

To some this may seem an uneconomical hypothesis. But the abundance of (almost entirely) trivial variants and additional lines attested by papyri and by the mediaeval manuscripts, together with the arguments of the ancient critics, reveal an indefatigable tendency to improve on the transmitted text.<sup>6</sup> Particularly noticeable among the various forms in which this misplaced creativity found expression is *ad hoc* enhancement by increasing the resemblance of one passage to another partially similar; such mechanical assimilation often betrays a feckless disregard for distinctive features of some importance.<sup>7</sup> We also from time to time find lines inserted to give greater force to the expression of pain or grief: thus, after *Il.* 8.199 the third-century B.C. **p** 7 (Pack<sup>2</sup> 819) credited Hera with a gesture involving both hands, while the very slightly later **p** 432 (Pack<sup>2</sup> 875) had Agamemnon tearing his hair from the pain of his wound at *Il.* 11.272a<sup>8</sup> Cicero and Pliny, I suspect, used texts in which the Oriental abandon of Priam's mourning had been transplanted to the Ithacan countryside.

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Homeric; at *Od.* 17.299 the MSS are divided between *κοπρίσ(σ)οντες* and *κοπήσοντες*. But though the verb itself is rare, its meaning is obvious.

<sup>6</sup> *διασκευή* is the scholiasts' term for deliberate alteration of the text, normally with reference to lines judged to be interpolated; see further K. Lehrs, *De Aristarchi studiis Homericis*<sup>9</sup> (Leipzig, 1882), p. 330.

<sup>7</sup> Thus, e.g. *Od.* 4.57–8 (= 1.141–2), absent from many of the mediaeval MSS and suspected by Athenaeus, belong to a formal meal with freshly roasted meat and are incongruous after 56 which refers to the production of left-overs for unexpected arrivals. Similarly, the repetition of Menelaus' presentation speech (4.613–19) to follow 15.112 produces, among other difficulties, a very awkward juxtaposition at 119–20, but is fortunately betrayed as an interpolation by its absence from some of the mediaeval MSS and from **p** 28 (Pack<sup>2</sup> 1106); see further M. J. Apthorp, *The Manuscript Evidence for Interpolation in Homer* (Heidelberg, 1980), pp. 200–16.

<sup>8</sup> Such too seems to have been the sense of the line added after *Il.* 23.136 in the third-century B.C. **p** 12 (Pack<sup>2</sup> 979). On these additional lines see further S. West, *The Ptolemaic Papyri of Homer* (Cologne–Opladen, 1967), pp. 87f., 96f., 176.

#### A NOTE ON LUCRETIUS 4.1046

One of the most surprising features of the final part of the fourth book of the *De rerum natura* is the peculiar way Lucretius introduces the topic he intends to examine at length. We approach the extensive treatment of love from merely physiological phenomena. The terms *libido* and *amor* are mentioned for the first time at 1045 and 1046 respectively; I would like to focus on the interpretation of those lines and on the meaning of the clausula *dira libido* in the context of the final section of Book Four. Lucretius is talking of *semen*:

quod simul atque suis eiectum sedibus exit,  
per membra atque artus decedit corpore toto,  
in loca conveniens nervorum certa citique  
continuo partis genitalis corporis ipsas.  
irritata tument loca semine fitque voluntas  
eicere id quo se contendit *dira libido*,  
idque petit corpus mens unde est *saucia amore*.

1045

The following lines, 1048–57, enrich with a variety of detail the explanation of the mechanism of attraction put forward for the first time at 1045–6: the wounded falls, as a rule, on the wound itself, and the lover, accordingly, *unde feritur eo tendit gestitique coire/ et iacere umorem in corpus de corpore ductum* (1055–6). There are no hints, so far, of criticism on Lucretius' part; indeed, only from the new paragraph

*haec Venus est nobis*... (1058ff.) onwards does the author voice his reservations and go out of his way to recommend remedies against the unhappy passion of love. However, this strongly critical attitude, which will prevail in most of the final section, does seem to be anticipated here by two relevant lexical choices, the clausula *dira libido* and the adjective *saucia* referring to the lover's *mens* (1048). But the presence of *dirus* in such a context seems to be attacking the wrong target, and has rightly aroused comment. If we take *libido* as an exclusively sexual drive opposed to the more passionate *cupido* of line 1090 (*unaque res haec* [sc. love] *est, cuius quam plurima habemus/ tam magis ardescit dira cuppedine pectus*), and we underline the horrifying and revolting meanings of the adjective, we are bound to conclude that Lucretius significantly deviates from orthodox Epicurean doctrine, which fully accepted sexual stimuli as natural.<sup>1</sup>

We have already mentioned the way in which the theme of love is introduced in the book: from the description of natural pollutions Lucretius moves on – through the section 1037–48 – to the mechanism of sexual intercourse. These lines are extremely compressed, and their logical texture is enhanced by the parallelism of lines 1046 and 1047 (*idque/unde* recalls *id/quo*). The extended analogy that follows, where a bloody duel is exploited as a model for the erotic relationship, is meant to explain the peculiar fact that it is exactly the person who has dealt the blow that is the one who stirs the passion of the lover, and is supposed to be able to quench it. Lucretius insists on this idea at length at this point, and will develop it later. The clausula *dira libido* is closely connected, in both sense and syntax, with the surrounding lines, that is to this very problem of the choice of the object of love. As lines 1045–7 clearly bring out, *libido* is not intended as an independent and ‘absolute’ drive, but only as the specific desire to *eicere semen* in the body that has wounded the mind with love: it is certainly a physical impulse, but one which the mind has unduly circumscribed and directed upon a single object. For this reason only, I would like to argue, does *libido* become here *dira*.<sup>2</sup>

