remark of a *poseur* or a *parvenu*.'⁶⁹

The noble verse

Alternatively, by loftiness we may understand not *hauteur* but high style; that has even less to do with noble birth. Let us compare two contemporaries of

⁶⁵ Luciano Perelli, *Lucrezio poeta dell'angoscia* (Florence 1969) 7.

⁶⁶ *Pro Cornelio II*, fr. 8 Crawford² and *Pro Caecina* 28 respectively.

⁶⁷ R. Syme, 'Caesar, the Senate, and Italy' *BSR* 14 (1938) 1–31 at 23 = *Roman Papers* i.88–119 at 111.

⁶⁸ Reminiscences heard from Eduard Fraenkel.

⁶⁹ H. Trevor-Roper (now Lord Dacre), *Hermit of Peking: The Hidden Life of Sir Edmund Backhouse* (rev. edn., Harmondsworth 1978) 341–2.

Lucretius' of whose respective social standing there is no doubt, Cicero and Caesar, writing on the same topic:

tu quoque, qui solus lecto sermone, Terenti,
 conversum expressumque Latina uoce Menandrum
 in medium nobis sedatis †vocibus† effers,
 quiddam come loquens atque omnia dulcia dicens.⁷⁰

tu quoque, tu in summis, o dimidiate Menander,
 poneris et merito, puri sermonis amator,
 lenibus atque utinam scriptis adiecta foret vis,⁷¹
 comica ut aequato virtus polleret honore
 cum Graecis, neve hac despectus parte iaceres:
 unum hoc maceror ac doleo tibi desse, Terenti.⁷²

The latter is the better criticism and also better poetry; but the style is no grander than Cicero's. Indeed, the nobleman may be free of the urge to self-inflation that marks the man who would be more than he is, whether he seek to impress the electors or a Memmius. The fourteenth Earl of Derby, whose affability amongst his own kind was matched, as it was not in Caesar, by his aloofness towards the lower orders, translated the *Iliad* into English blank verse, a measure whose capacity for epic exaltation needs no proof after Milton; but compare his poem for loftiness with the rhymed couplets of the merchant's son Pope.

Of Peleus' son, Achilles, sing, O Muse,
 The vengeance, deep and deadly; whence to Greece
 Unnumbered ills arose; which many a soul
 Of mighty warriors to the viewless shades
 Untimely sent; they on the battle plain
 Unburied lay, a prey to ravening dogs,
 And carrion birds; fulfilling thus the plan
 Devised of Jove, since first in wordy war,
 The mighty Agamemnon, King of men,
 Confronted stood by Peleus' godlike son.⁷³

Achilles' wrath, to Greece the direful spring
 Of woes unnumber'd, heavenly goddess, sing!
 That wrath which hurl'd to Pluto's gloomy reign
 The souls of mighty chiefs untimely slain:
 Whose limbs unburied on the naked shore,
 Devouring dogs and hungry vultures tore:

⁷⁰ Cicero fr. 2 Morel–Büchner–Blänsdorf and Courtney.

⁷¹ Enjambements, in pre-Vergilian hexameters, are not to be multiplied beyond necessity, least of all after the emphatic final monosyllable, set off as subject from the preceding predicate. Quite different is Lucr. 1.485–6 *nulla potest uis / stinguere*, where subject and predicate are interlaced, cf. 2.123–4, 5.104–5, 6.325–6; different again are such places as 2.95–6 *nulla quies est / reddita*, where the monosyllable is not emphatic.

⁷² Caesar fr. 1 Morel–Büchner–Blänsdorf and Courtney.

⁷³ *The Iliad of Homer, rendered into English blank verse. To which are appended Translations of Poems Ancient and Modern, by Edward Earl of Derby* 2 vols (13London 1894) 1.1.

Since great Achilles and Atrides strove,
Such was the sovereign doom, and such the will of Jove.⁷⁴

I do not ask which is better poetry, or the more faithful translation; I merely ask which more brings to mind a noble ancestry.

