

# Emendations on the second book of Lucretius

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## Abstract

Six emendations are offered upon the text of the second book of Lucretius' *De rerum natura*. Two emendations concern well-recognised textual problems in the book (*subitam* in 363 and the repetition of *in* in 483). The four remaining suggestions (three conjectures and one transposition) address parts of the book previously unsuspected by critics (549, 622-623, 708, 1136).

**Keywords:** Lucretius; Latin textual criticism; metre; stylistics.

## Resum. Esmenes al segon llibre de Lucreci.

Hom presenta sis esmenes al text del llibre segon del *De rerum natura* de Lucreci. Dues esmenes tracten sobre problemes textuais ben coneguts del llibre (*subitam* a 363 i la repetició de *in* a 483). Els quatre suggeriments restants (tres conjectures i una transposició) fan referència a parts del llibre no qüestionades anteriorment pels crítics (549, 622-623, 708, 1136).

**Paraules clau:** Lucreci; crítica textual llatina; metre; estilística.

The second book of Lucretius' *De rerum natura* is perhaps the most understudied of the poem and remains the only book that has not yet received a commentary specifically dedicated to its entirety<sup>1</sup>. It is hoped that this disappointing gap will soon be remedied. In the meantime, I offer below a few textual suggestions for the consideration of future editors, alongside those that I have already made on this book in passing elsewhere<sup>2</sup>.

1. Partial commentaries were undertaken by FOWLER, D.P. (2002). *Lucretius on Atomic Motion: A Commentary on De rerum natura 2.1-332*. Oxford, and WOOLERTON, E.M. (2004). *Lucretius de Rerum Natura 2.333-729: critical analysis*. Unpublished Cambridge University thesis.
2. For suggestions on 53; 462; 1079, see «Sigmatic Echthipsis in Lucretius». *Hermes* 136 (2008), p. 188-205, at 197-198, 190-193 and 201-202; on 88; 263; 456; 1006, see «*Lucretiana quaedam*». *Phil.* 152 (2008), p. 111-127, at 111-116; on 114, see «Emendations on the fifth book of Lucretius». *MD* 60 (2008), p. 177-89, at 179 n. 5; on 250, see «Seven Lucretian Emendations». *Eos* 95 (2008), p. 97-99; on 252; 331; 428; 1168, see «*Supplementa Lucretiana*». *Arctos* 42 (2008), p. 11-23,

2, 361-366:

*nec tenerae salices atque herbae rore uigentes  
fluminaque illa queunt summis labentia ripis  
oblectare animum subitamque auertere curam,  
nec uitulorum aliae species per pabula laeta*  
365 *deriuare queunt animum curamque leuare:  
usque adeo quiddam proprium notumque requirit.*

363 *subitam* OQG Macr. *Sat.* 6, 2, 6 : *summam* Ba (=B.L. Harl. 2612) : *solitam* Lachmann : *dubiam* Bernays : *sumptam* Munro : *subito* Brieger : *subidam* E. Baehrens : *saueam* Reid 365 *curamque* O<sup>p.c.</sup> Mico *Op. pr.* 121 : *curaque* O<sup>a.c.</sup>Q : *curraque* G

Thus Lucretius depicts the plaintive wanderings of the distraught heifer, engaged in futile search for her lost calf that has been slain for the sake of *religio*. *subitam* of 363 has caused problems to editors since Lachmann, on the ground that no suitable rendering of the adjective seems possible given the clearly prolonged period of searching depicted in 355-360. In short, this is not a „sudden“ care at all; the translation of Bailey („sudden recurrent pang“) introduces in its second word a concept quite alien to *subitus*. An alternative taken two centuries ago by Wakefield and followed by Munro (in later years), Nencini, Ernout and S.B. Smith *inter alios*, is to interpret *subitam... curam* in the sense *cura quae subiit*, comparing the active force that *praeteritus*, *obitus* and a number of other compounds of *ire* can bear. Yet to this defence one must make the strong objection that nowhere else in extant Latin literature does *subitus* possess this sense.

