

## LUCRETIUS, DRN 5.44 INSINUANDUM

at nisi purgatum est pectus, quae proelia nobis  
atque pericula tunc<sup>1</sup> ingratis insinuandum?

This passage has occasioned, if not *proelia*, at least divergent interpretations, not to mention instances of tergiversation. In 1910 Cyril Bailey modelled his first rendering of the lines closely on that of H. A. J. Munro: 'But unless the breast is cleared, what battles and dangers *must enter into us* in our own despite';<sup>2</sup> 'but unless the heart is cleansed, what battles and dangers *must then find their way into us* in our own despite'.<sup>3</sup> But a reprint of Bailey's translation in 1921 produced the following change: '... what battles and perils *must we then enter into* despite our will'. What changed Bailey's mind?

The explanation appeared years later in Bailey's great edition and commentary of 1947. In his note on the passage (p. 1328), he cites objections to Munro's interpretation that had been raised by C. N. Cole<sup>4</sup> and W. R. Hardie.<sup>5</sup> In this paper I will examine these objections and present my own interpretation of the passage, which amounts to a qualified vindication of Munro.

Before addressing the arguments of Cole and Hardie, I want to note that their view of the issue, which Bailey adopted, was too circumscribed. In adducing Munro's as the canonical interpretation, all three scholars misrepresent both the *status quo ante* and the originality of the interpretation that they endorse.<sup>6</sup> By the time Bailey had

<sup>1</sup> All known MSS. read *sunt* here. Merrill – the only editor, I believe, who retains this reading – is thereby driven to conjecture *insinuanda*, positing a most unlikely corruption. I prefer Lambinus' and Marullus' conjecture *tunc* to Lachmann's *tumst*, which gives identical sense, for the following reasons. Lachmann's objection to *tunc*, which must be inferred from his general remarks *ad DRN* 1.111, that Lucretius omits the copula only in the presence of the infinitive *esse* or one of its compounds, is not compelling. Bailey in his *editio maior* (Oxford, 1947) states that 'this arbitrary principle is now rightly rejected by editors' (p. 103), but he and most others nevertheless follow Lachmann by printing *tumst* at 5.44. Unfortunately, this conjecture introduces some unusual prosodic elements. While Lucretius does not hesitate to elide most monosyllables, such as the conjunction *cum*, he generally avoids aphæresis involving monosyllables: for details, see J. Soubiran, *L'Élision dans la poésie latine* (Paris, 1966), pp. 393–4. Indeed, I can find no occurrence of *tumst* in Latin poetry from Plautus to Ovid. Furthermore, Lucretius does not like to use *tum* before any word that begins with a vowel; the only example I can quote is 5.855, *multaque tum interiisse animantum saecula necessest*. Conversely, *tunc*, which is much less frequent than *tum* in Lucretius, does not normally appear *except* before a vowel. Finally, the sequence *tunc...tum* in consecutive lines (44–5), which some might have thought inelegant, can be paralleled in careful writers (in the same line: Tibullus 1.4.53, Ovid, *AA* 1.239, *Met.* 12.526; in consecutive lines: Vergil, *G.* 1.136–7, Propertius 1.7.21–2, Ovid, *AA* 1.239–41 *quater*, 2.321–2, *Met.* 12.445–6). Note too that in most of these passages *tunc* stands before a vowel.

<sup>2</sup> Munro, Vol. 3, translation (Cambridge, 1886<sup>4</sup>), p. 117.

<sup>3</sup> Bailey, *Lucretius on the Nature of Things* (Oxford, 1910), p. 187.

<sup>4</sup> 'On Lucretius V. 43 sq.', *CR* 19 (1905), 205–6.

<sup>5</sup> 'Notes and Emendations in Latin Poets', *CQ* 5 (1911), 104–7. The first edition of Bailey's translation appeared the year before Hardie's paper; Bailey probably first learned of Cole's paper from W. A. Merrill's commentary (New York, 1907), *ad loc.* Hardie does not mention Cole at all.