Lucretius the nobody

If love of a lord is no sure principle for literary history, neither is the romantic prejudice that poets should be poor or humbly born. At the opposite social extreme to Lucretius the patrician is Lucretius the freedman, the brainchild of Friedrich Marx,⁷⁵ who, noting that the chief nurseries of poets in Lucretius' day were Gaul and Spain, declared that his *cognomen* Carus—not attested for our poet before the Oblongus and the Vienna leaves,⁷⁶ but universally accepted⁷⁷—was favoured in Celtic and Celtiberian territory and not attested during the Republic amongst persons of Roman or Latin birth; its bearer was always of low status, a slave, freedman, or foreigner. He cited the Celtiberian Κάρος of Segeda (Appian *Bellum Hispanum* 45),⁷⁸ and some inscriptions from the second and twelfth volumes of *CIL*, together with an imperial freedman from v.5291; he also observed that the T. Aebutius Carus of Livy 39.55.8 was at 42.4.4 given the *cognomen* Parrus by our only witness, the fifth-century Codex Vindobonensis Latinus 15. Modern editors agree with Bücheler in emending *Carus* to *Parrus* rather than vice versa with Pighius; this not only eliminates the *cognomen* Carus from the Republican senate, but leaves just one other known pre-imperial Carus, namely the Sex. Vibius Sex. f. Carus whose dedication to Hercules at Superaequum was found in the railway station at Molina Aterno.⁷⁹ However, he was neither a freedman nor a Celt; his *gentilicium* is Italic, and a Paelignian

⁷⁴ *The Iliad and Odyssey of Homer, translated by Alexander Pope* (Albion edn., London and New York [1895]) 1–2.

⁷⁵ 'Der Dichter Lucretius' *Neue Jahrbücher für das klassische Altertum, Geschichte und deutsche Litteratur und für Pädagogik* 2 (1899) 533–48 at 535; the article is reprinted in G. Maurach (ed.) *Römische Philosophie* (Darmstadt 1976) 12–36.

⁷⁶ The recently revived identification with the marvellous Karos commemorated before the puzzled citizens of Oenoanda (Diog. Oen. fr. 122 ii 8–9) is refuted by M.F. Smith, 'The chisel and the Muse: Diogenes of Oenoanda and Lucretius' in K.A. Algra, M.H. Koenen, and P.H. Schrijvers (eds) *Lucretius and his Intellectual Background* (Amsterdam 1997) 67–78 at 68–72; it not only wields Ockham's Razor in the spirit of Sweeney Todd, but falsely infers from *our* conviction that τοῦ τε θαυμασίου Κάρου is a just tribute to *De rerum natura* that a contemporary Greek, in a Greek-speaking city, could or would have appraised a Latin poem—a pagan travesty of the Trecento notion that Diogenes' fellow Greek-speaker Paul of Tarsus called Vergil *poetarum maxime*: Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, MS Sala del Prefetto 10.27, *olim* A 79 inf. (facs. ed. Io. [= G.] Galbiati, *Francisci Petrarcae Vergilianus codex* (Milan 1930) fo. i^v).

⁷⁷ We could not account for posthumous invention as we can for Richard de Fournival's conferment on Propertius of the *cognomen* Nauta from *navita* (codd.: *non ita* Heinsius) at 2.24.38; see James L. Butrica, *The Manuscript Tradition of Propertius* (Toronto 1984) 25.

⁷⁸ Adolf Schulten, *Numantia: Die Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen 1905–1912* (4 vols, Munich 1914–31) i: *Die Keltiberer und ihre Kriege mit Rom* 335 n.10 takes it for granted that this war-leader Κάρος is identical, not only with the political leader Κάκροπος at D.S. 31.39, but with the Megaravicus of Florus 1.34, who fought the Romans twelve years after Karos' death.

