LUCRETIUS 3.955

In the course of his sermon on the theme that 'death is nothing to us' (3.830-1094), Lucretius, wanting to address some strong words to those who complain when it is time for them to die, uses the rethorically-effective and tactful[1] device of putting them into the mouth of a personified Nature. Nature is made to speak twice – first in 933-949, then in 955-962.

The first speech is addressed to one who complains about death, although he has had the opportunity to lead a pleasurable life. Nature says that, if he has taken advantage of that opportunity, he should retire like a satisfied guest at the end of a banquet, while, if he has wasted it, there is no point in seeking to prolong a life which is miserable. The addressee, who, it is implied (946-947, 952), is not of advanced age, is called first *mortalis* (933), then *stulte* (939).

The addressee of the second speech is an elderly person (952: *grandior... seniorque*), who, having wasted life's opportunities, whines and whinges when his time to die comes. Nature rebukes him in harsher tones (953: *non merito inclamet magis et voce increpet acri?*) and, if one accepts the reading of O and Q, begins thus:

aufer abhinc lacrimas, baratre, et compesce querellas! (955)

Although this may be what Lucretius wrote, *baratre* has worried editors for half a millennium. It does not occur elsewhere in Latin, while in Greek all we have is a doubtful occurrence in Lucian *Pseudol.* 17, where βάρα-θρον, the last in a list of six terms of abuse, is accusative and so could be neuter rather than masculine, and the following statement of Pseudo-Ammonius *Diff.* B94 p. 24 Nickau: βάραθρος μὲν γὰρ ὁ βαράθρου ἄξιος ἄνθρωπος. In the passage of Lucian the neutre, meaning 'pit' and therefore referring to a cause of destruction rather than to one who deserves destruction, is more likely to be right, for the two immediately-preceding words are ὄλεθρον and κύφωνα; and it is possible that Pseudo-Ammonius' explanation is based only on this passage, in which he supposed βάραθρον to be masculine.

barat(h)re is printed in the *editio princeps* (c. 1473) and by Havercamp (1725) and Wakefield (1797), but did not find much favour until the twentieth century, when it has been accepted by many editors, including Krokiewicz, Diels, Martin, Leonard and Smith, Bailey (1947), Paratore and Pizzani, Büchner, Kenney, myself, K. Müller, Milanese, and Giancotti. Not

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[1] See my note in the Loeb edition of Lucretius (Cambridge, Mass.– London 1975, revised 1982, 1992), 261.

all of those who retain *baratre* take it to mean 'you deserve to be thrown in a pit': some, like Müller and Milanese, interpret it as referring to one who is insatiable or a squanderer – an interpretation already mentioned by Lambinus; and Giancotti suggests that Lucretius may intend both meanings. But there is no firm evidence that the word could be equivalent to *homo insatiabilissime*.

baratre, as well as being otherwise unattested in Latin and little attested even in Greek, is, if it means 'you who deserve to be cast into a pit', unsatisfactory in two other respects. Firstly, it seems too abusive, even in this sharp rebuke: the person whom Nature addresses is greedy and foolish, but not a criminal. Secondly, *barathrum*[2] is used just a few lines below (966) in reference to the pit of hell, to which, Lucretius assures us, noone is consigned, so that, as Sedley well remarks, "if *baratre* were retained and held to mean someone who deserves to be hurled into the *barathrum*, there would be a most surprising irony in Nature's addressing the whinging old man with this particular term of abuse"[3].

Sedley proposes that *baratre* be emended to *barathri*: 'Away with your weeping, and curb your complaining about the pit of hell'. As a possible alternative, he suggests that *barathri* be construed with *lacrimas*, comparing Virg. *Aen.* 1.462, *sunt lacrimae rerum*. I do not find *barathri*, however construed, appealing, for three main reasons: firstly, because the postponement of connective *et*, though common in Augustan and post-Augustan poetry, is not Lucretian[4]; secondly, because the old man's grumble is not about hell, but about death (952-953)[5]; thirdly, because one would ex-

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[2] According to Diels, *barathrum* is Lachmann's correction of *baratrum* (O corr., Q), but this spelling goes back at least as far as the first Aldine (1500). (The 1486 and 1495 editions of Lucretius have *baratrum*. I have not been able to check the *editio princeps*).

[3] D. Sedley, *Lucretius and the Transformation of Greek Wisdom* (Cambridge 1998), 60. In the sentence which follows the one quoted above, Sedley comments: "Hardly a productive way of conveying Lucretius' principal message, that there is no pit of hell to fear!".

