

The second part of the collection deals with Lucretius' treatments of sleep, dreams, and alleged sensory-illusions (Chapters VIII–X, respectively). Chapter VIII rightly situates the applied psychology of 4.858ff. in the context of the project of the *Parva naturalia* (taken up by doxographers and psychologists as various as 'Aetius', Tertullian, and, one might add, Augustine in *Confessions* 10). This is followed by an intricate discussion of the mechanisms for sleep, involving a plausible emendation for the scholion on Epicurus, *Ad Herod.* 66, based on medical parallels. Whereas Chapter VIII had noted only the possible influence of Asclepiades on Lucretius' theory of nutrition (pp. 127–9), Chapter IX suggests that Lucretius' explanation for dreams (4.962–1036) is radically eclectic, drawing on the medical tradition, Aristotle, and Roman elements. Chapter X, 'Lucretius and the Sceptics', is a brilliant conclusion to Schrijvers's discussion of Book 4, examining Lucretius' use of sceptical collections of sensory illusions and modal 'contradictions'. S. controversially concludes that Lucretius had access to both Academic and Pyrrhonist sceptical works; at least in the case of the Academics, it is hard to see how he could be wrong. The final chapter, 'Seeing the Invisible', gives a sensitive and useful analysis of the functions and deployment of analogy in the *DRN*.

A bare summary cannot do justice to the wealth of detailed insights, interesting emendations, suggestive readings, and arresting parallels from Greek scientific work S. adduces. One can, however, address his general conclusions briefly. The central conclusion he draws is that Lucretius was an eclectic Late Hellenistic writer, steeped in the philosophical and scientific lore of his age (e.g. pp. 14–15, 166, 196). This is based on his identification of a wide array of Lucretian sources—allegedly direct sources, such as Palaephatus (Chapter III), Dicaearchus (Chapters VI–VII), Asclepiades (Chapter VIII), unnamed Academics (Clitomachus?), and Aenesidemus (Chapter X), as well as possibly indirect cases, such as Aristotle (Chapters I and IV) and Strato (Chapter II). These claims provoke three disturbing thoughts. First, one may worry that a successful confrontation between prior scientific thought and the *DRN* in fact illuminates only the intellectual context of the *ideas* in the poem (and possibly its reception by well-read readers): without a 'smoking gun' of the sort provided in Chapter X, parallels tell us nothing about *Lucretius*. Secondly, as David Sedley has pointed out (*Lucretius and the Transformation of Greek Wisdom* [Cambridge, 1998], p. 72 n. 51), even if S. is right to see these 'sources' behind Lucretius' words, given their dates, their influence—except in the controversial cases of Asclepiades and the Academics—may have been mediated through Epicurus' writings. Finally, one may wonder whether an 'eclectic' Lucretius is actually desirable: if this is the alternative, Sedley's 'fundamentalist' Lucretius (piously copying out lost portions of Epicurus' *De natura*) looks dangerously alluring. Perhaps there is a narrow track between the beaten path of Greek *paideia* and the Master's footsteps?

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THE APOSTLE OF EPICURUS

D. SEDLEY: *Lucretius and the Transformation of Greek Wisdom*. Pp. xviii + 234. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Cased, £35. ISBN: 0-521-57032-8.

This fascinating book argues strongly for the view that Lucretius did not use any source other than Books 1–15 of the *peri physeos* of Epicurus, and that we can see the

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poet at work ‘transforming Greek wisdom’. S. rightly criticizes recent Lucretian scholars for not making use of the remains of the *peri physeos*, and provides a thorough and convincing reconstruction of Epicurus’ *magnum opus* (in both senses of the word *magnum*).

S. begins by suggesting that the rank heresy of the proem is Lucretius’ acknowledging his literary debt to Empedocles, the father of didactic philosophical epic. Epicurus (it is argued) supplied the message, Empedocles the medium. This drives an unwelcome wedge between ‘poet and ‘philosopher’—and S. admits the problem that we do not possess the text of the proem of Empedocles’ *On Nature* anyway. His attempt to reconstruct the text of Empedocles from the proem of Lucretius will not convince everybody, but even where one is sceptical of the conclusion it is fascinating to examine the thoroughness of the reasoning. Highly illuminating (for instance) is S.’s explanation (pp. 14–15) of why Lucretius spends so long on the description of Sicily in his praise of Empedocles: this shows how the poet conveys philosophical points through conventional poetic imagery and awakens the reader to the literary reasons for reading Lucretius at all. This method is brilliantly developed in the second chapter, where S. examines the language which Lucretius uses and in particular the ways in which he copes with the lack of philosophical jargon in Latin. Lucretius’ policy of using ‘live metaphors’ to recreate Greek terms is a policy ‘not of finding a technical vocabulary, but of avoiding one’ (p. 44). Lucretius had to find a way of transferring what had been expressed in jargon-filled Greek prose into user-friendly Latin poetry, without betraying the complexity of the original, and he uses the *Fremdwörter* of Greek philosophy (*homoeomeria*, *harmonia*) largely for satirical purposes: S. regards the poet’s use of Greek terms as his way of expressing the sense of the exotic and remote—true pleasure in the proem to Book 2 is expressed in ‘pure pastoral Latin’ and Greek formations give a sneering edge to the descriptions of unnecessary luxuries.