⁷⁹ *CIL* i². 1796 = 9.3302 = *ILLRP* 144 *Sex. Vibius Sex. f. | Carus Her. d.d. | l.m.*

inscription, recording the construction of the temple, was found together with his dedication.⁸⁰

Yet although there are Celtic names in Marx's list, we do not find similar names in the *Tres Galliae*, and almost no Cari at all in Britain, despite the presence in all Celtic of other names beginning with *Car-* from *kārā-*, the stem of the Celtic verb meaning 'to love' (Irish *caraim* 'I love', Welsh *caraf*, infinitive *caru*).⁸¹ What relation Κάροϛ of Segeda, paroxytone if only by happy accident, and the likes of C. Boduacius Karus (*CIL* xii.3205) bear to this root we need not here enquire; there is simply no evidence that our poet was a Gaulish or Celtiberian Kāros rather than a Latin Cārus like the L. Carenius Carus who made a dedication to the Nymphs at Vasio (*CIL* xii.1326) or Aemilia Kara, wife of the local worthy L. Cornelius C. f. Gal. Romanus at Tarraco (ii.4267).⁸² Marx's onomastics, in short, utterly fail to establish his case; one might as well posit Thracian origin on the strength of Karos, father of the mercenary Darses who served in the troop that followed, and rebelled against, the son of Philadelphus.⁸³

Both Merrill cursorily and Tenney Frank at greater length had refuted Marx even before the diligence of Iiro Kajanto established what should have been clear from the Onomasticon for the letter C in *TLL*, that the *cognomen* Carus was widespread in the Roman world; it was never characteristic of the upper class, but though not confined to the freeborn it is not especially servile.⁸⁴ It therefore remains to be proved that the author of *De rerum natura* was either higher or lower in rank than Ovid's friend who wrote a poem on Hercules and taught the sons of Germanicus.⁸⁵

Yet however low the freedman socially, economically the poor man of free birth might well be beneath him. Such was the Lucretius envisaged by V.E. Alfieri, stretched out on his *lectus lucubratorius* at night, 'in quel *tablinum* semplice e povero che noi ci immaginiamo senza sforzo', composing those verses 'in cui non so se sia lecito leggere la fierezza della povertà, ma il poeta ci fa sentire, nel suo orgoglioso fastidio, che è lui che giace *in veste plebeia*' by a

⁸⁰ R.S. Conway, *The Italic Dialect Inscriptions Edited with a Grammar and Glossary* (2 vols, Cambridge 1897) i.248, no. 239: *a..... | t nounis | l alafis c | herec fesn | upsaseter | coisatens* ('... T. Nonius and L. Alfius C. f. saw to it that a temple should be built to Hercules'); on the syntax see F. Bücheler, *RhM*² 32 (1877) 60.

⁸¹ The lengthening in *cār* 'loves', *cār* 'kinsman' is secondary. Contrast the inherited long vowel of Latin *cārus* and its congeners Latvian *kārs* 'greedy', Gothic *hōrs* 'adulterer' ~ English 'whore'.

⁸² There would still be none if, with Louise Adams Holland, *Lucretius and the Transpadanes* (Princeton 1979), we allowed him on grounds of style to be a Transpadane like Catullus and Vergil; but if relish of words for their sound be a mark of northern origin we must rewrite the life of Ennius with all due speed.

⁸³ *SEG* 41 (1991) 663.4 = M. Büyükkolancı and H. Engelmann, 'Inchriften aus Ephesos' *ZPE* 86 (1991) 137–44 no. 7 (pp.140–2); cf. the Karos on a gem from Almus (now Lom) in Moesia, *SEG* 41 (1963) 963 = Aleksandra Dimitrova-Milčeva, *Антични геми и камеи от Национални археологически музей в София* (Sofia 1980) 94–5 no. 272 (who misreads the name). Both are cited by Smith (n.76) 70.

⁸⁴ W.A. Merrill, edn. (New York 1907) 14; Tenney Frank, 'On the name *Lucretius Carus*' in *Studies in Honor of Hermann Collitz* (Baltimore 1930) 63–6; Iiro Kajanto, *The Latin Cognomina* (Helsinki 1965) 71–3, 294.