[4] At 6.800 a postponed *et* has been introduced by many modern editors (including myself in the Loeb edition), who follow Naugerius in emending *plenior efflueris* (OQP) to *plenior et fueris*, but the emendation is to be rejected, because, as well as placing *et* in a position which violates Lucretius' universal practice elsewhere, it gives a feeble expression. I now strongly favour Brieger's bold, but brilliant, early conjecture *plenior ex epulis* (A. Brieger, *T. Lucreti Cari libri sex* [Leipzig 1894], lxxx).

[5] Sedley, 61, thinks that, without an indication "that the old man – whose words were not actually quoted – has been complaining partly about the prospect of hell..., one might be left wondering why Lucretius, at 966-7, should offer his rationalistic denial of hell as directly confirming Nature's rebuke". However, it is surely not innatural that Lucretius, who is there making the point that everything's and everyone's material is recycled to

pect a vocative, as in 933 (*mortalis*), 939 (*stulte*), and 1026 (*improbe*).

Bailey, in his commentary, thinks that *baratre* "should possibly be changed to *baratro* as the more usual termination in such epithets"[6]. This suggestion, which is apparently regarded by Bailey as his own and is attributed to him by Büchner, Kenney, and P.M. Brown, had already been made by Ernout[7], who, like Bailey, seems to be unaware that it was first printed in the second Aldine edition of Naugerius (1515) and adopted by, among others, Lambinus, Faber, and Creech. It is open to the same objections as those raised against *barat(h)re*.

Bockemüller's *barathrum* has the advantage of being an attested word, but it is inappropriate as *barat(h)re* in other respects.

The most popular alternative to *barat(h)re* is *balatro*, 'buffoon', 'jester', suggested by anonymous critics in Turnebus, *Adversaria* 20.26, and by Heinsius on Ovid *Am.* 3.3.1. It is adopted by, among others, Lachmann, Bernays, Munro, Brieger, Giussani, Heinze, Bailey (1900, 1922), Merrill (1907, 1917), Ernout, Rouse, Arata, and Gigon. This too is an attested word. It occurs in Varro *R.* 2.5.1, where the senator Q. Lucienus, *homo quamvis humanus ac iocosus*, ticked off by one of his friends for being late for his appointment with them, jokingly replies: *videbo iam vos, balatrones, et hoc adferam meum corium et flagra*. It occurs also in Horace *S.* 1.2.2, where *balatrones* are mentioned among those in mourning for the singer Tigellius. Here, according to Pseudo-Acro, "legitur et barat(h)rones", but *balatrones* is far more likely after the immediately preceding *mimae* ('mime-actresses'). That *barat(h)ro* and *balatro* are very close palaeographically and easily confused is obvious, and it may be noted that in Hor. *S.* 2.3.166, where most editors read *barat(h)rone*, 'into a pit', there is an alternative reading *balatroni* – a reading which, though less well supported by the manuscripts, attracted Richard Bentley[8] and is very likely to be correct, for with *quid enim differt, balatroni / dones quidquid habes an numquam utare paratis?* (166-167) we have the very close parallel of Hor. *S.* 1.2.56, *qui patrium mimae donat fundumque laremque. Balatro* is a possible candidate for Lucr. 3.955, but, in my opinion, not a very strong one: there is no parallel for its use in a seriously censorious address (in Varro

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create new things, should take the opportunity to observe that this means that noone goes to hell to suffer punishment, particularly since this is the subject of the very next passage (3.978-1023).

[6] C. Bailey, *T. Lucreti Cari De Rerum Natura libri sex*, II (Oxford 1947), 1154. See also his critical note ad loc.: "*fortasse* baratro".

[7] In: A. Ernout and L. Robin, *Lucrèce, De Rerum Natura*, II (Paris 1926), 152.

[8] Bentley, who actually prints *balatrone*, not *balatroni*, in his text, makes the unconvincing suggestion that, if *barathrone* is read, *dones* (167 be replaced with *damnes*.

the context is jocular), and the description of the old man, who weeps and
moans about death, as a 'jester' seems inappropriate.

Merrill [9] tentatively suggests *blatero* (cfr. Gel. 1.15.20), 'chatterbox',
but, like *balatro*, this suggestion, though palaeographically attractive,
seems unsatisfactory in sense. It is to be remembered that Nature is, ac-
cording to Lucretius himself, rebuking the elderly person more severely
than she rebuked the younger person, whom she call *stulte* (939). *Blatero* is
too mild, and one would expect a word describing foolishness and/or un-
reasonableness rather than loquaciousness.

But, if *baratre* is to be replaced, is there a better replacement than *bala-
tro* and *blatero*? I think that there is. In fact, I have two suggestions to put
forward.

