

LUCRETIVS, 4.420–25

denique ubi in medio nobis equus acer adhaesit 420
 flumine et in rapidas amnis despeximus undas,
 stantis equi corpus transversum ferre videtur
 vis et in adversum flumen contrudere raptim,
 et quocumque oculos traiecimus omnia ferri
 et fluere assimili nobis ratione videntur. 425

This passage occurs in a series of examples of optical illusions which Lucretius provides in order to illustrate the way in which the mind can misinterpret the evidence of the senses. There are no manuscript variations relevant to the problem which I wish to discuss.

The situation envisaged is that in fording a swift river, a horse has come to a halt in mid-stream. 'We', that is, the rider, look down into the rushing water and get the impression that our horse is moving sideways and upstream, although the horse is in fact stationary. And wherever we turn our eyes across the water, everything seems to be in motion. The question is, what is meant by the word 'everything', that is, *omnia* in line 424? Bailey interprets: 'when after looking down for some time at the rushing stream, we then look up at the objects on the bank, they all seem to be moving.'¹ Similarly Leonard and Smith take the reference to be to 'all objects on the bank or all stones, etc., sticking out of the stream.'² In this case the words 'assimili nobis ratione' must be taken closely together: the objects on the bank seem to be moving upstream in the same way that we ourselves appear to do.

Although I would not deny the possibility of such an impression arising in some circumstances, I do not believe that its occurrence would be sufficiently general to constitute part of the standard experience to which Lucretius appeals in order to illustrate his thesis. To be sure, when the rider looks down at the water the illusion of movement in his stationary mount can be created, because there is no fixed point relative to himself by which his own immobility can be measured. But when he looks up at the bank with 'all objects' on it, then, I suggest, it is rather the case that a fixed point is restored and the rider's immobility established than that the bank appears to move upstream with him.

One might account for the effect of upstream movement by supposing, as does Bailey, that the rider looks up after looking down *for some time* at the rushing stream,³ but now the reason is to be sought not in the absence of a fixed point by which to determine immobility, as is the case with the apparent upstream motion of the horse, but in some dizziness similar, as Bailey suggests, to the giddiness induced in children who spin until the room seems to turn round them when they stop. But thus two different types of illusion are presented together without distinction and such a transition to a new point in the middle of the sentence arouses suspicion.

¹ C. Bailey, *Titi Lucreti Cari De Rerum Natura Libri Sex* (Oxford, 1947), on 424–5.

² W. E. Leonard and S. B. Smith, *T. Lucreti Cari De Rerum Natura Libri Sex* (Madison, 1961–62), *ad loc.*

³ Bailey is essentially in agreement with C. Giussani, *T. Lucreti Cari De Rerum Natura Libri Sex* iii (Torino, 1897), p. 202: 'poi noi alziamo gli occhi alla opposta riva ... e allora tutto ci par non solo *ferri* ma anche *fluere*, chè la ondeggiante mobilità onde i nostri occhi con pieni, la trasportiamo a ciò che ci par correre invece dell' onda.' I take it that J. Godwin, *Lucretius De Rerum Natura* IV² (Warminster, 1992), *ad loc.*, has a similar interpretation in mind in commenting that "'everything seems to be carried along..." only after we have gazed down in to the water.'

In view of these difficulties I think it worthwhile considering whether Lucretius has not in mind a more simple and clearer effect. Lines 424 and 425 would be less problematic if they helped to create the effect of total flow against which the horse, although stationary, appears to be moving upstream. I suggest that they have been misplaced and that they originally followed line 421. The text would then run like this:

denique ubi in medio nobis equus acer adhaesit	420
flumine et in rapidas amnis despeximus undas,	421
et quocumque oculos traieciimus omnia ferri	424
et fluere assimili nobis ratione videntur,	425
stantis equi corpus transversum ferre videtur	422
vis et in adversum flumen contrudere raptim.	423

