LUCRETIAN IMAGERY

A thesis

by

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Although many fine editions have appeared, both ancient and modern, of Lucretius' De Rerum Natura", the one aspect of his style, "imagery", which forms the subject of this thesis, has not hitherto been adequately treated. Different editors have different views on Lucretius . Bailey holds that the most important single characteristic of Lucretius is his lofty and noble diction. Smith sees in the archaic tone of the poem the keynote of Lucretius' style. All, however, agree that the poem presents an uninterrupted sucession of varied and colourful pictures.

The aim of this thesis is to examine the "pictures" in Lucretius. They are found, first of all, in the metaphors which we meet everywhere in the poem, originated, in some cases, to make up for the "paupertas linguae Latinae", in others, to clarify the teachings of Epicurus, and, in a few, simply because the De Rerum Natura" is a poem, and its author a great poet.

Many images, however, owe their existence to the philosophical system itself, which teaches that invisible phenomena follow the same laws as visible. Accepting this principle, Lucretius introduces many analogies from

the world around him, and these reveal both his poetic powers and his own personal tastes and interests.

Since this investigation has involved, more than anything else, a close study of the text, only those books are listed in the bibliography which provided some help in this specific research. Most useful of all were the magnificent new edition by Leonard and Smith, and the translation by Bailey.

I wish to offer my gratitude to Prof. Clive Carruthers, the director of my research, to Prof. Paul McCullagh, and to Prof. Jean Launay for their constant aid and encouragement.

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CHAPTER ONE

LUCRETIUS AND EPICUREANISM

"Disserere incipiam et rerum primordia pendam"

Titus Lucretius Carus was born about 99 B.C. We know nothing of his family, his birthplace, or his private or public life. His contemporaries tell us little or nothing about him, and we must be content with a few short references to him by Cicero (1). and others, although all of the later poets show beyond doubt the influence of his language, if not of his philosophy.

"Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas..."

Vergil, in this line (taken from his second Georgic), surely means Lucretius; and many other lines and phrases (2). seem to indicate that Vergil knew his Lucretius very well. The same is true of the other literary men of his own day; but direct remarks about Lucretius are extremely rare.

He is a poet who wrote one poem, the De Rerum Natura, a didactic poem, seventy-four hundred lines in length, composed in dactylic hexameters. The purpose of the poem was to free mankind from fear -- fear of the gods, fear of death and its consequences, and to lead him to a happy life by converting him to the Epicurean philosophy. It will be observed as we proceed that the author must have failed dis-

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1. "Lucreti poemata, ut scribis, ita sunt: multis luminibus ingeni, multae tamen artis; sed cum veneris....". Cicero wrote these words to his brother Quintus in 54, and they are, unfortunately, ambiguous. Cicero liked Lucretius better, at rate, than his master, Epicurus.

2. e.g. Eclogues VI, ll. 31-40

mally in his main purpose. His poetic temperament again and again overruled the Epicurean ideal of emotional detachment.

He is, therefore, a poet unsung and unheralded, and comes down to us, a mysterious, brooding figure, the self-appointed liberator of mankind. Nothing can deter him from his mission, even though its completion is to involve him in the consideration of every field open to human inquiry. But on what grounds, one may ask, can Lucretius pretend to explain all things, since the short span of human existence, if nothing else, precludes a mere man from universal knowledge? That, Lucretius would exclaim, is because others are handicapped by a false principle, namely that reason and sensation are separable. Lucretius, by employing the one, single, Epicurean guide, the senses, could decide quid sit iudicandum in any topic under investigation.

Therefore, we have in Lucretius a man of many arts: a physicist, he will explain the nature of matter and the origin of the universe; an anthropologist, he will deduce man's beginnings and development; a political scientist, he will trace the history of social alliances and government; an astronomer, he will reconstruct the heavens; a theologian, he will prove with copious argument what we must believe concerning the gods(1) and as a moralist, he will teach us how to live and die.

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1. This promise (given in book 1, l. 158) Lucretius failed to keep. For some reason, perhaps the premature death of the poet, his original design was not executed: probably a substantial section was intended for the treatment of this important subject which affects so vitally the main purpose of the poem. But cf. 2-1090 - 1104, 2-646-7, 3-14-24, 5-146-155, 5-1169-1182, 6-387-422.

Before we turn to the poet's art, it seems desirable to examine this Epicurean philosophy which Lucretius valued so highly as to lavish his whole life's work upon it. Epicurus (BC 342-270) had numerous and devoted followers in Athens where he founded his school. All accounts agree that his own life was without blemish and that he endured a long illness with patience and courage. For the physical side of his philosophy, he adopted the atomic theory of Democritus and Leucippus and taught, as an ethical doctrine, that the pursuit of happiness should be man's chief aim in life. This concept brought the whole system into disrepute, since mere pleasure-seekers came to be called Epicureans, although Epicurus taught that true happiness was to be found only in virtue. Let us follow his argument in more detail:(1)

Philosophy, Epicurus tells us, is an activity which by learning and reasoning prepares the way for a happy life. We may, therefore, ascribe to philosophy two functions: 1- A theory of man and the universe which explains man's place and powers therein; 2- An application of the knowledge so acquired to ensure the proper conduct for a happy life.

If we keep before our minds these two functions of philosophy, which we may call <u>theory</u> and <u>practice</u>, we will be able to distinguish one philosophy from enother, or, in this case, the philosophy of Epicurus from that of the Stoics or others; for the practice of a philosophy is bound up with the theory and based upon it; hence the difference between philosophies is essentially and primarily one of theory.

1.- Source: "Epicureanism", by William Wallace.

Epicurus believed that every inquiry must be based on human reality, since the practise which follows from the theory will affect our lives as real human beings; and what means has nature given us so that we conceive of anything being as it is or as we think it is? The senses, of course. A river is a river because we sense that it possesses the characteristics because of which we make the sounds R-I-V-E-R and thus communicate to others the conclusion formed by the senses. To maintain that what we see is not really a river but a picture of something else or nothing would surely bring no help to man in his everyday life.

Since Epicureanism is a way of life and since our senses govern our lives, the evidence of the senses must be accepted. The explanation of this doctrine lies in the overwhelming importance that Epicurus attaches to the second element of philosophy. The practise of a properly regulated life demands a theory for its justification. Once he accepts the infallibility of the senses, all phenomena pertaining to man and the universe can be explained on that basis, and a code of ethics set up in conformity with that theory. Any theory, furthermore, which does not conflict with the senses, may be accepted provisionally, and we may safely act in accordance with such a theory. When we consider matters beyond the reach of the senses, we may assume that they operate in the same way as analogous matter which is subject to sensual scrutiny. The unknown is governed by the same regulations as the known. This method of inquiry is called the Canonic of Epicurus,

and provides the basis for his theory concerning the universe and man's place therein; the theory, finally, points to the proper regulation of conduct, and to a happy life.

Since the senses are infallible, the whole universe must be materialistic. What then is its composition? Atoms, "semina rerum," proclaims Lucretius, following in this too the dogma of his leader, Epicurus, who had cast about for some theory of natural science not contradicted by the evidence of the senses and adopted the atomic theory of Democritus and Leucippus. The universe had its beginning through the clashing of atoms which fell through space and swerved but a fraction of a hair, just sufficient for the atoms to fall together like to like[1] thus forming the rude earth's first beginnings. We shall not press this theory for enlightenment since we are not directly concerned with the strength (or weakness) of Epicurean physics, but the atomic theory is important to the purpose of the poem; for to this chance conglomeration of atoms the gods also belong, mortal immortals as it were, suspended vaguely and wisely between universes where we cannot touch or sense them, and whence, conversely, they can exercise no control over us. Men, too, are made of atoms, and must return at death to their original components which during life join together to form the composite man.

Illud in his rebus -- it follows then that man, in marking out his conduct, must not look beyond the limits

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1. When unlike atoms came together, monstrous growths resulted which could not survive.

of his own life-time for reward or consolation. His own ultimate happiness and pleasure are the only criteria by which he is to judge and to act. It is this concept of pleasure, we have already pointed out, which has robbed of good repute both the philosophy and its followers, who came to be known as men without principles to guide them, without gods to punish their transgressions, without moral scruples to deter them from a life of pleasure such as that described by Hume (1), "He alternates his hours between the amiable pleasure and the gay frolic virtue; forgetful of the past, secure of the future, he enjoys the present; the sprightly muses are the companions of his cheerful discourses and friendly endearments; and, after a day spent in all the pleasures of sense, and all the joys of harmony and friendship, the shades of night bring him mutual joy and rapture with the charming Celia, the mistress of his wishes". This unjustified view of Epicureanism is nevertheless inevitable unless we follow the master's reasoning through devious mental byways until he lead us home again to the pursuit of virtue.

Nothing exists beyond the grave: Our little life is rounded by a sleep — or rather oblivion. If pleasure is to be our aim in life, this poses the question: What is Pleasure? Pleasure, we are told, is the absence of pain. Therefore, that pleasure must not be sought which brings with it a disproportionate amount of pain; and conversely, some pains must be accepted which will then bring a proportionately great

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1. Quoted by Wallace, Epicureanism, P. 86.

reward in pleasures; and the consideration of true pleasure will lead us to the pursuit of virtue in which alone can true pleasure be found: "We cannot lead a life of pleasure which is not also a life of prudence, honour and justice; nor lead a life of prudence, honour and justice which is not also a life of pleasure". (1)

All of this seems very logical. Virtue, though it offer no reward at the moment of action, may well leave a rich legacy in the form of contentment and a sense of noble accomplishment-what Cicero calls "conscientia bene actae vitae". (2) But virtue cannot be regarded as always self-rewarding. For example, to die for one's country, or to save a friend cannot bring any reward in this world -- and hence none at all to an Epicurean -- unless the avoidance of remorse in consequence of not having embraced virtue justifies death as the lesser of the two pains.

But the concept of pleasure as man's chief aim in life does not merge with other systems on the ground that all paths lead to virtue. The doctrine of Epicurus would appear to promote a good life for a base and selfish reason; nor does this materialistic view of life allow any distinction between man and beast. (3) Moreover, the practical application of Epicurean teaching demanded a voluntary retirement from the contentions and strife of human relations in politics, commerce and the like. We should watch from solid ground the civiles undas, enjoying not so much the miseries of others as our own static contentment. Man owes nothing to the state per se, or beyond the extent to which he will thereby better his own lot. This Lucretius makes clear in his development of human civilization.

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1. Letter of Ep. to Menoecus, quoted by Wallace Epicureanism pp. 126- 132
2. De Senectute, Ch. 3, Sec. 9.
3. Cf. Cicero, De officiis, Book 1, Ch. 30; "Illae (Beluae) Nihil sentiunt nisi voluptatem ad eamque feruntur omni impetu..."

It was for his own welfare that man made the first social compart "nec laedere nec violari" (1). Sordid self-interest, according to Lucretius, dictated the establishment of a code of law and magistrates to enforce it.

Nor can we excuse Lucretius, with George Hadzsits, because he possessed "a profound belief that salvation of the individual meant redemption of society". (2). There is, in fact, evidence that the poet failed to accept in his own mind this concept of justice as a mere compact for mutual advantage. Why, for instance, does he mention the endearing influence of children as the welding force which kept together man and wife? (3) Lucretius the man and poet certainly regarded the baser concepts of Epicureanism with mixed feelings. But a view of justice had to be conjured up to square with Epicurean materialism (note how closely this view of justice resembles the sophist's "interest of the stronger" in Plato's Republic), and in this, as in all things, our poet carries through the dogma of Epicurus wherever it may lead-even to the bitter end.

In order to understand the poet's viewpoint, and not to condemn him and his philosophy without further evidence, we must consider some qualifying factors. Lucretius, like all men, is a product peculiar to his own temporal and geographical environment. His boyhood and, for that matter, his whole life coincided with the bloodiest period in Roman history. If the

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1. Luc. 5 - 1020
2. George Hadzsits, Lucretius and His Influence, p. 125.
3. 5. - 1017 - 18

reader of this essay has at all forgotten the history of that disheartening period, let him recall the clash of swords in the streets of Rome between the plebeians and the adherents of the Senate in the very year that Lucretius was born; the revolt of the Italian colonies when he was eight years old; the proscriptions of Marius and Sulla during the next ten years. In the course of this civil strife, one third of Italy's able-bodied men perished. It is commonly supposed that such events as these made the way easy for the intrusion of Epicurean teaching into Roman life. Patriots like Cicero might denounce it as "rubbish", (1), but for the ordinary citizen, struggling just to remain alive, Epicureanism undoubtedly possessed some appeal.

It is important also that Lucretius betrays a lack of confidence in his own teachings, not only through discrepancies in argument, but even more through the tone of the whole discourse. A deep inner conflict is carried on between the poet and the philosopher in Lucretius. His poem is a passionate argument against passions, an emotional appeal to avoid emotions. For example, an Epicurean should regard death with equanimity, since it is nothing more than the resolution of atoms into their original forms; but our poet's preoccupation with death leads him far beyond the limits of philosophical treatment, and in the process he creates his best poetry.

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1. De Divinatione, book 1, ch. 3, 5. "Epicurum balbutientem de natura deorum...".

