

PROFESSOR COURTNEY'S SUGGESTIONS ON LUCRETIVS

These notes are a response to E. Courtney, *Four Suggestions on Lucretius*, "Prometheus" 32, 2006, 159-160. Although my remarks are mainly critical, I welcome his article as a helpful contribution to a better understanding of the passages discussed.

2.114-115 *contemplator enim cum solis lumina cumque
inserti fundunt radii per opaca domorum.*

"There is no word *cumcumque*", remarks Courtney. There is no occurrence of it elsewhere, but that does not necessarily mean that it is to be rejected. Lambinus' explanation that it is equivalent to *quandocumque* has been accepted by most editors. Courtney's suggested replacement of *cumque* with *ubique* seems to me unlikely to be right: "anywhere" would be weak and unwanted; and "everywhere" would be inappropriate, given that Lucretius is describing how rays of sunlight penetrate darkened rooms without filling them.

If I were convinced that *cumque* is corrupt (which I am not), I should prefer to replace it with *clara*. This is much less close to *cumque* than Courtney's suggestion, but the sense is good, and the contrast between *lumina clara* and *opaca* is effective: "Watch carefully when the sun's rays are let in and pour their bright light through the dark places of houses". Compare 1.144 *clara... lumina* and 3.1 *clarum... lumen*.

6.799-801 *denique si calidis etiam cunctere lavabris
plenior †efflueris†, solio ferventis aquai
quam facile in medio fit uti des saepe ruinas!*

Discussing what should replace the corrupt *efflueris* of OQ (*effueris* U), Courtney writes: "Apart from proposals which remove one problem at the cost of introducing another (and I mean in particular those which introduce postponed *et* in Lucretius), the available options are *et sudes* (K. Müller), which is weak and implausible, *effultus* (produced by Haber from a typescript of Housman, "CJ" 51, 1956, 388), which would go better with a dining-couch (*torus*) than a bath-tub (*solium*), and *ex epulis* (Brieger), which has nothing against it but implausibility". I have three comments to make on this. First, to the list of "the available options" one should certainly add *effertus*, suggested by W.S. Watt, *Lucretiana*, "Philologus" 140, 1996, 248-256, at 255¹. Secondly, *effultus* was found not in a typescript of Housman, but in

¹ Watt later told me that he preferred Brieger's suggestion (see below).

a manuscript sent by him to Robert Cary Gilson. Haber describes it as being "in ink, in that beautiful lucid script – quite different from his epistolary hand – which Housman always employed in fair copy of his scholarly writings..."². Thirdly, and most importantly, it is as disappointing as it is surprising to see *ex epulis* unceremoniously brushed aside, without any reason given for its "implausibility". It deserves better than that. I say this with some feeling, because a few years ago I revived this early suggestion of Brieger and took some trouble to argue that it is the best candidate³. Courtney's own suggestion, *et turgens*, is not bad, but far less good: *turgens*, like *effertus*, is somewhat pleonastic after *plenior*, and, unlike *ex epulis*, does not supply the expected mention of food. In support of *turgens*, he points out that "*turgidus* appears in similar contexts at Persius 3.98 and Juvenal 1.143", but both these writers mention the heavy meal that has made the person swollen, and Persius' *turgidus hic epulis atque albo ventre lavatur* may be quoted, as I quoted it in my "MH" article, in support of *plenior ex epulis*, "too full after a banquet"⁴.

6.1192-1196 *item ad supremum denique tempus*
 compressae nares, nasi primoris acumen
 tenve, cavati oculi, cava tempora, frigida pellis
 duraque, in ore iacens rictum, frons tenta manebat.
 nec nimio rigida post artus morte iacebant.

in ore iacens rictum (1195) is Nonius' text, except that he has *rictu*. Courtney is unhappy about *iacens*, partly because *iacet rictum* "is a strange phrase indeed", partly because *iacebant* occurs in the next line. He is also unhappy about *rigens*, a proposed emendation of *iacens*, because of *rigidi... artus* in 1196. His unhappiness about both is understandable, and he is right to say: "An easy correction would be *patens*". The suggestion is attractive, but what Courtney does not mention, presumably because he is unaware of it, is that it is not new: Havercamp conjectures and prints *patens* in his edition of Lucretius of 1725. It is to be noted, too, that the name of the scholar who proposed *rigens* is not, as Courtney says, Ollier, but Olivier.

6.1230-1234 *illud in his rebus miserandum magnopere unum*
 aerumnabile erat, quod ubi se quisque videbat
 implicitum morbo, morti damnatus ut esset,

² T.B. Haber, *New Housman Lucretiana*, "CJ" 51, 1956, 386-390, at 387.

³ M.F. Smith, *Lucretius* 6.799-803, "MH" 58, 2001, 65-69, at 65-67.

⁴ Compare also Cicero, *TD* 5.100: *confer sudantes, ructantes, refertos epulis tamquam opimos boves*.

*deficiens animo maesto cum corde iacebat,
funera respectans animam amittebat ibidem.*

Courtney is not comfortable with *ut esset* (1232), whether *ut* is taken to mean "as if", as by Pius and most editors, or "how", as by H. Jacobson. He proposes *ut a se*⁵, but his idea that the sick person "gives up because he has condemned himself to death" strikes me as inappropriate and improbable, given that the deadliness of the plague is outside the victim's control. The reading of the manuscripts surely gives much better sense, and the Latin is defensible, for, as Courtney very fairly mentions, there is a line of Valerius Flaccus (5.92) in which *ut* means "as if". In our passage of Lucretius the unusual construction may have resulted from a conflation of two expressions in the poet's mind: "as one condemned to death" and "as if he were condemned to death".

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⁵ Better *ab se*. In Lucretius *ab* is the usual form before a sibilant. There are six occurrences of *ab se*, none of *a se*.