<sup>6</sup> Bailey (1947, p. 1328) begins his discussion by citing Munro's rendering, which Cole (p. 205) also calls 'the interpretation generally accepted for these lines'; Hardie (p. 105) refers to Munro, to Bailey's first translation, and to J. D. Duff's school edition of Book 5 (Cambridge, 1889).

been won over by Cole and Hardie, each of the translations that he discusses had enjoyed the support of distinguished Lucretian scholars for generations. The view that the revisionists ascribed to Munro can be traced back at least as far as the commentary of J. B. Pius (Bologna, 1511).<sup>7</sup> Their own interpretation, moreover, boasts a lineage almost as long and no less distinguished, originating in Lambinus' Paris edition of 1563–4.<sup>8</sup> Both interpretations find numerous supporters among commentators and translators before Munro.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps because both views are so well established in previous scholarship, Bailey's own authority in this instance has had little influence: a desultory survey of translations and commentaries since his *editio maior* appeared shows that the competing interpretations continue to be about equally popular.<sup>10</sup>

This lack of critical agreement is fully understandable, since it is impossible even to parse the passage with confidence. The main problem is *insinuandum* itself. Is the form to be taken as a gerund, and therefore (probably) active<sup>11</sup> – i.e. 'one must insinuate battles and dangers' – or as an impersonal gerundive, and therefore (probably) passive<sup>12</sup> – i.e. 'battles and dangers must be insinuated'? In most such cases decision is unnecessary: a phrase such as *poenas timendum est* (*DRN* 1.111) is perfectly easy to construe, and the problem of whether it means 'punishment must be feared' or 'one must fear punishment' exists only for the translator. Similarly, in the case of *proelia atque pericula insinuandum [est]*, the ambiguity that troubles us may never have occurred to the poet or his intended audience; but here we must decide, and the decision affects our understanding of the passage.

Because of the syntactical ambiguity of *insinuandum*, the matter cannot be decided

<sup>7</sup> Pius: 'proelia. motus animi. τὰ πάθη: perturbationes scilicet quando in iecore aegro nascuntur domini. sunt insinuandum. indefinitum pro insinuanda: imprimenda et infligenda aio hominibus.'

<sup>8</sup> Lambinus: 'id est, quae tunc proelia inire, quaeque pericula adire nos oportet, vel invitos? insinuandum: subintellige, est: id est, insinuare, et subire nos oportet.'

<sup>9</sup> On Pius' (≈ Munro's) side may be placed Marolles (Paris, 1659), Marchetti (London, 1717), Le Grange (Paris, 1768), Knebel (Leipzig, 1831), Bossart (Berlin, 1865) and Trevelyan (Cambridge, 1937); on that of Lambinus (≈ Cole and Hardie), Paré (Paris, 1631), Le Fèvre (Saumur, 1662), Du Fay (Paris, 1680), Havercamp (Leiden, 1725), Meinecke (Leipzig, 1795), Wakefield (London, 1796), Lemaire (Paris, 1838), Binder (Stuttgart, 1868–9), Ernout, (Paris, 1920) and Diels (Berlin, 1924). Not all interpreters fall squarely into one or the other camp: e.g. Creech's rather liberal translation (Oxford, 1682) speaks of 'civil wars' and of passions that 'vex the mind', which seems to me closer to the former point of view; but in his notes *ad loc.* (Oxford, 1695) he closely paraphrases Lambinus.

<sup>10</sup> The renderings of W. H. Brown (New Brunswick, NJ, 1950), R. E. Latham (Harmondsworth, 1951), L. L. Johnson (Fontwell, Sussex, 1963), R. Humphries (Bloomington, IN, 1968) all agree with that of Munro. Bailey is followed, however, by the most recent commentator on *DRN* 5, C. D. N. Costa (Oxford, 1984). Likewise the new Loeb editor, M. F. Smith, has altered W. H. D. Rouse's rendering, '...what battles and perils must we then let in, will we or no?' (edd. 1–3, Cambridge, MA, 1924, 1928, 1937) to '...what battlefields and perils must we then find our way into...' (ed. 4, 1975). (Smith's own translation [London, 1969] is less committed: '...what strifes and dangers we incur against our will'.) U. Pizzani (in the commentary *ad loc.* included in *Lucreti De Rerum Natura locos praecipue notabiles collegit et illustravit H. Paratore* [Roma, 1960]) succinctly states the case for both sides and, without mentioning Cole, Hardie, or Bailey, decides in favour of their interpretation.

