

LUCRETIIUS 3. 492-3*

IN Mr. E. J. Kenney's recent edition of Book 3 (Cambridge, 1971) the lines are printed as follows:

nimirum quia vis morbi distracta per artus
turbat agens animam spumas, . . .

His translation is, 'obviously because the violence of the disease is dispersed throughout the body and as it forces out breath stirs up foam . . .'¹ The difficulty is that nowhere else does 'distracta' mean 'dispersed'. Moreover, in vv. 501 and 507, in the same sequence of argument, the meaning is clearly 'torn apart', as usual. One way of meeting this difficulty is to read 'anima' in 493, as proposed by Tohte.² However, this gives the barely defensible 'animā spumas' and is unsatisfactory in another respect. Lines 499-501, in which 'ut docui' must refer back to 492-3, imply that the 'animus' as well as the 'anima' was mentioned there and that the effect of epilepsy is to upset the relation between the two.³

I therefore propose 'animi' for 'morbi' in 492 and translate, 'doubtless because the tearing apart of the mind throws the spirit into confusion throughout the body, producing foam . . .'. The periphrasis 'vis animi/-ae' is common in Lucretius⁴ and the *ratio corruptelae* would be that a scribe, having written 'vi morbi' in 487, unthinkingly wrote 'vis morbi' in 492 instead of 'vis animi'.

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¹ In view of 'spumas agit' in 489, it is probably better to take 'agens' with 'spumas' than with 'animam'. Kenney, in his note on 493, finds this an acceptable alternative.

² This, of course, involves changing 'vis' in 492 to 'vi' and taking 'turbat' as an intransitive verb.

³ See the note on 500-1 in Bailey's edition. Lucretius does not make clear how the 'umor' (503) produces the seizure. However, Plato (*Timaeus* 85a) speaks of the mind's being directly affected by 'phlegm' (one of the 'humours').

⁴ See e.g. 3. 790 (= *animus*) and 3. 638 (= *anima*).