"Iam iam non domus accipiet te laeta, neque uxor
Optima nec dulces occurrent oscula nati
praeripere et tacita pectus dulcedine tangent." (1)

Although he puts these lines in the mouth of an imaginary opponent, he nevertheless expresses in them his own thoughts and perhaps his own loneliness. No less illustrative of the poet's non-Epicurean convictions is his description of death itself:

"..... namque iaceret
aeterno corpus perfusum frigore leti." (2)

The grave movement of the line and its solemn diction bespeak alike a poet awed by the spectre of eternity, not a physicist rearranging atoms. As poetry it is a marvellous line; as philosophy, and especially Epicurean philosophy, it is quite unsuitable.

We have said quite enough of Lucretius, the philosopher, and it is certainly time for us to turn to the poet. We may understand him better if we examine carefully and amicably the tools with which he built his poetic mansion-where he hoped to find happiness independent of gods and men.

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1. Luc. Book 4, 923-4.
2. Luc. Book 3, ll. 894-6.

CHAPTER TWO
THE STRUCTURE OF THE POEM

"Quin etiam refert nostris in versibus ipsis
cum quibus et quali sint ordine quaeque locata."

The De Rerum Natura is, in a sense, two separate poems. The main body of the work comprises an account of the Epicurean philosophy. There are, however, many passages of "pure" poetry which Lucretius apparently inserted at intervals throughout the poem. The latter may be summarized as follows: (1) The "proems", or introductions to each Book; (2) Digressions or extraneous matter within the various books.

The proems would seem to indicate that Lucretius divided the work into six main sections or books, but this is not beyond question. The proem to book one contains a prayer to Venus, a dedication of the poem to Memmius (1), and a tribute to Epicurus. The prayer and dedication belong properly to the beginning of the poem, but the eulogy of Epicurus is repeated at the commencement of books three, five and six. Are books two and four then really separate entities, or do they belong to the books which precede them? In that case, books one and three will be much longer than five and six. If, again, we disregard all divisions of the poem, then the proems can be counted among the poetic "digressions", and not necessarily introductions at all.

To illustrate the structure of the poem, the following chart will clearly show the distinct alternations of pure

1- C. Gemellus Memmius, praetor in 58 B.C, to whom the dedication must have been made on the grounds of friendship, for he was anything but a loyal Epicurean. (Bailey, Vol. 2, p. 598)

poetry with didactic poetry. For the sake of convenience, the usual division into books is retained.

Subject Matter	Location Of Lines
Book One.	
Introduction (prayer, dedication, eulogy of Ep.)	1-145
Physics (indestructibility of matter)	145-398
Digression (the poet's task)	398-417
Physics (matter and void; falsity of rival theories)	417-716
Digression (Mt. Etna, Sicily, Empedocles born there)	716-733
Physics (refutation of rival theories)	733-921
Digression (the poet's crusade)	921-950
Physics (the boundless universe)	950-1117
Book Two.	
Digression (the blessings of philosophy)	1-61
Physics (atomic movement)	61-167
Digression (origin of the world)	167-183
Physics (gravity, atomic swerve, conservation of motion)	183-352
Digression (maternal love in nature)	352-366
Physics (atomic shapes)	366-600
Digression (mother-earth)	600-660
Physics (secondary qualities of atoms)	660-990
Digression (man's heavenly origin)	990-1048
Physics (numerous Universes)	1048-1090
Digression (absence of divine control)	1090-1104
Physics (Growth and decay)	1104-1174
Book Three.	
Digression (praise of Epicurus)	1-30

Introduction (man's fear of death)	30-93
Physics (nature of the soul)	93-830
Digression (our human failings)	830-893
Ethics (fear of death unjustified)	893-978
Ethics (false fear of punishment after death)	978-1023
Ethics (death is common to all men)	1023-1052
Digression (satire -- if men fear death, why do they live as they do?)	1052-1074
Ethics (death is unavoidable)	1074-1094

Book Four.

Digression (the poet's mission)	1-25
Physics (the simulacra of vision)	25-269
Physics (Explanation of reflected images)	269-323
Digression (vision in everyday life)	323-378
Physics (the infallibility of the senses)	378-521
Physics (hearing)	521-614
Physics (taste)	614-632
Digression (tastes vary among creatures)	632-673
Physics (smell)	673-721
Digression (dreams and visions)	721-776
Digression (conscious thoughts)	776-818
Digression (cause and effect in creation)	818-876
Physics (muscular reaction)	876-906
Digression (advice to the reader)	906-915
Physics (dreams)	915-961
Digression (examples of dreams)	961-1036
Physics (sexual desire)	1036-1057
Digression (attack on the passion of love)	1057-1287

Book Five

Book Six

Digression (the folly of ascribing thunder-bolts to the gods)	378-422
Natural Science (water-spouts and other phenomena)	422-534
Natural Science (earthquakes)	534-608
Natural Science (constant volume of the sea)	208-638
Natural Science (volcano)	638-702
Natural Science (the Nile river)	702-737
Natural Science (poisonous vapors)	737-839
Natural Science (hot springs)	839-905
Natural Science (the magnet)	905-1089
Medicine (pestilence)	1089-1137
Digression (the plague at Athens, 430 B.C.)	1137-1286

It is tempting to conclude that, in some cases at least, the poet inserted these digressions by design. This scheme is more apparent in the first two books where the "poetic" sections completely interrupt the thread of the discourse. Indeed, it is in the course of one of these digressions that he seems to suggest the idea:

> "Sed veluti pueris absinthia taetra medentes
> cum dare conantur, prius oras pocula circum
> contingunt mellis dulci flavoque liquore
> ...sic ego nunc...volui tibi suaviloquenti
> carmine Pierio rationem exponere nostram...".(1)

But he perhaps means his whole poem, and not only "poetic" sections. He has already promised to touch all things with the Muse's charm, and he certainly regards his whole poem as poetry. However, some of the passages in question show that they were meant to be stopping-points along the way. In Book 1, l. 417, after a digression of nineteen lines, the poet resumes his task with these words:

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1. Luc Book 1, ll. 936-950 (quotation abridged)

"sed nunc ut repetam coeptum pertexere dictis..." At. l. 950, after the famous simile quoted above, he returns to his subject as if shaking off this literary lapse;

"Sed quoniam docui...".

In Book 2, l. 62, he takes up the burden of argument with

"Nunc age, quo motu...".

Although digressions do occur in the last four books of the poem — and there are very many — still the sharp, abrupt transition to a new topic in no longer found. The digression is now likely to be suggested by the subject matter. For example, the physics of vision is followed by a lengthy discussion of cases where the eye is apparently deceived (1); the section on sex introduces a violent attack on the passion of love (2). Sometimes the suggestion is indirect, e.g. the section on metals causes the poet to think of weapons, then of wars, and finally of beasts employed in battle (3). A general statement may be related to a particular example or vice versa, e.g. the many combinations of atoms which exist sometimes give rise to pestilence — as was the case in Athens. On the other hand, the existence of Mt. Aetna proves that fiery blasts of wind rage through hollow caverns underground.

The first two books, therefore, which deal with Epicurean physics, form a closely connected account. The variations in the theme are distinct interruptions or "rests" in the argument, and probably intentional. From this fact,

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1. Book 4, ll. 323 seq.
2. Book 4, ll. 1057 seq.
3. Book 5, ll. 1311 seq. The passage is somewhat irrational, especially the last words, "si fuit ut facerent". One critic, at least, finds in it proof of L's insanity. (Postgate, "New Light Upon Lucretius" John Rylands Lib., 1926)

we may suppose that the first books represent the poet's finished work. The remaining four books stand in varying stages of disarray, book six being little more than a patch-work of unrelated examples.

Some critics maintain that only the "digressions" in Lucretius deserve the name "poetry". They are said to be oases amid the arid wastes of philosophical argument. These critics would restrict poetry to certain "poetical" topics, one German scholar having gone so far as to deny any artistic value to Lucretius on the ground that philosophy is in no way a gift of the Muses. Well, at least Lucretius was no innovator in committing didactic material to verse. Literature in its earliest form was invariably verse, and it became conventional in ancient Greece to undertake various poetical genres in specific dialects and metres. The "learned" Hesiod set to dactylic hexameters his dour prescription for human conduct. However, when Greek thought came to full flower in the fifth century B.C., prose supplanted verse as a vehicle of instruction. Once the art of writing had become commonplace, the need for verse as an aid to memory disappeared and poetry began to be cherished for its beauty rather than its utility. Poetry was now composed to charm more than instruct the listener.(1)

If Lucretius, therefore, had followed the example of the illustrious Greek philosophers, he should have

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1. "Didactic poetry was the normal medium of expression before writing and reading were commonly known. Artistic didactic poetry then developed in which the art is more than content..." Geer: Classical Civilization, p. 156.

avoided the language of the Muses in a philosophical treatise. That he did not do so proves that he was a poet by inclination, though a philosopher by choice, and preferred to risk a departure form the time-honoured medium rather than abandon either the projected poem or subject. Both were dear to him; he desired passionately to free his fellowmen from the suffering which, he felt, pressed so heavily upon them, from the terrors and uncertainties of daily life combined with the grim prognostications of punishment after death. The anomaly of the De Rerum Natura is that the Epicurean philosophy, an unlikely subject for poetry, proved so inspirational to the poet.

A person who read this short analysis of the poem's structure, but not the poem itself, might conclude that the work contains serious flaws for which Lucretius cannot be pardoned. Such an impression is surely not a correct one. If we judge the poet's exposition of "theoretical" philosophy alone, then the errors are indeed hard to miss, but they are faults common to the Epicurean system, for which Lucretius can scarcely be blamed.. For example, Epicurus teaches that any possible explanation of phenomena can be accepted provided that it does not conflict with the evidence of the senses. Lucretius is thereby led to explain any earthly wonder which chances to come to his mind, and the natural result of this practice is a certain degree of incoherence. However, from the "practical" or ethical standpoint, Lucretius maintains a fixed and intense purpose throughout the poem. This purpose,

as we have stated before, is to free mankind from fear, and to conduct him to a happy life. The theme is repeated again and again, and like the melody running through a symphony, motivates the whole work.

The poet feels a profound sense of duty towards his readers. His is an urgent mission, and no proof, example, analogy, simile or word-picture can be omitted which will add conviction to his argument. Here then is the source and wellspring of Lucretian imagery. Goaded by an almost holy zeal and a restless excitement of the imagination, he brings the dull atoms to life and parades them across the stage like marching legions. Forceful expression is the outstanding characteristic of Lucretius. Nothing is "misty or in soft focus" (1). He attaches to inanimate objects or forces an almost human will, so that winds "swoop down to dislodge and destroy things with numerous blows" (2), atoms make war on one another (3), flame "lurks hidden in logs" (4). Some of these quaint expressions result from the lack of suitable Latin words to explain scientific processes, but they illustrate all the more the vivid imagination of the poet.

The "picture" quality of Lucretian verse is shown in metaphors like the ones just quoted and also in the wealth of examples which he draws from every side of Roman Life. Although all of the editors have recognized the abundant metaphors in the poem, none has attempted a systematic examination of them. They seem to show first of all the teacher striving to make every point and every proof

1. Leonard & Smith, p. 184. 2. 1. 291. 3. 1-337 4. 1-871

almost painfully clear to his student; then we see the perplexed scientist adapting a word to suit or nearly suit the context; or perhaps the poet just puts down a happy phrase which may be his own or a reminiscence from his own reading.

The image in a very great number of metaphors is derived from armed warfare, sometimes very lightly felt, as in

"...elementa... permutato ordine...." (1)

but in other cases obviously intended:

"quiddam quod contra pugnare obstareque possit?" (2)

More than fourteen hundred examples have been isolated by actual count. This confirms what the reader already knows — that the imagery of Lucretius is sharp and distinct. But it does more than that. It shows us the almost unnatural pessimism of the poet, his morbid contemplation of violent death, and the dismal failure of Epicureanism to heal the wounds of its noblest and most ardent partisan.

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1. 1.-827. 2. 2.-280

CHAPTER THREE

COMMON METAPHORS

"... Dictis quibus et quo carmine demum clara tuae possim
praepandere lumina menti..."

It is not enough to see, in a general way, the frequency of metaphors in Lucretius. It is likely that our understanding (and, therefore, our appreciation) of his genius will be enhanced by a more detailed study. We must not produce a mere word-list, nor can we spare the reader the numerous quotations which a comprehensive survey demands.

We can approach our task in several different ways: We can examine the various topics of the poem separately, and the metaphors peculiar to each, or perhaps maintain a distinction between "technical" and "poetic" metap hors. A fault common to these methods would be the repetition of the same word in different contexts throughout the essay, where a comparison of usages would be awkward if not impossible. It seems best, on the whole, to discuss the commonest words individually first, and to proceed to the more sustained word-pictures later.

Let us take up the verb "fugio", its compounds "diffugio", "suffugio" and "effugio", the intensive form "fugito", and the nouns "fuga", "effugium" and "perfugium". The natural and original meaning is "flee"—presumably from harm or because of terror or pain. The literal meaning is found in the poem: (5. 1072)

"canes...fugiunt summisso corpore plagas".