<sup>11</sup> P. Aalto, *Untersuchungen über das lateinische Gerundium und Gerundivum* (Helsinki, 1949), pp. 92–8.

<sup>12</sup> E. Risch, *Gerundium und Gerundivum, Gebrauch im klassischen und älteren Latein, Entstehung und Vorgeschichte* (Berlin and New York, 1984), pp. 110–12 and 186–8. Cf. J. B. Hofmann and A. Szantyr, *Lateinische Syntax und Stylistik* (München, 1963), pp. 371–3 (§202 C, a), who elsewhere (p. 369, §201, Zusatz a) admit the difficulty of deciding with certainty whether the form is a gerund or a gerundive.

Nevertheless, such comparisons are useful in exposing the real problem with our passage. What does it mean 'to insinuate' battles or for battles 'to be insinuated'? The question has nothing to do with the voice of *insinuandum*, but rather with its basic significance. Hardie (p. 105) correctly observes that *insinuare* 'sometimes means "to enter into", sometimes "to put into"'; and Bailey (*ad loc.*), assuming that he is dealing with a (passive) gerundive, infers that *proelia insinuandum est* must mean either 'battles must be *inserted*' or 'battles must be *entered*'. Of course, if *insinuandum* has an active force, we are left with a similar choice between 'one must insert' and 'one must enter'. When the matter is put in these terms, it becomes apparent that the question is simply whether the battles take place around us or inside us. To decide between these alternatives, we must consider three points: (1) the requirements of the context, (2) the imagery of *Angst* in Lucretius, and (3) the etymology of *insinuare*.

at nisi purgatum est pectus,

- It is clear that questions 2 and 3 are little more than restatements of question 1. In effect they define the ‘battles and dangers’ of lines 43–4 more specifically as the ‘sharp pangs of greed’ that ‘tear a man apart’ (45–6), and as the ‘pride, lust and impudence’ that ‘wreak slaughter’ (47–8). Question 4 then tells us that Epicurus’ achievement is, precisely, to have subdued and driven these passions out of the soul – i.e. to have purged the breast. The fourth question of the series therefore looks back to the first: ‘if the breast has not been purged, what battles and dangers then *nobis insinuandum est*?’

<sup>13</sup> For a fairly full list of passages in other authors with forms in *-ndum* + accusative + *esse* see Aalto (above, note 11), loc. cit., with the cautionary remarks of Risch (above, note 12), p. 186.

<sup>14</sup> *DRN* 1.111, 138, 381, 627, 963; 2.39, 492, 1129; 3.391, 626, 796; 4.778; 5.44, 302; 6.917.

Now, Cole's opinion is that 'battles and dangers must be put into us' does not fit Lucretius' argument. His view of the passage focuses on an opposition between avoidable and unavoidable contests; but if we consider the way in which the argument continues to develop, it would be truer to Lucretius' line of reasoning to think in terms of 'places' that we can or cannot avoid [*quae loca vitandi plerumque est nostra potestas*, 42]. We must remember too that 'we', the putative beneficiaries of Epicurus' and Hercules' accomplishments, are relative newcomers to the argument, mere ciphers in a large pattern of contrasts that turns upon the figures of these two 'culture heroes'. The contrast that Lucretius draws between these figures and their respective achievements is quite detailed. Hercules' accomplishments are listed at length in lines 22–36, and are answered briefly by those of Epicurus in 45–9; the lines that we are trying to interpret fall in between. It will be easier to understand what Lucretius is saying if we list the terms of his comparison in parallel:

Hercules	Epicurus
A. vanquished the Nemean lion, the Erymanthean boar, the Cretan bull, the Lernaean hydra, and so forth (24–34);	A. vanquished the various forms of spiritual distress – the sharp pangs of greed and its attendant fears, pride, lust and impudence, luxury and sloth (45–8);
B. evicted these monsters from already inaccessible places (34–6);	B. subdued and expelled these passions from the soul with words, not arms (49–50);
C. if he had not done so, we could have avoided those places and those monsters anyway, just as we now avoid places where wild animals live (37–42).	C. if he had not done so, <i>quae proelia nobis / atque pericula tumst ingratis insinuandum?</i> (43–4).

