

IV Colloquium on Latin Literature
Cortona 10-12 March 2022. De rerum natura Book VI

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De rerum natura Book VI

Francesco Busti

(Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa)

The double identity of Lucretius' Calliope
(pagine 455-471)

Abstract: When Lucretius invokes Calliope as his *dux* at the end of the proem to Book VI (92-95), the echo of I1 in VI 94 reinforces a more general correspondence between Calliope and Venus, whom Lucretius had invoked as his *socia* in the proem to Book I (24). This paper argues that the two goddesses share the same double identity, as they both represent a twofold aspect of the poem, namely the profound interdependence of form and content. This twofold aspect is cunningly embodied in an interlingual pun on Epicurus' name, which makes him an *ejpivkouro~* to his own philosophy.

Keywords: Lucretius, Calliope, Venus, Persuasion, Truth.

René de Nicolay

(Universität Zürich)

Lucretius on Thunderbolts (De rerum natura VI 269-345). Reductionism or Translation?
(pagine 472-479)

Abstract: Thunderbolts connect what is above and what lies below. They could lend themselves to a reductionistic account, showing how lofty phenomena can actually be analyzed in down-to-earth terms. This is not how Lucretius treats them: instead, he plays *vis-à-vis* his readers the role of a transitional figure, indicating to them the path towards a full explanation of thunderbolts. The article tries to explain why and how Lucretius chooses that move of translation (from a seemingly supernatural phenomenon to the beginnings of a physicalist account) rather than the possibility of scientific reduction.

Keywords: Lucretius, Epicurus, Thunderbolts, Reductionism, Translation.

Francesca Econimo

(Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa)

Disarming Jupiter. Lucretius' Attack on Divine Thunderbolts (De rerum natura VI 379-422)
(pagine 480-496)

Abstract: This paper focuses on Lucretius' criticism of divine thunderbolts (*DNR* VI 379-422). Firstly, I show how Lucretius draws on the latent myths of Ajax and Phaethon as paradigms of divine punishment, valid for the fiction of myth, but not for everyday life, thus demonstrating that thunderbolts do not depend on divine will. Secondly, I highlight the echoes of terrible events dating back to 65 and 63 BCE and argue that Lucretius is engaging with Cicero's *De consulatu suo*. While Cicero ascribes the recent upheavals to the will of a Stoic god, Lucretius attributes them to the perishable nature of the world according to Epicurean doctrine. In doing so, he succeeds in depriving Jupiter of his thunderbolt.

Keywords: Lucretius' *De rerum natura* VI, Thunderbolts, Latent Myths, *De consulatu suo*, Fear of Cosmic Upheavals.

Myrto Garani

(Εθνικόν και Καποδιστριακόν Πανεπιστήμιον Αθηνών)

Lucretius on prester (*De rerum natura* VI 423-450)

(pagine 497-506)

Abstract: Within the framework of his meteorological account, Lucretius explains the causes and the nature of the obscure phenomenon of prester (*De rerum natura* VI 423-450), which was generally associated with tornadoes and waterspouts. After a brief overview of early theories which hold that prester is of fiery nature, I compare Lucretius' windy explanation with what we read in Epicurus' *Letter to Pythocles* and in Theophrastus' Syriac-Arabic *Metarsiology*. I also explore the various ways in which Lucretius relates his explanation with the previous tradition and resorts to creative analogical reasoning, in order to clarify the phenomenon and demythologize it.

Keywords: Lucretius, *prester*, Meteorology, Theophrastus, Metarsiology

Andrew Feldherr

(Princeton University, NJ)

«*It never rains but it pours*». *Material Abundance and Didactic "Palingenesis" in Lucretius' Account of Precipitation: Lucr. VI 495-534*

(pagine 507-525)

Abstract: This article offers a close reading of Lucretius' account of precipitation informed by its structural position at the transition point in Book VI between meteorological and terrestrial phenomena. This transition relates the subject matter of the poem to its representational and didactic strategies and signals the tension between viewing the poem as a complete system that explains everything and as subject to revision on account of the infinity of actual occurrences in nature. The reader thus becomes a participant in a still incomplete compositional process of producing a poem that perfectly represents the world.

Keywords: Didacticism, Structure, Intertextuality, Meteorology, Closure, Simile.