The first suggestion is *barde*, 'blockhead', 'numskull'. It occurred to me
independently, when, with Sedley's discussion of *baratre* fresh in my mind,
I stumbled across the word in Plautus *Bac.* 1088: *stulti, stolidi, fatui, fungi,
bardi, blenni, buccones*. But, on investigation, I found that it is printed in
Avancius' (first Aldine) edition of 1500 and is the reading also of Pius
(1511, 1514), Candidus (Juntine edition, 1512), Gifanius (1565-1566,
1595), and at least two seventeeth-century editors – Paré (1631) and Fay
(1680). It is mentioned, though without any discussion of its plausibility,
by Lachmann, who attributes it to Marullus, and by Munro, who notes "not
Marullus"[10], but, after making a wide, though admittedly not exhaustive,
search, I have found it mentioned by only one later scholar – Merrill in
"UCP" 2, 1911, 114. And yet here we have a word, which, though not very
common, is well attested in Republican Latin, which well suits the context,
and which is palaeographically plausible. Let us now examine each of these
three considerations in turn.

First, let us look at the incidence of *bardus*. It occurs in Plautus not only
in *Bac.* 1088, quoted above, but also in *Per.* 169, *nimis tandem me quidem
pro barda et pro rustica reor habitam esse aps te*. In *Epid.* 420-421, where
the manuscripts read *Ego illic me autem sic adsimulabam: quasi / stolidum,
cumbardum* (or *cum bardum*) *me faciebam*, most editors accept Leo's
conjecture *combardum*, a compound which is not found elsewhere. Another
occurrence of *bardus*, the only other one before Lucretius, is in Caecilius
250 Ribbeck (=267 Warmington): ... *nimis audacem nimisque bardum*

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[9] W.A. Merrill, *Criticism of the Text of Lucretius with Suggestions for its Improve-
ment: Part 1, Books I-III*, "UCP" 3, 1916, 44.

[10] For Lachmann's hostility to Avancius, and for criticism of his attribution to Marul-
lus of "everything that first appeared in Avancius' edition", see H.A.J. Munro, *T. Lucreti
Cari De Rerum Natura libri sex*, I, 4th ed. (Cambridge 1886), 6.

barbarum. It is used by Cicero *Fat.* 10, where he reports Zopyrus' unusual opinion of Socrates: *stupidum esse Socratem dixit et bardum quod iugula concava non haberet.* Then there is a long gap before it reappears in: Tertullian *Adv. Hermog.* 36 (*CSSL* I p. 427); Arnobius *Adv. nat.* 2.19, 3.20 (*CSEL* IV pp. 64.2, 125.17); Augustine *Contra secundam Iuliani responsionem imperfectum opus* 2.55, 3.145, 6.9 (Migne, *PL* 45 cols. 1165, 1306, 1515); and Marius Mercator *Liber subnotationum in verba Iuliani* 6.1 (Migne, *PL* 48 col. 135). According to the manuscripts, it occurs also in Martianus Capella 6.656: *sequitur Thracia, cuius incolae bardi habent appetitum maximum mortis.* Here Willis adopts Kopp's emendation *barbari.* He may be right to do so, in view of Solinus 10.1, *Thracibus barbaris inesse contemptum vitae*, but one cannot say that *bardi* does not make sense, and the substitution of the rather uncommon word for the common *barbari* would be a surprising scribal error.

Next, let us consider the contextual suitability of *barde.* What the context requires is a word which is stronger than *stulte*, but not too abusive, and *barde* fulfils this requirement. The origin of *bardus* is not agreed, but, whether Festus[11] is right in deriving it from the Greek βαρδύς (a metathetical form of βραδύς which occurs in the superlative in Hom. *Il.* 23.310, 530, and Theoc. 15.104[12]), or whether it is of Etruscan derivation[13], it was natural for the ancients to connect it with βαρδύς/βραδύς and *tardus*, and it is possible (see especially the Caecilius passage quoted above) that it was sometimes associated with *barbarus* as well. In any case, in view of its occurrence in Plautus and Caecilius, one seems justified in regarding it as a robust and colloquial word; and it is its colloquial character, as well as its robustness, which makes it appropriate in Lucr. 3.955, where Nature's opening words, *aufer abhinc lacrimas*, look like a colloquialism, *abhinc* being used in a very rare local sense[14], like *hinc* in Plautus *Men.* 607, *aufer hinc palpationes*, and *Poen.* 1035, *maledicta hinc aufer.*

Ad for the palaeographical plausibility of *barde*, its corruption into *baratre* is not too difficult to explain. One possibility is that the alteration occurred directly: the substitution of *t* for *d* is common[15]; part of the word

[11] See W.M. Lindsay, *Sexti Pompei Festi de verborum significatu quae supersunt cum Pauli epitome* (Leipzig 1913), 31.10-12, and *Glossaria Latina*, IV (Paris 1930), 134.

