

Lucretius' Use and Avoidance of Greek

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Summary. Lucretius uses highly technical Greek Epicurean sources, but his strategy is to replace technical terms with complementary sets of metaphors and images. Above all, he never merely transliterates a Greek philosophical term, unless for the exceptional purpose of keeping the corresponding concept at arm's length. His aim is to make Epicureanism thoroughly at home in a Roman cultural context. In the first half of the present chapter, this policy is illustrated with examples such as his vocabulary for visual 'images' in book 4 (where, thanks to the accidental survival of two successive versions of the book's programme of topics, his methods can be observed in action). The second half of the chapter examines the ways in which he does nevertheless introduce numerous Greek loan-words into his vocabulary, arguing that this is done in order to build up contexts which convey an exotic and alien Greek world.

Why does Lucretius combine these two antithetical policies towards the Greek language? He is drawing a cultural map in which the Roman and the Greek are widely separated, but in which Epicureanism can, uniquely, cross that divide, and thus prove its true universality.

IN A FAMOUS MANIFESTO (1.136–45), Lucretius laments the linguistic struggle that he faces: 'Nor do I fail to appreciate that it is difficult to illuminate in Latin verse the dark discoveries of the Greeks, especially because much use must be made of new words, given the poverty of our language and the newness of the subject matter.' In the first half of the chapter, I shall be considering how he handles this task of Latinizing the technicalities of Epicurean philosophy. In the second half I shall turn to his own poetic

use of Greek loan-words and idioms. The two practices will come out looking antithetical to each other, and at the end I shall suggest how we are meant to interpret this antithesis.

A central theme will be Lucretius' avoidance of technical terms. By 'technical term' I intend a single word or phrase, either especially coined or adapted from existing usage and earmarked by the author as his standard and more or less invariable way of designating a specific item or concept within a discipline. Its sense must be recognizably different from, or at least recognizably more precise than, any distinct sense that the same term may bear in ordinary usage. While medicine and mathematics were disciplines which had long possessed technical vocabularies, philosophy had been slow to catch up, acquiring little technical terminology before Aristotle. Nevertheless, Hellenistic philosophies had become thoroughly technical in their terminology, and Epicureanism, despite its (misplaced) reputation as an ordinary-language philosophy, was very nearly as jargon-ridden as Stoicism. It could in fact plausibly be maintained that the atomistic tradition from which Epicureanism emerged had, in the hands of its fifth-century exponents, itself pioneered the creation of a philosophical technical vocabulary.

The Latinization of technical Greek, at least in rhetorical treatises, was a familiar practice by the mid first century BC, when Lucretius wrote. But from Cicero's letters one may get the impression that when educated Romans were locked in philosophical discussion they preferred simply to pepper their Latin prose with the authentic Greek terms. It was not until more than a decade after Lucretius' death that Cicero composed his principal philosophical works, in which the Latin philosophical vocabulary was largely forged.

A full-scale study of Cicero's handling of this task is, as far as I know, yet to be written.¹ Among many things it might help teach us is just what is distinctive about Lucretius' own near-contemporary efforts to accommodate Epicureanism within the Latin language. For the present, let Cicero speak for himself as he reflects on the task of Latinization, in a characteristic exchange between speakers from the first book of the *Academica* (1.24-6):

'... But the combination of the two they called "body" and, as one might put it, "quality". You *will* permit us occasionally to use unknown words when dealing with unfamiliar subject matter, just as is done by the Greeks, who have been dealing with these subjects for a long time.' 'We will,' replied Atticus. 'In fact it will even be permissible for you to use Greek words when you want, if you happen to find no Latin ones available.' 'Thanks, but I'll do

¹ However, I have not yet been able to consult Hartung (1970).

my best to speak in Latin, except that I'll use words like "philosophy", "rhetoric", "physics" or "dialectic" — words which along with many others are now habitually used as Latin ones. I have therefore named "qualities" the things which the Greeks call ποιότητες, a word which among the Greeks is itself not an everyday one but belongs to the philosophers. The same applies in many cases. None of the dialecticians' words are from public language: they use their own. And that is a common feature of virtually all disciplines: for new things either new names must be created, or metaphors must be drawn from other fields. If that is the practice of the Greeks, who have already been engaged in these things for so many centuries, how much more should it be allowed to us, who are now trying to deal with these things for the first time.' 'Actually, Varro,' I said, 'it looks as if you will deserve well of your fellow countrymen, if you are going to enrich them not only with facts, as you have done, but also with words.' 'On your instigation then,' he said, 'we will venture to use new words if it becomes necessary.'

Two features deserve particular attention. First, the simple transliteration of Greek words was, as the speaker Varro acknowledges, a familiar and accepted practice, albeit confined largely to the names of the disciplines themselves, such as 'dialectic' and 'rhetoric'. Second, Cicero presents his colleagues as considering it highly commendable when discussing philosophy in Latin to coin the necessary technical jargon, if possible on the analogy of the Greek original, as in the proffered example of *qualitas* for Greek ποιότης.

In both respects Lucretius offers a stark contrast. Take the names of disciplines once more. The *De Rerum Natura* is a poem about physics, what Lucretius' own contemporaries were calling *physica*, yet nowhere in it can that term or its cognates be found. Does Lucretius then have no name for the physical science he is practising? One clear case in which he does is at 1.148, where the proper Epicurean justification for the study of physics is given: ignorant and superstitious fears are to be dispelled by *naturae species ratioque*. The phrase captures quite closely Epicurus' preferred term for physics, φυσιολογία, with *naturae* and *ratio* picking up its constituents φύσις and λόγος respectively. But in Lucretius' rendition it has lost all terminological technicality, and become a subtly descriptive formula for the poem's theme. Read actively, *naturae species ratioque* no doubt denotes the rational philosophical procedure of 'looking at nature and reasoning about it'. But at the same time the Latin permits and even encourages the additional reading, 'the appearance and rationale of nature': such a rendition emphasizes the power of nature herself to confront us with the truth — a motif which Lucretius will be turning to good use in the poem. No strand in this web of connotations goes beyond the potential significance of the one Greek word φυσιολογία.