Katherine Dennis

(Princeton University, NJ)

Between Apocalypse and Paradox. Lucretius VI 535-638

(pagine 526-536)

Abstract: Lucretius' proofs on the constant size of the ocean at vi 608-638 are a striking departure from his depiction of cataclysmic earthquakes in lines 535-607, leading some to argue the lines are misplaced. This article puts the two passages into dialogue, demonstrating the linguistic, thematic, and didactic similarities between the two. The intense atmosphere of *horror* that pervades the first half of the passage may be abated by the mere paradoxicality of the second, but both topics destabilize the reader's perception, limiting the possibility of philosophical detachment the book purports to offer.

Keywords: Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, Analogy, Eschatology, Affective Criticism.

Francesco Grotto

(Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa)

The ignis sacer. A Miniature Giant? On Lucr. VI 660-661 (and 547)

(pagine 537-543)

Abstract: In *De rerum natura* VI 660-661 Lucretius characterises the disease named *ignis sacer* as a burning snake, a choice justified by the “fiery” and “creeping” nature of that disorder. In this note, I suggest a parallelism between such imagery and the traditional depiction of Typhon – or, alternatively, the Giant Enceladus –, the serpent-like creature which was thought to be buried under Mount Etna and whose movements were supposed to cause volcanic eruptions. The verb *disserpunt* at VI 547, used to describe the propagation of seismic tremors, could also be suggestive of similar mythological associations.

Keywords: Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, *ignis sacer*, Giant, Snake, Etna, Typhon, Enceladus.

Leonardo Galli

(Alma Mater Studiorum, Università di Bologna)

Un catalogo zoppicante. Proposta di trasposizione di Lucr. VI 804-805
(pagine 544-552)

Abstract: This article proposes the transposition of Lucr. VI 804-805 after VI 801: in this way, not only does the couplet acquire a coherence otherwise absent within the text, but the structure of the passage as a whole also becomes conceptually clearer.

Keywords: Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, Textual Criticism.

Deborah Steiner

(Columbia University, NY)

“Only Connect”. Reading of Lucretius De rerum natura VI 906-1089
(pagine 553-572)

Abstract: This discussion of the passage in Book vi in which Lucretius treats the phenomenon of magnetism addresses four principal issues. First, I identify the Greek precedents, chiefly Homer and Plato, for the poet’s account, and the exegetical tradition surrounding the Homeric passages that inform the Lucretian lines; this section also briefly evokes two later poems demonstrably influenced by Lucretius’ magnet passage. In the second part, I focus on the seemingly digressive mention of Samothrace and the language used for the behaviour of iron on the island. Part three explores the *Abbruchformel* with which Lucretius closes his account, and argues for the presence of two Pindaric antecedents. And the concluding portion draws together my different points so as to highlight the chorality motif that punctuates lines 906-1089, and that invites us to see the excursus as part of the more extended initiatory paradigm structuring the *De rerum natura*.

Keywords: Lucretius, Magnet, Magnetism, *De rerum natura*, Korybants, Choral Dancing, Initiation.

Marta M. Perilli

(Università degli Studi di Firenze)

A Dead(ly) Air. Lucretius on the Origins of Epidemics and the Perishability of Air in De rerum natura VI 1090-1137
(pagine 573-584)

Abstract: This article takes into consideration two main themes developed in Lucretius’ theoretical explanation on the origins of epidemics (VI 1096-1137). Firstly, it deals with the poet’s strategy to debunk the belief that the plague was a godsent punishment against wicked individuals. On a literary level, Lucretius makes this anti-theological argument by referencing and subverting not only the widely recognized model of Iliad Book I, but also two Hesiodic passages (*op.* 96-104 and 240-243). Secondly, the paper deals with the apocalyptic scope given to epidemics by employing some of the tropes deployed in the poem’s previous eschatological passages. Lucretius makes an argument for the plague as evidence of the corruptibility of the air and, thus, of the mortality of the world and its impending end. The presence of the same argument in Theophrastus’ fr. 184 FHSG shows that Lucretius in the analytical exposition of the origin of epidemics further engages with the philosophical debate on the destructibility of the cosmos.

Keywords: Lucretius, Hesiod, Theophrastus, Plague, Apocalyptic Tropes, Mortality of the World, Perishability of Air.

Alessandro Schiesaro

(Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa)

Ovid's Aeginian Plague and the ending of De rerum natura (with a correction to Lucr. VI 1249)
(pagine 585-600)

Abstract: A comparison with the final lines of Ovid's narrative of the plague at Aegina (*met.* VI 608-613) offers elements in support of the transposition of *De rerum natura* VI 1247-1251 to the end of the book, first suggested by Bockemüller. At line VI 1249 *leto* <*in maerore*> should be read instead of Marullus' *in lectum*.