⁸⁵ *Ex Ponto* 4.13.11–12, 47–8, cf. 4.16.7–8. For another poetical Carus see Martial 9.23–4.

smoky lamp whose flame ‘accompagna il respiro dell’uomo e lo scorrere della penna che riempie di *atramentum*, di indelebile *atramentum*, le carte.’⁸⁶ Indeed we imagine the room without difficulty, for we have seen it in *La Bohème*; placing Lucretius there is harder. Poor Lucretii there certainly were at Rome—we recall the *M. Lucre* part of whose remains were found by the Via Appia (*ILLRP* 877)—but such folk no more write six-book epics than Gaulish freedmen do.

That is not simply because they know their place, as Merrill supposed:

the austere sermon at the opening of the second book on the vanity of political ambition is evidence of a freedom of criticism and liberty of thought and expression which would hardly be found in a person of low social standing at the time.⁸⁷

It was in Lucretius’ heyday that Helvius Mancius of Formiae, son of a freedman, not only prosecuted a future consul before the censors but answered Pompey’s insults with a devastating riposte that shocked Valerius Maximus in the more circumspect age of Tiberius (Val. Max. 6.2.8). Rather it is because they lack leisure,⁸⁸ and (unless they have the elder Horace for a father) have not received the necessary education.⁸⁹

Lucretius and Memmius: a study in friendship

According to Munro’s contemporary W.Y. Sellar, by no means an exact scholar,

The tone of the dedication to Memmius, a member of a noble plebeian house, and of the occasional addresses to him in the body of the poem, is not that of a client to a patron, but of an equal to an equal:

Sed tua me virtus tamen et sperata voluptas
Suavis amicitiae—⁹⁰

‘Noble’ is loosely spoken, for the Memmii, like the plebeian Lucretii, were only of praetorian rank, but while the Lucretii were on the way down the Memmii, until the calamity of 54 BC, were on the way up: their first praetorship, in 172 BC, coincided with the last but one to be held by the Lucretii. Likewise Frank writes:

⁸⁶ Alfieri (n.23) 11–12; the *lectus lucubratorius* owes its origin to Suet. *Aug.* 78.1. However, *Lucrezio* was the youthful work, written for badly needed money and later disowned, of a man whose academic prospects were blighted by the Fascist regime, but who became a respected headmaster in Milan (Franco Basso, pers. comm.). Despite community of name, he was no kin of either the great poet or the eminent soldier.

⁸⁷ Merrill (n.84) 14.

⁸⁸ When F. Giancotti, *Tito Lucrezio Caro: La natura* (Milan 1994) xxvii writes: ‘Lucrezio dovette godere d’un certo agio. Un indizio in questo senso si può forse desumere dallo scorcio di I 141–142, specialmente da *noctes vigilare serenas*, e secondariamente da IV 969–970, ove *semper* sembra indicare la costanza di un impegno in cui non interferiscono preoccupazioni di altro genere’, the attempt to extract the literal from the literary is questionable, the inferences, even were they valid, would be incompatible; but the proposition they fail to prove is none the less correct.

⁸⁹ A point made by Francis Cairns in discussion at Leeds.

⁹⁰ W.Y. Sellar, *The Roman Poets of the Republic* (rev. edn., Oxford 1881) 282.

Once we are rid of the prejudices created by the conjectures of Marx I think that no reader of Lucretius will fail to see that the poet speaks like a free citizen conscious of an honourable position in society and that he addresses Memmius as an equal.⁹¹

Is it really the tone of an equal to an equal that we hear in the famous lines 1.140–5?

Sed tua me virtus tamen et sperata voluptas
suavis amicitiae quemvis efferre laborem
suadet, et inducit noctes vigilare serenas
quaerentem dictis quibus et quo carmine demum
clara tuae possim praepandere lumina menti,
res quibus occultas penitus convisere possis.