Similarly with individual technical terms within his chosen discipline,

Lucretius' constant practice is to render Greek technicality neither with Latin technicality nor with mere transliteration, but with a range of his own metaphors. Take the case of 'atoms'. Of the earlier Latin prose writers on Epicureanism, we know only that Amafinius had rendered the term *corpuscula*,² although Lucilius' reference to 'atomus... Epicuri' (753 Marx) shows that simple transliteration had long been another available expedient. Cicero, for his part, actually shows a strong preference for this transliterated form, with occasional resort to *corpuscula*³ or to his own probable coinage *individua*, 'indivisibles'. None of these is ideal. Transliteration of a term from within a discipline — as distinct from the name of the discipline itself — is a rare resort for Cicero, and savours of defeat. *Corpuscula* captures the minuteness of the atoms but not their all-important indivisibility. And *individua* suffers in Cicero's philosophical prose from having to stand in for too many different Greek originals: he had already, in his paraphrase of Plato's *Timaeus* (21, 25, 27), used it to represent ἀμέριστος, ἀμερήs and ἄσχιστος, all terms with importantly different technical connotations both from each other and from 'atom'.

Lucretius, characteristically, introduces his own set of terms for atoms in the proem to book 1, 54–61, more than 400 lines before his first proof of their existence: *rerum primordia*, *materies*, *genitalia corpora*, *semina rerum*, *corpora prima*. Unlike *corpuscula*, all these concentrate not on the smallness of atoms but on their role as the primitive starting points from which other entities are built up. In introducing them, he places the chief emphasis on their dynamic generative powers, already indicated in the procreative implications of *materies* (a derivative of *mater*), *genitalia* and *semina*. These implications he then exploits in his first set of arguments, those against generation *ex nihilo*, in the course of which he seeks to persuade us that the biological regularities which are evident at the macroscopic level depend on fixed *materies* or *semina* at the microscopic level. The metrically convenient transliteration *atomi* never so much as puts in an appearance. But *corpuscula* does crop up as an occasional variant in later books, especially where their generative powers are not at issue.⁴ So does *elementa*, 'letters', a convenient equivalent for στοιχεῖα ('elements' but also more specifically 'letters'), which helps to reinforce Lucretius' favoured analogy between atomic rearrangement and alphabetic ana-

² Cicero, *Ac.* 1.6.

³ *ND* 1.66–7, 2.94, *Ac.* 1.6, *Tusc.* 1.22.

⁴ 2.153, 529, 4.199, 899, 6.1063. At 4.899 it is specifically their smallness that he wishes to emphasize with the diminutive.

grams.⁵ Hence it tends to occur in contexts where the *ordering* of atoms is in focus.⁶

A similar but more cautious metaphorical diversification of a single original Greek term is illustrated in book 4 by Lucretius' range of renditions for εἶδωλα, the thin films of atoms which stream off bodies and cause vision. Lucilius, once again, had simply transliterated the word as *idola* (753 Marx). Cicero and his Epicurean correspondent Cassius, discussing the topic in 45 BC,⁷ agreed to be appalled at the Roman Epicurean Catus for his translation of εἶδωλα as *spectra*. *Spectrum* is otherwise unattested in Latin before the seventeenth century (when it seems to mean 'appearance' or 'aspect'). It probably represents Catus' attempt to invent an off-the-peg jargon for Latin Epicureanism. I have no idea what connotations it conveyed to a Roman ear, but Cicero and Cassius seem to have found them comic.

Lucretius, at any rate, is considerably more subtle. He conveys εἶδωλον with a range of words which collectively capture the idea, already present in the Greek, of a painted or sculpted image preserving the surface features of its subject. His most regular term for this is *simulacrum*, but he also commonly uses *imago*, with the occasional further variants *effigies* and *figura*. (All four renditions were to enjoy at least some success with later Latin writers on Epicureanism).⁸

By an extraordinary stroke of luck, the text of book 4 preserves side by side Lucretius' earlier and later versions of the introductory lines in which his range of terms is sketched.⁹ In the earlier version (45–53), the existence of εἶδωλα is first broached with the words

nunc agere incipiam tibi, quod vementer ad has res
attinet, esse ea quae rerum simulacra vocamus,
quae quasi membranae vel cortex nominatandast,
quod speciem ac formam similem gerit eius imago
cuiuscumque cluet de corpore fusa vagari. (4.49–53)

I shall now begin to deal with what is closely relevant to this: that there are that which we call images of things, which are to be

⁵ 1.196–8, 907–14, 2.688–94, 1013–22.

⁶ E.g. 1.827, 2.393, 463, 4.941, 6.1009.

⁷ *Fam.* 15.16.1, 19.1.

⁸ *Simulacrum*, Vitruvius 6.2.3, Gellius 5.16.3; *imago*, Cicero, e.g. *ND* 1.114, and often; *effigies*, Cicero, *ND* 1.110; *figura*, Seneca, *NQ* 1.5.1, Quintilian, *Inst.* 10.2.15.

⁹ 45–53 represent an early phase when our book 4 was to follow book 2, thus retaining the order of material established in Epicurus' *On nature*. 26–44 were substituted when our book 3 had been placed in between. These lines also announce a new central function for book 4, to dispel belief in ghosts, although at his death Lucretius had clearly not yet reshaped the book along such lines.

termed 'like membranes or bark', because the image bears a shape and form similar to those of whatever thing's body we say it has been shed from and travelled.

