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The Prometheus story, which is more about the creation of human beings as a species (though usually focussed on the male) is also occasionally relevant, but J. stays focussed on the specifically gendered creation of a woman (literally or metaphorically) or use of a manufactured woman, usually, though not exclusively, by a man – a wise choice when this theme alone offers such a great variety of texts for study.

The book is written in an easily readable style and elaborates on secondary scholarship for those new to the field. Technical terms are clearly explained (though I am not sure the term ‘Ur’ can be quite so easily boiled down to mean ‘source’, p. 68) and there is a small glossary. It is an excellent resource for students of both film and Classics. J. provides her own highly readable prose translation of Met. 10.238–97, which will be invaluable to non-specialists, while the Latin text is provided in an Appendix. It is a shame that the flow of the writing is occasionally interrupted by typing errors or minor inaccuracies (for example, the names Freddy/Freddy and Zac/Zack are spelled inconsistently; the Buffy episode ‘Ted’ is from Season 2, not 1, p. 145) but these do not detract from the overall achievement of the work. This lively and engaging volume will prove very useful to students and scholars alike.

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LUcretius AND LUCY HutCHINSON

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In 2011, a book on Lucretius won the National Book Award in the US and became a bestseller. Stephen Greenblatt’s The Swerve: How the World Became Modern tells the story of how Poggio Bracciolini discovered a manuscript of De rerum natura in a German monastery in Fulda and sent back to Florence a copy he had had made. The argument of Greenblatt’s book is that the Renaissance recovery of Lucretius exemplifies the ‘cultural shift at the origins of modern life and thought’ (p. 11). Providing an account of Lucretius’ ‘affectives’ in the writings of Shakespeare, Montaigne, Galileo and Jefferson, Greenblatt devotes a few pages to Lucy Hutchinson’s seventeenth-century translation, ‘from a surprising source’, as a ‘remarkable accomplishment’ (p. 257). What intriguess Greenblatt, as it has Hutchinson scholars, is the contradiction between Hutchinson’s dedicatory epistle to the Earl of Anglesey in which she denounces the poem and the fact that ‘she painstakingly prepar[ed] a verse translation, pa[id] a professional scribe to write out the first five books, and carefully cop[ied] out book 6, along with the Arguments and the marginalia in her own hand’ (p. 258).

Hutchinson’s translation remained in manuscript until Hugh de Quenin’s 1996 edition, which Greenblatt used; now readers can avail themselves of this magisterial edition, which constitutes the first volume of the eagerly awaited complete works of Hutchinson, under the general editorship of N. One of the distinctive features of this edition is that it prints as parallel text the Latin editions – the 1631 annotated edition by Daniel Pareus and the
1570 edition of Dionysus Lambinus (for the last part of Book 6) — that Hutchinson used, thereby making it possible for readers to discern Hutchinson’s choices as a translator. (The Latin text was prepared by Z.). For, as N. points out, the early modern Lucretius that Hutchinson used differs significantly from modern editions.

The substantial, 146-page introduction by N. gives a thorough account of the contexts of Hutchinson’s translation. Noting that De rerum natura was the last major Latin epic to remain untranslated, N. lays to rest the now discredited idea that early modern women’s translations exemplify their submission to patriarchal strictures against authorship. In fact, as he points out, her dedicatee, the Earl of Anglesey, designated her a ‘worthye author’ on the manuscript. Hutchinson joined male translators such as John Evelyn and John Creech, even expressing rivalry against Evelyn in her dedication. Comparing hers to these translations, N. states that Hutchinson’s is much closer to Lucretius than Creech’s freer translation with substantial cuts, though it is inferior to Dryden’s, and concludes: ‘[h]er translation is too uneven and inaccurate to be termed a great one, but it reveals a persistent energy, independence of mind, and determination which often raise her above her contemporaries’ (p. cvii).

N. stresses throughout the importance of Hutchinson’s gendered position as a woman reader of Lucretius and is mindful of the significance of gender in the choices she made as a translator. This position led her to decline to translate the section on sexuality in Book 4, stating, ‘The cause & effects of Love which he makes a kind of dreame but much here was left out for a midwife to translate whose obscene art it would better become then a nicer pen’ (p. 281). Yet N. suggests that Lucretius had a special appeal for women because he inverts conventional hierarchies and diverges from the traditional topic of military heroism as the subject of epic. Indeed, he points out that other women in seventeenth-century England expressed positive responses to Lucretius: in 1610 Jane Owen presented to the Bodleian an illuminated manuscript of Lucretius, and Margaret Cavendish’s Poems and Fancies (1653) was influenced by Lucretius. Here and in an earlier article, N. demonstrates the close relationship between Hutchinson and Cavendish despite their apparently diametrically opposed political allegiances.