Keywords: End of *De rerum natura* VI, Text of *De rerum natura* VI, Ovid and Lucretius.

Manuel Galzerano

(Università degli Studi Roma Tre)

Lucretius' Last Act. A Defence of Bockemüller's Transposition
(pagine 601-613)

Abstract: This article offers a defence of the transposition of lines VI 1247-1251 to the end of Lucretius' *De rerum natura*, first proposed by Bockemüller. Despite Deufert's arguments in favour of the transmitted text, vv. 1247-1251 seem to be out of place in the context where they are found, as they alter the symmetrical structure of vv. 1238-1246. On the contrary, a close comparison with Thuc. II 52 4 confirms that these lines better fit the ending of the poem; in fact, both Thucydides and Lucretius distinguish between the action of two separate groups of citizens: only the latter group piles the corpses onto a funeral pyre that has already been lit and then leaves. Moreover, both inter-textual parallels (Manil. I 888-891) and intra-textual ones (the comparison with Lucretius' preceding book endings) confirm that the transposition remains the best solution in order to reconstruct the final act of Lucretius' poem. Finally, Bockemüller's emendation, given the "epiphonematic" nature of vv. 1250-1251, provides a strong argument against those readings that regard Book VI as missing a reassuring final section about Epicurean *voluptas* and/or divine bliss in the *intermundia*.

Keywords: Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, Plague, Thucydides, Manilius, Ovid, Intertextuality, Closure.

Nicolò Campodonico

(Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa)

Finally Epicurus. A Note on Lucr. VI 1250-1251
(pagine 614-620)

Abstract: In VI 1250-1251, Lucretius states that no one could be found who was not assaulted by illness, mourning, and death during the terrible plague in Athens, which concludes the *De rerum natura*. This article suggests that the reference to *nec ... quisquam ... quem neque ...* implicitly evokes Epicurus as the future saviour of Athens and of mankind, as described in the proem of Book VI. Lucretius uses here the passive form of the verb *reperire*, which appears elsewhere to refer to Epicurus' discoveries (VI 7) and to the discovery of Epicurus himself (VI 5). Lucretius also seems to allude here to the letter that Epicurus wrote to Idomeneus from his deathbed, in which he expressed his endurance of pain and inner joy. The analysis of these verses, whose structure recalls Epicurus' depiction in I 68, may bring further arguments to the hypothesis that they are the true ending of the *De rerum natura*, as was suggested by Bockemüller and other scholars.

Keywords: Lucretius, Epicurus, Athens, *De rerum natura*, Ending, Closure, Plague.

MISCELLANEA

Giulio Vannini

(Università degli Studi di Firenze)

Petronio 43, 4-8. Riflessioni sul testo e una congettura

(pagine 621-628)

Abstract: The article, focusing on a disputed passage from the *Cena Trimalchionis* (43, 4-8), suggests a new interpretation for the phrase *prima vindemia* (43, 4), shows that the character under discussion is Chrysanthus' brother (43, 4-8), offers arguments in support of the transmitted *oracularios* (43, 6), and presents a new conjecture for the problematic *cui datum est, non cui destinatum* (43, 7).

Keywords: Petronius, *Cena Trimalchionis*, Textual Criticism.

Michele De Lazzer

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Ancora su Ardalio. Note a margine della Glossa A 128 nella raccolta inedita Arbiter

(pagine 629-653)

Abstract: This article aims to offer an analysis of gloss A 128 about the rare noun *ardalio* and contained in the alphabetical latin glossary *Arbiter*, presumably composed between the 7th and the 8th century and currently preserved in ms. Sankt Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, 908. In this voice *ardalio* is explained with *acutus cum malignitate*, a definition diametrically opposed to the meaning proposed in the first attestations of this term, in Phaedrus (II 5, 1) and later in Martial (II 7, 8 and IV 78, 10), that use *ardalio* to label fatuous and gullible characters, really far from being *acuti* and *maligni*. After some remarks on a recent study, published by G. Flammini (2020) and entirely devoted to this word, the present contribution tries to identify a plausible source for voice A 128 and discusses, at the same time, the different meanings of *ardalio* from Antiquity to the Late Middle Ages. Furthermore, this article attempts to shed light on the hypothesis that *ardalio* would originally be connected with a character of ancient mime.

Keywords: *Arbiter*, *ardalio*, Latin Glossary, Martial, Phaedrus.