He thereby recruits, in addition to the family of artistic metaphors, the biological vocabulary of 'membranes' and 'bark' as helping to convey the difficult idea of these ultra-fine detachable surface-layers of bodies. In the event, neither of the biological terms is brought into play in this role anywhere in book 4.¹⁰ And that must be why, when for other reasons he came to rewrite the proem, Lucretius edited them out, limiting his vocabulary for *εἶδωλα* exclusively to the iconic imagery.¹¹

In the rewritten passage (26–44) the existence of *εἶδωλα* is broached in language which starts out identical to the first version, but then departs significantly from it:

nunc agere incipiam tibi, quod vehementer ad has res
attinet, esse ea quae rerum simulacra vocamus,
quae quasi membranae summo de corpore rerum
dereptae volitant ultroque citroque per auras . . . (4.29–32)

I shall now begin to deal with what is closely relevant to this: that there are what we call images of things, which, like membranes snatched from the outermost part of things' bodies, fly hither and thither through the air . . .

'Membranes' here is no longer part of the designated vocabulary for *εἶδωλα*, but forms instead the basis of an extended simile, designed to convey one specific aspect, the detachability and volatility of these atomic films. As for the other biological term 'bark', a clumsily inapposite name for a light and volatile surface layer of atoms, this has now been deleted. It does however put in an appearance at the end of the rewritten passage, in the company of the preferred sculptural imagery:

dico igitur rerum effigias tenuisque figuras
mittier ab rebus summo de cortice eorum.

I say, therefore, that things' effigies and tenuous figures are despatched from them off their outermost bark.

Like J. Godwin, the recent editor of book 4, I see no justification for the

¹⁰ On *cortex*, see below. *Membranae* occurs once, at 4.95, but only in the descriptive phrase 'tenuis summi membrana coloris', where it is not left to fend for itself.

¹¹ *Effigiae* and *figurae* are in fact used only twice and three times respectively in the remainder of the book. *Imago* (most commonly singular, for metrical reasons) is used some seventeen times. Curiously, it does not occur in the revised version of the proem.

standard emendation of *cortice* to *corpore*.¹² Lucretius has in his revised version rightly seen that 'bark' most appropriately conveys the idea of the stable outer part of an object, *from* which the εἶδωλα flow.

It might seem pointless to wonder what motivated Lucretius' original abortive attempt to introduce the pair of biological terms. But as it happens the question can be answered with a surprising degree of confidence. Alexander of Aphrodisias,¹³ in attacking the Epicurean theory of vision by *simulacra*, asks why, if *simulacra* are as volatile as the proponents assert they are, windy conditions are not sufficient to prevent our seeing things. In describing the images' volatility, he quotes the actual words of the theory's proponents: ἐκ φλοιωδῶν καὶ ὑμενωδῶν ὡς φασιν, '[consisting]¹⁴ "of bark-like and membrane-like" stuffs, as they put it.' Once we place this Greek phrase alongside Lucretius 4.51, it becomes scarcely deniable that he has quite simply *translated* it. His 'quae quasi membranae vel cortex nominatandast' announces that 'membrane-like' and 'bark-like' are appropriate descriptions to use of the *simulacra*. Although there is evidence that the Epicureans did sometimes also call the visual images 'barks' or 'membranes',¹⁵ it seems clear that on this occasion Lucretius' *quasi* is added in order to capture the adjectival force of the -ώδης termination: not membranes and barks, but membrane-like and bark-like. The conclusion must be that Lucretius was ready in principle simply to draw his imagery from the technical terminology of Greek Epicurean prose, but that such borrowings only survived into subsequent drafts if they could prove their independent worth in the context of Latin poetic imagery. In this particular case, while the sculptural imagery survived, the biological imagery failed the test and was edited out.

This privileged glimpse of Lucretius at work on refining his own vocabulary reveals something about his motivation. Rather than follow Catus in supplying a Latin technical term for εἶδωλα, he seeks to embody the notion in a set of metaphors which will complement each other in focusing on the cardinal feature of εἶδωλα, their power to preserve a

¹² Godwin (1986: 94–5). Bailey's comment ad loc. that *cortice* cannot be right because *cortex* designates for Lucretius the εἶδωλον, overlooks the point that that was only in the now discarded version of the poem.

¹³ *De anima mantissa* 135.24–6, εἰ δὲ ἐστὶν εὐκολοὺς αὐτῶν ἢ κίνησις ἐκ φλοιωδῶν καὶ ὑμενωδῶν ὡς φασιν, καὶ πᾶσα ῥοπή ἰκανὴ παρασύρει αὐτά, εἶδει μὴ ὄραν τοὺς κατὰ τὸν ἄνεμον βλέποντας. For discussion of the passage, see Avotins (1980).

¹⁴ See Avotins (1980: 438 n. 40) for discussion as to whether a participle such as πεποιημένων has fallen out here. Given the Lucretian parallel, I am at least confident that the phrase describes the composition of the *simulacra* themselves, not (a possibility considered sympathetically by Avotins) some external agent which moves them.

¹⁵ For ὑμενεις see Diogenes of Oenoanda fr. 10 V 3 Smith; φλοιούς is one available MS reading at Plutarch, *Non posse* 1106A.

portrait-like resemblance to the object emitting them, even over a considerable distance travelled. Their detachability and volatility will be conveyed in other ways, by both simile and argument,¹⁶ without being allowed to dilute or obfuscate the dominant metaphor of portraiture.

To those familiar with Cicero's philosophical works it may seem that there is nothing unique about Lucretius' search for a mutually complementary set of terms corresponding to a single Greek term. A similar-looking process can be glimpsed in Cicero's own forging of a philosophical vocabulary, where he often introduces a Greek term with a whole bevy of Latin equivalents. The Stoic term for infallible cognition, *κατάληψις*, literally 'grasping', provides a good illustration. Its use in rhetorical theory may have earned it Latinization at an earlier date, since already in his youthful *De inventione* Cicero uses *perceptio* in a way probably intended to correspond to *κατάληψιν*.¹⁷ Yet still in the second book of the *Academica* his spokesman Lucullus can be found tinkering with the rendition of it, and listing a range of alternatives: '... "cognitio" aut "perceptio" aut (si verbum e verbo volumus) "comprehensio", quam *κατάληψιν* illi vocant ...' (*Ac.* 2.17, cf. 18, 31).