Accordingly, emendation deserves serious consideration. Of the various conjectures offered, Lachmann's *solitam* is quite contrary to the truth: the heifer's anxiety is not at all customary to her. Munro's *sumptam* is hopelessly prosaic and bizarrely implies that the cow actively took the *cura* upon herself. Brieger's *subito*, though barely removed from the paradosis, is lamentably weak; the less said of Baehrens' *subidam* the better. Bernays' *dubiam* is, refreshingly, an emendation founded on good sense rather than the *ductus litterarum*. A possible alternative is *maestam*: the streams cannot divert the cow's melancholic anxiety. Lucretius employs the adjective elsewhere of mourners themselves (1, 89; 6, 1281), victims (1, 99), the generally miserable (4, 1236), as well as of their hearts (6, 1152) and minds (6, 1233); for its use as a transferred epithet (i.e. for the *cura* of the *maesta uacca*), cf., e.g., Sil. 6, 551: *haec Marus et maesta refouebat uulnera cura*. A similar transference can be seen in Lucretius at 6, 645: *pauida complebant pectora cura*. If *mae-* or *me-*

at 14-19; on 467, see «Two Lucretian Emendations». *Prometheus* 35 (2009), p. 81-89, at 81-86; on 344, see «One Lucretian Emendation». *Inuigilata Lucernis* 30 (2008), p. 49-51; on 561, see «Emendations on the third book of Lucretius». *Euphrosyne* 37 (2009), p. 309-316, at 314; on 601, see «Three Lucretian Emendations». *AAnthung* 48 (2008), p. 351-364, at 351-359; for my discussion of 27 and 462, see «N.H. Romanes and the text of Lucretius». *ICS* 32 (2006), p. 75-115, at 99-101 and 95-96. In a forthcoming article in *Rivista di Filologia e Istruzione Classica* I offer emendations on 2, 181; 2, 554; 2, 911.

were lost after *-um*, the resultant *stam* could well have been expanded to *subitam* so as to repair metre. We must merely suppose that this corruption occurred in the half-millennium before Macrobius came to cite verses 361-363 in his *Saturnalia*.

2, 481-485:

*quod si non ita sit, rursum iam semina quaedam  
esse infinito debebunt corporis auctu.  
namque in eadem una quouisuis in breuitate  
corporis inter se multum uariare figurae*

485 *non possunt.*

483 *namque in* OQ : *nam quod* Pius : *namque* Lachmann : *namque ut* Siebelis *eadem* OQ : *eodem* Munro *una* OQ : *unius* Lachmann *cuiusuis* [melius scriptum *quouisuis*] *in* OQ : *cuiuscuius* Lambinus : *cuiusuis iam* Brieger : *cuiusuis haec* Merrill *namque in eadem una cunctis breuitate remensa* Lotze : *namque in eadem unaque unius iam breuitate* Hörschelmann

The repetition of *in* as transmitted in 483 has been agreed by all to be indefensible. Various emendations have been offered, ranging from the violent (Lotze) to the unclassical (Lambinus), and twentieth-century editors have tended to favour Brieger's simple alteration of the latter *in* to *iam*. Yet it is a curious place to insert an adverb — generously translated by Bailey „in these circumstances“ — and it has the distinct look of an emendation. My ear favours retaining the latter transmitted *in*, the required collocation *eadem una... in breuitate* displaying typical Lucretian word order. In lieu of the former *in*, therefore, I suggest that we read *illa* (preferable to *hac*): *namque illa eadem una quouisuis in breuitate / corporis*. To translate 483-485: „for in that one and the same smallness of any given atom, the shapes are unable to differ from one another greatly“. For the synzesis of *eadem*, cf. 1, 480; 4, 744; 4, 786; 4, 959; at Verg. *Aen.* 10, 487 we find the same pairing with this synzesis: *una eademque uia*.

2, 547-550:

*quippe etenim sumam hoc quoque uti finita per omne  
corpora iactari unius genitalia rei,  
unde, ubi, qua ui et quo pacto congressa coibunt*  
550 *materia tanto in pelago turbaque aliena?*

The sequence of interrogatives in 549 would run with more force without the *et* that joins the third and fourth elements (i.e. *unde, ubi, qua ui, quo pacto*): the particle could easily have been added by scribal error (a species of banalisation). *et* is wrongly inserted in Lucretius' mss at 1, 820 (QG); 2, 637 (Q); 4, 235; 4, 677. Since Lucretius very rarely placed *ui* before a following vowel (only once (5, 162) in its 37 other occurrences), the removal of *et* would also restore a smoother and more natural rhythm than is offered by the prodelision of the conjunction.