The compound "diffugio" consistently means "fly apart" describing the activity of the atoms, the "corpora prima" of which all nature is formed: (6. 232)

"fulmen...curat item vasis integris vina repente diffugiant..."

In his account of the world's formation, Lucretius pictures a "nova tempestas quaedam et moles", a huge mass of atoms which embraces sun, moon, stars and earth in one shapeless entity. From this mass the atoms began to detach themselves: (5. 443)

"Diffugere inde loci partes coepere...".

Elsewhere this verb denotes the diffusion of perfume: (3. 222)

"...cum "spiritus unguenti suavis diffugit in auras".

"Diffugio" shows this technical meaning at eleven places in the poem (1). It will be observed that the prefix "-dis" accurately pictures the dispersal of the atoms of wine, earth and perfume in many directions at once. The metaphors in these examples lie in the attribution of voluntary action to inanimate objects, and, in all these cases where the word signifies violent activity, the image is derived from armed conflict. The wine flees bofore the onslaught of the thunderbolt, the atoms from the anonymity of primal chaos, the perfume from its imprisonment in the jar.

The following passage will show this personification vividly: Lucretius is attempting to refute the physical theory of Anaxagoras (2), the "homoeomeria", according to

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1. 1. 761, 762, 1103; 2. 457; 3. 122, 222, 255, 817; 4. 566, 443; 6. 232.
2. Born circa BC 500.

which all things are made of tiny replicas of themselves, or, as Lucretius succinctly puts it, "bones are made of very small bones, flesh of small and tiny pieces of flesh...". The poet complains that the Anaxagorean atoms lack the necessary solidity: (1. 852-3)

> "nam quid in oppressu valido durabit eorum
> ut mortem effugiat, leti sub dentibus ipsis?"

He represents the atoms of Anaxagoras as weak creatures unable to withstand the crushing jaws of death. The compound "effugio" should mean "to make good one's escape", and the poet uses the word with his usual exactness, a fact which renders the metaphors all the more apt and forceful. The following example brings out the difference in meaning between the simple and the compound verb: (3. 1068-9)

> "hoc se quisque modo fugit, at quam scilicet, ut
> fit, effugere haud potis est, ingratis haeret et
> odit".

Bailey translates (1) in part: "Each man struggles to flee from himself... in fact he cannot escape...". The metaphor is in the transference of physical to mental activity, as it is in the following passages which show a variety of settings for the same image:. The poet warns that we must escape the snares of Love: (4. 1150)

> "...et tamen implicitus quoque possis inque peditus
> (2) effugere infestum..."

Note how the metaphor is developed in the first line quoted so that the picture seems to be that of a prisoner being advised how to escape his shackles. Likewise we must avoid the errors of false reasoning: (4. 824)

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1. Vol. 1, p. 357.
2. Tmesis, a relic of the early language when the prefix was kept separate from the verb.

"Illud in his rebus vitium vementer avessis
effugere...".

The point is more strongly emphasized in the following lines, where the word "effugium" is similarly used: (3. 524)

"Usque adeo falsae rationi vera videtur
res occurrere et effugium praecludere eunti
ancipitique refutatu convincere falsum".

Lucretius pictures the supporter of a non-Epicurean view as an enemy whose escape from true reasoning is cut off by the double-edged sword of argument.

The other compounds of "fugio" occur more rarely, but offer, nevertheless, interesting examples to prove how the poet strives for a clear picture through metaphor. In the following passage Lucretius sets forth the theory of a rival philosopher: (3. 766)

"scilicet in tenero tenerascere corpore mentem
confugient...".

He begins contemptuously with "scilicet", then strikes upon the one word "confugient" which makes a clear picture out of an abstract statement of belief. The reader sees the opponents of Epicureanism huddled together for shelter in a last stronghold which our poet is about to destroy. How incomparably better the line stands with "confugient" than with "putant" or "dicunt" which the preceding accusative and infinitive seem to require.

Lucretius uses "suffugio" to describe the blending of angles at a distance (4. 360), "profugio" the escape of the soul from the body (3. 717), "perfugium" a castle. (5. 1109) or a retreat from logic (5. 1186)

The simple verb "fugio" appears in every range from the literal to the picturesque. One of the prettiest pictures can be found in the Invocation to Venus at the beginning of the poem: (1. 6)

"Te, dea, te fugiunt venti, te nubila caeli...".

Another is that of a boat sailing along a river: (4. 390)

"Et fugere ad puppim colles campique videntur...".

He uses the same verb to describe the movement of lightning: (6. 332)

"Inter enim fugit ac penetrat per rara viarum (1)",

or the perspiration from the body: (2. 715)

"...multaque caecis
"Corporibus fugiunt e corpore percita plagis...".

Here the metaphor is strengthened by the words "percita plagis". The following example is both typically Lucretian and a model of precise metaphor: (6. 1043)

"Fit quoque ut a lapide hoc ferri natura recedat
interdum, fugere atque sequi consueta vicissim".

He is, of course, discussing magnetic attraction and repulsion. The idea of "flee" and "pursue", related to magnetic force, is at once imaginative and exact. Not only "fugere", but "recedat", "sequi", "consueta" and "vicissim" all bring the scene to life, and endow the iron with human attributes of thought and volition.

"Fugio" appears once or twice in its literal meaning. It would be unnecessary to quote an example, but the following will further illustrate the "picture" quality of Lucretian style, and show his use of almost identical words to describe human activity as he adopted for the exposition of his physical theories— and with undiminished effect: (5. 984-7)

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1. A Graecism for "raras vias"; similar examples appear in at least 20 other places throughout the poem.

"...eiectique domo fugiebant saxea tecta
spumigeri suis adventu validique leonis
atque intempesta cedebant nocte paventes
hospitibus saevis instrata cubilia fronde".

This passage presents a succession of varied pictures. Taken as it is from our author's account of civilization's beginnings, it tells of an early human habitation, from which the occupants were likely to be expelled in the dead of night: First, Lucretius uses the word "domus", which calls to the mind the family abode, dear and familiar; then he defines home as "saxea tecta", a cave, further clarified by "instrata cubilia fronde", their "couches spread with leaves" which they must yield to their cruel guests. The touch of humour completes a vivid picture.

There remains to be discussed in this section the intensive verb "fugito" which appears six times (1) in the poem. The verb is mostly ante-classical, and there seems to be no particular reason for its use by Lucretius. It is not a metrical solvent. We may conjecture that he chooses the word for variety and to support the archaic tone of the work. In its normal sense "to flee in haste", it is found only once (6. 753). The imagery in the other cases may involve personification: (4. 324)

"Splendida porro oculi fugitant vitantque tueri...",

the humorous use of a forceful word: (4. 1176)

"Et miseram taetris se suffit oderibus ipsa
quam famulae longe fugitant furtimoue cachinnant.",

or the expression of a mental activity in physical terms: (6. 1239)

I. 1. 658; 4. 299; 1065, 1176; 6. 753, 1239

"Nam quicumque suos fugitabant visere ad aegros...".

The verb "vinco" gives further evidence of the author's fondness for the strong, bold metaphor in a variety of contexts. Unlike "fugio", there exists no sharp distinction between the various compounds, which are apparently chosen for variety and as metrical solvents. The word very commonly (1) denotes a victory or defeat in argument: (6. 498)

> "... primum iam semina aquai
> multa simul vincam consurgere nubibus ipsis".

The accusative and infinitive construction would be more usual with "convinco" which is so used by Cicero (2). In the Passive Voice, the verb pictures the submission of the reader to the poet's argument: (5. 343)

> "Tanto quique magis victus fateare necessest
> exitium quoque terrarum caelique futurum".

The use of "vinco" with the implication "conquer ages" is perhaps, exclusively Lucretian. In the following line, he uses both the normal "vivo" and "vinco" to emphasize a point in the argument: If there were no atoms, the poet writes, and if things could be created out of nothing, then the earth might suddenly produce men of monstrous size: (1. 200-2)

> "..... qui pontum per vada possent
> "transire et magnos manibus divellere montis
> "multaque vivendo vitalia vincere saecle".

The alliteration too helps to drive the argument home, and influences his choice of words here.

"Vinco", applied to inanimate things, shows a rich variety of meanings. The reader will note more than a trace of satire in this passage: (5. 1269-72)

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1. 1,72,624; 2,748; 3,525; 4,481,488,496, 764; 5, 99,343,728, 735; 6,498,708.

"Nec minus argento facere haec auroque parabant
quam validi primum violentis viribus aeris,
nequiquam, quoniam cedebat victa potestas
nec poterant pariter durum sufferre laborem".

"Cedebat victa potestas" is our author's quaint way of stating that silver and gold were easily blunted, and therefore, of little use to early man; the "violent force of rugged bronze" far outvalued soft, useless gold among those savage poeples whose assessment of worth was certainly more direct, and perhaps more creditable than that of modern mortals by whom gold is held in "wondrous honour".

The decay of matter, induced by lapseof time, is shown by the wearing away of a rock: (5. 306)

"Denique non lapides quoque vinci cernis ab aevo?",

or, in the case of a flame, by the consumption of its powers: (5. 409)

"Inde cadunt vires (ignis) aliqua ratione revictae...".

Grain ripens in the sun: (5. 1104)

".....multa videbant
verberibus radiorum atque aestu victa per agros".

Here "victa" completes the metaphor begun at "verberibus". The image is perhaps slightly felt, but the poet seems to be thinking of a row of soldiers or prisoners who succumb to repeated blows or lashes. The melting of brass in the forge produces a striking combination of metaphors: (1. 493)

"tum glacies aeris flamma devicta liquescit...".

The first image is that of melting ice, while "devicta" pictures the complete subjection of the resisting bronze to the fire.

It will be observed that Lucretius employs "vinco"

metaphorically almost to the exclusion of the primary meaning: in fact, out of forty examples which we have noted, only three can be construed to mean "conquer" in the physical sense. That this is partly due to the nature of the treatise cannot be overlooked; but the wide range of the metaphors clearly reveals the poet's art, while the clarity of his diction supports our view— namely, that metaphor is responsible for the "picture" quality of Lucretian style.

In view of the abundant metaphors in the preceding section, it will be something of an anticlimax to study the Lucretian use of the verb "sisto" and its compounds. The word "sisto", though military in origin, had passed into the language of everyday life before classical times, and the metaphor is noticeable only to a slight degree. The following examples will show that Lucretius, while maintaining the exact meaning of each verb, still displays in the use of this common verb his genius for sketching a picture with words.

Some of the compounds (consisto, exsisto) he has adopted as "technical" words for the exposition of his physical theories: (1. 706)

".....ex igni summam consistere posse (putarunt)". The English "consist of" or "is made of" provides an accurate translation here, and this is the usual meaning of the word in its technical sense (1). In the following, the context is very different: (5. 415)

1. See note 1. on page 30.

"Constiterunt imbres et flumina vim minuerunt". "The rains halted and the rivers abated their violence". Note how the imagery, begun with "constiterunt", is carried on through the rest of the line. Sometimes the meaning "halt" is extended to "hold one's place" or "endure": (3. 606)

"...minimum quodvis nequeat consistere tempus". In the following passage, the context demands a slightly different rendering: (6. 11)

"...et, proquam possent, vitam consistere tutam (vidit)".

The compound "exsisto" maintains in all cases the primary meaning "stand forth", but again the various contexts give scope to the poet's imaginative touch. He represents the crops standing like soldiers in straight ranks: (5. 212)

"(segetes) sponte sua nequeant liquidas exsistere in auras",

the sweat standing on a man's brow: (3. 154)

"Sudoresque ita palloremque exsistere toto "corpore", the birth of a child: (4.1228)

"Maternoque mares exsistunt corpore creti".

The other compounds and the simple verb "sisto" are less common. One example, however, deserves to be quoted, not so much to illustrate the verb being discussed as for its startling clarity and beauty.

Lucretius teaches that atoms are not all alike

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1. Other examples: 1,-168 - 235,-394,-420,-752,-839,-872,-989,-1028; 2,-584,-697,-906,-1120; 3,-349,-846; 4,-101; 5,-60,-65,-237; 6,-44.

in size and shape. To prove this point, he observes that between animals, even of the same species, some differences must exist, for in no other way could a mother recognize her own offspring. Here the poet forsakes the philosopher and he tells a story about a cow and her calf, the calf sacrificed on the altar to some god (a useless offering according to Epicureanism), the cow seeking her offspring in the pasture: (2. 355-60)

> "At mater viridis saltus orbata peragrans
> "quaerit humi pedibus vestigia pressa bisulcis,
> "omnia convisens oculis loca si queat usquam
> "conspicere amissum fetum, completque querellis
> "frondiferum nemus adsistens et crebra revisit
> "ad stabulum desiderio perfixa iuvenci..."

