

Comic Misunderstanding: The *Adulescens Amans* in DRN 4

1. Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* 4

Section A: 4.1121-40

1125	adde quod absumunt viris pereuntque labore; adde quod alterius sub nutu degitur aetas, languent officia atque aegrotat fama vacillans. labitur interea res et Babylonia fiunt unguenta, et pulchra in pedibus Sicyonia rident; scilicet et grandes viridi cum luce zmaragdi auro includuntur, teriturque thalassina vestis adsidue et Veneris sudorem exercita potat; et bene parta patrum fiunt anademata, mitrae, 1130 interdum in pallam atque Alidensia Ciaque vertunt. eximia veste et victu convivia, ludi, pocula crebra, unguenta, coronae, sarta parantur, nequiquam, quoniam medio de fonte leporum surgit amari aliquid quod in ipsis floribus angat, 1135 aut cum conscius ipse animus se forte remordet desidiose agere aetatem lustrisque perire, aut quod in ambiguo verbum iaculata reliquit quod cupido adfixum cordi vivescit ut ignis, aut nimium iactare oculos aliumve tueri 1140 quod putat in voltuque videt vestigia risus.	Add that they use up their strength and waste away with effort; add that their life is spent subject to the will of another. Their responsibilities lie neglected, and their reputation wavers and grows ill. Meanwhile, their property is ruined and turns into Babylonian perfumes, and pretty Sicyonian shoes laugh on their girlfriends' feet. Of course big emeralds with their green light are also set in gold, and purple clothing is worn out constantly, is roughly used, and drinks the sweat of sex. Their fathers' hard-earned savings becomes headbands and fancy hats, and sometimes it turns into a cloak and the products of Alinda and Ceos. With extraordinary decorations and food, parties, games, frequent drinking, perfumes, crowns, and garlands are prepared—for nothing, since from the middle of their spring of delights rises something bitter that chokes them among the very flowers, either when his mind itself happens to gnaw at him, knowing that he spends his time idly and wastes away in brothels, or because she has cast out an ambiguous word and left it, where it sticks in his heart and thrives like fire, or because he thinks that she casts her eyes around too much or looks at someone else, and on her face, he sees the traces of laughter.
------	--	--

Section B: 4.1171-91

1175	sed tamen esto iam quantovis oris honore, cui Veneris membris vis omnibus exoriatur: nempe aliae quoque sunt; nempe hac sine viximus ante; nempe eadem facit, et scimus facere, omnia turpi et miseram taetris se suffit odoribus ipsa, quam famulae longe futigant furtimque cachinnant. at lacrimans exclusus amator limina saepe floribus et sertis operit postisque superbos unguit amaracino et foribus miser oscula figit; 1180 quem si, iam admissum, venientem offenderit aura una modo, causas abeundi quaerat honestas et meditate diu cadat alte sumpta querella, stultitiaque ibi se damnet, tribuisse quod illi plus videat quam mortali concedere par est. 1185 nec Veneres nostras hoc fallit; quo magis ipsae omnia summo opera hos vitae postscaenia celant quos retinere volunt adstrictosque esse in amore, nequiquam, quoniam tu animo tamen omnia possis protrahere in lucem atque omnis inquirere risus, 1190 et, si bello animist et non odiosa, vicissim praetermittere et humanis concedere rebus.	But still, let her have as lovely a face as you want, let the power of Venus arise from her whole body. Of course there are still others. Of course we have lived without this one before. Of course she does, and we know that she does, all the same things that the ugly woman does, and she drenches her poor self with gross smells, and her household runs far away from her and secretly laughs at her. But her weepy, locked-out lover often covers her doorstep with flowers and garlands and daubs the arrogant doorposts with marjoram and presses kisses upon the door, poor thing. But if just one sniff hit him as he came in once admitted, he would look for good reasons for leaving, and his lament, long thought-out and drawn from deep within, would fall away, and he would curse himself then for his foolishness, because he would see that he had attributed to her more than is right to grant to a mortal. And our Venuses aren't unaware of this. So much the more they hide everything carefully behind the scenes of their lives from the men whom they want to hold onto and to be tied down with love—to no effect, since you can still drag everything out into the light with your mind and look into every laugh, and if she has a nice mind and isn't loathsome, in turn you can let them go and give in to her human circumstances.
------	---	--

2. Plautus, *Mostellaria* 144-45

nunc simul res, fides, fama, uirtus, decus
deseruerunt: ego sum in usu factus nimio nequior.

Now all at once my property, credit, good name, strength, and reputation
have abandoned me. I've been made so much more useless through use.

3. Plautus, *Asinaria* 768-69, 792

uocet conuiuam neminem illa, tu uoces;
ad eorum ne quem oculos adiciat suos. ...
neque ullum uerbum faciat perplexabile.

She must invite no guests; you may invite them,
and she must not cast her eyes upon any of them. ...
She must not speak any word confusingly.

4. Terence, *Eunuchus* 934-40

quae dum foris sunt nil videtur mundius,
nec mage compositum quicquam nec magis elegans ...
harum videre inluuiem sordes inopiam,
quam inhonestae solae sint domi atque auidae cibi, ...
nosse omnia haec salus est adulescentulis.

While they're out, nothing seems neater,
nothing more put together or more elegant. ...
But to see their filth, squalor, and poverty,
how ugly they are and how greedy for food when they're at home ...
knowing all of this is healthy for young men.

5. Terence, *Heautontimorumenos* 211-14

mage nunc me amicae dicta stimulant "da mihi" atque "adfer mihi":
quoi quod respondeam nil habeo; neque me quisquamst miserior. ...
tum quod dem ei "recte" est; nam nil esse mihi religiosum dicere.

My girlfriend's words now trouble me more: 'Give me this' and 'Bring me that.'
Then when I answer, 'I don't have anything,' no one is sadder than me. ...
Then about me giving things to her, she says, 'Rightly so!'

Select Bibliography

- Bailey, C. 1947. *Titi Lucreti Cari De Rerum Natura*, Vol. 3. Oxford.
Betensky, A. 1980. "Lucretius and Love." *CW* 73.5: 291-99.
Brown, R. D. 1987. *Lucretius on Love and Sex*. Leiden.
Copley, F. O. 1956. *Exclusus Amator: A Study in Latin Love Poetry*. Baltimore.
Davidson, J. N. 1997. *Courtesans and Fishcakes: The Consuming Passions of Classical Athens*. New York.
Dutsch, D. M. 2008. *Feminine Discourse in Roman Comedy: On Echoes and Voices*. Oxford.
Ernout, A., and L. Robin. 1962. *Lucretius: De Rerum Natura*, Vol. 2. Paris.
Kauer, R., W. M. Lindsay, and O. Skutsch. 1965. *P. Terenti Afri Comoediae*. Oxford.
Lindsay, W. M. 1904. *T. Macci Plauti Comoediae*. Oxford.
Nussbaum, M. C. 1994. *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics*. Princeton.
Rosivach, V. J. 1980. "Lucretius 4.1123-40." *AJP* 101.4: 401-403.
Taylor, B. 2016. "Rationalism and the Theatre in Lucretius." *CQ* 66.1: 140-154.
Zagagi, N. 1980. *Tradition and Originality in Plautus: Studies of the Amatory Motifs in Plautine Comedy*. Göttingen.