The advantages of this version are clear. When we have looked down 'and wherever we have turned our eyes everything appears to us to be moving and flowing in the same way', then our mount seems to be moving upstream. Here the illusion of the rider is due only to the sense of movement round his stationary horse, without regard to the bank. 'Everything' is whatever meets his eyes as he surveys the water below and about him; it is just this totality of uniform movement that creates the illusion of his own contrary motion. In line 425 the verb *videntur* should not be taken to imply that the impression is fallacious, as is the case with line 422; the emphasis is rather on *quocumque* and *omnia*, indicating not that the appearance of unceasing flow is illusory but that it is complete. *Nobis* here goes closely with *videntur*, as for example in the words 'luna necesse est... quantaque quantast hinc nobis videatur in alto' (5.581-4); *assimili... ratione* is to be referred to whatever separate visual items make up the content of *omnia*: they all move in the same way (as each other).⁴ The verb *fluere* finds its correct subject in things which are actually flowing downstream, and is freed from its odd partnership with the apparent upstream *struggle* expressed by *contrudere*, for which the idea of flowing is inappropriate. Now the perfect tense *traieciimus* supports the two occurrences of the same tense in the previous lines, and the prefix *ne-* only imply that the gaze roams over the water, and not that it reaches the far bank; indeed this latter meaning would sit oddly with the relative adverb *quocumque*, for the expressions *quocumque... traieciimus* and *omnia... videntur* are limited in reference by the verb *despeximus* in line 421: 'when we have looked down and, wherever we have turned our eyes, everything seems to be flowing in one direction...' The turning of our gaze and the totality which appears are restricted to the range allowed by the act of looking down so that there is no contradiction between lines 421 and 424.

I wish now to consider possible objections to the text which I propose. First, one result of the transposition is to remove the general effect (*omnia...*) away from the conclusion to a premise, and this might appear to run counter to the pattern of other arguments in this section of the poem, in which a more limited impression leads into a universal one (children see rooms and columns spinning and think that the whole house will fall [401-3]; oars and rudder appear bent at the point of entry into the water so that the whole ship appears broken [436-43]; pressure of hand under eyeball

⁴ For other examples in Lucretius of the dative with *videri* where illusion is not implied see 1.726, 2.444, 3.224; without a dative expressed examples are numerous. To catch the nuance Bailey sometimes translates 'see' rather than 'seem', even where opinion rather than visual appearance is in question, e.g. 'if you see them true' for 'si tibi vera videntur' (2.1042). For my translation cf. A. Ernout, *Lucrèce de la nature*⁴ iv (Paris, 1942), p. 20: 'et partout où nous proménon nos regards les objets nous paraissent également être entraînés et flotter dans le même sens.' Likewise W. D. Rouse, *Lucretius de rerum natura*⁵ (London and Cambridge, 1959), p. 279.

makes lamps, furniture, faces, bodies and everything look double [447–52]). However, in these examples the universal effect includes and completes the itemized particulars, and indeed in two of the three cases is stated in advance (437, 449), whereas in our passage as the manuscripts have it there is no similar set to be completed: the content of *omnia* (objects on the bank?) is not easily supplied from the horse as is the whole house from rooms and columns or ships from oars and rudders. Thus our passage is not really parallel and nothing is lost by the transposition in this respect.

A second point concerns the resultant alteration in the sentence structure from 'When A then B and C' to 'When A and B then C'. It is true that the latter is less common in Lucretius than is the former, but as a fundamental framework of thought it is nevertheless entirely Lucretian. The simplest format may be seen with temporal clauses at e.g. 2.1067–9 and 5.1011–14, and it underlies some more complex structures as e.g. 5.1204–10. A clear example is found within a stretch of descriptive narrative at 1.87–92. Similar patterns occur with causal clauses (e.g. 4.26–30 and 4.939–41, with more complex developments at 1.585–92 and 3.425–39) as well as with relative (4.962–65) and conditional clauses (1.968–73). The sentence exhibits a proportional distribution of lines to its three main elements (A—2 lines, B—2 lines, C—2 lines) which resembles a Lucretian pattern of argument noted by Classen whereby two lines of conclusion follow two lines of description and two of observation.⁵ For other six-line sentences related to ours we may compare 1.265–70 (with causal and final subordinate clauses), 3.634–9 (causal and conditional) and 4.404–9 (temporal and relative). Our passage comprises a sentence which is perhaps not so long as to require a pointer such as *tum* to introduce the apodosis, and thus the proposal produces a sentence which sits well with Lucretian usage.

A third consideration is that, with the line order of the manuscripts, the verb *videri* in both its occurrences figures in the conclusion of the argument and refers to optical illusion. Further, the entire section 379–468 is concerned with the mind's false interpretation of visual data, and throughout the section the verb chiefly employed to express this mistaken condition is *videri*, which occurs as many as fifteen times. The proposed transposition therefore puts *videntur* (425) out of step with the other occurrences of the verb both in the immediate argument and in the wider context of the whole section. On the other hand the proposed meaning is unobjectionable in itself and well supported in Lucretius, and such disconcerting variations are not without parallel; indeed, on *aestus* at 6.826 Bailey notes that 'it is characteristic of Lucretius to use the word in quite a different sense from that in which it has occurred many times in the context.'⁶ We do not have to go so far as that, for we are not concerned with a different meaning of *videri* so much as the same basic meaning 'appear' without the implication of falsity which predominates elsewhere in this context.⁷ The verb is one which Lucretius would naturally choose for the use to which it is put, so that the anomaly does not constitute an objection to the proposal.