As we have said, the use of "adsistens" is not noteworthy, but no essay on Lucretian style could omit or disregard these lines, perhaps the finest in the poem, though they are least important to the poet's philosophy. Indeed, one can scarcely believe that the author of these verses ascribed every human emotion to the swerve of an atom (1). Such a passage as this one may have prompted the numerous critics who maintain that Lucretius is a great poet in spite of his philosophical beliefs, not because of them. "...In spite of his philosophy, he everywhere gives way to admiration, and rapturous views of nature. He is transported with the several beauties of the world even when he arraigns the

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1. The atoms, falling straight downwards, could never collide but for the "clinamen principiorum", the swerve of the atoms. This phenomenon is not explained, except that it "must be so", since otherwise nothing could be created, or possess free will (2. 216-93).

order of it, and destroys the principle of beauty...". This opinion, written by Shaftesbury (1), and shared by many other admirers of Lucretius, appears to disregard the close and almost inseparable union in Lucretius of poetic eloquence with philosophical conviction. The tender and appealing depiction of the cow's love for her calf forms part of a philosophical proof. Had the poet not wished to show that differences exist within the same species, would such a simile have occurred to him, and, even if it had, would he have told the story with the same impassioned fervor for its own sake? His burning desire to convert mankind to Epicureanism, to free us from fear, to explain rationally the mysteries of the universe — this desire inspired him to create the unsurpassed poetry which our critics would now wrench from its context and regard as the true Lucretian muse.

As a last example of verbal metaphor, the verb "iacio" and its compounds will be given separate consideration. There are no fewer than ninety-nine uses of this verb in the poem. It is characteristic of Lucretius to turn to the word "hurl" to describe every form of physical, mental and atomic activity.

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1. "Characteristics", 1727, 3, 32, quoted by Merrill, Luc., p. 51.

As a technical word, "iacio" pictures the emanations from matter which are supposed to produce vision: (4. 68)

"...cum sint in summis corpora rebus
multa minuta, iaci quae possint...",

the diffusion of light: (1. 663)

"aestifer ignis uti lumen iacit...",

of perfume:

"nec iaciunt ullum proprium de corpore odorem".

The compound "eicio" describes the departure of the soul: (3. 577)

"quare etiam atque etiam resoluto corporis omni
tegmine et eiectis extra vitalibus auris".

The body is a covering (tegmen) which contains the life-giving "breezes". As the covering is unravelled (resoluto), the breath of life escapes. In the following example, where the verb denotes the expulsion of semen, note how the metaphor, begun with "eicio", is echoed back by the words "contendit" and "dira":(4. 1046)

"...eicere id (semen) quo se contendit dira libido".

The poet produces a variety of impressions from the intensive verb "iacto". Dogs toss their puppies about: (5. 1068)

"aut ubi eos (catulos) iactant pedibus",

wild bulls turn on their own masters in battle; (5. 1323)

"iactabantque suos tauri pedibusque terebant",

water is evaporated by the sun: (6. 874)

"praeterea solis radiis iactatur aquai...umor",

a chain sways in the breeze: (6. 913)

"...ordine demisso levibus iactarier auris".

A final example will illustrate once more the poet's forceful style, but even more his acute perception of true causes. Oddly enough he makes the deduction to defend a rather absurd Epicurean theory, that vision results from "films" which continuously peel off from the surface of every object and strike against the human eye. Dreams must be caused by stray films which wander about the sky and impinge themselves upon the mind. The following passage explains how these dream-figures are able to move: (4. 768 seq.)

> "quod superest, non est mirum simulacra moveri
> bracchiaque in numerum iactare et cetera membra,
> nam fit ut in somnis facere hoc videatur imago;
> quippe ubi prima perit alioque est altera nata
> inde statu, prior hic gestum mutasse videtur,
> scilicet id fieri celeri ratione putandumst".

The deduction that a rapid succession of images creates the impression of movement is a remarkable one and this fact is, of course, the basis of motion-picture photography. Even in this technical passage, the reader who has fallen under the spell of Lucretius will feel the poet's touch more than the philosopher's. The argument concerns dreams of dead persons whose "films", cast off during their lifetime, come back through the night air to haunt us in dreams. Why then do they "toss their limbs in rhythmic time "? Despite his rational account, Lucretius feels the shadowy presence of a phantom, a convulsive jerking of the limbs that betrays a being from beyond the grave.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUSTAINED METAPHORS

The rather close and detailed examples in the preceding chapter appeared to be necessary in order to demonstrate with some exactness the employment of common words in various contexts. We can now browse more freely through the poem and attampt to quote the word-pictures which best illustrate his genius.

Lucretius is primarily a teacher, and an earnest one. It is in his eager anxiety to convince his students of some Epicurean tenet that he manifests the most striking and forceful metaphors. The indestructibility of the atom is stated in these words: (l. 528 seq).

> "haec neque dissolvi plagis extrinsecus icta
> possunt nec porro penitus penetrata retexi
> nec ratione queunt alia temptate labare".

Several images seem to merge in this picture; violent blows (plagis icta), unravelled cloth (dissolvi, retexi), the onset of disease (temptata), and the tottering of a house's foundation (labare). Like a painting done in bright colours, the lines demand attention.

The sustained argument and purpose of the poet-teacher is aided by his stately and elevated diction. Lucretius never quite quite descends to the commonplace, even in long passages of dry Epicureanism. The dignity of the verse is due partly to a conscious archaism which the poet adopts from his illustrious predecessor, Ennius, partly to his own humorless pessimism, but most of all to the grave and noble phrasing. There are many splendid

instances of metaphors which serve only to heighten the literary tone of the poem.. Singly, they strike the reader as colourful poetic embellishments; en masse, they contribute a significant share to the majesty of Lucretian verse. If the student of Lucretius were asked to quote at random from the poem, he would probably remember the "flammantia moenia mundi" (1), that solemn but magnificent phrase which pictures the edge of the universe as a fortress ringed by raging flames.

It is almost impossible to demonstrate adequately by examples a quality which is inherent in the poem and inseparable from it. The lofty diction of Lucretius is like a coloured strand woven through a piece of cloth; we must examine the whole cloth to appreciate its effect, and in no way can we estimate the value of the thread by plucking it forth from the weave.. If the reader agrees, however, that Lucretius maintains this uplifted writing throughout the poem, the following metaphors will be seen to form part of that design.

He speaks of the atoms as "solida pollentia simplicitate" (2), rendered by Bailey "that prevail in their solid singleness". The odd, but dignified, expression seems to attract Lucretius so that he employs it several times with minor variations. Often the prosaic word will be changed or elaborated. "Earth, air and water" become "terrae...corpus et aerias auras roremque liquoris" (3); "stone and iron" are called "validas saxi radices et fera ferri...corpora" (4); the ocean is "sudor...maris" (5) or

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1. Luc. 1.-73. 2. Luc. 1.-548,574,609,612; 2. 157. 3.-1. 771. 4. 2. 103. 5. 2. 465.

"Neptuni corpus acerbum " (1), wild beasts are "saecla ferarum" (2).

Not only are common words supplanted by the elevated language of Lucretian poetry. The metaphors which seem designated to ennoble his style stand out in countless phrases and expressions. He speaks of the "severa silentia noctis " (3), and with equal pessimism writes "nox obruit ingenti caligine terras (4). The sun is a fountain, "largus liquidi fons luminis aetherius sol" (5), the stars night-wandering torches, "noctivagaeque faces caeli flammaeque volantes" (6). During an eclipse, the moon hides in secret lairs, "lunaeque latebras" (7), or is plundered of her light, "spoliare lunam lumine" (8). The Great Flood was the reign of moisture, "umor regnarit in arvis" (9), but the poet also pictures great tides of wrath, "magnos irarum volvere fluctus" (10). Death is a chill tremor, "frigore leti" (11), a shoal, "ad vada leti" (12), or the embrace of earth, "tellus amplectitur ossa" (13).

The metaphors quoted thus far added, we felt, to the grandeur of the poem. Many others show rather the transfer of images taken from every-day life to topics in the poem. Lucretius promises to free us from the snares of religion, "exsolvere nodis religionum" (14), or of passion, "nodos Veneris" (15), but he even extends the image to heat which looses the tight knots of metals i.e. by melting them, "dissolvunt nodos..." (16).

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1. 2. 472. 2. 4, 413 et ubique, 3. Luc 4. 460. 4. Luc 5. 650. 5. Luc. 5. 281. 6. Luc. 5. 1191. 7. Luc. 5. 751. 8. Luc. 5. 762. 9. Luc. 5. 395. 10. Luc. 6. 74. 11. Luc. 4. 924. 12. Luc. 5. 1232. 13. Luc. 4. 734. 14. Luc. 4.7. 15. Luc. 4. 1148. 16. Luc. 6. 356.

Many writers have compared life to the running of a race, and this image appears in Lucretius too; but Lucretius takes the expression "lumine vitae" (1), a metaphor, and joins it with "decurso" which would be literally translated "when the light of his life had been run out". Perhaps this is no more strange than Shakespere's "to take up arms against a sea of troubles". At any rate, Lucretius corrects the image in another example, "spatium decurrere amoris" (2).

A favorite device of the poet is to liken our life and struggles therein to a journey and its attendant hardships. In philosophy, he means the narrow path to true reasoning when he refutes other philosophers who fear to accept the radical atomic theory and thus " ardua dum metuunt, amittunt vera viai" (3), In a general way, he pities those who lack the blessings of true understanding: "queas videre...alios passim...errare atque viam palantis quaerere vitae..." (4). For his own poetic exploits he awards himself the explorer's palm: "avia Pieridum peragro loca nullius ante trita solo" (5).

Other typical Lucretian touches reflect an interest in horsemanship. Such an image surely comes to mind in the words "percussit thyrso laudis spes magna meum cor..." (6) or "materiem corporis...refrenavit per membra voluntas" (7) or still more in the quaint phrase "pascere oculos" (8). He charmingly reverses the metaphor in a passage which actually involves horses: "equus florenti aetate iuvencus pinmigeri saevit calcaribus ictus amoris" (9).

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1. Luc. 3. 1042. 2. LUC. 4. 1196. 3. Luc. 1. 659. 4. Luc. 2. 10. 5. Luc. 1. 920. 6. Luc. 6923. 7. Luc. 2. 276. 8. Luc. 2. 419 9. Luc. 5. 1075.

Metaphors from sowing and harvesting are very common andoften the picture is no natural that the original meaning of the word in question is forgotten. Lucretius sometimes extends the metaphor to create an original and happy picture as in "sol... Lumine conserit arva" (1) where the sun becomes the ploughman and in "lacrimis spargunt rorantibus ora genasque" (2) where tears are raindrops. The following lines show the poet's usual pessimism and also a proclivity to bitter satire:

> "aere solum terrae tractabant, aereque belli
> miscebant fluctus et vulnera vasta serebant" (3).

Note the rhetorical "aere" and the deliberate striving for alliteration to drive home a telling point.

Like all poets, Lucretius gazes in awe upon the manifestations of nature, wind, sea, thunder, rain and even such lesser phenomena as hot springs, volcanoes and waterspouts. He is less likely to adapt images from these topics to others than he is to seize upon words from every source in a frantic effort adequately to treat these stupendous natural wonders with a poet's vision. Here is his description of a gale:

> "silvifragis vexat flabris: ita perfurit acri
> cum fremitu saevitque minaci murmure ventus" (4)

In his brooding anxiety he sees only the menacing qualities in the roaring winds and in the muttering thunder:

> "fulminis horribili cum plaga torrida tellus
> contremit et magnum percurrunt murmura caelum" (5)

We find the poet in a more tranquil mood as he produces the example of sea-shells on the shore to prove that objects of one class follow a set pattern:

1.8. Luc. 2. 211. 2. Luc. 2. 977. 3. Luc. 5. 1290
4. Luc. 1. 275-6. 5. Luc. 5. 1220-1.

"concharumque genus parili ratione videmus
pingere telluris gremium, qua mollibus undis
litoris incurvi bibulam pavit aequor harenam" (1).

It is worth while to quote here Bailey's translation of these lines to show how deeply this scholar feels their picture-like impression: "And in like manner we see the race of shells painting the lap of earth, where with its gentle waves the sea beats on the thirsty sand of the winding shore" (2). As we have said, the derivation of metaphors from nature is limited in Lucretius, but one passage may be cited which will show the metaphor, however lightly felt:

"cum confluxerunt (semina rerum), patefit quodcumque creatur,
dum tempestates adsunt et vivida tellus
tuto res teneras effert in luminis oras" (3).

The verb "fluo" and its compounds are very common in many contexts, and "in luminis oras" is, of course, conventional.

Metaphors taken from fire are not numerous, but one quotation, which begins with a common expression, shows how the image clung to the poet, so that he pursued the same picture in a succeeding line when he might well have employed some other phrase to complete the episode:

"numquam Tyndaridis forma conflatus amoris
ignis, Alexandri Phrygio sub pectore gliscens,
clara accendisset saevi certamina belli..." (4)

"Ignis amoris" is not at all unusual, but note how the whole image comes to life when the poet represents the fire of love setting ablaze the clash of arms. Note also the pregnant meaning of "clara". It is again typical of Lucretius to describe actual fires in terms of other processes:

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1. 2. 375-6. 2. Bailey, Luc., page 257. 3. 1. 177-9.
4. 1-473-5

"donec flammai fulseruht flore coorto",(1)

and

"ignes...celeri flamma degustant tigna trabesque".(2)

The flame is first a budding flower, then a monster gulping down beams and rafters.