2, 618-623:

*tympaena tenta tonant palmis et cymbala circum  
concaua, raucisonoque minantur cornua cantu,  
620 et Phrygio stimulat numero caua tibia mentis,  
telaque praeporant uiolenti signa furoris,  
622 ingratos animos atque impia pectora uolgi  
623 conterrere metu quae possint numine diuae.*

623 *numine* OQ : *numini*? amicus quidam Havercampi : *numine* ut gen. def. Diels : *nomine* Papanghelis

Along with the great majority of editors, I see no need to remove the double ablative in 623: *metu* is to be taken closely with *conterrere*, and *numine diuae* serves as an instrumental ablative. What strikes me as genuinely strange, however, is the postponement of *quae [tela]* to ninth position in its clause. 622-623 would run both more easily and more forcefully if interchanged with one another: *conterrere metu quae possint numine diuae / ingratos animos atque impia pectora uolgi*. The transposition of single adjacent lines affects the poem's transmission at 1, 14-15; 1, 1085-1086; 2, 5-6; 4, 250-251; 4, 863-864; 4, 1123-1124, and other instances no doubt await detection.

2, 707-709:

*quorum nil fieri manifestumst, omnia quando  
seminibus certis certa genetrice creata  
conseruare genus crescentia posse uidemus.*

Since *materia* is personified as *genetrice* in 708, the syntax would be eased after *seminibus certis* by inserting *a* before *genetrice*. It is by no means a difficult supposition that *certaa* was reduced to *certa*, either by a simple graphic error of the scribe (haplography) or by the loss of the sound between *certa* and *genetrice* when reciting the line in his head.

2, 1133-1138:

*quippe etenim quantost res amplior, augmine adempto,  
et quo latior est, in cunctas undique partes  
1135 plura modo dispargit et ab se corpora mittit,  
nec facile in uenas cibus omnis diditur ei  
nec satis est, proquam largos exaestuat aestus,  
unde queat tantum suboriri ac subpeditare.*

Again I offer a small change. In 1136 *diditur* is constructed with the prepositional clause *in uenas... omnis*, which leaves the dative of possession *ei* (=rei

*crescenti*) loosely appended. Given that *eius* was very often abbreviated *ei*' or *e*' in ancient *notae* and early minuscule, that Lucretius closed his verses more commonly with *eius* than *ei*<sup>3</sup>, and that damage frequently occurred to the close of lines of *De rerum natura*<sup>4</sup>, I suggest that Lucretius closed 2, 1136 *diditur eius*<sup>5</sup>.

3. *eius* closes nineteen verses, *ei* eight (excluding the present instance), of which only two (5, 729; 6, 795) are datives of possession.
4. For the loss of *-us* at the close of a line, cf. 3, 404 (Q); 5, 24 (Q); 6, 144 (*aest* for *aestus*); for textual damage at the close of the line, cf. 1, 748; 1, 752; 1, 1068-1075; 2, 331; 2, 428; 2, 1115; 3, 159; 3, 538; 3, 596; 3, 705; 3, 1061; 4, 612; 5, 586.
5. As a final note, I record my support of the following readings or conjectures in the present book: 564 *adauctu* (Purmann); 716 *quoiquam* (Wakefield after *cuiquam*, the early vulgate); 734 *alio quouis* (Lambinus); 978 *natura* (Gassendi); 1062 *saepe* (García Calvo); 1099 *inque* (early vulgate). The much-suspected *geminam* of 1082 is proven to be correct by the evidence of the Strasbourg Empedocles: see MARTIN, A.; PRIMAVESI, O. (1999). *L'Empédocle de Strasbourg (P. Strasb. Gr. Inv. 1665-1666): introduction, édition et commentaire*. Berlin, p. 230 and 234.