The individual points of this comparison are quite clear. Hercules has cleared the monsters out of a few isolated spots. Those spots were indeed dangerous when infested, but they were easy to avoid, and so not really dangerous at all. This is proved by the analogy of those places that are still filled with monsters: they are potentially dangerous, but are easy to avoid and so not dangerous in fact. Epicurus, on the other hand, cleared the passions out of our souls (*cuncta subegerit ex animoque / expulerit* 47–8). Had he not done so – if we did not have a *purgatum pectus* – then our souls would be full of those same passions. This would be dangerous, because our souls are not places we can avoid. We would be forced to do battle with these monstrous passions and to undergo dangers ourselves; and the passions would win these battles. They would 'tear apart' (*scindunt*, 45) the man whose soul contained them, and they would 'wreak slaughter' (*efficiunt clades*, 48). In the terms of this comparison, Hercules pacified dangerous places that we can avoid, but Epicurus pacified a dangerous place that we cannot avoid, and so is more worthy to be called a god. The place that he pacified is the human soul. The monsters that he vanquished are the soul's passions. When our soul is empty of these passions, all is well; when they are present, *quae proelia nobis / atque pericula tumst ingratis insinuandum?* In translating this phrase, it seems to me that we have two choices: either (1) ignore, with Cole, the contrast between the avoidable places pacified by Hercules and the unavoidable one pacified by Epicurus, and speak vaguely of 'entering battles', or (2) acknowledge that contrast and recognize Lucretius' position that the truly dangerous battles are internal ones, the passions that will occupy our soul unless we follow the teachings of Epicurus.

Second, imagery. Both Cole (pp. 205–6) and Hardie (p. 105, where he admits that

it is a minor point) allege that to speak of battles and dangers as entering a person is not 'natural'. Such reasoning is excessively Bentleian. While the expression may not be 'natural', it is not unpoetic or alien to Lucretius. The proviso *at nisi purgatum est pectus* (43) points to the Epicurean ideal of ἀταραξία; the opposite of a *purgatum* or *purum pectus* is a *turbatum pectus*, one subject to τάραχος.<sup>15</sup> The poet draws this contrast in many ways, perhaps most memorably in his observations on the vanity of military power (*DRN* 2.38–54). The sight of armies under one's own command will not frighten *religiones* into deserting the *animus* nor cause the fear of death to leave behind a *vacuum pectus*...*curaque solutum*. Rather, *metus hominum curaeque sequaces* flaunt themselves boldly *inter reges rerumque potentes*. The idea of doing battle with fear and routing it from the soul in order to produce a *vacuum* or *purgatum pectus* is what vivifies both passages. To imagine these battles as occurring in the breast is, perhaps, unnatural; but it is equally unnatural to imagine fear taking its place on a real battlefield. I see no grounds for denying either image to Lucretius.

Third, etymology. Lucretius' use of *insinuate* in 5.44 and elsewhere actually reinforces the idea that *proelia* somehow enter the bosom. In the first place, these *proelia* are nothing other than fear, desire, and other symptoms of the τάραχος that besets the unenlightened soul; and the chest is the *situs* of the *animus* or *mens*:

hic exsultat enim pavor ac metus, haec loca circum  
laetitia mulcent; hic ergo mens animusque est. (3.141–2)

But fear is not born in the soul; rather, Lucretius speaks of it as entering the breast from without, as at 5.73–4:

...et quibus ille modis divum metus *insinuetur*  
*pectora*.