I do not think so; I hear it rather in the proem to Pope's *Essay on Man*, addressed to his friend Viscount Bolingbroke and rivalling Lucretius himself in its assurance:

Awake, my ST. JOHN! leave all meaner things
To low ambition, and the pride of Kings.
Let us (since Life can little more supply
Than just to look about us and to die)
Expatriate free o'er all this scene of Man;
A mighty maze! but not without a plan;
A Wild, where weeds and flow'rs promiscuous shoot,
Or Garden, tempting with forbidden fruit.
Together let us beat this ample field,
Try what the open, what the covert yield;
The latent tracts, the giddy heights explore
Of all who blindly creep, or sightless soar;
Eye Nature's walks, shoot Folly as it flies,
And catch the Manners living as they rise;
Laugh as we must, be candid where we can;
But vindicate the ways of God to Man.⁹²

To be sure Pope had two advantages over Lucretius, that he was versifying Bolingbroke's philosophy rather than his own, and that the intimacy to which Lucretius aspires had already been attained despite the difference of rank. The tone of personal address is very different from 'quella impressione di subalternità che si ricava dal modo in cui Lucrezio si rivolge a Memmio',⁹³ that is to say, the language in which poets address those from whom they hope for favour. The favour is Memmius' friendship, the polite word for patronage but not excluding personal intimacy; as Bailey well observes, 'though the expression is not servile, it certainly might be used by a dependant'.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Frank (n.84) 66.

⁹² *An Essay on Man: Epistle I*, vv. 1–16.

⁹³ L. Canfora, *Vita di Lucrezio* (Palermo 1993) 45. Quite different is the modesty topos, the profession of inadequacy used adroitly by Horace and Vergil to exalt the addressee as beyond their praises and ineptly by the panegyrist of Messalla (vv. 1–17).

⁹⁴ Bailey (n.3) ii.623; contrast 1.7.

Nor is the argument to be evaded by invoking the language of Epicurean friendship, which is plainly present but which the reader—even if he were Memmius—would not privilege over normal Latin usage. The tone suggests, not indeed a penniless nobody, but the social inferior of the great man, in the eighteenth-century sense of that expression, from whom he hopes to win favour, even as Catullus and Cinna had hoped to do from Memmius and his friends Veranius and Fabullus had from Piso; it was Catullus who, having failed to fatten himself on provincial pickings, both summed up the moral, and illustrated the type of *amicitia* at stake, in the words *pete nobiles amicos!*⁹⁵ To be sure, since he affords no evidence of having sung Memmius' praises (even if the odd political epigram was written in his interest), it was his own fault; Lucretius gave better value.⁹⁶ Indeed, even though, before the fateful revelation, he need not have known any better than the shocked senators what a scoundrel Memmius was, what else but hope of advantage could persuade him to bestow on that politician above all other such extravagant praise as *quem tu dea tempore in omni / omnibus ornatum voluisti excellere rebus* (1.26–7) or lament that *Memmi clara propago* cannot desert the public weal at such a troublous time (1.41–3)? One no more expects Lucretius to believe it than one supposes James Thomson to have believed all the praises he bestowed on George Bubb Dodington:

AND thou, my youthful Muse's early Friend,
 In whom the Human Graces all unite:
 Pure Light of Mind, and Tenderness of Heart;
 Genius and Wisdom; the gay social Sense,
 By Decency chastis'd; Goodness and Wit,
 In seldom-meeting Harmony combin'd;
 Unblemish'd Honour, and an active Zeal,
 For BRITAIN'S Glory, Liberty, and Man:
 O DODINGTON! attend my rural Song,
 Stoop to my Theme, inspirit every Line,
 And teach me to deserve thy just Applause.⁹⁷

Even if Dodington does not entirely deserve his reputation as a servile turncoat and opportunist,⁹⁸ neither does he deserve such laudation; but he had every expectation of receiving it. He was a patron of letters, and rewarded Thomson generously; what Memmius did for Lucretius we have no way of knowing, but we cannot take it for granted that he disappointed the poet as he did the preacher.

Lucretius in Campania

It was in monumental ignorance that Sellar declared:⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Piso was, and Memmius was not, a *nobilis*, but Catullus, like Sellar, is speaking loosely.

⁹⁶ I stand by my suggestion that Lucretius was the social as well as the poetical peer of Catullus: L.A. Holford-Strevens, *Aulus Gellius* (London 1988) 9 n.4.

⁹⁷ James Thomson *The Seasons: Summer* 21–30, ed. James Sambrook (Oxford 1981) 60.

