

## THE SACRIFICE OF IPHIGENEIA: AN EXAMPLE OF ‘DISTRIBUTION’ OF A LUCRETIAN THEME IN VIRGIL\*

In his discussion of Virgilian imitations of Lucretian phraseology Cyril Bailey examines the phenomenon of what he terms the ‘doublet’, that is, the procedure whereby Virgil imitates separate elements of a Lucretian phrase at different points in his own work.<sup>1</sup> Take, for example, *De Rerum Natura* 1. 210–12:

esse videlicet in terris primordia rerum,  
quae nos fecundas *vertentes vomere glebas*  
terraique solum subigentes cimus ad ortus.

At *Georgics* 3. 525 f. we find ‘*vomere terras invertisse*’; at 3. 161, ‘*fractis invertere glaebis*’.<sup>2</sup> Bailey confines himself to linguistic imitation. In the following notes I wish to examine a related phenomenon on the thematic level, the procedure whereby Virgil uses different parts or aspects of a single Lucretian passage or episode to help structure two or more episodes in his own poetry. Such an inquiry is primarily of interest for the light it throws on the ways in which Virgil handles elements from the earlier poetic tradition, and at this level is really a form of source criticism; but I wish to suggest that the observation of such things may also contribute to the more difficult task of literary criticism.<sup>3</sup>

The sacrifice of Iphigeneia is one of Lucretius’ most savage attacks on traditional religion (1. 80–101), and at the same time one of his most pathetic pieces of scene-painting. On both counts it might be expected to have had a deep impact on Virgil’s profoundly conservative, but scarcely robustly optimistic mind. Verbal echoes are indeed to be found in a number of passages in the *Georgics* and the *Aeneid*,<sup>4</sup> but three scenes in the second book of the *Aeneid* are of particular interest for their rehandling of elements from the Lucretian passage.

### (i) *Sinon* (*Aeneid* 2. 57–198)

Sinon claims that he has escaped from being offered up as a sacrifice, a fate to which he was destined through Calchas’ interpretation of an oracle of Apollo. Calchas was notoriously the priestly authority for the sacrifice of Iphigeneia, and the parallelism with that earlier human sacrifice is made clear in the reported words of the oracle (*Aen.* 2. 116 ff.):

sanguine placastis ventos<sup>5</sup> et virgine caesa  
cum primum Iliacas, Danaï, venistis ad oras;  
sanguine quaerendi reditus animaque litandum  
Argolica.

\* I am grateful to Professor R. G. M. Nisbet for his comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

<sup>1</sup> C. Bailey, ‘Virgil and Lucretius’, *PCA* 28 (1931), 21–39, esp. p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. also 2. 399, *glæbaque versis... frangenda bidentibus*; *DRN* 1. 212 is echoed at *Geo.* 1. 125, *subigebant arva*.

<sup>3</sup> A thorough analysis, along these lines, of Virgilian adaptation of Lucretius might also provide a rigorous control for the once-popular pastime of reconstructing lost Ennius out of Virgil.

<sup>4</sup> Most of the parallels are noted by W. A. Merrill, ‘Parallels and Coincidences in Lucretius and Virgil’, *Univ. Calif. Publ. Class. Philol.* 3 (1918), 138 f.

<sup>5</sup> The use of *placare* of religious appeasement of the winds is probably found at *Lucr.* 6. 48 f., though the text is incurably corrupt.

This parallelism is not fortuitous, for it would appear that the Virgilian motif of the sacrifice of Sinon is an invention on the analogy of the sacrifice of Iphigeneia.<sup>6</sup> The words of Apollo contain echoes of the opening lines of the sacrifice of Iphigeneia (Lucr. 1. 84 ff.; I italicize parallels):

Aulide quo pacto Triviai *virginis* aram  
Iphianassai turparunt *sanguine* foede  
ductores *Danaum* delecti, prima virorum.<sup>7</sup>

Sinon, like Lucretius, stresses the horror of a *human* sacrifice, here intensified by the fact that the intended victim himself speaks; he dwells on the concrete details of the preparations, the *salsae fruges* and the *circum tempora vittae* (Aen. 2. 133; cf. 156); compare the *infula* worn by the victim Iphigeneia (Lucr. 1. 87 f.), and the added vivid detail of the concealed knife (90).