While the importance of metaphor to Lucretian style has been established to some extent by the various categorical examples quoted thus far, we must still consider the pictures of violent activity, armed strife, destruction and death which dominate the poem and clearly reveal not only the genius of Lucretius, but even his earnestness, his sincerity, his sad and mournful philosophy, and perhaps his madness.

According to the atomic theory, the universe is composed of tiny indestructible elements which fall downwards in a constant stream. The atoms have a limited number of shapes, but of each shape there is an infinite supply. The chance meetings of these various atoms create everything in the universe; hooked atoms join together to form iron, smooth, round atoms become water or sand, very fine atoms make up the wind or the breath of life. Decay and regeneration is a continuous process as the atomic combinations keep changing, although the atoms themselves are invincible.

This constant motion (3) had to be fully described and proven, a feat which, Lucretius tells us, overtaxed the resources of the Latin tongue (4). The numerous metaphors

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1. 1-900 2. 2-192
3. 2-62 Seq. 4. 1-139

drawn from strife and violent activity in general show the poet's solution to the linguistic problem:

> "porro si nullast frangendis reddita finis
> corporibus, tamen ex aeterno tempore quaeque
> nunc etiam superare necessest corpora rebus,
> quae nondum clueant ullo temptata periclo,
> at quoniam fragili natura praedita constant,
> descrepat aeternum tempus potuisse manere
> innumerabilibus plagis vexata per aevum" (1)

These lines quoted almost at random, give abundant evidence of such images. Although the imagery is, in a sense, created through necessity, we still recognize the genius of the creator. Note how earnestly he seeks to make his meaning clear beyond all doubt; the words of the first explanation are echoed in the second: frangendis: fragili; superare: manere; temptata: vexata; periclo: plagis. The swift but erratic movement of the atoms sounds like a battle between evenly matched opponents:

> "multa videbis enim plagis ibi percita caecis
> commutare viam retroque repulsa reverti
> nunc huc nunc illuc in cunctas undique partis" (2)

and elsewhere they seem to march in close ranks;

> "agmine condenso naturam corporis explent..." (3).

He finally calls atomic motion a battle of the elements, in which one combination must perish before another can take its place, even as in life the baby's sickly cry follows upon the lament paid his predecessor:

> "sic aequo geritur certamine principiorum
> ex infinito contractum tempore bellum.
> nunc hic nunc illic superant vitalia rerum
> et superantur item. miscetur funere vagor
> quem pueri tollunt visentes luminis oras;
> nec nox ulla diem neque noctem aurora secutast
> quae non audierit mixtos vagitibus aegris
> ploratus mortis comites et funeris atri" (4).

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1. 3. 1-577-83. 2. 2-129-31. 3. 1-606. 4. 2-573-80.

Here again both images are repeated: "aequo geritur certamine bellum" becomes "superant vitalia et superantur item"; then, as the poet reduces the atomic conflict to human terms, his own picture strikes him with its vividness so that he reproduces and expands it. The imagery of the last line is remarkable. The words "comites" and "atri" as well as "mortis" are wonderfully effective abstractions. The "lament that escorts death and the black funeral" also means "the lament of the black-robed mourners who escort the dead man to his funeral".

If Lucretius employed these metaphors from warfare only to illustrate atomic motion, our account might well end here. But, in fact, the whole work resounds with the tramp of marching legions in the backgroung (1). Lucretius himself is a sentinel guarding the tenets of Epicureanism "noctes vigilare serenas" (2); a philosopher opponent then enters the fray; "Heraclitus init ... proelia primus" (3); and even the reader must do battle in defence of his views: "si tibi vera videntur, date manus, aut, si falsum est, accingere contra" (4).

A well-populated region is "munita multa virum vi" (5); children are a defence in old age: "gnatis munire senectam" (6); India, the land of elephants, is be "vallo munitur eburno" (7); the mythical hydra has a rampart of snakes: "venenatis...vallata colubris" (8).

The most picturesque and forceful metaphors appear when the author is most deeply affected by the topic at hand. As we have said already, Lucretius shrinks in awe before Nature's

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1. cf. Robert Bridges: "... the march of his slow-trooping argument". 2. 1-142. 3. 1-638. 4. 2-1042-3. 5. 1-728. 6. 4-1256. 7. 2-538. 8. 5-27

wonders, even as he undertakes to explain them by rational arguments. He makes war upon them as formidable enemies, since they are said to be weapons in the hands of the gods:

> "quod si Iuppiter atque alii fulgentia divi
> terrifico quatiunt sonitu caelestia templa
> et iaciunt ignem quo cuiquest cumque voluntas,
> cur quibus incautum scelus aversabile cumquest
> non faciunt icti flammas ut fulguris halent
> pectore perfixo, documen mortalibus acre..." (1)

We can't help but suspect that Lucretius, deep in his heart, does fear the "sharp warning to mortals"... He paints Religion as a dread oppressor

> "...quae caput a caeli regionibus ostendebat
> horribili super aspectu mortalibus instans..." (2)

whom only one man, Epicurus, dared resist, fearing neither the gods nor their weapons:

> "quem neque fama deum nec fulmina nec minitanti
> murmure compressit caelum.....". (3)

The poet has, up to this point, merely enhanced the fabric of his work by suggestive images. We shall now examine some evidence of an unnatural preoccupation with violence and death. The first episode is relatively unimportant, but seems nevertheless to belong to the developing fixation. The thread of the argument is as follows: The rich man, bedded in purple coverlets, suffers the same fever as the pauper in his plain cot; similarly, nobility and high estate cannot bring freedom from fear, unless...

> "si non forte tuas legiones per loca campi
> fervere cum videas belli simulacra cientis,
> subsidiis magnis epicuri constabilitas,
> ornatas armis itastuas pariterque animatas,
> fervere cum videas classem lateque vagari,
> his tibi tum rebus timefactae religiones
> effugiunt animo pavidae; mortisque timores
> tum vacuum pectus linquunt curaque solutum" (4).

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4. 2-40-7. 1. 6-387 - 92 2. 1-64 - 5 3. 1-68 - 9

"Epicuri" and "itastuas" (1) are, of course, corruptions. In any case, the passage merely shows the example which first came to the poet's mind. The next item describes a dream:

> "porro hominum mentes, magnis quae motibus edunt
> magna, itidem saepe in somnis faciuntque geruntque,
> reges expugnant, capiuntur, proelia miscent,
> tollunt clamorem, quasi si iugulentur, ibidem"(2).

Again the evidence is flimsy, and he seems to assign such dreams only to those who "magna edunt". Moreover, the passage cited follows an account of other dreams.

In his discussion of the soul, Lucretius gives a lengthy account of bodies dismembered in war or by execution, but the treatment of the topic is necessary to prove the mortality of the soul (3).

All of this is but meager preparation for an amazing digression on warfare which is ushered in by the description of early weapons. He proceeds from swords to cavalry, then to the use of other animals, bulls, boars, lions, in vivid and bloody battles marked by indiscriminate slaughter, as the animals turn on their masters and kill friend and foe alike. We see first the topic introduced:

> "Temptarunt etiam tauros in moenere belli
> expertique sues saevos sunt mittere in hostis.
> et validos partim prae se misere leones..." (4)

Next the poet develops each theme at greater length, allotting somewhat more space to lions than to the others. In each case the important point is that the beasts cannot be trusted to kill only their enemies:

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1. "paribus" is a likely conection: Clascical Review Vol. 11, No. 4, p. 119 - Boyd. 2. 4-1011 - 14. 3. 3-634-69 4. 5-1308-10.

"leae...nec opinantis a tergo deripiebant
deplexaeque dabant in terram vulnere victos..." (1)

"iactabantque suos tauri pedibusque terebant..." (2)

"et validis socios caedebant dentibus apri..." (3)

Finally, Lucretius doubts whether the events described ever happened, or at least in this world:

> "si fuit ut facerent. Sed vix adducor ut, ante
> quam commune malum fieret foedumque, futurum
> non quierint animo praesentire atque videre;
> et magis id possis factum contendere in omni,
> in variis mundis varia ratione creatis,
> quam certo atque uno terrarum quolibet orbi" (4).

The most obvious explanation of this amazing performance by our poet is to suppose the work to be in an unfinished condition at this point. He may have written separate passages on bulls, boars and lions with the intention of selecting only one as an illustration. But the phrasing of the lines shows a conscious avoidance of repetition; for example, "nec opinantis... victos", becomes "suos" in the second corresponding passage, and "socios" in the third. The inference is, of course, that the whole episode must have been intended for inclusion in the poem.

However irrelevant and incoherent this extended commentary on animals may be, the conclusion is still more perplexing, "si fuit ut facerent...". If Lucretius doubts that these events ever took place, then his description of them shows a disordered imagination and involves him in a contravention of Epicurean dogma, namely, that any possible explanation of phenomena is to be accepted as true until

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1. 5-1320-1. 2. 5-1323. 3. 5-1326 4. 5-1341-6.

more evidence is available; but, indeed, it is far from clear what he wished to explain.

A theory which would vindicate Lucretius' sanity at this point is to take verses 1341-9 to be a marginal note, written, no doubt, by Lucretius, and subsequently inserted into the text by the editors (1). Others conjecture their interpolation by a "lector philosophus" as a critical commentary on the passage. However, the tone is Lucretian, and the lines sound authentic (2).

At least one early editor (3) amended "si" to "sic" in l. 1341, thus removing one irrational contradiction. The notion (v. quotation above) that animal warfare must have occurred on some planet other than ours can be accepted because of book 2, ll. 1048-90 (4).

The abundant metaphors from violent activity throughout the poem should be considered along with this strange picture of animals in warfare. Surely all of this evidence points to some degree of neurotic anxiety in Lucretius. He had suffered as a boy, we may suppose, when thousands of Romans met sudden death in successive proscriptions as rival factions gained and lost supremacy. If it is true that the poetic temperament is susceptible to deep and lasting impressions, then Lucretius must have nourished in his heart these wounds inflicted by the cruel and savage scenes he had witnessed, incurable and inescapable.

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1. The view of Giussani, quoted by Ernout, Lucrèce, Commentaire, Vol. 3, p. 178.
2. "...écrit dans une langue qui est bien celle de L". Id.
3. Thomas Creech, 1807.
4. e.g. "... fateare necesse est esse alios alibi congressus materiae, qualis hic est". (2-1064-5).

At the very commencement of his grand task, Lucretius begs for an interval of tranquil peace during which to complete his labours. Although these lines serve to confirm our stated views on the poet, they also introduce here the final words we have to say on metaphor. We have already seen in some examples how an image may appeal to the poet so that he develops and expands it. Now we shall see how a chance word or phrase may be echoed back in a succeeding metaphor, consciously or not, the result being a complete artistic picture:

> "effice ut interea fera moenera militiai
> per maria ac terras omnis sopita quiescant.
> nam tu sola potes tranquilla pace iuvare
> mortalis, quoniam belli fera moenera Mavors
> armipotens regit, inggremium qui saepe tuum se
> reicit aeterno devictus vulnere amoris..." (1).

"sopita quiescant" seems to portray appeased lovers (2), a thought repeated in "devictus vulnere amoris" .. "per maria ac terras" finds its sequel in "in gremium", Note also the repeated "fera moenera", a well-liked and expressive phrase.

The following example of sustained metaphor might be entitled "The Battle of the Seasons":

> "tempus id est vernum; quare pugnare necessest
> dissimilis res inter se turbareque mixtas.
> et calor extremus primo cum frigore mixtus
> volvitur, autumni quod fertur nomine tempus,
> hic quoque confligunt hiemes aestatibus acres.
> propterea freta sunt haec anni nominitanda,
> nec mirumst, in eo si tempore plurima fiunt
> fulmina tempestasque cietur turbida caelo,
> ancipiti quoniam bello turbatur utrimque,
> hinc flammis illinc ventis umoreque mixto" (3).

"necessest" introduces a possible explanation of the changing seasons, and should be accepted pending new evidence, since it does not conflict with the impressions of the senses. The war is carried on in spring and autumn between heat and cold,

1. 1-29-34. 2. Leonard & Smith, ad. loc. 3. 6-369-77

and Lucretius, with typical thoroughness, describes the contest in each case. The external signs of this atmospheric warfare strike upon our senses as thunderstorms which are therefore not surprising, since—and here Lucretius reenacts the battle a third time. The development of the image is remarkable: first, the opposing elements are merely "dissimilis res" (spring); then they become "hiemes aestatibus acres" (autumn); he preserves the most complete and effective picture until the end: "hinc flammis illinc ventis umoreque mixto".