On the one hand, *insinuate* here connotes a mysterious – usually, an invisible – process of entry, as often in Lucretius.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, it clearly spells out this process: the *metus divum* is inserted or makes its way into one's *sinus*.<sup>17</sup> The word *pectora* brings out this sense of *insinuate* by means of an etymological pun.<sup>18</sup> Although the

<sup>15</sup> The consistency of these ideas is apparent in Lucretius' diction: cf. 3.492–4 (*turbat*, 493), 4.337–42 (*purgat*, 341), 6.374–8 (*turbatur*, 377), 1119–24 (*conturbat*, 1121). The same imagery is found at 3.34–40 applied to clear skies, a metaphor for the tranquillity of mind experienced by the Epicurean sage.

<sup>16</sup> He uses it to suggest the way in which lightning (6.89), heat (6.234, 355 *bis*, 385, 860) and magnetism (6.1032) pass into and through solid objects; to connote the mind's penetration of difficult intellectual matter (1.409); the effect of sensory stimuli upon the body (2.436, 684; 4.331, 525; 6.778, 802; *morbida vis*, 6.955); the occupation of bodies by souls, according to benighted rival theories (1.113, 116, 3.671, 689, 698, 722, 729, 738, 780, 782).

<sup>17</sup> The word *sinus* in this sense refers primarily to the fold in the toga that draped over the chest, which was used as a pocket; but this meaning easily passes over into 'breast, chest, or bosom' (e.g. Ovid, *Epist.* 1.45; Tacitus, *Hist.* 3.10.4).

<sup>18</sup> Vergil borrows this idea in *Aeneid* 2.228–9,

tum vero tremefacta novus *per pectora* cunctis  
*insinuat* pavor,

and Bernard M. W. Knox ('The Serpent and the Flame. The Imagery of the Second Book of the *Aeneid*', *AJP* 71 [1950], 384) finds in this passage a 'reminiscence' of *DRN* 5.73. He also calls *insinuate* 'one of Lucretius' favorite words', observing that 'Virgil uses it only here' (cf. the similar remarks of R. G. Austin, *P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos Liber Sextus* [Oxford, 1977], *ad loc.*). It is certainly not common before Lucretius (only three examples in Plautus, *Cist.* 89, 92 and *Mil.* 105). Later poetic occurrences (Propertius 3.9.28; Statius, *Theb.* 5.448, 7.110, *Silv.* 2.1.234; Rutilius Namatianus 1.590; cf. Manilius 4.604 [conjectured by Scaliger]) show no awareness of this etymology.

lexica state that the literal meaning 'to insert into one's *sinus*' is post-classical,<sup>19</sup> a meaning such as 'to enter the bosom' is entirely appropriate to the many passages in which Lucretius uses *insinuare* to speak of souls entering bodies and occupying the chest.<sup>20</sup> At 5.73 this sense is extended to the process whereby fear enters the soul, a close analogue to the infiltration of the soul by 'battles', i.e. *ῥάπαχος* = *metus*, *anxia cura*, etc. at 5.44.<sup>21</sup> These abstractions are said to be inserted into one's *sinus* almost as if they were a purse, a book, or any other ordinary object; but the use of such homely metaphors is a basic part of Lucretius' expository style. Too often, the metaphors go unnoticed, and the poet is misunderstood.<sup>22</sup>

Therefore, of the two renderings of our passage that Bailey (*ad loc.*) regards as possible, I believe that the first, which he ultimately rejects (the impersonal gerundive 'battles must be inserted'), or its equivalent (the gerund 'one must insert battles'), is correct. Not only does either of these renderings locate the *proelia atque pericula* inside the *pectus* – where, according to the structure of Lucretius' argument and the pervading imagery of his poem, they belong – but both are more compatible with the etymology of *insinuare* that I have suggested above (i.e. 'battles must be put / one must put battles into the *sinus*').