[12] The comparative form βαρδύτεροι is Brunck's generally-accepted emendation of βραδύτεροι in Theoc. 29.30.

[13] As suggested by A. Walde and J.B. Hofman, *Lateinisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, I, 3rd ed. (Heidelberg 1938), 97. Different opinions on the origin of *bardus* are mentioned by S. Lilja, *Terms of Abuse in Roman Comedy* (Helsinki 1965), 24-25, 47-48.

[14] The only parallel seems to be Apul. *Fl.* 16.

[15] See e.g. Lucr. 1.1081 *haut* (Q) for *haud*, 2.27 *renitet* (O) for *renidet*, 467 *atmixta*

may have been obliterated as a result of a blot or tear; and the supposition would be that the emergence of *baratre* was assisted by the presence of *barat(h)rum* in 966. However, I think it more likely that the process of corruption had two stages. In the first stage *barde* became *barbare*: the latter word is much more common than the former, and confusion of *d* and *b* is frequent[16]. In the second stage the unmetrical *barbare* was 'corrected' to the palaeographically very similar *baratre*, the alteration being influenced by *barat(h)rum* eleven lines below.

My second suggestion is *baro* (sometimes spelled *varo*) – a word similar in meaning to *barde*. It appears first in Lucilius 1121 Marx (= 1184 Warmington). It is found five times in Cicero (*Fam.* 9.26.3, *Att.* 5.11.6[17], *Ep.* fr. 5.4 p. 176 Shackleton Bailey = fr. 6.4 p. 298 Müller, *Fin.* 2.76[18], *Div.* 2.144), once in Persius (5.138), three times in Petronius (53.11, 63.7, 10). In Cic. *Div.* 2.144 and Pers. 5.138 we have the vocative. Most of the points which I have mentioned in favour of *barde* are favourable to *baro* as well and need not to be repeated. The corruption of *baro* into *baratre* might have begun with a dittography of the following *et* (cfr. e.g. Lucr. 4.235, where O and Q have *commovet et* for *commovet*), with *baratre* then emerging from *baroetet* under the influence of *barat(h)rum* in 966.

To sum up: *baratre*, though not certainly wrong, is unlikely to be right; *balatro* and *blatero* are possible candidates to replace it, but *barde* and *baro* are much more suitable ones. I prefer *barde*, mainly on the ground that its corruption into *baratre* can be more easily explained.

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(Q) for *admixta*, 493 *atsimili* (O) for *adsimili*, 3.598 *trepitatur* (QV) for *trepidatur*, 4.570 *atlisa* (Q) for *adlisa*, 5.221 *atportant* (OQ) for *adportant*, 6.890 *maris parat* (OQU) for *marist Aradi.*

[16] Corruption of *d* → *b* in Lucr. 1.286 *turbibus* (O) for *turbidus*, 668 *arbor* (QG) for *ardor*, 682 *arboris* (QG) for *ardoris*, 995 *absiduo* (QG) for *adsiduo*, 4.468 *abdit* (Q) for *addit*, 537 *ab* (Q) for *ad*, 834 *ibeo* (Q) for *ideo*, 5.122 *animinbistent* (OQ) for *a numine distent*, 1110 *debere* (OQ) for *dedere*, 6.878 *nobosque* (QU) for *nodosque*. Corruption of *b* → *d* in Lucr. 2.891 *fedus* (OV), *sedus* (Q), for *rebus*, 3.644 *ad* (OQ) for *ab*, 4.378 *adluit* (OQ) for *abluit*, 5.1003 *Saevidat* (O), *Sevidat* (Q), for *saevibat*, 1097 *ardoris* (OQ) for *arboris*, 1141 *recidat* O corr., Q, *recidit* (O), for *redibat*, 6.71 *oderunt* (OQ) for *oberunt*, 621 *ad* (Q) for *ab*.

[17] Here Cicero is referring to Epicureans: *apud Patronem et reliquos barones te in maxima gratia posui.*

[18] D.R. Shakleton Bailey, *Cicero's Letters to Atticus*, III (Cambridge 1968), 209, says that Cicero "makes the Epicurean spokesman say ironically *nos barones*". Although he is right about the irony, he is wrong about the speaker, who is not the Epicurean Torquatus, but Cicero himself.