The general air of religious dread conjured up by Sinon (cf. especially lines 119 ff.) is also similar to the Lucretian view of the effects of *religio*. The portentous figure of the *vates* Calchas and his deliberate manipulation of his priestly authority find a parallel in the Lucretian passage which follows the sacrifice of Iphigeneia, the attack on the fictions ( *fingere*, 1. 104) by which the *vates* maintain their reign of terror over the human mind. (Within the wider context of book two of the *Aeneid* it is of course the Trojans who are ruined by their mistaken trust in Sinon's fictional account of Calchas' directives.<sup>8</sup>)

(ii) *The death of Laocoon* (Aeneid 2. 199–231)

In reality the Greeks are in no need of a second human sacrifice to procure favourable winds; instead they are gratuitously presented with a 'human sacrifice' that opens the gates of Troy to them, just as the original sacrifice of Iphigeneia had opened the sea-passage to the Troad. It is not Sinon who is sacrificed, but Laocoon. Lucretian influence pervades this passage also. The pathos of Lucretius' description of the sacrifice of Iphigeneia lies largely in the deception of the victim's expectations. The candidate adorned for marriage turns out to be the sacrificial victim; the *deductio* leads only to the sacrificial altar, and the *infula* of the victim takes the place of the bridal fillet.<sup>9</sup>

Virgil's description of the death of Laocoon employs a similarly gruesome play on the reversal of sacrificial role. Laocoon is in the process of sacrificing a bull (202) when he is attacked by the serpents;<sup>10</sup> it is the priest who ends up as the victim (220 ff.):

<sup>6</sup> R. Heinze, *Virgils epische Technik*<sup>3</sup> (1915), p. 9.

<sup>7</sup> The reference of *virginis* is obviously not that of the Virgilian *virgine*; Virgil in fact extracts from the word a pathos not found in Lucretius, a typical improvement of his source. Virgil's use, in the context of the wooden horse, of the phrases *ductores Danaum* (Aen. 2. 14) and *delecta virum* (18), both echoes of Lucr. 1. 86, possibly hints at the wicked deceitfulness of the Greek generals.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *ficto pectore*, Aen. 2. 107: it is the fiction of a fiction, in Lucretian terms, that is the undoing of the Trojans.

<sup>9</sup> For further details on the working out of this ironical device see E. J. Kenney, in Woodman and West (edd.), *Quality and Pleasure in Latin Poetry* (1974), pp. 24 ff., 139. It perhaps has its origins in the use of *προτέλεια* at Aesch. Ag. 227 (see Fraenkel *ad loc.*). On the more general topos of the 'wedding as funeral' see J. C. Bramble, *PCPS* n.s. 16 (1970), 31 n. 2; Bömer ad Ovid, *Met.* 6. 428 f.

<sup>10</sup> The theme of the sacrificer struck down may owe something to the scene at Soph. *Trach.* 760 ff., in which Heracles succumbs to the poisoned shirt while he is sacrificing; but Sophocles does not use the specific conceit of the sacrificer turned into the sacrificed. With *Trach.* 770 f., *εἶτα φονίας | ἐχθρᾶς ἐχίδνης ἰὸς ὡς ἐδαινυτο*, compare Aen. 2. 221, *perfusus sanie vittas atroque veneno*; cf. also *depascitur*, 215.

ille simul manibus tendit divellere nodos  
 perfusus sanie vittas atque veneno,  
 clamores simul horrendos ad sidera tollit:  
 qualis mugitus, fugit cum saucius aram  
 taurus et incertam excussit cervice securim.

Laocoon takes the place of the bull.<sup>11</sup> The *vittae*<sup>12</sup> of the priest become the attribute of the victim. We remember that Sinon had singled out the *vittae* as the attribute of his own sacrificial role (*Aen.* 2. 133; 156). Sinon, so he said, had successfully broken his bonds and escaped from the scene of sacrifice; Laocoon's (and the bull's) attempt to break away will not succeed. Lucretian influence is also suggested by Aeneas' account of the reaction of the onlookers to this omen; the whole atmosphere is one of oppressive religious dread, as is made clear in the opening lines (199 ff.):

hic aliud maius miseris multoque tremendum  
 obicitur magis atque improvida pectora turbat.

*Tremere* and *turbare* are both used by Lucretius to describe the evil effects of religion.<sup>13</sup> *Miser* is a typical Lucretian epithet for the man who has not been liberated from his superstitions; the word occurs both here, at the very beginning of the episode of the death of Laocoon and its consequences, and at the very end (248–9):

nos delubra deum miseri, quibus ultimus esset  
 ille dies, festa velamus fronde per urbem.<sup>14</sup>

*Improvida* is the only unLucretian note struck in *Aen.* 2. 199–200. The immediate effect of the death of Laocoon and his sons is also very Lucretian (228 ff.):

tum vero tremefacta novus per pectora cunctis  
 insinuat pavor, et scelus expendisse merentem  
 Laocoonta ferunt.