Normally in Cicero this little fanfare would herald the first introduction of a term. But we are already here in the second book of the *Academica*, and it is certain that *κατάληψις* had already featured in book 1.¹⁸ What Cicero in fact turns out on closer inspection to be doing here is not creating but *enlarging* his stock of Latin terms for it, adding *comprehensio* to the terms *perceptio* and *cognitio* which he had been using up to now (in the *Academica*, that is, and also in the *De finibus*, composed contemporaneously with it.) And one can see why. Both *perceptio* and *cognitio* were too widely and loosely used within the ordinary Latin cognitive vocabulary to capture the very special flavour of Stoic *κατάληψις*, whereas *comprehensio* and its cognates were barely yet familiar in a cognitive sense, so that the usage could still retain a suitably technical ring.¹⁹

Curiously enough Cicero too, just like Lucretius in book 4, can here be watched in the act of refining his vocabulary. Our version of book 2 comes from the *Academica priora*, Cicero's first edition. In his revised edition, the *Academica posteriora*, from which part of book 1 survives, *comprehensio* is heralded as the single correct translation right from the start (*Ac.* 1.41): '“When that impression was discerned in its own right, Zeno called it *comprehendibile*. Will you accept this?” “Yes,” he replied.

¹⁶ 4.54–216.

¹⁷ *Inv.* 1.9, 36.

¹⁸ *Ac.* 2.28 indicates that Hortensius had already used it in book 1.

¹⁹ For the various cognate forms of *comprehensio* in Cicero, see Lévy (1992).

"How else *could* you express *καταληπτόν*?" "But when it had already been received and endorsed, he called it *comprehensio*, like things grasped with the hand."

This exclusive use of *comprehensio* for *κατάληψις* seems thereafter to become canonical in what survives of the revised book 1, and was undoubtedly continued in the lost books 2–4 of the revised version. It enables Cicero to let it stand in contrast, as a term of art, with the less technical 'knowledge' vocabulary — *scire*, *cognoscere* and *percipere* — which in the ensuing chapters he puts into the mouths of pre-Stoic philosophers.²⁰

Consequently, it would be quite misleading to assimilate the practices of Lucretius and Cicero when each sets about establishing a group of alternative or complementary Latin terms for a single Greek original. Cicero does it only as a step towards what will, if all goes well,²¹ prove to be their eventual whittling down to a single technical term. For Lucretius, on the other hand, the range of alternative terms is no stopgap or compromise, but is intrinsically desirable. By means of it, he seeks to capture the Greek original, not by substituting a Latin technical term for a Greek one, but by keeping in play a whole set of mutually complementary metaphors. The policy is one not of finding a technical terminology, but of avoiding one. And in pursuing it Lucretius is doing no more than observing the rules of his genre, the hexameter poem on physics. The proper comparison to make is not with Cicero, but with Empedocles, whom Lucretius reveres as the founder of his genre.²² Empedocles has no technical vocabulary for the six primary entities in his physics — the four elements plus the two powers Love and Strife — but deploys for each a varied set of metaphors and allegorical names: thus the element water is represented not only by the word 'water' (*ὑδωρ*), but also by 'rain' (*ὄμβρος*), 'sea' (*θάλασσα*, *πόντος*) and 'Nestis', probably a Sicilian cult name for Persephone. Lucretius too, it should be remembered, explicitly retains the right to deploy divine names allegorically, such as 'Neptune' for 'sea' (2.655–60) — another implicit declaration of allegiance to his genre and its founder.

I do not mean to deny that any word in Lucretius ever has a technical sense assigned to it, although interestingly enough the most prominent cases are ones where the Greek original *lacked* such a term. (I am thinking here of *coniunctum* for 'permanent property' at 1.449ff.,²³ and the *animus*/

²⁰ See e.g. 1.44

²¹ Hence *Fin.* 3.15, where Cato remarks 'equidem soleo etiam, quod uno Graeci, *si aliter non possum, idem pluribus verbis exponere*'. On this passage, cf. Powell (1995a: 292–4).

²² I argue this in Sedley (1989).

²³ That *coniunctum* does not, as commonly supposed, translate the single Greek word *συμβητικός* is argued in Long and Sedley (1987: §7), and more fully in Sedley (1988). As for *eventum* in the same passage, it is introduced as already a familiar Latin usage (458).

anima distinction set out in book 3.) But what we have already seen, the conversion of Greek technicality into Latin metaphor, is a far more pervasive feature of his poetry. One very satisfying case, which was first detected by Myles Burnyeat,²⁴ is Lucretius' rendition at 4.472 of the exclusively Epicurean technical term for a thesis which 'refutes itself', *περικάτω τρέπεται*. Scepticism, the claim to know nothing, is dismissed as self-refuting, but Lucretius conveys the dry technicality of *περικάτω τρέπεται* with a picture of the sceptic as an acrobat or contortionist: 'If someone thinks that nothing is known, he doesn't even know whether *that* can be known, since he admits that he knows nothing. I therefore decline to argue my case against this person who *has stood with his own head pressed into his footprints*': 'qui capite ipse suo in statuit vestigia sese'. The sceptic's confusion is reinforced in the last line with the Lucretian device which David West has christened 'syntactical onomatopoeia': intellectual contortion is symbolized by contorted grammar, with the proper order *statuit in* reversed in defiance of basic syntax. (I see no advantage in emending *suo* to *sua*, with most editors since Lachmann. That merely substitutes one grammatical inversion — *sua in* for *in sua* — for another. Anyone who objects that the grammatical inversion is too harsh for Lucretius to have perpetrated should consider the example in my next paragraph.)