The gradual development of a Lucretian word-picture can be traced in the following lines. The author first compares the gathering clouds before a storm to a mighty range of mountains in whose hollow places the winds lie buried. Then the winds angrily rush forth like bears (1) flushed from their pens, roaring and fuming:

> "nubila portabunt venti transversa per auras,
> aut ubi per magnos montis cumulata videbis
> insuper esse aliis alia atque urgere superne
> in statione locata sepultis undique ventis,
> tum poteris magnas moles cognoscere eorum
> speluncasque velut saxis pendentibu" structas
> cernere, quas venti cum tempestate coorta
> complerunt, magno indignantur murmure clausi
> nubibus in caveisque ferarum more minantur;
> nunc hinc nunc illinc fremitus per nubila mittunt
> quaerentesque viam circum versantur....." (2)

In the first four lines, we see only the winds buried and the mountains of clouds above them standing guard (3) (in statione locata). The word "speluncas" first suggests wild beasts, and the image gains added strength through the rest of the passage, to be clarified finally by "ferarum

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1. Smith prefers lions, v. ad loc.
2. 6 - 190 - 200.
3. Smith sees here the image of a ship at anchor, v. ad loc.

more". Compare "speluncas...venti complerunt" with "complet... frondiferum nemus querellis" (1), where the cow is lowing for her lost calf, or with "clamoribus omnia complent" (2), the anguished cries of gladiators torn to pieces by panthers or lions. "Caveis" recalls the cages of wild animals in the circus, and "fremitus" their groans in captivity.

This concludes our account of Lucretian metaphor, a subject as vast and, one is tempted to say, as transcendental as the poem itself. There are many mysteries still to be solved in Lucretius, whose answers lurk hidden in the deep current of his song, like dull gold in a river-bed; it is not enough to skim quickly over the Lucretian waves, along the placid stretches and meanderings of his philosophy and through the occasional swift water of the exalted phrase or passage; the eager student must keep watch with Lucretius per noctes serenas, and with the ripeness of age (if the love of beauty is not dulled in him) he may come to know his Lucretius. If this essay takes even a step toward a truer appreciation of the poet's handiwork, it has achieved its aim.

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1. 2-358.
2. 4-1017.

CHAPTER FIVE
ANALOGIES

Suppose that Lucretius had said: "The atoms behave just like armed troops: Sometimes they seem to attack one another, showering down merciless blows; at other times they retreat, seeking to escape this way and that". He would then be resorting to analogy or simile to make his argument clear. Our analysis of his writing thus far has revealed his constant and effective use of metaphor, which paints a picture for the reader who cares to see it, rather than of analogy, which thrusts the canvas into his hands.

Nevertheless, the poet does introduce analogies which are at once precise and picturesque. To turn back for a moment, we said earlier that "the unknown is governed by the same regulations as the known" according to the Epicurean system. Lucretius has, therefore, a definite purpose and need for analogous comparisons. These are, of course, "images", and thay go far to show not only the poet's artistry, but even more his own personal interests, his observations of life around him, his views on nature, his descriptions of the political and social customs of his times. Here, too, the historian will find much source-material; the chance mention of a grinding mill, a ring, or perhaps a scythed chariot may have allowed the addition of a new paragraph to our record of the period. On the other hand, much of the poet's keen apprehension of nature and her workings possesses a merit which is timeless. He is still, in some respects, the teacher, and we his students.

No doubt, there is much to criticize in his teachings.

For example, in accepting any theory which does not conflict with the senses, he is forced to conclude that the sun and moon are large rocks just as they appear to be. However, even when steeped in the grossest error, Lucretius displays again and again a fresh, keen, almost naive appreciation of the world around him. His analogies are apt to be simple and abvious, so obvious, in fact, that they would scarcely occur to the average thinker, or, if they did, that they would not be considered worthy of notice.. Nevertheless, the poet finds in them material for finely descriptive imagery.

This love for the "homely" simile characterizes Lucretius, and this homeliness constitutes the most important quality in the figure as he employs it. To understand what we mean by a "simple", "obvious", or "homely" analogy, it will be necessary to follow some of his philosophical arguments, and his means of proving them. To show the boundless nature of the universe, he pictures a javelin-thrower running up to the "edge", and hurling the shaft ahead of him. Where will it go?

> ".....siquis procurrat ad oras
> ultimus extremas iaciatque volatile telum
> id validis utrum contortum viribus ire
> quo fuerit missum mavis longeque volare,
> an prohibere aliquid censes obstareque posse" ? (1).

The argument is not original (2), but the little picture is Roman and Lucretian. "Procurrat" is the technical word for the run before a running throw, "ultimus extremas" emphasizes by juxtaposition (3) the fact that the runner has reached the very edge, "volatile", "validis viribus", and "contortum" all stress the force of the throw.

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1. I-969-73.
2. "The principle is the same as that summarized by Archytas of Tarentum". (Smith, p. 293).
3. Smith, p. 294.

According to Epicurean doctrine, all things must fall downwards in an unending stream (1). Let us not be deceived, Lucretius admonishes, when we see flames shooting up to the roof-tops, grain growing upwards, and water "spitting up" boards no matter how hard we press them down:

> "Nonne vides etiam quanta vi tigna trabesque
> respuat umor aquae nam quo magis ursimus alte
> derecta et magna vi multi pressimus aegre,
> tam cupide sursum revomit (2)....." (3).

The commonplace fact becomes almost an adventure under the poet's touch. We see the familiar repetition of the image and its fuller development on being retold. The water seems to spit defiance like a cat perched in a tree.

Sometimes the poet will overwhelm the reader with the very number of his analogies. For example, the soul cannot exist outside the body, because all things in nature have their fixed abode: Flame is not found in rivers nor cold in fire; a tree cannot take root in the sky, fishes are not to be found swimming in the fields, blood will not flow through wood nor sap through stones (4); therefore, the mind cannot exist outside the body. He implies a rebuke to anyone so foolish as to reject the obvious truths in nature, which he then identifies with his own argument; he thus tends to gain equal credit for both. There is a certain drollery in this picture as if the author felt that, really, the point is so certain that no sane person can

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1. A weak point in Lucretius, since he does not explain the meaning of "up" or "down" in absolute reasoning. Cf. Epicurus, letter to Herodotus, ch. 60 (Bailey, Epicurus, pp. 35-6).
2. "Revomit" is an almost certain emendation of the mss. "removet". The poet's habit of repeating an image allows us to conjecture the true reading from "respuat".
3. 2-196-9.
4. 3-622-3 and 3-784-9.

question it. He exhibits this same smug humor as he refutes the idea that the soul is immortal and changes from one body to another. Our poet regards this eventuality with great relish:

> "quod si immortalis foret (animus) et mutare soleret
> corpora, permixtis animantes moribus essent,
> effugeret canis Hyrcano de semine saepe
> cornigeri incursum cervi tremeretque per auras
> aeris accipiter fugiens veniente columba,
> desiperent homines, saperent fera saecla ferarum" (1).

Lucretius allows himself to enjoy his own mental picture of deer pursuing hounds, doves swooping down on hawks and wild beasts as philosophers. Having routed his antagonists on this point, he goes on with more seriousness to the possibility that human souls can transmigrate only to human bodies.

We can only admire the ingenuity and acute perception of Lucretius in his efforts to defend some of the more improbable Epicurean doctrines. Such is the account given of sight. We are asked to believe that atoms in thin layers, or "films", stream off from things. These films strike the eye-ball, thus causing us to feel the atoms i.e. experience sight. After a preliminary reprimand ("id licet hinc quamvis hebeti cognoscere corde") (2), Lucretius shows how common it is for everyday objects to shed parts of themselves: Wood gives off smoke, fire heat; grasshoppers lay aside their "smooth coats" in summer; calves drop cauls from their heads at birth; snakes deposit their skins on thorn-bushes—

> ".....nam saepe videmus
> illorum spoliis vepris volitantibus auctas" (3).

The poet succeeds in creating a fine poetic image even from a snake's skin fluttering in the breeze. One might object that

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1. 3-748-53. 2. 4-53. 3. 4-56-62.

a snake loses its skin only once in a year while the films must be thought to keep peeling off without let or interruption. In that case, we must be forgetting that cold rises from rivers, heat flows from the sun, spray from the sea, and a bitter odor from wormwood (1).

One final example will be enough to demostrate how Lucretius draws his images from common, yet unexpected sources. He is trying to prove that the atoms of which the soul is composed are thinly scattered through the limbs and frame. That is why we fail to notice the graze against our bodies of various objects:

> "...nam neque pulveris interdum sentimus adhaesum
> corpore nec membris incussam sidere cretam,
> nec nebulam noctu neque aranei tenuia fila
> obvia sentimus, quando obretimur euntes
> nec supera caput eiusdem cecidisse vietam
> vestem nec plumas avium papposque volantis
> qui nimia levitate cadunt plerumque gravatim,
> nec repentis itum cuiusviscumque animantis
> sentimus nec priva pedum vestigia quaeque,
> corpore quae in nostro culices et cetera ponunt" (2).

The wide range of the images indicates the deep reflection of the poet on this important topic. The pattern is still the same, however, as elsewhere. The trifling incidents of every day, insignificant to us, provide the poet with abundant evidence to corroborate his views, and they enhance the clear, fresh quality of his poetry.

What we originally meant by the "homely" simile should now be apparent. We should next enquire why the poet preferred to use these concrete examples rather than simply state the Epicurean position or defend it by reasoning alone. One explanation lies in the system itself, or rather, in its method of enquiry: the senses must be believed; that which is

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1. 4-219-24.
2. 3-381-90

imperceptible follows the same laws as the perceptible; any explanation not disproven by the senses can be accepted pro tem. A second explanation can also be offered which is of the utmost importance to our understanding of Lucretius, namely, that in all cases, he is a teacher first and a poet (from his viewpoint) second. That he did not require a "poetic" or amorphous setting for his poetry adds to the stature of his genius. What he might have accomplished had he not been yoked to Epicureanism, it is perhaps idle to ask. For he would not have been Lucretius.

Although Lucretius chooses similes in order to instruct, we can still discover from them his personal interests. Was he an intense intellectual who never looked up from his books even to greet the sunlight streaming in his window after a rain? Or perhaps he was the urbane socialite, mingling easily among the gay circles of patrician Rome? No. One would more readily find Lucretius striding, like Wordsworth, along a country lane, or stopping at a crossroads, like R.L. Stevenson, with one book to read and one to write in, jotting down a few hurried lines to be polished up later "per noctes serenas". Lucretius loved nature, the fertility of the earth, the salt spray of the ocean, animals and birds. Nor did he merely love them with the empty longing of an outsider, like one who listens to a symphony, knowing it to be great, and yet unable to enjoy it. Lucretius knew the sound of a swan from that of a crane (1), that the hardy goat thrives on herbs which would poison a human being (2), and that a calf butts with its horns before they are there (3). He had seen the sun rise and set on the ocean horizon (4),

1. 4-180-1 and 4-909-10. 2. 4-640-1, 5-899-900 and 6-971-2
3. 5-1034-5 4. 4-432-4.

observed how the shore seemed to glide past (1), and noted too, at first hand, the sea's grim harvest of ships and men (2). He had picked up a handful of poppyseed and let it trickle through his fingers (3), climbed mountains (4), put wine through a sieve and tasted the bitter lees (5). In short, Lucretius had enjoyed a long and close association with nature.

It is typical of the Lucretius we know that he combines the poet's wide-eyed admiration of nature with the professional curiosity of the scientist. He introduces the subject of natural growth and decay to prove the indestructibility of matter, but the passage becomes a hymn to Nature:

> "Postremo pereunt imbres, ubi eos pater aether
> in gremium matris terrai praecipitavit;
> at nitidae surgunt fruges ramique virescunt
> arboribus, crescunt ipsae fetuque gravantur;
> hinc alitur porro nostrum genus atque ferarum,
> hinc laetas urbis pueris florere videmus
> frondiferasque novis avibus canere undique silvas;
> hinc fessae pecudes pingui per pabula laeta
> corpora deponunt et candens lacteus umor
> uberibus manat distentis (6); hinc nova proles,
> artubus infirmis teneras lasciva per herbas
> ludit lacte mero mentis perculsa novellas" (7).

The rain appears to "perish" as it disappears into the earth, but it gives life to all growing things. Similarly, nature has on hand a vast supply of atoms for her task of creation, constantly renewed by the destruction of other things. The "marriage" of earth and sky produces crops and fruits, and thus confers life to all living creatures. As Smith remarks (8), he "embraces the whole creation in the scope of atomism". The lines themselves are among the finest in Lucretius. Note the heightened effect of the metaphor "florere" in this context,

1. 4-387-9 2. 2-552-9 3. 2-453 and 3-196. 4. 6-469
5. 2-391-2 and 2-430. 6. Cf. Horace, Epodes, 16.
7. [illegible] 1-250-61. 8. v. ad loc.

and the affectionate playfulness in the last line, especially in "novellas".

In attempting to explain how atoms can be in continuous motion, although the objects which they compose are not seen to move, Lucretius thinks of a flock of sheep grazing on a distant hill:

> "Nam saepe in colli tondentes pabula laeta
> lanigerae reptant pecudes quo quamque vocantes
> invitant herbae gemmantes rore recenti,
> et satiati agni ludunt blandeque coruscant;
> omnia quae nobis longe confusa videntur
> et velut in viridi candor consistere colli"..(1)

The analogy is a clever one, and the poet adds the touches which produce the clarity of a painting. He implies that he has often observed personally this peaceful country scene.