What then of *nobis*? Are these battles insinuated by us or do they enter into us? Again, purely linguistic analysis offers little help. Cole (p. 206) notes that *insinuare* 'insert' is not followed by the accusative + dative construction elsewhere in Lucretius. Thus *nobis* at 5.44 denoting the end of motion would constitute a Lucretian *unicum*. This is of course no great difficulty; Cole himself admits (p. 206) that five of the thirty Lucretian instances of *insinuare* involve constructions that appear only once, and that the poet actually uses eleven different constructions with the verb. On the other hand, *insinuare* is found several times with no end of motion expressed;<sup>23</sup> and in this particular passage, there is no need to specify the end of motion, since it is contained in the verb itself: it is the *sinus*. Thus *nobis* may after all be a simple dative of agent. A reader might easily take it as such after *nostra potestas* (42). But Hardie (p. 106; cf. Cole, p. 206) goes too far in arguing that the passive periphrastic requires that there be 'some agent in view...not necessarily expressed, but at least conceivable, somewhere within the range of mental vision'. In the first place, passive forms of *insinuare* in Lucretius are never accompanied by expressions of agency;<sup>24</sup> and in the second, Lucretius actually prefers to use the impersonal gerund(ive) + accusative + *esse* construction without a dative of agent,<sup>25</sup> even in the presence of a different dative construction.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *Insinuare* appears commonly in prose, normally with the meaning 'to wind one's way through or into' by an indirect route (as clearly at *DRN* 6.1032; cf. *OLD* s.v. *sinuare*). Although the verb occurs in several passages that concern battles (e.g. Caesar, *Gal.* 4.33; Livy 44.41.8), in all it means 'to work one's way through (the ranks or the *mêlée*)'; it is not equivalent to *manum conserere*, and such passages should not be adduced as parallels to *DRN* 5.44.

<sup>20</sup> See note 16 above.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Pius' gloss on *proelia* (quoted above, note 7); Cicero, *Tusc.* 4.10: 'quae Graeci *πάθη* vocant nobis "perturbationes" appellari magis placet quam "morbos"'.  
<sup>22</sup> This point is forcefully made by D. West, *The Imagery and Poetry of Lucretius* (Edinburgh, 1969), pp. 1–10 *et passim*; see also H. Sykes Davies, 'Notes on Lucretius', *The Criterion* 11 (1931), 25–42.

<sup>23</sup> *DRN* 3.485, 782, 4.331.

<sup>24</sup> Passive *insinuare* is found without agent at *DRN* 3.780, 782, 6.355, 955.

<sup>25</sup> See *DRN* 1.111, 138, 381, 963, 3.391, 626, 796, 5.302, 6.917. An agent appears with this construction only at 1.627 and 4.777–8.  
<sup>26</sup> There are two examples, both, like 5.44, involving the dative with a compound verb: 2.39, *animo prodesse putandum*; 2.1128–9, *fluere atque recedere rebus / multa manus dandum est*. At 2.492 there is perhaps an ellipse of the expected dative in *addendum partis alias erit*.

In short, I see no definite way nor any compelling reason to decide between these constructions. I therefore suggest taking *nobis* quite loosely as a dative of disadvantage; and while I concede that Munro's translation is imprecise, I submit that, since utter precision here is impossible, Munro in fact does not offer an impossible interpretation of *proelia insinuandum est*: 'battles must enter us', i.e. 'battles must be inserted into our breast (agent unspecified)', captures the essential idea.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> There has certainly been a pronounced strain of ambiguity, apparently intentional, as well as of obscurity and indecision among commentators and translators from almost the very beginning. Le Grange (Paris, 1768) manages to embrace both interpretations in his version: 'Mais si nos coeurs ne sont délivrés des vices, que de combats intérieurs à soutenir! que de périls à vaincre!' P. H. Wooby (New York, 1973) tends rather less elegantly in the same direction: 'But if our heart is not purified, what risks and battles, / Then, must infiltrate us dissatisfied, which we must enter.'

This paper was written in order to answer a question put to me by two students, Eric Kylo and David Rich, with whom I once had the pleasure of reading Lucretius in a graduate seminar. A preliminary version of it was discussed with a group of colleagues and students at the University of Pennsylvania during Spring, 1987, as part of our series of talks on work-in-progress. Several improvements were suggested by the editors of *CQ* and the anonymous referee. My thanks to all of these benefactors. Any faults that remain are, of course, my own responsibility.