I am inclined to see a similar story as underlying a nearby passage, 4.832–3. Lucretius rejects another topsy-turvy piece of thinking — the teleologist's mistake of supposing that, because a human bodily part serves a function, that function must have been conceived prior to the part's coming to exist. In Lucretius' view, a thing must already exist before any thoughts about its function can even be entertained. Teleology is back-to-front reasoning; or, as he puts it, 'All such explanations which they offer are back to front, due to distorted reasoning': 'cetera de genere hoc inter quaecumque pretantur | omnia perversa praepostera sunt ratione'. What was in his Greek original? My guess is that what he found there was a description of teleological reasoning as *διάστροφος*, 'distorted'. This term, which translates literally into Lucretius' word *perversa*, is one which, according to Sextus Empiricus,²⁵ Epicurus used for opinion which imposes a distorted construal on primary empirical data. But once again Lucretius has backed up the accusation with syntactical onomatopoeia. The distortion is attributed to 'back-to-front' (*praepostera*) thinking, which in turn is conveyed by the reversal of linguistic elements contained in the tmesis in *inter quaecumque pretantur*. Tmesis is a common Lucretian device (one

²⁴ Burnyeat (1978).

²⁵ S.E. *M* 7.209; for the authenticity of the Epicurean terminology in *M* 7.206–10, see Sedley (1992: 44–55), and cf. Gigante (1981: 118–48).

rarely if ever used without a specific point), but this is one of only two times in which the bare verb stem, left exposed by separation from its prefix, is not a Latin word at all.²⁶ The teleological reversal cannot be contemplated, Lucretius' message runs: it produces nonsense.

In all these Lucretian strategies for the conversion of Greek technicality into Latin imagery, one invariable rule is observed: never transliterate the Greek term. There are, in fact, only two significant breaches of that rule,²⁷ and they both speak eloquently in its favour. A leading contender for the title of Lucretius' worst line is 1.830: 'Now let us also take a look at Anaxagoras' *homoiomereia* ["nunc et Anaxagorae scrutemur homoeomerian", 830] — as the Greeks call it, but which the poverty of our native language prevents us from saying in our own tongue' (1.830–2). The ungainliness conveys a point about the unacceptable consequences of resorting to mere transliteration of the Greek. Anaxagoras' word is glaringly not at home in the Latin language; and that in turn foreshadows the fact, which Lucretius satirically develops in the sequel, that the concept underlying it is equally unwelcome.

This link between the alienness of a word and the alienness of the concept it expresses is virtually explicit in the other passage where bare transliteration is resorted to. Early in book 3 the old Greek theory that soul is a harmony or attunement of the bodily elements is dismissed (3.98–135). In Lucretius' discussion of it the Greek word *ἁρμονία* is simply transliterated, not translated. This is not in itself surprising, since *ἁρμονία* is as resistant to rendition into Latin as it is into English. Even Cicero, in his paraphrase of Plato's *Timaeus* (27), while attempting the translation *concentio* for *ἁρμονία*, is sufficiently uneasy about it to take the step, uncharacteristic in this work, of supplying the Greek word too. Elsewhere Cicero's own preference with regard to *harmonia* is for simply transliterating it.²⁸ But more is at stake for Lucretius: the word's undisguised alienness to the Latin language is symptomatic of the concept's irrelevance:

So, since the nature of mind and spirit has been found to be part of man, give back the name of *harmonia*, whether it was brought down to the musicians from high Helicon, or whether they themselves drew it from some other source and transferred it to what previously lacked a name of its own. Whatever it is, let them keep it. (3.130–5)

²⁶ For the other, see the brilliant article of Hinds (1987).

²⁷ I do not count *prester* (6.424), which although in a way technical is not a philosophically controversial term.

²⁸ E.g. *Rep.* 2.69, *Tusc.* 1.41. Even Lucretius himself once outside book 3 uses the transliterated *harmoniae*: at 4.1248, where he may feel that his need for the musical metaphor leaves him no option.

An alien concept deserves an alien name. By the same token, Lucretius' habitual practice has made clear, philosophically welcome concepts must make themselves at home in the language too.

Now I come to the great Lucretian anomaly. Although Lucretius studiously avoids using transliterated Greek *terminology*, his whole poem is nevertheless knee-deep in Greek loan words.

These Greek words have been usefully catalogued by Bailey,²⁹ who concludes (a) that in some cases Lucretius' hand was forced by the unavailability of a suitable Latin word; but also (b) that in others, where a perfectly good Latin word was at his disposal, he was using Greek out of sheer 'caprice'; and (c) that in one extreme case, 4.1160–9, where sixteen Greek words occur in the space of ten lines, it was impossible to resist the conclusion that Lucretius is translating a Greek original.

It is hard to think of a more implausible set of explanations. With regard to (a), what we have already seen of Lucretius' handling of philosophical terminology should put us on our guard against ever assuming too readily that he has been forced to resort to Greek by the lack of a Latin word.³⁰ As for (c), Bailey's explanation implies a very poor opinion of Lucretius' skills as a translator, and one totally negated by a passage like 3.18–22, where we know that Lucretius is following a Greek original, the Homeric description of Olympus.³¹ But in the remainder of this chapter I want to concentrate on (b), the kind of cases where Bailey thought the intrusion of Greek merely gratuitous. It seems to me that there are remarkably few genuine cases that fit this description.

Most of the Greek words attributed by Bailey to Lucretian 'caprice' do not occur in isolation. They tend to turn up in droves. And again and again this concentration of Greek words in a passage is exploited for a specific effect — to conjure up for the readers a Greek or an otherwise exotic context. When Greece joined the European Common Market, one British newspaper celebrated with a competition for the reader's poem with the largest number of Greek-derived words. This is pretty much what Lucretius is up to too: when he uses a whole convoy of Greek words, he is usually quite simply trying to make us think of Greece.

'Greek words' here should be interpreted broadly. It naturally includes Greek proper names as well as common nouns and adjectives. Moreover,

²⁹ Bailey (1947: i. 138–9).

³⁰ However, see n. 28 above on *harmoniae* at 4.1248, and n. 27 on *prester* at 6.424.