From Chapter III onwards S. argues the central premise that Lucretius was a ‘fundamentalist’, who showed no contact with the Epicurean (or other) schools in Italy at the time, such as that of Philodemus. This line of thought (if accepted) would illuminate the issue of why Lucretius chose to attack the Presocratics in his polemical passages instead of the far more dangerous Stoics. S.’s answer is that Lucretius was simply doing as his master had done; and that the polemic against the Presocratics (1.635–920) is in imitation of Books 14 and 15 of Epicurus’ *On Nature*. Unlike others, such as Diogenes of Oenoanda, Lucretius refused to ‘update’ his list. Much of the latter part of the book is taken up with discussion of the rôle of Theophrastus as a source for Epicurus and hence for Lucretius: the poet’s echoes and criticisms of his master’s source are at last given the attention they deserve.

Many of these hypotheses are of course speculative, their force cumulative, and the burden of proof must rest with their author. In particular, S.’s argument from the silence of the poet on contemporary philosophical issues is hardly conclusive evidence in a text which (as S. is keen to argue elsewhere) is incomplete. Lucretius might equally have been a metaphrast who was not intending to convert us at all, but simply to produce great didactic poetry. S.’s assumption throughout the book—shown revealingly in the associations of the word ‘fundamentalist’—is that Lucretius is ‘sincere’ and ‘single-minded’ in his beliefs. In fact S.’s argument could equally suggest that Lucretius used only one source because he did not *care* so much about the philosophy but simply needed material for his poetic imagination to get to work on.

In Chapter IV, S. brilliantly reconstructs the *peri physeos* book by book, and in Chapter V he suggests persuasively that we can see the poet at work following Epicurus’ ordering of the topics in Books 1–3 and then diverging somewhat in the

(unfinished) Books 4–6. This scholarly *tour de force* is not, however, without its difficulties: S.'s discussion (for instance) of the ending of Book 4 (pp. 150–2) as showing Lucretius' reversal of Epicurus' expository order is plausible in itself, but his discussion does the poet scant justice: the point of the diatribe against love in this book is precisely that the romantic lover *thinks* that he is seeing the truth when he is in fact being deceived by his own imagination, and the concluding pages on the biology of reproduction are set against the background of this infatuated lover who sees the girl as a goddess when in fact she is as much part of the biological world (4.1174–6) as he is. Similarly the argument against teleology is Lucretius' (as a good teacher) taking the chance to nail this important illusion; even though the 'vital properties' aspect is less relevant, the 'illusion' of teleology makes it supremely relevant here in a discussion of illusions. The discussion of Book 6 ends with the suggestion that the epilogue on the plague at Athens is not how the poet would have left it. Had he lived, we would have been shown the Epicurean moral of the passage ('what is terrible is readily endurable') explained. Alternatively, one might follow Penwill ('The Ending of Sense: Death as Closure in Lucretius Book 6', *Ramus* 25 [1996], 146–69, not in S.'s bibliography) which sees the ending as expressing the tragic sense of the poem, a reading which leaves Lucretius firmly in the 'poet' rather than 'philosopher' camp: the lack of any ethical conclusion (like the relative paucity of ethics in the poem as a whole) does not in general lend much credence to S.'s picture of the poet out to convert us to his fundamentalist faith but rather gives us a text of great aesthetic power and dexterity whose finale is one of art and artistry rather than ethical debate.

This book will provoke healthy critical debate and is already required reading. It is not afraid to raise big questions about Lucretius as a writer and a thinker with exemplary clarity and scholarship. S.'s own style is (in fact) redolent of the Lucretian didactic manner: he takes us round the universe of the poem, stopping to linger on points of detail with minute attention to accuracy, but being driven by a single-minded sense of direction and purpose, imparting clarity to what in other hands might be obscure. Many of us will have reservations about his conclusions, but his opinions, and the light his arguments shed on the detail of the poem and its background, cannot be ignored by any serious student of this poem.

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A BACKWARD GLANCE

R. F. THOMAS: *Reading Virgil and his Texts: Studies in Intertextuality*. Pp. 351. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1999. Cased, £33. ISBN: 0-472-10897-2.

Though a collection of previously published material, none of it revised, this book has a surprising overall cohesion. From the outset, T. has rigorously staked out and delimited his scholarly territory, and this volume is a testament to his success in maintaining focus over two decades and more. The main texts under investigation are the *Georgics* and *Eclogues*; the central 'critical narrative' involves Virgil's profound engagement with and gradual transcendence of Callimacheanism (both narrowly and broadly construed). The first chapter ('Preparing the Way') consists of four articles on Catullus and Roman Alexandrianism, which provide a useful introduction to the volume; the next ten feature substantial individual articles dealing with Virgil and important Hellenistic sources; the last ('Intertextuality Observed') comprises eight

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