Many further examples reveal the poet's faculty for putting to good use his love of nature and country life: atoms can exist although we do not see them, just as rocks are worn smooth by dripping water although we cannot see the rock particles which have been rubbed away, or as a ploughshare becomes thin through constant use although the individual bits of iron which it loses are invisible. (2) A person afflicted with epilepsy foams at the mouth because the soul atoms are seething within him, in the same way as the ocean boils when flayed by winds (3). Some atoms are smaller than others since a horn-lantern has enough space between its atoms to let light pass through, but not water. He obviously recalls some rainy night when he stopped to admire (as Lucretius would) the incongruity of a flame immune to the pelting rain-drops, and

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1. 2-317-22. 2. 1-313-4 3. 3-487-93

continuing to shed its light around (1). The atoms, though senseless, can produce living beings, a fact which is well attested by the worms which come to life in dung after a heavy rain:

> "quippe videre licet vivos exsistere vermis
> stercore de taetro, putorem cum sibi nacta est
> intempestivis ex imbribus umida tellus;
> praeterea cunctas itidem res vertere sese.
> vertunt se fluvii frondes et pabula laeta
> in pecudes, vertunt pecudes in corpora nostra
> naturam, et nostro de corpore saepe ferarum
> augescunt viris et corpora pennipotentum" (2).

The first analogy is strictly correct, but the thought of the "umida tellus" leads him to a fuller analogy in nature. He insists on the close connection of cause and effect by repeating identical words, "in pecudes...pecudes...in corpora...de corpore", and in the last two lines betrays his usual melancholy even to the detriment of the argument, since wild beasts cannot be thought to subsist on a human diet (3), nor vultures, to any extent, on human carrion (4). The word "saepe" is quaintly Lucretian.

The poet's love of nature extends in full measure to nature's creatures. He seems to show a special fondness for animals, first of all, by the oddly dignified names which he assigns them. Thus we have "fida canum vis", "saecla ferarum", "bucera saecla", "pennipotentes", "lanigerae pecudes", and even "squamigerum pecudes", i.e. fish. Then the very frequency of his references to animals, and especially to dogs, shows his deep interest. Indeed, the search for philosophical truth throughout the poem is likened to a hunting-dog tracking game, even when the simile is only implied by such an expression as "ratione sagaci" (5). Elsewhere, he advises the reader to

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1. 2-387-8. 2. 2-871-8 3. Cf. 5-988 seq. 4. Cf. 4-679-80
5. 1-368

imitate the keen-scented hound:

> "verum animo satis haec vestigia parva sagaci
> sunt per quae possis cognoscere cetera tute.
> namque canes ut montivagae persaepe ferarum (1)
> naribus inveniunt intectas fronde quietes,
> cum semel institerunt vestigia certa viai,
> sic alid ex alio per te tute ipse videre
> talibus in rebus poteris caecasque latebras
> insinuare omnis et verum protrahere inde" (2).

The phrase "animo...sagaci" suggests the picture. Note the vivid conclusion in "verum protrahere".

In his treatment of natural selection, Lucretius ascribes to dogs their conventional role which ensured their survival:

> "...levisomma canum fido cum pectore corda
> ...sunt hominum tutelae tradita..." (3),

and, discussing sex, mentions dogs "fettered in the bonds of love" (4). But he shows his own personal liking for dogs as pets in an acute analysis of speech. We are not to think, writes Lucretius, that human speech cannot be explained on a natural basis, because animals too manage to express themselves in a form of speech:

> "irritata canum cum primum magna Molossum
> mollia ricta fremunt duros nudantia dentis,
> longe alio sonitu rabie restricta minantur,
> et cum iam latrant et vocibus omnia complent.
> at catulos blande cum lingua lambere temptant
> aut ubi eos iactant pedibus morsuque petentes
> suspensis teneros imitantur dentibus haustus,
> longe alio pacto gannitu vocis adulant,
> et cum deserti baubantur in aedibus aut cum
> plorantes fugiunt summisso corpore plagas" (5).

Could this understanding of dogs in all their moods have come to Lucretius except through a long friendship ? .. The reader will at once notice the expressive alliteration: The succession

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1. The other reading "ferai" is almost to be preferred here, since "montivagae" is scarcely the right epithet for "canes".
2. 1-402-9. Cf. 4-680-1 and 4-705. 3. 5-864 Seq. 4. 4-1203-7.
5. 5-1063-72 6. 4-987-90.

of m's in the first line suggests the booming sound of a large dog, the l's in the fifth line reproduce the lulling of the mother, while in the seventh line the t's and s's picture her playful snapping at her pups. The effect of prolonged baying is gained by the onomatopoeic "baubantur".

Lucretius reveals again and again his keen observation of other animals as well. He has discovered that horses dream (1), a lion will flee from a cock (2), swans give forth a clear plaintive cry "lugibri voce" (3), the peacock's plumage changes color in the rays of the sun (4), lambs recognize their own mothers (5). It is rather impressive to scan a list of the animals which find a place in the poem: Dogs, horses, cows, oxen, pigs, goats, sheep, lions, panthers, elephants, boars, foxes, deer, snakes, grasshoppers, geese, swans, crows, ravens, peacocks and cranes.

The images in Lucretius give us various glimpses into the customs of his time, and our little sketch should take into account his contribution to the historians of a later period. Our examination of the metaphors which the poet employs so abundantly disclosed, apart from the need for new words to treat a subject never previously attempted in Latin, an almost unnatural preoccupation with violent activity and death. This tendency towards morbid pessimism, we surmised, could have resulted from the troubled conditions under which Lucretius lived; but such a view on our part was supported by other evidence. It

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1. 4-987-90 2. 4-710-17, although this is doubtless a legend, and is mentioned by Pliny, Hist. Nat. 3. 4-548. 4. 2-806-7. 5. 2-368.

would have been unwise to reconstruct an age marred by civil strife merely from the unbalanced emotions of the poet.

A basic difference exists, therefore, between the metaphors and analogies in Lucretius, in that the former reveal the inner personality and temperament of the poet, the latter his outward interests; and there is mothing inconsistent in his abhorrence of war on the one hand, and his love of nature on the other. It is equally true that the analogies, which reflect outwards, provide the most valuable historical data.

Many items of historical importance have been incidentally mentioned elsewhere and need not be repeated. Indeed, it would be a task much beyond the scope of this essay to classify and assess all of them. We will be satisfied just to show the interesting variety and unexpectedness of the images which cast rays of light upon the poet's contemporary scene.

The importance of agriculture has already been indicated by numerous examples. Lucretius, however, mentions specifically the grinding of corn (1), the existence of water-wheels (2), the different sizes of corn-kernels (3), and the chance biting on a stohe in a loaf of bread (4). These last remarks seem to hint at the poor quality of Roman agricultural produce. The inroads made upon the forests had brought devastating floods even in Lucretius' day (5), and the poet speaks of the "effeta

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1. 1-881-2. 2. 5-516. 3. 2-371-3. 4. 3-693-4.
5. 1-281-9 and 5-341-2.

tellus" (1), her fertility all but exhausted:

> "Ipsa (tellus) dedit dulcis fetus et pabula laeta;
> quae nunc vix nostro grandescunt aucta labore, (2)
> conterimusque boves et viris agricolarum
> conficimus; ferrum vix arvis suppeditari" (3).

The Lucretian images reflect a very full development and use of metals. We find that the Romans felled trees with axes as we know them, that is, with a chopping instrument (4), that Lucretius had heard the squeaking of a saw (5), the rasping of brass door-hinges (6), and the blaring of a trumpet (7). He also understood the heat-treatment of metals (8) and the welding of brass (9).

Even more interesting to the antiquary are the glimpses of the Roman people which we catch from time to time through the poet's keen eyes. How intriguing it is to think of passersby "shaking" the hand of a stone statue so often that it is worn smooth! (10) We can commiserate with the young lad who drinks the bitter medicine because the cup is smeared with honey (11), or with the unfortunate Roman suffering from toothache (12); we picture ourselves walking with Lucretius, and stopping, as he does, to gaze upon a corpse lying by the roadside— a perhaps not uncommon occurrence in those days

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1. 2-1150; "metaphor comes from women who have passed their climacteric", Smith ad loc. , a view supported by 5-827, "ut mulier spatio defessa vetusto...". Luc. is strangely inconsistent in his account of the age of the world. Compare 5-324 seq. (verum, ut opinor, habet novitatem summa recensque naturast mundi...") with 5-105-6 ("forsitan et graviter terrarum motibus ortis omnia conquassari in parvo tempore cernes...").
2. Note the significant absence of "vix" in McGill's motto.
3. 2-1159-62. 4. 6-167-70. 5. 2-410-1. 6. 2-449-50.
7. 4-546. 8. 6-9689. 9. 6-1079. 10. 1-316-7. 11. 1-936 seq.
12. 3-692-3.

when police protection was unknown:

> "Nam neque eum ferro nec frigore vincere possis
> interiisse neque a morbo neque forte veneno,
> verum aliquid genere esse ex hoc quod contigit ei
> scimus..." (1).

Lucretius cites three funeral practices; cremation, mummifying, and burial, of which the first was, perhaps, the most usual (2). The theme of death inspires the poet with deep emotion, and it is here that he embarks upon that famous passage, "iam iam non domus accipiet te laeta..." (3), in which he lays bare his sensitivity, his human weakness, and, in the same breath, his grandeur.

The images in Lucretius embrace a great many fields, and it would be misplaced industry to do more than create an awareness of them here. He supplies information on religious rites (4), architecture (5), foreign trade (6), the arena (7), and pottery (8), to select a few. Not only do these countless pictures add up to the matchless vividness of the poet's style; they also present him to posterity as a mirror of his own times.

If Lucretius was able to weave the magic of poetry into the utilitarian fabric of didacticism, what then would he have done with a grand theme, a subject truly worthy of his talents? We must caution ourselves that what we deem unworthy of Lucretius actually inflamed him with poetic zeal. The insipid

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1. 6-708-11. 2. 3-891-3; cremation is also referred to at 2-415 and 6-1154. 3. 3-894; v.page 10 above. 4. 2-416-7. 5. 3-775; 4-75-83; 4-353-4; 4-426-31; 4-513-21; 6-548; 6-951; 6-1068-71. 6. 2-500-1. 7. 2-263-4. 8. 6-555-6.

teaching of Epicurus was to him a glorious mission, one which involved the happiness and security of mankind. Nevertheless, in treating the very essence of his dogma, that men must abandon their religious fears and superstitions, he recounts a story already immortalized by Aeschylus, a story in which every human feeling is plumbed to its depths:

> "Aulide quo pacto Triviai virginis aram
> Iphianassai turparunt sanguine foede
> ductores Danaum delecti, prima virorum. (1)
> cui simul infula virgineos circumdata comptus
> ex utraque pari malarum parte profusast,
> et maestum simul ante aras adstare parentem
> sensit et hunc propter ferrum celare ministros
> aspectuque suo lacrimas effundere civis,
> muta metu terram genibus summissa petebat.
> nec miserae prodesse in tali tempore quibat
> quod patrio princeps donarat nomine regem.
> nam sublata virum manibus tremibundaque ad aras
> deductast, non ut sollemni more sacrorum
> perfecto posset claro comitari Hymenaeo,
> sed casta inceste nubendi tempore in ipso
> hostia concideret mactatu maesta parentis,
> exitus ut classi felix faustusque daretur". (2)

But even in this magnificent tribute to the sacredness of human life, the poet is hurried on from one exalted phrase to another by the urgency of his task, by the dire need of mankind for the salvation which only he, the apostle of Epicurus, can offer him. No matter how far above the calm and even tenor of the Epicurean way the poet may soar, the bond is always there. It is still unbroken.

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1. Cf. page 25 above. 2. 1-84-100.

CHAPTER SIX

SECONDARY STYLISTIC FEATURES

Although the metaphors and analogies in Lucretius are chiefly responsible for the freshness and clarity of the poem, other stylistic qualities also affect the "flavor" of his work to an appreciable extent. Most important of these is a quaint archaism which permeates the whole poem. Mr. Smith, in the introduction to his text, remarks: "Archaism is the most notable mark of Lucretius' style and diction". By archaism he means the use of obsolete words, spelling, inflection and grammar, Mr. Smith discusses this aspect of Lucretius with such thoroughness and erudition that we can only refer the reader to him at this point (1). However, with due respect to his love and understanding of Lucretius, we feel that he over-stresses the role of archaic style in Lucretius, both in accepting doubtful readings simply because they are archaic, and in attaching such great significance to what is after all an artificial device.

Archaism of itself is neither good nor bad; only in the motives of the poet and in the degree to which his aim is achieved can we find scope for praise or censure. Archaism might, in a particular case, show an unwillingness to cope with the contemporary idiom and to attempt original word-creations, but rather an indolent reliance on the tested patterns of predecessors.

Such is partly the case with Lucretius, who expresses

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1. P. 132 seq.

great admiration for Ennius (1), and borrows many words and phrases from him. On the other hand, Lucretius avoids much that is faulty in Ennius (excessive alliteration, for example), and adds a great deal which is his own. He represents a transition from the coarse, though vigorous, Ennius to the artistic, smooth-flowing Vergil.