⁹⁸ For a sustained defence see John Carswell, *The Old Cause: Three Biographical Studies in Whiggism* (London 1954) 129–265.

⁹⁹ Sellar (n.92) 281.

The Gentile name Lucretius was one eminently Roman, nor is there ground for believing that, like the equally ancient and noble name borne by the other great poet of the age, it had become common in other parts of Italy.

Republican inscriptions exhibit Lucretii at Nemi (*ILLRP* 78), Teggiano (*ILLRP* 674), and Capua; at this last C. Lucretius C. l. Apulus was a *magister* in 106 BC (*ILLRP* 714)¹⁰⁰ and C. Lucretius C. f. in the following year (*ILLRP* 712); two generations later Cassius the assassin may have had a friend there, unless the man in question was the Republican commander Q. Lucretius.¹⁰¹ However, the only other Lucretius Carus on record is the father of a sixteen-year-old boy called C. Lucretius Statilius whose tomb Mommsen found in the archiepiscopal palace at Benevento, but *Carus*, as he confesses, is even more doubtful a reading than the rest of this ill-written and ill-preserved inscription.¹⁰² If nevertheless it is correct, one might suppose that our poet came from a local family of Lucretii Cari, and even find support for Guido Della Valle's notion that he was a smallholding relation of the Neapolitan, not the Roman, Lucretii, who attended Piso's villa at Herculaneum;¹⁰³ for all its author's extravagances,¹⁰⁴ this 'romanzesca ricostruzione', this 'amorosa fantasia suggerita dall'amore di campanile',¹⁰⁵ seems to have the edge over the Transpadane hypothesis now that a text has been discovered in the Villa dei Papiri, but it remains a guess.¹⁰⁶ Another guess makes him Umbrian,¹⁰⁷ though no Umbrian instance of the *nomen* is adduced; Sabine origin is no less plausible.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁰ L. Lucretius L. f. Apulus was seventh in the list of *pontifices* at Sutrium (*CIL* xi.3254 i 7).

¹⁰¹ Cicero *ad Atticum* 7.24.1, 25.1.

¹⁰² Mommsen (n.62) no. 1653: C. LVCRETIO STA|TILIO QVI VIXIT AN|NIS XVI // MENS V | LUCRETIVS CAR|VS PATER QVEM//TO DECEPISTI INFI//|CITOCVM| INNOCENT ('Descripti, sed est male scripta et male habita'); in l. 4 'dubius fui num legerem GN CAR aut [sic] CAT'.

¹⁰³ Guido Della Valle, 'Tito Lucrezio Caro e l'epicurismo campano' *Atti della Accademia Pontiana* 62 = 2nd ser. 37 (1932) 185–496; *id.* 'Dove nacque Tito Lucrezio Caro?' *Rivista indogreca-italiana di filologia — lingua — antichità* 17/1–2 (1933) 1–16. Canali's Lucretii have property, and a tomb, at Herculaneum (pp.8, 125). The second *nomen* Statilius might indicate Lucanian affinities; cf. R. Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (Oxford 1939) 237 n.4.

¹⁰⁴ Such as his equation of the Campanian and Roman Epicureans respectively with the γνήσιοι and σοφισταί of D.L. 10.26, opposing 'ortodossi, genuini, sinceri' intimates of Philodemus like Lucretius with 'i giovani aristocratici dell'Urbe', who merely dropped in on a Siro or a Philodemus to complete their education, and were soulmates of Memmius ('Tito Lucrezio Caro e l'epicurismo campano' 494–5); or his impossible emendation at Cic. *Att.* 4.16.6 *Pompei*<is> *Gallia*, as if *Gallia* had not been long since corrected to *gratia* ('Caio Memmio comandava il presidio di Pompeii?' *Rivista di studi pompeiani* 1 (1934) 89–101 [*non vidi*], cit. Bailey (n.3) 1.7 n.4). The notion that Lucretius lived far from the bustle and corruption of Rome was sufficiently refuted by A. Traglia, *Sulla formazione spirituale di Lucrezio* (Rome 1948) 11–21.

¹⁰⁵ So the northerner Perelli (n.65) 5.