⁵ C. J. Classen, 'Poetry and rhetoric in Lucretius', in C. J. Classen (ed.), *Probleme der Lukrezforschung* (Hildesheim, 1986), p. 345, with reference to 1.305–10.

⁶ Cf. 6.778–9, where *tactus* is used first of smell and then of touch in general. Bailey notes that *tactus* is 'fully appropriate to smell, the word from the Lucretian point of view is used in the same sense in both places, and the nearness of the repetition is not repugnant to Lucretius.'

⁷ The use of *videri* with different force in adjacent lines should cause no surprise, cf. e.g.: 'quae cum magna ... videtur ... regio ... , nil tamen hoc habuisse viro praeclarius in se ... videtur. carmina ... vociferantur ... ut vix humana videatur stirpe creatus' (1.726–32). Here the last of the three occurrences expresses an impression contrary to fact. See also 4.237–8; 4.288–93; 6.674–7. It is worth noting that in our section *videre* 'to see' occurs at 418 and 462 (active) and 428 and 466 (twice) (passive).

As for the source of the error, I suppose that a couple of lines, either 422–3 or 424–5, were left out by accident and written at the foot of the page with a marginal indication of their proper position; at some later stage they were restored at the wrong place. No simple palaeographical explanation for the omission leaps to the eye, but this does not mean that nothing at all can be said by way of explanation. Bailey's list of what he regards as certain restorations of misplaced lines in Lucretius contains four passages consisting of more than a single line, 4.551–2, 5.437–9, 5.594–5, 5.1131–2.⁸ We can add 6.934–95, which is no conjecture since the lines appear in the proper order in Book 4. In the second of these five passages omission may with some confidence be ascribed to homoeoteuton (*-tis*, 445, 439). In the first it is possible that omission may have occurred through homoeomeson (*corpore* 541, *levore* 552), while in the third no plain reason is apparent. However, in the other two passages it is remarkable that the first word of the omitted lines is identical with the first word of the preceding line. 5.1126...1127 runs:

...	
invidia interdum contemptim in Tartara taetra;	1126
invidia quoniam, ceu fulmine, summa vaporant	1131
plerumque et quae sunt aliis magis edita cumque;	1132
ut satius multo iam sit parere quietum	1127
...	

Likewise in Book 6: 'cum... (929), cum... (934), usque... (935), fertur... (930).' It is easy to see why 5.1131 and 6.934 might be overlooked, but not why 5.1132 and 6.935 should go too. Now, if both lines were in fact omitted in each case, the process is strikingly similar to our passage, where, assuming the omitted pair of lines to be 422–3, the last word of the first omitted line is *videtur* (422) while the last word of the preceding line is *videntur*. The omission of line 422 is thus easily explained: the scribe finishes *videntur* and thinking that he has written *videtur* goes on, leaving out line 422; but this does not explain the loss of line 423 as well. However, if both lines did in fact fall out in this way, they could have been wrongly replaced, leading to the manuscript word order. The similarity of these three passages suggests that the repetition of prominent words, although not classifiable among the regular mechanical causes of omission, may have contributed to an oversight which led to the initial displacement.⁹

The University of Queensland

MICHAEL DYSON

⁸ C. Bailey, 'The Mind of Lucretius', *AJPh* 61 (1940), 283 n. 11.

⁹ For helpful comments on this article I am grateful to my colleague Dr M. J. Athorp and to the referee and editors of *Classical Quarterly*.

A PUNNING REMINISCENCE OF VERGIL, *Ecl.* 10.75–7 IN HORACE, *Epist.* 1.5.28–9

The fifth poem in Horace's first book of *Epistles* takes the form of an invitation to Torquatus¹ to attend a dinner which the poet is preparing for that evening, the eve

* I should like to thank Stephen Harrison, Stephen Heyworth, Roland Mayer, Damien Nelis and Richard Gaskin for their help, and the Fondation Hardt for the quiet to pursue a half-heard echo.

¹ On the identity of this Torquatus, see R. G. M. Nisbet, 'Notes on Horace, Epistles 1', *CQ* 9 (1959), 73–6. W. Allen, Jr, *et al.*, 'The addressees in Horace's first book of Epistles', *Studies in Philology* 67 (1970), 255–66.