<sup>11</sup> The equivocation between human and animal victim also finds a parallel (in reverse) in Lucretius, at 2. 352 ff., where the emotions of the cow, the mother of the sacrificed *vitulus*, are described in almost human terms (*nec minus atque homines*, 351). As in the case of Iphigeneia, *religio* is responsible for the 'murder' of a child. Line 353, *turicremas propter mactatus concidit aras*, may be echoed in *Aen.* 2. 202, *taurum ingentem mactabat ad aras*.

<sup>12</sup> On *vittae* see Austin ad *Aen.* 2. 133; L. Beringer, *Die Kultworte bei Vergil* (diss. Erlangen 1932), pp. 53 ff. The *vitta* is worn by a sacrificial animal at *Geo.* 3. 487 (in a passage with echoes of the Lucretian sacrifice of Iphigeneia). Virgil enjoys playing on the ambivalence of the *vitta* or *infula*: at *Aen.* 10. 538 ff. the *vitta* and *infula* of the priest Haemonides also turn out to be those of a victim: *immolat* is the word used to describe his death, 541 (Serv. ad loc.: *IMMOLAT quasi victimam ut ille consueverat: nam hoc verbo ad sacerdotis nomen adlusit*). At 7. 352 Allecto's snake, which, like the serpents that kill Laocoon, successfully attacks its 'victim', is itself turned into the *vitta* of the victim Amata; this *vitta* may be understood either as an innocent item of adornment, like the *tortile aurum* of the preceding clause, or, more sinisterly, as the attribute of the victim. (Cf. 6. 281, [Discordia] *vipereum crinem vittis innexa cruentis*, for the combination of snake, *vittae*, and blood.) Another example of reversal of sacrificial role occurs at *Aen.* 2. 501 f., *Priamumque per aras | sanguine foedantem quos ipse sacraverat ignis*; this irony is not found in the Ennian model, sc. 98 f.V, *Priamo vi vitam evitari, | Iovis aram sanguine turpari*, although the simple idea of human sacrifice contained in these lines seems to have influenced Lucretius, 1. 84 f., *aram | Iphianassai turparunt sanguine*. The conceit is imitated in Petron. *Sat.* 89, 51, *iacet sacerdos inter aras victima* (Laocoon).

<sup>13</sup> *Tremere*: DRN 5. 1222; *turbare*: 1. 106; 3. 38.

<sup>14</sup> These two lines seem also to echo DRN 5. 1165–7, *unde etiam nunc est mortalibus insitus horror | qui delubra deum nova toto suscitatur orbi | terrarum et festis cogit celebrare diebus. o miseri* are the very first words that we hear Laocoon utter, *Aen.* 2. 42. In Lucretian terms one might say that Laocoon offers wretched man (the Trojans) salvation through revelation (the uncovering of the Greeks in the horse), but does not succeed. Cf. also *Aen.* 1. 215, *miseros morsu depascitur artus: miserae* is used of Agamemnon's child at DRN 1. 93.

Compare *DRN* 5. 73 f.:

et quibus ille modis divum metus insinuarit  
pectora.

The idea that religious dread is partly the product of a readiness to see the punishing hand of god in a catastrophic natural event (*Aen.* 2. 229 f.) is given formal expression in Lucretius.<sup>15</sup>

There is a final contrast to be noted between the *vates* Calchas and the *sacerdos* Laocoon. The latter is more like a Roman priest than the witch-doctor Calchas, but he is powerless against the darker supernatural forces. Virgil, like Lucretius, shows us graphically how belief in omens and seers can involve the believer in ruin; his answer, however, is hardly as unambiguous as that of Lucretius.<sup>16</sup>

(ii) *The Iulus omen* (*Aeneid* 2. 679–91)