³¹ *Od.* 6.42–6. See the notes on Lucretius ad loc. in Kenney (1971), and notice especially *innubilus* (21) for the Homeric ἀνέφελος, an apparent Lucretian coinage designed to capture the special flavour of the original, but decidedly not a transliteration.

it can be extended to include Greek linguistic idioms, such as the formation of compound adjectives, not native to the Latin language. These points are well illustrated by 1.464–82, the wonderful description of the Trojan war. In the space of five lines, 473–7, we have not only six Greek names, but also the quasi-Greek compound adjective *Graiuenaarum*:

... numquam Tyndaridis forma conflatus amore
ignis, Alexandri Phrygio sub pectore gliscens,
clara accendisset saevi certamina belli,
nec clam durateus Troianis Pergama partu
inflammasset equos nocturno Graiuenaarum.

... never would that flame kindled deep in Alexander's Phrygian heart and fanned with love through the beauty of Tyndareus' daughter have ignited the shining battles of savage war, nor would that wooden horse by giving birth to its Grecian offspring at dead of night have set fire to the Trojans' Pergama.

Especially telling is the authentic Homeric adjective *durateus* used of the 'Wooden' Horse (where, as Bailey ruefully points out, there was the perfectly good Latin word *ligneus* available). And in this already Greek context it is legitimate to regard the archaic Latin nominative *equos*, with its Greek-like termination, as yet another linguistic detail contributing to the same cumulative effect. (It should therefore not, with the majority of editors, be normalized to *equus*.)³²

The argumentative context of this description is Lucretius' discussion of the metaphysical problem how facts about the past maintain their present existence: what is there in existence now for them to be properties of? It therefore serves his purposes to present his example, the Trojan war, as a remote one. The epic ring of the Greek helps locate it in a context far removed from present-day Rome. This brings me to a general observation: that the creation of a Greek context tends, in Lucretius' hands, to emphasize the remote and the exotic.

Bailey's list of gratuitous Greek imports includes *scaphiis*, 'basins', at 6.1046. The word was a common enough one in Latin by Lucretius' day to pass unnoticed. Nevertheless, since it occurs here in a Greek context, flanked by Greek proper names, it does deserve consideration. It occurs in the course of a long and involved discussion of the magnet, and at this point Lucretius is describing the phenomenon of magnetic repulsion:

³² As Jim Adams points out to me, the retention of the old *-os* termination is not particularly unusual in a noun whose stem ends in *-u* (to avoid the collocation *uu*). Nevertheless, it may be judged to acquire a Hellenizing significance when contained, as here, within a broader Hellenizing context.

exultare etiam Samothracia ferrea vidi
 et ramenta simul ferri furere intus ahenis
 in scaphiis, lapis hic Magnes cum subditus esset. (6.1044–6)

I have even seen Samothracian iron objects dance, and iron filings
 all simultaneously go crazy in bronze basins (*scaphiis*), when this
 Magnesian stone was placed underneath.

What are these Samothracian *ferrea*? Iron rings, the editors usually say. But I doubt it. There were rings called ‘Samothracian’, but they seem to have been a combination of iron and gold: on one report, gold rings with an iron ‘head’; on another account, iron rings plated or decorated with gold.³³ It seems unlikely that either of these is meant. The neuter *ferrea* cannot easily imply the masculine complement *anuli* or *anelli*.³⁴ Besides, someone displaying the powers of a magnet would not be likely to use objects containing gold as well as iron, since the weight of the gold would reduce their responsiveness to the magnetism. Finally, both types of ring clearly had a predominantly gold exterior, and would not very naturally be known as ‘iron’ rings. (It would only be if you wanted to cause offence that you would be likely to refer to someone’s gold-plated ring as their ‘iron ring’.)

Ferrea must mean just what it appears to mean, namely ‘iron objects’. But why, then, are they called ‘Samothracian’? There is only one plausible answer: Lucretius is describing a display he once witnessed in *Samothrace*, and ‘Samothracia ferrea’ means ‘the ironware of Samothrace’. The natural magnet or lodestone, variously called the Magnesian stone and the Heracleian stone, was as the names suggest predominantly associated with Magnesia or Heracleia, whether the Heracleia in Lydia or the one in Pontus. But according to one variant tradition the magnet was first found in Samothrace, and was named after the city of Heracleia on that island.³⁵ If there had actually been a Heracleia in Samothrace, this association of the Heracleian stone with the island might have been dismissed as a simple error of geography, the confusion of one Heracleia with another. But since Samothracian Heracleia seems to be a fiction, a better explanation for the origin of this variant tradition must be that lodestones were indeed found on Samothrace, and that this led to a misconception regarding the location of the Heracleia in question. The Lucretian passage, if I have interpreted it correctly, now stands in strong confirmation of that hypothesis. This use

³³ For the evidence, see Lewis (1959: T 30, T 213).

³⁴ For similar doubts, see Godwin (1991: ad loc.).

³⁵ *Etymologicum Magnum*, s.v. *Μαγνητῆς* = Lewis (1959: T 20).

of a first-person eye-witness account is a rarity in Lucretius,³⁶ and confirms that, exceptionally, he is recounting to us an exhibition of the powers of the magnet which he had seen when himself in Samothrace — whether from a vendor, or in a religious ritual, or in other circumstances is impossible to guess.

But how likely is it that he had been to this particular island? A picture of Lucretius the seasoned Aegean tourist does not carry conviction, and should become still less plausible when we proceed to explore his wary attitude to things Greek. Nor is Lucretius, of all people, very likely to have gone on a religious pilgrimage to the celebrated Kabiric mysteries held there.³⁷ However, there is no obligation to see this visit as motivated by either tourism or religious zeal. Samothrace, lying just off the coast of Thrace, was a natural point of anchorage for anyone on a sea voyage between Europe and Asia. *Acts of the Apostles* 16.11 describes how St Paul put in there for the night when sailing from the Troad to Macedonia,³⁸ and Ovid changed ships there on his way to exile in Tomi (*Tristia* 1. 10.19–22). Any Roman sent on a tour of duty to an Asian province might well stop off there on the outward or homeward journey. One plausible such journey might be — but here I am entering the realms of fantasy — a tour of duty to Bithynia, where Lucretius' patron Memmius was praetor in 57 bc.