Readers of CR will find of interest N.’s informative account of Lucretius’ seventeenth-century reception and his detailed analysis of translation choices Hutchinson made: for example, her distortion of Lucretius’ meaning on topics such as the gods, the soul and the infinite cosmos; her critical rewriting of whole passages in Book 4; and her errors in translating Lucretius’ cosmology. For Hutchinson scholars, his discussion of the relationship of the translation to Hutchinson’s other works, especially her biblical epic Order and Disorder, which he suggests ‘reveals the complexity of Hutchinson’s response to DRN’ (p. lxxiv), is of particular interest, for her translation has not received as much scholarly attention as her Life of Colonel John Hutchinson (a memoir of her husband, a parliamentarian general). N.’s insightful analysis of Hutchinson’s contradictory position in relation to Lucretius — a contradiction that Greenblatt noted — is highly persuasive. He points out that the dedication and the marginal denunciations, which were added later, should not be taken literally, and that despite these signs of resistance to his ideas, Hutchinson displays ‘strong elements of interest and even identification’ (p. xcii) with her author. Although Hutchinson calls Lucretius an ‘Atheist Dog’, she translates passages that express his atheism with ‘some vigour’ (p. lxxv). In fact, N. makes the intriguing suggestion that since Anglesey had published controversial works, she may have hoped that he would publish her translation. Finally, the discussion of various aspects of the poem, for example, the relationship between animals and humans, will be of interest to a wider group of scholars — in this instance those engaged in the developing field of animal studies. The introduction thus
represents a boon to scholars of Lucretius and his reception, of Hutchinson, of early modern women writers, and of early modern studies more generally.

B. provides the transcription of the manuscript. The distinction between the scribe’s transcriptions on the one hand, and Hutchinson’s dedication, Argument, marginalia and corrections to the text on the other, are made by the use of two different typefaces. B.’s detailed Commentary, which is published separately as Part 2, discusses relationships between the translation and the Latin text, points out relationships to Hutchinson’s other writings, provides commentary on Lucretius’ reception and calls attention to matters of critical significance. It also helpfully directs the reader to relevant scholarship on both Lucretius and Hutchinson. Of the many commentaries of value, I note as of particular interest those indicating the relevance of Lucretius’ civil war context and the plague narrative for Hutchinson, the specifics of her rewritings of Book 4, and her political engagement with the text, especially in Book 5.

N. points out that Hutchinson displayed considerable interest not only in rival translators of Lucretius, such as Evelyn, but also in the translations of the Aeneid by John Denham and Sidney Godolphin, which she copied out in her commonplace book. Since Hutchinson was the first Englishwoman to translate a classical epic, and would go on to write a biblical epic of her own, it is significant that her voice comes together with Lucretius’ invocation of Calliope, the Muse of epic poetry, in Book 6 which she herself transcribed:

Of those great wonders which in heaven are
I now of Thunders & loud tempests sing
What is their cause, & what effects they bring:

Subtile Calliope, the Gods delight,
And Mankinds recreation, guide me right
That I may the desired goale attained
And crownes of glory, by thy conduct gaine. (6:87-9, 96-9; p. 389)

Lucretius’ emphasis on how Nature lays waste ‘monumenta virum,’ (6:241, p. 396) which she translates as ‘Heroes Monuments’ (6:258, p. 397) is not only an instance of what N. characterises as her anti-Augustinism, but also an exemplary moment when a female poet is enabled to carve a space for herself in the epic tradition. For as N. points out, in Order and Disorder she included not only passages from her Lucretius translation, but also near-translations and imitations of the Aeneid and the Metamorphoses. In addition, she imitates the incomplete or irregular lines of Virgil in her Lucretius. Scholars of Hutchinson have already been comparing Order and Disorder and Milton’s Paradise Lost; it still remains for them to explore the relationship between her epic and not only Lucretius, but also Virgil and Ovid; and her Lucretius, especially Book 6, and Spenser’s Faerie Queene (Spenser wrote a Lucretian hymn to Venus). One of the many achievements of this edition is to bring to the fore of our consciousness the making of an early modern female epic poet.

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