¹⁰⁶ K. Kleve, 'Lucretius in Herculaneum', *CErc* 19 (1989), 5–27, but note Giancotti's warning (n.89) xxv n.32. For the Transpadane Lucretius see n.82.

¹⁰⁷ A. Piganiol, *La Conquête romaine* (5th edn, Paris 1967) 607: 'l'Ombrien Lucrèce'; for negative evidence see the index to *CIL* 11 (which by contrast shows the name well established in Etruria and not unknown in Aemilia).

¹⁰⁸ R. Syme, *Sallust* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1964) 7. The *nomen* is not unknown in Sabine territory (Conway (n.80) 2.368), but less favoured than in Campanian, Volscian, and Latin areas (*ibid.* 157, 265, 344).

Lucretius' powers of description, his mastery of that technique called in Greek ἐνάργεια and in Latin *sub oculis subiectio*, have lead readers to suppose him intimately acquainted with town and country, with leisure and trade. Where observation ends and imagination begins, what is *Ur-* and what is *Bildungserlebnis*, no two critics will ever agree. Those not drawn by aprioristic principle to the thesis that texts, not their authors, should engage our concern may yet accept it in Lucretius' case as a counsel, not of despair, but of reason. Even his links with the school at Herculaneum have been disputed: was it the man who went there, or only the book?¹⁰⁹ Yet this is part of the larger question of Lucretius' relation to the Epicureans of his day, and his degree of acquaintance with Epicurus' writings, with those of later Epicureans, and those of other philosophers outside the Garden. As we have recently been assured,

Now that the 'psychological' approach appears to have lost its appeal and the phantoms of the 'mad poet' and the 'antilucrèce chez Lucrèce' are no longer with us, Lucretian scholars are more and more trying to explain particular features of the *De rerum natura* by reference to the affiliations of doctrine and method between Lucretius and others (Epicurus, the Epicurean tradition, or other Greek and Roman philosophers and poets).¹¹⁰

Unfortunately, the answers to these questions have proved no less elusive; suffice it to recall the conflicting hypotheses presented at the very conference in Amsterdam to whose proceedings these words are prefaced.¹¹¹ The Epicurean friend among friends and the brilliant loner are stereotypes perhaps no less attractive than the scornful aristocrat and the possessed starveling; if one moral can be drawn from the failure of Lucretian biography, it is that the fewer the facts, the easier they are to fit into a pattern. Let us beware of seeking pattern in reality: *tanta stat praedita culpa*.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ T. Dorandi, 'Lucrèce et les Épicuriens de Campanie', in Algra-Koenen-Schrijvers (n.76) 35–48 ends: 'Le nom de Lucrèce ne paraît jamais en rapport ni avec celui de Philodème, ni avec celui de Siron ou d'autres épicuriens. Peut-être un jour, à notre grande surprise, lirons-nous le nom du poète sur un papyrus noirci d'Herculaneum. Pour le moment, nous devons nous contenter de reconstituer le *background* intellectuel des épicuriens de Campanie avec lesquels on peut seulement supposer que Lucrèce était en contact.' The next contribution, K. Kleve 'Lucretius and Philodemus' (*ibid.* 49–66), begins: 'The thesis of this paper is that Lucretius was a member of the Epicurean circle around Philodemus in the Papyrus Villa in Herculaneum.' However, his attempt to read Lucretius' name into Philodemus' *Rhetorica* fails (F. Longo Auricchio, *ex rel.* David Blank, pers. comm.)

¹¹⁰ P.H. Schrijvers in Algra-Koenen-Schrijvers (n.76) vii.

¹¹¹ See too other works by the same authors, and the contrasting viewpoints of P.H. Schrijvers, *Lucrèce et les sciences de la vie* (Leiden 1998) and David Sedley, *Lucretius and the Transformation of Greek Wisdom* (Cambridge 1998).

¹¹² Previous versions of this paper were read to the Leeds Lucretius Workshop on 23 October 1999 and to the Oxford Philological Society on 18 February 2000. I am grateful to all who made comments on those occasions.