At all events, the use of the Greek word *scaphiis* at 6.1046 can now hardly be called gratuitous. It is part of the window-dressing for Lucretius' brief excursion into an exotic world — his report of tricks with magnets in Greek bronze vessels, witnessed in person on this remote Aegean island.

Nor are the remote and the exotic by any means always viewed with sympathy or approval. In book 4, for example (1123–30, 1160–9), Greek vocabulary piles up to describe the absurd luxuries and euphemistic epithets which deluded lovers, blinded to the realities of life, bestow on the objects of their affections. (These lines, incidentally, feature prominently in Bailey's list of gratuitously introduced Greek words, and include the ones which he thought must be translated from a Greek original.) And book 2 has another build-up of Greek words and names in the frenetic

³⁶ Another case is 4.577, recalling his own experience of multiple echoes. Given how sparing he is with them, I would take these autopsy claims seriously. When he has not witnessed something in person, Lucretius is ready to admit it: cf. his indication at 1.727 that he has never been to Sicily.

³⁷ There is reason to think that some Romans did go to Samothrace for the mysteries, possibly including one with Epicurean links. See Bloch (1940: esp. n. 18).

³⁸ Although Samothrace was said to be ill-provided with harbours (Pliny, *NH* 4.12.73), it certainly had at least one (Livy 45.6.3).

description of the worship of Cybele (600–43),³⁹ a cult whose theological implications we are immediately urged to shun. Just as they are culturally remote,⁴⁰ so too they are, as Lucretius puts it (2.645), ‘far removed from true reasoning’.

This shunning of the exotic can be felt in the important ethical proem to book 2, at lines 20–61. The simple idyllic Epicurean lifestyle is eulogized in pure pastoral Latin. Greek words and formations creep in only when Lucretius is describing the pointless luxuries with which it stands in contrast (*lampadas igniferas* and *citharae* in 24–8, where 24–5 themselves recall the well known Homeric description of Phaeacian opulence at *Odyssey* 7.100–2).

One less hostile use of Greek is book 3’s quasi-heroic parade of the great men who, for all their greatness, proved mortal (3.1024–44) — *Scipiad* (note the Greek termination), the companions of the *Heliconiades*, i.e. the poets, including Homer, who out of all of them was the one who won the *sceptra* (1038), Democritus, and even Epicurus — whose actual Greek name appears nowhere but here in the entire poem. What is evoked this time is not alienness or remoteness, but the larger than life heroism of Homeric (as well as Ennian) epic, in a parade of the dead also reminiscent of the Homeric *Nekuia*.⁴¹

Homer’s own canonisation in this list does reflect a recognition on Lucretius’ part of Greek superiority in both music and poetry. This emerges from the key Greek terms and forms which highlight his own celebrated poetic manifesto at 1.921–50: his poetic ambitions have struck his heart with a *thyrsus* (1.923), inspiring him to expound his philosophy ‘with sweet-talking Pierian song’ (*suaviloquenti | carmine Pierio*, 1.945–6). We should perhaps also detect an implicit contrast of Roman and Greek noises at 2.410–13:

ne tu forte putes serrae stridentis acerbum
horrorem constare elementis levibus aeque
ac musaea mele, per chordas organici quae
mobilibus digitis experefacta figurant.

So you must not think that the harsh grating of a shrieking saw consists of elements as smooth as those constituting the musical

³⁹ As well as the Greek proper names in the passage, note *tympana* and *cymbala* (618), *chorea* (635), and the compound adjectives at 601, 619, 627 and 632.

⁴⁰ This is emphasized by Lucretius’ specific indications (600, 629) that he is giving us a *Greek* portrayal of Cybele.

⁴¹ 1025 is Ennian (see fr. 137 Skutsch), followed immediately by the Iliadic line 1026 (cf. *Il.* 21.107). The thematic link with the *Nekuia* is already set up by the preceding lines, 980–1012, on myths of torture in Hades. For the dense series of further echoes of Greek literature in this passage, see Segal (1990: esp. 177–8).

melodies which the instrumentalists with nimble fingers arouse and form on their strings.

The almost pure Greek third line contrasts with the pure Latin which precedes. Where Greece has given us sublime music, Rome's more characteristic noise is the shrieking sawblades of a workshop.⁴²

Sudden switches of vocabulary have this power to transport us instantly to and fro between the Greek and the Roman worlds. They can be used not only to praise Greek superiority, and to marginalize what Lucretius shuns as alien, but also, on the contrary, to universalize a concept. In book 5 (1028–90), Lucretius argues for the natural origin of language partly by appeal to the way that all animals alike from infancy instinctively know their innate powers:

cornua nata prius vitulo quam frontibus extent,
 illis iratus petit atque infestus inurget;
at catuli pantherarum scymnique leonum
 unguibus ac pedibus iam tum morsuque repugnant
 vix etiam cum sunt dentes unguesque creati. (5.1034–8)

The calf angrily butts and charges with his incipient horns before they have even protruded from his forehead. Panther whelps and lion cubs already fight with claws, paws and biting at an age when their teeth and claws have barely appeared.

Scymni (1036), the Greek *vox propria* for lion cubs, occurs in Latin literature only here. Bailey objected to it on the ground that there was a perfectly good Latin word for cubs available, *catuli*, and one which Lucretius could hardly have overlooked since he uses it in the very same line! But this once again misses the point. The butting calf, a familiar sight in the Italian countryside, is described in pure Latin. The young panthers and lions, on the other hand, those exotic inhabitants of the eastern Mediterranean and beyond, belong to another world. The switch to that other world is made instantaneously with the consecutive Greek-derived words *pantherarum scymnique* in line 1036. Lucretius neatly gets across the point that this instinctive use of innate powers is the same the whole world over, even though the nature of the powers themselves may vary from region to region. Likewise, he is arguing, human beings the world over naturally express themselves in language, even though the actual sounds produced differ according to region.

