

Teresa Cirillo shows how his annotations to a printed edition of Tacitus' *Annals* reflects his interest in contemporary politics (and also magic); the emendations proposed are so trivial that in most cases modern editions do not even mention any error in the Mediceus. Parrhasius' interest in politics was shared by Gasparino Barzizza, to judge from some of his notes on Plato's *Republic*, printed here by Angela Piscitelli in a piece that arrived too late for Atti I. Barzizza's notes seem no more significant than Parrhasius', but he does make engaging asides ('O beatam ebrietatem et felices Patavinos qui sunt egregii potatores!'); he was at least better engaged thus than in supplementing the mutilated text of Quintilian. Piscitelli would have helped her readers if she had not elucidated the frequent references to *De officiis* according to the old system of Ciceronian chapters; Barzizza's note alluding to Solon (p. 119) will be based on *De senectute* 26. Finally, and even less relevant to Parrhasius, is Fulvio Delle Donne's excellent contribution on the epistle, apparently written c. 1450 (though there is no argument for the date), introducing a collection of late fourteenth-century letters. The epistle, printed here, reads more like an exercise than an address to a real son needing to be diverted to law from poetry; but, as the editor says, it has more than a whiff of the *Dialogus* of Tacitus.

This book is attractively produced, with a number of plates, and it gives a pleasant sense of Italians revelling in the investigation of their splendid humanist heritage: the *Leitmotiv* of Lucia Gualdo Rosa's preface is 'molto resta'. But nothing in it is more memorable than the affecting tribute to Giuseppe Billanovich by his pupil Mirella Ferrari, who has herself done so much to throw light on the activities of the humanists. She stresses his part in establishing the wonderful Sala di Consultazione at the Catholic University in Milan; Carlo Maria Mazzucchi's fine inscription there fitly marks this service.

Corpus Christi College, Oxford

MICHAEL WINTERBOTTOM

A DUTCH LUCRETIAN

B. GEMELLI: *Isaac Beeckman, atomista e lettore critico di Lucrezio*. Pp. xiii + 132. Rome: Leo Olschki, 2002. Paper. ISBN: 88-222-5075-3.

This efficient little book achieves what it sets out to do: to give an account of the influence of classical atomism on the philosophy of Isaac Beeckman, seventeenth-century reader of Lucretius, Galen, and Bacon, correspondent of Descartes, Mersenne, and Gassendi, who until early last century was known only from a fragmentary dissertation submitted for the doctorate in medicine at Caen, and a miscellany of observations compiled from his scientific journal by a younger brother, Abraham. G. reconstructs Beeckman's atomism from the journal, which was rediscovered in 1905 by C. De Waard. He concedes the limitations 'imposed by the fragmentary and discontinuous structure' of this source, which is not a finished treatise. On the other hand, he suggests that the 'eclectic diary . . . is a precious instrument for knowing the judgements, and continuous revisions of them, that a humanist and scientist of wide range such as Beeckman was gradually clarifying and modifying' (pp. xiii, viii).

But if Beeckman found objects worthy of scientific attention in the works of poets and artisans, in the observation of preachers in church and children at play, G.'s book is squarely for the specialists: it addresses an audience of early modern intellectual and

scientific historians rather than humanists. G. is not concerned, for example, with the moments of introspection which apparently punctuate Beeckman's diary. Beeckman's status as a figure of 'exceptional cultural significance' is taken for granted, as is a familiarity with the broad contours of his career (namely, contributions to meteorology, rectorship of the Latin school at Dordrecht, fraught relationship with Descartes). The ideal reader should also have Gassendi at his/her fingertips—a constant point of reference. (In his final pages, G. reminds us that Beeckman and Gassendi met in 1629, but declines to speculate on the historical priority of Beeckman's atomist ideas.)

G.'s four chapters are devoted to explicit 'Lucretian References'; 'Lucretian Images' (i.e. observations influenced by the imagery of Lucretius); 'References to Other Atomists'; and 'Terminology; Models and Hypotheses of Phenomena According to the Atomist and Corpuscular Theory' (e.g. *textura, ordo, primordia*). Each chapter is divided into digestible, numbered goblets. These are topical rather than chronological, and do not reflect the character of Beeckman's diary as a book. (Contrast M. A. Screech's attention to paratextual detail in *Montaigne's Annotated Copy of Lucretius* [Geneva, 1998].) G. makes the tantalizing observation that Beeckman uses Latin for reflections prompted by his reading of Lucretius, but Dutch for those pertaining to Bacon's *Sylva sylvarum* (written in English, despite its Latin title). This choice has wider implications in the history of Latin as a scientific language in the early modern period, admittedly beyond the scope of the present work.

The suggestion that, for scientists of Beeckman's generation, 'it was not of great importance whether a text was in prose or poetry for it to constitute an opportunity for reflection in the field of the science of nature' is accompanied by a rather telegraphic footnote on the fortune of Lucretius' poem in the natural philosophical literature of the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries (p. xi). While it is true that Lucretius was appreciated for his matter, not 'just' his poetry, the fact remains that several Cinquecento writers—G. mentions Fracastoro and Bruno; one might add 'Palingenius', Scipione Capece, and Aonio Paleario—chose to render their own, sometimes controversial, natural philosophies in Lucretian *verse*. The rhetorical power of Lucretius' poetry was a force to be reckoned with in the sixteenth century, at least, and to impersonate the Epicurean materialist was to play with fire (quite literally in the case of Bruno!). If his teeth had been pulled by the eighteenth—when enlightened Jesuits in Rome were churning out thousands of Lucretian hexameters on, e.g. Newtonian physics—the transition from Lucretius, hero of heretics, to Lucretius, handmaid of the Christian corpuscularist, might have merited a little more space in G.'s introduction.

The orthodox Beeckman treats Lucretius thoughtfully, as sourcebook and sounding-board for his own, original reflections. In one passage, where Beeckman attempts a sort of Galenic compromise between the purely teleological/providential and the fortuitous/materialist models of Creation, G. points out that references to 'God and Lucretius coexist without representing the prototypes of that incurable dichotomy formulated already by the first apologists and fathers of the Church' (p. 8). That section of Beeckman's notes headed 'Lucretius refutatus' (pp. 25–31) does not call the inveterate enemy of religion to account, but calmly challenges aspects of his theory of vision. One is left wondering whether Beeckman would have discoursed so nonchalantly with Lucretius in print—or in poetry.

University of Western Australia

YASMIN HASKELL