The death of Laocoon is a clear omen of the imminent destruction of Troy, but the Trojans are blind to its significance.<sup>17</sup> The reversal of the process of destruction, and the beginning of new hope, is marked by another omen, the magical flame that plays round the head of Iulus, as Aeneas prepares to go out and die fighting.<sup>18</sup> Others have observed that this omen in certain respects echoes the omen of the death of Laocoon, most notably in the ‘serpentine’ description of the licking flames, which ‘feed’ on the temples of Iulus as the real serpents fed on the limbs of the sons of Laocoon.<sup>19</sup> But where the sons of Laocoon were destroyed, and so the fate of Troy sealed, the son of Aeneas is unharmed, and Troy will eventually be restored. The Laocoon omen led to disaster because it was misinterpreted (*improvida pectora*, 200); the Iulus omen leads to success because it is correctly interpreted by Anchises,<sup>20</sup> but this is only after the initial reaction of fear and dread on the part of Iulus’ parents (685):

nos pavidi trepidare metu

With this compare the Trojan reaction to the death of Laocoon, with its Lucretian flavour (228 f.). Aeneas and Creusa are inclined to take the omen as a deadly attack

<sup>15</sup> *DRN* 5. 1222 ff.

<sup>16</sup> At *Aen.* 7. 435 ff. Turnus scoffs at a *vates* (compare esp. 438, *ne tantos mihi finge metus*, with *Lucr.* 1. 104 ff., *quippe etenim quam multa tibi iam fingere possunt|somnia quae vitae rationes vertere possint|fortunisque tuas omnis turbare timore*), but it does not help him. The *vates* is usually respected and revered in Virgil, and the dream is a reliable vehicle of communication (cf. e.g. 8. 43, *ne vana putes haec fingere somnum*).

<sup>17</sup> On the historiographical topos of the prodigy preceding the fall of a city see H. Kleinknecht, ‘Laokoon’, *Hermes* 79 (1944), 83 ff.

<sup>18</sup> Both omens are introduced by *ecce* (*Aen.* 2. 203; 682).

<sup>19</sup> See B. M. W. Knox, ‘The Serpent and the Flame (The Imagery of the Second Book of the *Aeneid*)’, *AJP* 71 (1950), 379–400. Knox fails to note the further echoes of the serpent image in the *gliding* star of the *omen impetrativum* (*Aen.* 2. 692 ff.); nor does he note the important Lucretian parallel for the association of fire, serpent, and the human body, at *DRN* 6. 660 f. (describing a disease), *existit sacer ignis et urit corpore serpens|quamcumque arripuit partem, repitque per artus* (a passage imitated by Virgil at *Geo.* 3. 565 f.). With *sacer ignis* compare the *sanctos...ignis* of the Iulus omen (*Aen.* 2. 686).

<sup>20</sup> It is particularly appropriate that Anchises should be the one to interpret the fire-omen, since he had first-hand experience of the effects of divinely-sent fire, in the form of the thunderbolt (*Aen.* 2. 648–9). The following verbal echoes would seem to indicate that there are associations of the thunderbolt in the innocuous flame that attaches itself to Iulus: *Aen.* 2. 683 f., *tactuque innoxia mollis|lambere flamma comas*: cf. 649, *contigit igni* (Anchises and the thunderbolt); *Lucr.* 6. 394, *volvitur in flammis innoxius* (of one struck by lightning).

on their son, the 'victim' of the flames, just as Laocoon saw *his* sons become the victims of the serpents. The pathos of this is expressed in line 681:

namque manus inter maestorumque ora parentum

Virgil here has in mind the Lucretian picture of Agamemnon and his child (*DRN* 1. 89 f.):

et maestum simul ante aras adstare parentem  
sensit...<sup>21</sup>

There is the same suggestion of the contrast between the physical proximity of the parent(s) and the unbridgeable distance opened up by the appropriation of the child as a victim by the gods. The perceived threat to Iulus also echoes the fate of Priam's son Polites, who dies before his parents' eyes (*Aen.* 2. 531 f.):

ut tandem ante oculos evasit et ora parentum,  
concidit...

*Consideret* is used to describe the death of Iphigeneia in Lucretius (1. 99).

The recognition of the sacrificial undertones in the Iulus omen (echoing the sacrifices of both Iphigeneia and Laocoon) may also help to resolve the interpretation of lines 682 ff.:

ecce levis summo de vertice visus Iuli  
fundere lumen apex, tactuque innoxia mollis  
lambere flamma comas et circum tempora pasci.