Moreover, the archaic diction does support the elevated tone of the discourse and is well suited to a moral essay; it seems to confer dignity and to command respect. This fact is well illustrated in the poet's frank treatment of sex. Nowhere in this section (2) does he fail to preserve a lofty detachment and stateliness, and thus, far from offending the reader, he rather wins his sympathy and understanding.

But archaism is not the only factor to be considered. The poem has almost the sweep and grandeur of an epic; and no simple formula for its creation is likely to be uncovered. All that we have learned of Lucretius has its share in the poem's fabric; every word or phrase, every image he seized upon as his thoughts darted swiftly through the arena of human experience. However, the qualities which cause us to use the word "epic" are precisely those which help maintain the elevated style, and of these, archaism is one.

Closely allied to archaism is a strong tendency towards full expression or parallelism. This may occur in a simple phrase,

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1. Luc. 1-117-9.
2. 4-1058-end.

such as "validas viris" (1), or in an extended description, e.g. of death:

> "...amisso iam corpore vita quoque omnis
> omnibus e nervis atque ossibus exsolvatur" (2).

Here the complete and irrevocable departure of life from the body is emphasized. But in other examples no particular stress is intended:

> "...calidos ignis gelidamque pruinam" (3).

The adjectives are quite unnecessary, but the phrasing is typical of Lucretius, and is repeated in various contexts throughout the poem. This fullness of style corresponds to the repeated images we observed in the metaphors.

Whether this feature of Lucretius' style represents a conscious striving for noble diction and clarity of expression we cannot know beyond all doubt. It can be proven, however, that our poet was prone to repetition even when no useful purpose could be served. No editor, apparently, has commented on this important fact, namely, that any unusual word or phrase which appears in the text is likely to appear again within the next few lines. This can be illustrated by many examples: "fera moenera" (4), "generatim" (5), "temptata labare" (6), "ad nilum funditus" (7), "funditus omnes" (8), "fruges arbusta animantes" (9), "ex alienigenis" (10), "effugium" (11), "intervallis ...resultant" (12), "tigna trabesque" (13), and countless others (14).

Sometimes the same word will appear several times in a

L. 1-576. 2. 1-810-1. 3. 2-431. 4. 1-29 and 32. 5. 1-227 and 229. 6. 1-530 and 537. 7. 1-668 and 673. 8. 1-791 and 797. 9. 1-808 and 821. 10. 1-865 and 874. 11. 1-975 and 983. 12. 2-98 and 101. 13. 2-192 and 196. 14. in Book 4, l. 476, the word "notitiam" occurs followed at L. 479 by "notitiem". The cases cited above indicate that the spellings should be uniform.

comparatively short passage, and such a word will be an uncommon one, e.g. "perquam" at 3-180, 187, 204, and "proquam" at 3-199. Nearly always the repeated word or phrase will occur at the same place in each line. For example, "per aeris inter vallum" causes a spondaic line at 4-187 and again at 4-198.

This evidence tends to show that Lucretius did not consciously cultivate a repetitious style; but he found no fault with repetition. When a word or phrase appealed to him, either because of its aptness, or because it provided a metrical solvent, he employed it as often as required. No doubt he often did so unawares; still, in reading over his work, he saw no need for variation.

There are even whole passages which appear several times in the poem. Such passages frequently represent a basic doctrine,

"continuo hoc mors est illius quod fuit ante" (1),

a transition from false to true reasoning,

"nequiquam, quoniam..." (2),

or a restatement of the poem's main theme,

"hunc igitur terrorem animi tenebrasque necessest
non radii solis neque lucida tela diei
discutiant, sed naturae species ratioque" (3).

This might be taken, at first sight, as evidence of incompleteness or lack of revision. However, once we recognize the pattern of repetition throughout the work, the passages present no difficulty.

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1. 1-671, 1-793, 2-754 2. 4-1188, 5-388. 3. 1-146-8, 2-59-61, 3,91-93, 6-39-41.

To sum up our views on these topics, archaism and fullness of expression are not of primary artistic value in Lucretius. The poet undoubtedly began to write in an archaic style while under the spell of Ennius, and the poem deserves praise not because of the imitation but in spite of it. No one would consider as a primary quality in Vergil his imitation of Homer. The constant reproduction of words and phrases is Ennian in origin. It is nevertheless true that these stylistic features color the whole poem and endow it with a certain remote impressiveness and majesty. Lucretius is one of the easiest poets to identify from his verses, a fact largely owing to his quaint antiquarian diction.

In our study of Lucretius ' secondary characteristics, we must allow at least a brief mention of satire. First of all, Lucretius writes in the metre conventionally adopted by the satirists; the sections, moreover, which should be classed as satire make up a considerable number of verses; lastly, Lucretius exercises a profound influence upon satirists such as Horace and Juvenal.

Much work remains to be done before Lucretius' place among the Roman satirists can be properly assessed. One problem is the selection of satirical passages from a long poem, passages which must still be studied in their context of Epicurean didacticism; for the criticism of man's folly is seen to attach closely to the exposition of a philosophy intended to correct it. However, Lucretian satire embraces more than Epicurean moralizing.

It is, of course, an Epicurean concept to shun the contentions of political life, seeking a placid contentment undisturbed by strong emotions of any kind. Lucretius describes the empty longings and aspirations of man, endeavors to point to the right road, and, true to form, finds happy relief in a pleasant country spot:

> "Gratius interdum neque nature ipsa requirit
> si non aurea sunt iuvenum simulacra per aedes
> lampadas igniferas manibus retinentia dextris,
> lumina nocturnis epulis ut suppeditentur,
> nec domus argento fulget auroque renidet
> nec citharae reboant laqueata aurataque templa,
> cum tamen inter se prostrati in gramine molli
> propter aquae rivum sub ramis arboris altae
> non magnis opibus iucunde corpora curant,
> praesertim cum tempestas arridet et anni
> tempora conspergunt viridantis floribus herbas" (1).

The luxuries provided by wealth are unnecessary to the Epicurean, since his happiness and well-being depend on a calm and peaceful mind. But Lucretius is not insensible to external influences. The "lampadas igniferas" of the luxury-loving city-dweller have their counterpart in "cum tempestas arridet" for the nature-loving Lucretius, so that the poet unwittingly identifies himself with those he wishes to convert. In theory, the Epicurean should not need the blandishments of either town or country. Lucretius, in advocating a return to country life, shows a thoroughly Roman admiration for rustic simplicity.

Still Epicureanism was an escapist philosophy, and enjoyed its greatest popularity during times of political

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1. 2-23-33

unrest. Lucretius saw on every side the social and political evils which were eventually to destroy the republic. He looked with pity rather than rancour upon his fellows ("miseros homines"), and supposed all of their faults to accrue "in no small measure" to their common fear of death;

> ".....Haec vulnera vitae
> non minimam partem mortis formidine aluntur". (1)

Harried by blighting poverty, men sought to improve their lot by any and every means, seeking thus to forget the terrors of impending death. This blind greed for wealth and power turned men to lawlessness and civil bloodshed:

> "Sanguine civili rem conflant divitiasque
> conduplicant avidi, caedem caede accumulantes" (2).

The political satire constitutes a powerful indictment of the late republic. But he reserves his most impassioned and sincere criticism for the grand theme of death (3). One feels that the poet is here attempting his own salvation as well as ours:

> "Denique si vocem rerum natura repente
> mittat et hoc alicui nostrum sic increpet ipsa
> 'quid tibi tanto operest, mortalis, quod nimis aegris
> luctibus indulges? quid mortem congemis ac fles?
> nam si grata fuit tibi vita anteacta priorque
> et non omnia pertusum congesta quasi in vas
> commoda perfluxere atque ingrata interiere,
> cur non ut plenus vitae conviva recedis
> aequo animoque capis securam, stulte, quietem? '" (4).

Nature herself is the teacher, and "alicui nostrum" places Lucretius and the reader side by side. The image in the last two lines was a famous one in antiquity, and may be as old as Epicurus (5). Lucretius has no patience with anyone so foolish

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1. 3-63-4 2. 3-70-1 3. 3-830 seq. 4. 3-931-9
5. Smith. V. ad loc.

as to express surprise or complaint at the approach of inevitable death:

> "'aufer abhinc lacrimas, balatro, et compesce querelas.
> omnia perfunctus vitai praemia marces.
> sed quia semper aves quod abest, praesentia temnis,
> imperfecta tibi elapsast ingrataque vita
> et nec opinanti mors ad caput adstitit...'" (1)

These words have even more than the usual Lucretian directness and vividness. The chiastic word-order avoided in the first line but retained in the third helps to achieve this effect, along with the bold image in the last line.

There is still one aspect of Lucretian satire which we have not touched upon, namely, his attack on the passion of love. This section is quite unexpected, although his discussion of the reproductive process is extremely lucid and complete. Epicurus had warned his followers against illicit loves and had minimised the joys of sexual intercourse which were, he said, always tempered by "goading distress". But Lucretius inveighs against love with all the outraged pride of a rejected suitor. Just as we see the poet's anxiety concerning death reflected in his lengthy and grave meditations on that topic, so do we catch, in these bitter attacks on love, the echoes of a hopeless passion.

Nowhere else does he reveal quite the same cynicism as he does in the following lines which satirize the foolish idealism of the lover:

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1. 3-955-9.

"Nigra melichrus est, immunda et fetida acosmos,
caesia Palladium, Nervosa et lignea dorcas,
parvula, pumilio, chariton mia tota merum sal,
magna atque immanis cataplexis plenaque honoris.
balba loqui non quit, traulizi, muta pudens est;
at flagrans odiosa loquacula Lampadium fit.
ischnon eromenion tum fit, cum vivere non quit
prae macie; rhadine verost iam mortua tussi.
at tumida et mammosa Ceres est ipsa ab Iaccho,
simula Silena ac saturast, labeosa philema.
cetera de genere hoc longum est si dicere coner" (1).

By using Greek words, the poet stresses the un-Roman character of such conduct. He is almost humorous, but it is a tragic sort of humour, foreign both in words and in sentiment to the Lucretius we have known.

These satirical passages, therefore, express not only the orthodox Epicurean doctrine, but also the personal philosophy of Lucretius. He objects to luxurious living, to deceit and violence of every description, to unmanly grief and weakness. In these views he differs not at all from such a non-Epicurean as Cicero, whose "De Senectute", for example, offers interesting parallels. In tone, Lucretius is less genial than Horace and less abusive than Juvenal.

The imagery of Lucretius is coloured to a discernible extent by those devices affecting the word order and choice which we commonly term "figures of speech". Most of them accentuate the didactic nature of the treatise, such as anaphora,

"Unde animale genus generatim in lumine vitae
redducit Venus, aut redductum daedala tellus
unde alit atque auget generatim pabula praebens?
unde mare ingenui fontes externaque longe..."(2),

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1. 4-1160-70. 2. 1-227-30. Cf. 1-278, 2-256-7, 4-696-7, 4-783, 5-498, 5-937.

litotes,

"venti...non nimis incertis fiunt in partibus anni" (1), and oxymoron,

"Heraclitus... clarus ob obscuram linguam..." (2). Only rarely do we observe the deliberate use of such figures for poetic effect. A famous instance of juxtaposition is "casta incesta" (3), in the story of Iphigeneia. "In saxis ac speluncis permanat aquarum liquidus umor" (4) almost certainly exemplifies hendiadys. Chiasmus, which is common in Lucretius (as in Latin generally), is doubtless intended at times to brighten a word-picture, e.g. "saecla ferarum... multaque vincebant, vitabant pauca latebris" (5). We have already noticed the poet's fondness for metonymy in such phrases as "saecla ferarum" (6).

In a poem as vast in scope and, in fact, as long as the De Rerum Natura, there are bound to be a number of anomalies which, though unimportant, still stir the curiosity and interest of the reader. The most obvious irregularity is the hypermetric line, and one, but only one, occurs in the poem (7). Other interesting minutiae are a line-for-line argument, reminiscent of early poetry (8), awkward phrasing (9), humorous touches (10), an unsuitable spondaic rhythm (11), and word-play (12).

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1. 5-676 et ubique. 2. 1-629. Cf. 3-1048, 4-584, 4-1133-4, 5-983, 6-248. 3. 1-98. Cf. 1-741. 4. 1-348. Cf. 3-176. 5. 5-969. Cf. 1-174, 1-659, 3-1065, 4,799, 6-848-9, 6-878, 6-1150. 6. v. page... 7. 5-849. 8. 5-963-5. 9. 1-339, 1-520-1, 4-723. 10. 1-260-1, 5-91. 11. 6-1086. 12. 1-697-8, 3-469-70.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study can be summed up as follows:

1- The clear and lucid style of Lucretius is due almost entirely to his metaphors and analogies, and these have not been fully appreciated by the editors.

2- Lucretius cannot be separately studied as a poet and as a philosopher. The evidence has shown that his desire to inspire the reader with his own enthusiasm is responsible for the most vivid and moving poetry.

The thesis, therefore, provides some grounds for a new approach to Lucretius, and throws fresh light upon his literary objectives and methods.

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