The interpretation is confirmed by a comparison in the immediately following passage, where *et iacere umorem collectum in corpora quaeque* describes a sexual act deprived of psychological concerns because opposed to the vain passion for the *simulacra* that lure the mind (1061) – an act which is natural and therefore positive from the Epicurean point of view. This is what Lucretius recommends, without criticizing the *exclusively* natural desire. He thus follows the lesson of his master, and even more, *pace* Jerome and Dr Logre,<sup>3</sup> an attitude common to the archaic Roman

<sup>1</sup> This interpretation is laid out in an excellent paper by A. Traina, *Dira libido*. (*Sul linguaggio lucreziano dell'eros*), in *Studi di letteratura latina in onore di A. Traglia* (Rome, 1979), i.259–76, now in A. Traina, *Poeti latini (e neolatini)* II (Bologna, 1981), pp. 11ff. Traina rightly points out the reticence of the editors, among whom only Leonard and Smith (Madison, 1942) have anything to remark on *dira* (but, as Traina says, their opinion, ‘*dira*... a Puritanical and conventional epithet for unchastened desire’, misses the point). The situation has not significantly changed: J. Godwin (Warminster, 1980) remains silent, and R. Brown (Amsterdam, 1988) basically agrees with Traina.

<sup>2</sup> One of the meanings of *dirus* (generically: ‘terrible’) is ‘unnatural’, to be taken more precisely as ‘absurd’, ‘senseless’. For Lucretius, love is not only excessive, inasmuch as it takes away Epicurus’ disciple from the search for *ἀραξία* and wisdom, but altogether unnatural: it is absurd to hope that the source of passion and the means to quench it can come from the same person, *quod fieri contra totum natura repugnat* (1088). Cf. Hor. *Carm.* 2.2.13ff. (*crescit indulgens sibi dirus hydrops/ nec sitim pellit, nisi causa morbi/ fugerit venis*), where *dirus* not only describes the repelling aspect of the dropsical, but indicates as well the mistake he is led into, the *indulgentia sibi*, the fact that he goes on drinking instead of trying to eliminate the *causa morbi* (cf. Nisbet and Hubbard ad loc.).

<sup>3</sup> Hier. *Chron.* s.a. 1923 Helm; Dr Logre, *L'anxiété de Lucrèce* (Paris, 1946).

moral system (of which a fair idea is given by Cato's praise of *Venus facilis et parabilis* in Hor. *serm.* 1.2.116ff.).

Lines 1085–91 put a stronger emphasis on the condemnation of passionate love and of the sexual activity which is linked to it, and lines 1086–8 offer a very similar version of the syntactical structure exploited in 1046–9:

namque in eo spes est, unde est ardoris origo,  
restingui quoque posse ab eodem corpore flammam.  
quod fieri contra totum natura repugnat.

The point that strikes Lucretius most, the fact that the very power that causes the burning passion of love is the only one able to soothe it, is therefore mentioned briefly at first, and then picked up again and attacked once and for all: the reiteration becomes more evident because of the syntactical similarity.<sup>4</sup>

*Dirus* reappears at 1090, and this time it is connected with *cupido* (*dira cuppedine*). *Libido* in 1046 and *cupido* here are not opposed to each other as, respectively, a natural sexual desire (completely positive, from an Epicurean point of view) and a censurable psychological passion, since, as we have already seen, the very *libido* mentioned at line 1046 is marred by a wrong δόξα of the mind. Whereas *libido* stands in the foreground at line 1046, the emphasis at line 1090 is on *cupido*, which represents a passionate factor, located in the *pectus*, but nonetheless inseparable from its underlying physical impulse towards pleasure.

However, this relation does not seem to entail any kind of opposition between *libido* and *cupido*: *Venus* (1058) is *dira libido* and *muta cupido* (1057), *dulcedo* and *cura* (1059–60), all at the same time. Their mutual dependence, in fact, is so strongly felt that they can even be identified: *cupido*, at line 1115, means *semen*; this extreme brachylogy condenses the impulse towards pleasure, its psychological counterpart, and the physiological aspects in a bold metonymy that knows of no models and no imitations.

Again, at 5.964, in the description of primitive life, he mentions the *impensa libido* of males, which is not contaminated with psychological and passionate elements (these being unknown yet, 5.958–9); and from 5.962 on, Lucretius' only point of interest is the reproductive mechanism, in which both *cupido* (963: *mutua*) and *impensa libido*<sup>5</sup> are instruments which Venus uses so that all animal beings *cupide generatim saecula propagent* (1.20). *Cupido* and *libido* are therefore to be regarded as two complementary aspects of the same phenomenon, and their tight link is also strengthened at a phonic level by their collocation at the end of two subsequent lines (5.963–4).

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<sup>4</sup> Lucretius' polemical target should therefore be seen in the traditional portrait of love as only metaphorically *terribilis*, δεινός. On the contrary, Love is actually *dirus* (whether or not the two adjectives are etymologically connected). It is a flame that, as Nature herself teaches all too well, cannot be put out by water coming from the same source as the fire: ὁ τρώσας, for Lucretius, οὐκ ἰάσεται (cf. Otto, *Sprichwörter*, s.v. *amor*).

<sup>5</sup> *Impensus* does not have any negative implication, and can be referred to positive qualities as well. This is the first time that the adjective is used in poetry: cf. *ThLL* vii.1, p. 548, 73.

## BULLS AND BOXERS IN APOLLONIUS AND VERGIL

In a famous passage of the third book of the *Georgics* (3.209–41) Vergil describes two bulls fighting over a *formosa iuuenca*; the bull which is at first beaten goes off to recover and prepare, returning to attack again its arrogant opponent. The description