The problem lies in the reference of *apex*. Servius<sup>22</sup> takes it to mean the spike on top of the cap of the *flamen*, or, by extension, the top of that cap itself. Austin, in his commentary, firmly rejects this and takes it to mean 'a point or tongue of fire', and produces later parallels for this sense.<sup>23</sup> But serious difficulties remain for this latter interpretation. Austin regards *innoxia flamma* as an amplification of *levis apex*, a view earlier supported by Henry,<sup>24</sup> who compared *Aeneid* 2. 722:

veste super fulvique internor pelle leonis.

Here *pelle leonis* defines more closely the general *veste*. There is no ambiguity; *veste* is immediately intelligible, and the effect of *pelle leonis* is to specify, not to resolve a

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Geo.* 4. 476 f. = *Aen.* 6. 30 f., *pueri innuptaeque puellae, impositique rogis iuvenes ante ora parentum* (the juxtaposition of *innuptae puellae* and *ante ora parentum* possibly indicates a subdued reminiscence of the Lucretian Iphigeneia). Cf. also *Aen.* 10. 840, *maesti...parentis*, of Mezentius waiting for news of his (dead) son; significantly there are verbal echoes of the Iphigeneia passage in the immediately preceding lines: (831 f.) *et terra sublevat ipsum sanguine turpantem comptos de more capillos*; cf. *Lucr.* 1. 84 f., *Aulide quo pacto Triviai virginis aram Iphianassai turparunt sanguine foede*; 95, *nam sublata virum manibus*. A remoter echo of the Lucretian passage is possibly to be found at *Aen.* 10. 522, *at tremibunda supervolat hasta*; immediately preceding we have been told of the prisoners taken by Aeneas for human sacrifice. Is it simply coincidence that we have the fairly rare *tremibundus*: cf. *Lucr.* 1. 95, *tremibundaque ad aras deductast*? I suggest that the mention of human sacrifice brought with it a recollection of the language used by Lucretius to describe such an event, and that this recollection spilled over into the description of the flying spear; but it would be wrong to look for *thematic* significance in this echo.

<sup>22</sup> ad *Aen.* 2. 683.

<sup>23</sup> Cp. also the instances of ἀκμή in the sense 'point (of fire)', *LSJ* s.v. I.

<sup>24</sup> J. Henry, *Aeneidea*, II (1878), pp. 321 f.

riddle. But this cannot be said of the relation between *apex* and *flamma*. *Apex* is not a word habitually associated with fire; indeed this is the first attested use in that sense in Latin. Further, although 'levis is a natural epithet for fire',<sup>25</sup> it is not, on its own, sufficiently specific to make us think immediately of fire. We are left in an uneasy suspense until we reach the word *flamma* in the next line.

Of the later instances of *apex* in the sense 'point of fire'<sup>26</sup> (attested in no pagan prose author before the grammarian Diomedes), a large number avoid these problems either by using *apex* after a reference to flame (or light) has been unambiguously established, or by attaching to *apex* an adjective or defining genitive referring explicitly to fire. In only one instance, Silius 16. 120, is an explicit reference to flame postponed until after the clause containing *apex*, and this is of no value as an independent witness since it is clearly modelled directly on the Virgilian passage. Indeed a large number of the cases in which *apex* is used to mean 'a point of fire' are obviously directly based on the Virgilian passage, and almost all refer to a supernatural or religious fire.<sup>27</sup> It would appear that the poets were aware of a deliberate innovation by Virgil.

When we find in Virgil such an extension of usage combined with an apparent awkwardness in the sense, it is often worth enquiring whether there are not specific non-linguistic reasons for the choice of language.<sup>28</sup> I suggest that the perplexity caused by the usage is due to a deliberate ambiguity on the part of Virgil: the literal point of fire prefigures the *apex* which Iulus will later institute at Alba Longa.<sup>29</sup> The motif of *sacrificial reversal* that I described for Laocoon (and Iphigeneia) is thereby inverted. The flame around Iulus' temples<sup>30</sup> appears to be a mark of the doomed victim; correctly interpreted, however, it is a symbol of the headdress of the future priest.<sup>31</sup>

A brief attempt may be made to assess the wider significance of the Lucretian echoes in the Iulus omen: the sacrifice of Iphigeneia 'unbound' the winds that kept the Greek fleet at Aulis, though in a way that entailed future disaster; the benign sacred fire that

<sup>25</sup> Austin loc. cit.

<sup>26</sup> *TLL* ii. 227, 27 ff.

<sup>27</sup> The two exceptions are Stat. *Theb.* 3. 596, 5. 88, both referring to volcanic activity; in the first case the sense 'peak' is also possible.