It is worth looking out for a comparable universality in the account of disease with which the whole poem closes (6.1090–1286). Initially, Lucre-

⁴² Cf. 2.500–6, Lucretius' catalogue of qualitative extremes, where Graecisms indicate the exotic character of the finest dyes (500–1) and of the most sublime music (505).

tius emphasizes how widely diseases differ from one region of the world to another (6.1103–18). The diversity is brought home mainly by the deployment of geographical names, although the exotic character of the Egyptian elephantiasis disease is further emphasized by its Greek name, *elephas* (1114). When Lucretius turns to his long closing description of the Athenian plague, however, there is no attempt to bring out its exotic character by the use of Greek, despite the ready availability of suitable vocabulary in the Thucydides text which he is following.⁴³ I do not intend here to speculate about Lucretius' purpose in closing with the plague passage. I shall simply observe that the linguistic pattern I have described confirms that its lessons, whatever they are, are meant to be universal ones.

I hope that these examples have succeeded in demonstrating the wide-ranging evocative powers of strategically placed Greek names, idioms and loan words in Lucretius' poem. If I am right, something unexpected has emerged. Despite the proclaimed Greek origins of both his poetic medium and its message, Lucretius is very far from being a philhellene or Hellenizer. Although the Greeks are acknowledged to outshine the Romans both artistically and philosophically, Greekness for him frequently symbolizes the culturally remote, the morally dangerous and the philosophically obscure. Seen in this light, the wholesale Latinization of Greek philosophical terminology which I discussed in the first half of this paper will need careful interpretation. We can now see that Lucretius' concern is not the philosophical spoon-feeding of disadvantaged Roman readers linguistically incapable of savouring the Epicurean gospels in their original Greek. On the contrary, his readers' familiarity with the Greek language, as with Greek literature, is assumed from the outset, and is systematically exploited. Nor on the other hand is he transporting his Roman readers to Athens. He is importing to Rome from Athens its single most precious product, which, as the proem to book 6 eloquently declares, is Epicurus' philosophy.

It is certainly no part of his strategy to play down Epicurus' Greekness. Right from the proem to book 1, Epicurus has been labelled the great Greek discoverer ('*primum Graius homo . . .*', 1.66).⁴⁴ And in the proem to book 3 not only is Epicurus hailed as the 'glory of the Greek race' ('*o Graiae gentis decus*', 3.3), but his Greekness is brought out with the

⁴³ For Lucretius' use of medical vocabulary, see D. Langslow's paper in this volume.

⁴⁴ As Farrell (1991: 34–5, n. 17) points out, '*Graius homo*' echoes Ennius' application of the same phrase to Pyrrhus, thus implicitly bracketing Epicurus and Pyrrhus as formidable Greek invaders of Italy.

very linguistic device that I have been documenting. Lucretius professes himself Epicurus' imitator, not his rival:

quid enim contendat hirundo
 cyncis, aut quidnam tremulis facere artubus haedi
 consimile in cursu possint et fortis equi vis. (3.6-8)

For how should a swallow compete with swans, or what would kids, with their trembling limbs, be able to do in a race to compare with the powerful strength of a horse?

The familiar pattern emerges once again. Lucretius is the swallow, or the kid, described in his own language, Latin. Epicurus is the swan, or the horse. The swan is so named in Greek: the Greek *cycnus* became common enough in Latin, but this may well be its earliest occurrence;⁴⁵ and at all events, the native Latin word *olor* was available to Lucretius as an alternative. Even the dative form of *cyncis* imports a further Graecism, the indigenous Latin construction after verbs of contending being *cum* plus ablative.⁴⁶ What is more, *fortis equi vis*, although Latin, honours the horse with the Greek idiom, familiar from epic, whereby a hero is periphrastically called not 'x' but 'the (mighty) strength of x', e.g. *Iliad* 23.720 κρατερῆ . . . ἴς Ὀδυσῆος (where ἴς is cognate with Lucretius' *vis*).⁴⁷

So at this crucial juncture Lucretius is not only emphasizing Epicurus' Greekness, but even acknowledging that the Romans are, philosophically, the poor relations. The question 'How can a Lucretius compete with an Epicurus?' turns out to carry the subtext 'How can a Roman philosopher compete with a Greek philosopher?'

What are we to make of these contradictions? Lucretius considers Greek culture artistically and philosophically superior, and yet at the same time deeply alien. He floods his poem with Greek words, but religiously avoids them in the course of doctrinal exposition. Let me close with a suggested explanation of these anomalies. Epicurus is a Greek, a voice from an alien culture to which Lucretius has no interest in acclimatizing himself or his reader. Lucretius' mapping-out of the Greek and the Roman, effected by his strategic interweaving of Greek and Latin vocabulary, is a constant reminder of the gulf that divides the two worlds. But although Epicurus' world is alien, his philosophy is not. It directly addresses the universal moral needs of mankind, and to that extent it transcends all

⁴⁵ See André (1967: 65).

⁴⁶ I am grateful to Roland Mayer for pointing this out to me. He illuminatingly compares the device of using a Greek nominative-plus-infinitive construction at Catullus 4.1-2, where the purported speaker is designated by a Greek noun, *phaselus*.

⁴⁷ This Graecism is noted by Kenney (1971: ad loc.), and I owe to David West the further point that ἴς, rather than βία, is the Greek form directly echoed by Lucretius.

cultural barriers. Lucretius, we have seen, is constantly emphasizing the barriers. It is precisely by drawing attention to the cultural divide between the Greek and the Roman, while making Epicurean philosophy nevertheless thoroughly at home in his own native language, that he proves to us its true universality.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ My thanks to audiences at the Oxford Philological Society, at the British Academy Colloquium 'The language of Latin poetry', at the University of Leiden, and at St Petersburg for helpful discussion, and, for additional comments, to David West, Ted Kenney, Michael Reeve, Jim Adams, Roland Mayer, Voula Tsouna, David Langslow, Mieke Koenen and Han Baltussen. An enlarged version of the paper appears as Chapter 2 of my book *Lucretius and the Transformation of Greek Wisdom* (Cambridge, 1998), and I am grateful to Cambridge University Press for permission to print it here.

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