

MONICA R. GALE, *Lucretius: De Rerum Natura V*, Aris & Phillips Classical Texts, Oxford: Aris & Phillips, 2009, pp. vii + 222, ISBN 9780856688898.

This is the first individual edition with commentary of book five of Lucretius since C. D. N. Costa's Oxford edition of 1984. Costa's edition supplanted, in English, J. D. Duff's little Cambridge Pitt Press edition, originally published in 1889 and reprinted until 1950. In Italian there has been the edition of Giussani-Stampini, first published in 1929 and revised by V. D'Agostino in 1959. In French Patin, Benoist and Lantoine produced an edition in 1884. As Costa says in his preface, book five seems to have deterred commentators because of the complexity of its subject matter. The only book of Lucretius less well served is book two which has no individual commentary. On the other hand books five and two have been the most intensively studied of all the books of Lucretius, because of the account of the 'swerve' of the atoms in book two, and the account of the origin of species and of prehistory in book five. In addition to the huge number of scholarly articles and monographs published on these topics, there have been two large-scale commentaries on parts of these books, Don Fowler's *Lucretius on Atomic Motion: a Commentary on De rerum natura 2.1-332* (Oxford 2002), and my own *Lucretius on Creation and Evolution: a Commentary on De rerum natura 5.772-1104* (Oxford 2003). Since the publication of this part-commentary I have been preparing a large-scale commentary on the whole of book five, but this will not be finished for several years. The other main commentary is still that of Cyril Bailey's three-volume edition of Lucretius, first published in 1947.

Monica R. Gale's (G.'s) commentary does not seek to compete with Bailey but to 'make Lucretius' urgent and impassioned argument, and something of his poetic style, accessible to a wider audience, including those with little or no knowledge of Latin.' (v). The Aris and Phillips series of commentaries offers the Latin text with a facing English translation, and a commentary with lemmas keyed to the English rather than the Latin, thus making them far more user friendly for the reader with little or no Latin, while Latin scholars can easily identify the Latin words or lines being commented on. One drawback for the Latinist may be, however, that the focus on accessibility for the non-Latin reader may tend to supply fewer references to Greek and Latin intertexts than more traditional editions. On the other hand, to be fair, on re-consulting Costa's commentary on book five and E. J. Kenny's Cambridge 'Green and Yellow' commentary on book three – two of the more recent traditional commentaries – they do not particularly outshine G. in this respect, while G. is far better than either on the philosophy and the

poetry. This is very impressive, and it has to be said here that Aris & Phillips are very lucky to have G. as a contributor to their commentary series; she is one of the leading Latin scholars in the world and someone who would more normally be found publishing under the imprint of one of the great University Presses.¹

G. provides a useful Introduction, briefly placing Lucretius in his context in the later republic, outlining the Epicurean philosophy, introducing the reader to didactic poetry, explaining Lucretius' cosmological outlook, and giving some guidance on the text and Lucretius' language and style.

The text is essentially that of Bailey's 1922 OCT edition with only ten alternate readings preferred, which are provided in a useful list. An apparatus criticus is supplied, somewhat simpler than that in Bailey's 1947 three-volume edition, and particular textual difficulties are addressed in the commentary. This is a generally quite reasonable approach; Bailey had already undone most of the horrors inflicted on Lucretius' text by earlier, radical editors like Karl Lachmann, who tried to make Lucretius more 'rational' by transposing large chunks of text and deleting his characteristic repetitions.

The translation seems fresh and readable, and stays close enough to the Latin to be useful to the learner, while avoiding flattening Lucretius' style too much. At the other end of the stylistic register G. also successfully avoids the sort of 'Epic' language some translators feel the need for. Translating Lucretius is tricky because he does move quickly between registers and does, indeed, use epic as well as archaic language. Overall G. is probably right to leave it out as much as possible. Nothing, it seems, dates as quickly as 'Epic' language. Compare Bailey's attempt at line 8 *deus ille fuit, deus, inclute Memmi*: 'he was a god, yea a god, noble Memmius', and G.'s, 'he was a god, a god, glorious Memmius'. Interestingly at lines 247-8 G. translates *ne corripuisse rearis | me mihi*, as, 'in case you should think that I have made an illegitimate assumption', showing clearly that she recognises that the metaphor, 'to beg the question' (thus Rouse/Smith's Loeb translation), has now lost its original meaning, while subtly offering it a chance of survival by using it in her commentary on the lines. On the other hand, perhaps *horrens Arcadius sus* (line 25) would be better as, 'bristling Arcadian pig', than 'bristling Arcadian boar'. It is tricky as we know it is the Erymanthian boar that Lucretius means, but the bathetic monosyllabic line ending, *sus*, seems to be part of an anti-epic tradition including Horace, *Ars* 397, *ridiculus mus*, and Virgil, *Georgics* 3.255, *Sabellicus sus*. In line 866 G. translates the compound adjective *lanigerae* as 'woolly' rather than

¹ See especially her books *Myth and Poetry in Lucretius* (Cambridge University Press 1994), *Virgil on the Nature of Things: The Georgics, Lucretius and the Didactic Tradition* (Cambridge University Press 2000), (ed.) *Oxford Readings in Classical Studies: Lucretius* (Oxford University Press 2007), and her forthcoming edition of Catullus for the Cambridge U.P. 'Green and Yellow' series.

'wool-bearing', but it has been argued cogently by David Sedley recently that the two compounds *levisomna* (864) and *lanigeræ* form an 'Empedoclean fingerprint' and so should be highlighted. In line 996 *horriferis accibant vocibus Orcum*, is rendered as, 'would ... call upon Death with dreadful cries', thus translating out a seeming onomatopoeic explanation for the name Orcus as a god of death, derived from the cries of the dying. This seems preferable to arguing, as G. does in the commentary ad loc., that the line may suggest a superstitious belief in an afterlife already in existence among the early humans.

The commentary consists of a substantial 117 pages and is thus longer than Costa's (104 pages) and a bit more than half the length of Bailey's which at 230 pages is the longest yet published. G. easily improves on Costa in nearly every note, showing a confident grasp of the most up to date scholarship on Epicureanism, as well as her accustomed encyclopaedic knowledge of Latin poetry. In particular G. presents admirably clear analysis of often complex topics. This is especially true of the section on astronomy, which is the most technical part of the book. Here G. acknowledges the help of the great polymath Professor George Huxley. Certainly this is the clearest exposition of Lucretius' astronomy that I have come across. Of the other sections, I would have liked to have seen more discussion of the passage of anti-creationist arguments in 156-234, especially on the contentious point of whether we are justified in reading this section as anti-Stoic, as G. suggests, or as David Sedley has argued, it is entirely aimed at Plato's *Timæus*. There is evidence for both positions. More introduction could also have been supplied to the section on the origin of species at 837-77 since this has attracted more attention, and has been more contentious, over the centuries than any other part of the book. However, these are more differences of opinion than criticisms, and G.'s edition can certainly be recommended very strongly to anyone interested in Lucretius, from the reader with no Latin looking for a reliable and intelligent guide to Lucretius 5 to advanced scholars who want to keep up with the latest ideas on Lucretius. This edition has already found a welcome place on my own Lucretius shelves alongside Bailey, Costa, Giussani-Stampini, D'Agostino, and Patin, Benoist and Lantoine.

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