<sup>28</sup> For another example of this phenomenon see my 'Atlas and *axis*', *CQ* n.s. 33 (1983), 220–8.

<sup>29</sup> Servius ad *Aen.* 2. 683, '*apex*' *proprie dicitur in summo flaminis pilleo virga lanata... quod primum apud Albam Ascanium statuisset*. This does not look like the sort of note which is invented out of the text of Virgil, but it represents a tradition otherwise lost. There appears to be no basis for J. W. Mackail's assertion (*The Aeneid* [1930], pp. 82 f.) that the worship of Jupiter Latiaris by the cities of the Latin League at Alba Longa was instituted by Ascanius, and that he was the first *flamen dialis* (followed by Austin). An interest in the aetiology of priestly institutions is manifest elsewhere in the *Aeneid*: cf. H. J. Rose, *Aeneas Pontifex* (Vergilian Essays, II [1948]). (I am grateful to Dr N. M. Horsfall for advice in these matters.) K. Quinn, *Virgil's Aeneid: a critical description* (1968), pp. 388 f., also argues that *apex* here is ambiguous, but only as a way of expressing the difficulty of describing an unfamiliar phenomenon.

<sup>30</sup> *circum tempora*, 684, is also the location for *vittae* at 133 (Sinon). In all three cases, Sinon, Laocoon, and Iulus, the symbol of sacrificial role is an item of equipment for the head. Varro, *LL* 5. 84 interestingly derives *flamen* from the woollen *filum* or fillet wound round the flamen's cap; cf. Paul. ex Fest. p. 23 Müll., *apiculum, filum, quo flamines velatum apicem gerunt*; Serv. auct. ad *Aen.* 10. 270.

<sup>31</sup> The Iulus omen is echoed in the flames that shoot from the head of Augustus at Actium, *Aen.* 8. 680 f., and in the description of Aeneas returning to Latium, 10. 270 f., *ardet apex capiti cristisque a vertice flamma funditur*, where the literal flames are compared to comets, thus repeating the sequence of 2. 679–98, of (i) miraculous flame on earth, (ii) flame in the heavens as a sign. The whole passage picks up and reverses themes from the destruction of Troy; it is now the Trojan fleet that glides to shore like snakes (*adlabi* 269), its leader putting forth flames (cf. the fire of the snakes that swim towards Laocoon, 2. 210; and the more natural fire raised from the Greek flagship as a signal at 2. 256 f.).

takes hold of Iulus releases the family of Aeneas from the latter's misguided determination to stay in and fight for Troy, to enter on a journey that will ultimately end in prosperity.

Why does Virgil repeatedly apply motifs from the Lucretian sacrifice of Iphigeneia within book two of the *Aeneid*? At the most general level it is an example of Virgil's tendency to repeat thematic structures in different contexts; certain patterns are effective, and are reused. Such repetition may also be intended to convey significance; we are meant to compare discrete sets of events which share an underlying thematic structure of this nature. In the present case the most obvious effect of this sort is the way in which the theme of human sacrifice paradoxically becomes a good omen in the case of Iulus; this inversion of values matches other features of book two which suggest that it pivots around a contrast between the threat of total destruction and the possibility of a new beginning for Troy. Finally we need to consider the implications of Virgil's utilization of a key passage from Lucretius' denunciation of religion. The emotional and sensational detail of the sacrifice of Iphigeneia obviously serves partisan ends for Lucretius; Virgil uses these qualities to great dramatic effect, but does he, too, reveal an attitude concerning such things? The Trojans come to grief because they put their trust in just the sort of fiction that Lucretius is concerned to unmask; on the other hand *religio* in Virgil is no empty charade; there is nothing make-believe about the serpents that kill Laocoon and his sons. It would appear that the Trojans are destroyed *both* by their own inability to think correctly (the Lucretian point of view), *and* by the fact that the gods really are against them. This double determination is hinted at in *Aeneid* 2. 54 ff.:

et, si fata deum, si mens non laeva fuisset,  
impulerat ferro Argolicas foedare latebras,  
Troiaque nunc staret, Priamique arx alta maneres.

This distinction, however, will not adequately account for Virgil's allusions to religious awe and dread here and elsewhere.<sup>32</sup> Lucretius correctly describes the emotion, but, Virgil implies, it is an emotion that corresponds to a supernatural reality; and the gods are not always friendly.

*Corpus Christi College, Oxford*

P. R. HARDIE

<sup>32</sup> For a particularly stark example see *Aen.* 8. 349 ff.