Lucretius' appeals to the phenomenology of fear must be understood in the context of this combination of a materialist account of mind and a cognitivist view of the emotions. He points to the fact that we may experience sweats and pallor over our entire frame when the mind is moved by fear (*est commota metuque mens*) as evidence of the intimate connection between the *anima*, which is dispersed throughout the body, and the *animus*, which has a fixed location.[34] Given the role judgments play within Epicureanism as both constituents and causes of emotions, the claim that fear is felt to arise in the breast (*hic exsultat*)[35] is surely a relevant consideration when attempting to identify the location where these judgments themselves take place.[36]

University of Illinois at Urbana – Champaign KIRK R. SANDERS
ksanders@uiuc.edu
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[34] *De rerum nat*. 3.152–60.
[35] *De rerum nat*. 3.141.
[36] The same could be said, *mutatis mutandis*, of the joys to which Lucretius refers in this same passage. That he intends by *laetitiae* in line 142 pleasures of the *mens/animus* in particular is borne out by the expression <*id* > *sibi gaudet*, *cum neque res animam neque corpus commovet una* in lines 145–6.

VIRGIL'S CUCUMBER: *GEORGICS* 4.121–2

tortusque per herbam
cresceret in uentrem cucumis

The cucumber appears only here in Virgil's poetry, as one of the plants to be grown in the garden sketched out by the poet in the fourth *Georgic*. Commentators remark on the verisimilitude of this short description,[1] and it is indeed true that cucumbers will swell in the grass, and (especially in the days before EU directives on the straightness of cucumbers) may grow in plump curves. However, I am inclined to see a little bit more in these lines: it seems to me that this description of something twisting through the grass and expanding its belly initially suggests a far more sinister presence in the garden, the snake.[2]

The line ending *per herbam* might ring the first alarm bells. Although, naturally, grass can be viewed by the poet as representative of luxuriant growth and plentiful fodder for the herds, there are several marked occasions when the long grass conceals a snake. Firstly, we might think of Damoetas' couplet in *Eclogue* 3:

qui legitis flores et humi nascentia fraga,
frigidus, o pueri, fugite hinc, latet anguis in herba. *Ecl*. 3.92–3

[1] Cf. the comments on these lines by R.A.B. Mynors, *Virgil*, Georgics (Oxford, 1990) and R.F. Thomas, *Virgil*: Georgics (Cambridge, 1988), vol. 2.
[2] Thomas (n. 1) seems aware of this possibility, as is evinced by his translation, '[and how] the cucumber snakes through the ground and swells into a paunch'. He does not develop the idea in his comment, however; moreover, his translation of *per herbam* as 'through the ground' blunts the association with the image of the snake in the grass that I want to make.

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The fear of snakes persists into the *Georgics* and, despite the poet's claim (*G.* 2.153–4) that there are no dangerous snakes in Italy, plenty of snakes do appear in the poem,[3] and it turns out that sleeping in the grass can be a dangerous activity when the chersydrus has shed its skin:

> ne mihi tum mollis sub diuo carpere somnos
> neu dorso nemoris libeat iacuisse per herbas,
> cum positis nouus exuuiis nitidusque iuuenta
> uoluitur… *G.* 3.435–9

Later in Book 4, Eurydice will confirm such fears and meet her death, bitten by a snake lurking in the grass:

> immanem ante pedes hydrum moritura puella
> seruantem ripas alta non uidit in herba. *G.* 4.458–9

The adjective *tortus* might also add to this impression. It is not a word reserved solely for the habits of snakes, but it is eminently possible to use it of them, as, for example, in the simile of the broken-backed snake at *Aen.* 5.276, where it occurs as a noun: *nequiquam longos fugiens dat corpore tortus*.[4]

It seems likely to me that a gardener's joke is lurking in these lines. There was a type of *cucumis* known to the Romans as *cucumis anguinus*, the snaky cucumber.[5] Virgil could well be glossing this, via his subtle connection to snakes.

On a more literary, as well as scientific, level it may also be that the poet is taking the opportunity to allude to Nicander, author of the 'other' *Georgics*.[6] Although the scanty remains of that work do not include a reference to cucumbers, as common and popular vegetables they might well have been included in his discussion of garden plants. Nicander does, in any case, mention a relative of the cucumber, the gourd (σικύη, fr. 72 Schn.), while in the *Theriaca*, a work from which Virgil's discussion of snakes seems to take its inspiration,[7] the bitter root of the squirting cucumber (σικύος ἀγρότερος, 866–7) is recommended for use as an antidote to the poisonous bites of water-snakes and sting-rays. Given Nicander's strong association with both snakes and gardens, it may be that Virgil here offers a subtle nod towards the source he has already used for his snakes and might well have used again, had he chosen to go further down the path of writing about horticulture. Moreover, if one accepts Stephen Harrison's argument that the Corycian gardener himself should be identified with Nicander,[8] the potential allusion seems more pointed.

Apart from such taxonomical and literary games, the lines could also form a small-scale comment on some of the larger themes of the poem. With all these serpentine hints brought to mind, the fact that what is being described is a cucumber adds a touch of humour to the passage, contrasting with the ominous role of real

[3] Cf. Thomas (n. 1), *ad G.* 3.414–39.

[4] Cf. *G.* 3.38: *tortosque Ixionis anguis*, and *G.* 3.432: *flammantia lumina torquens* (of the chersydrus, just before the poet voices his wish not to be lying in the grass while such snakes are about).

[5] Cf. Varro, *RR* 1.2.25: *cucumerem anguinum condito in aquam* (how to make a decoction of this particular cucumber which repels bugs); Pliny *HN* 20.4 (arguing that the decoction repels mice).

[6] I owe thanks to the anonymous referee for suggesting this line of argument to me.

[7] Cf. Thomas (n. 1), 119–23.

[8] Cf. S.J. Harrison, 'Virgil's *Corycius senex* and Nicander's *Georgica*: *Georgics* 4.116–48', in M. Gale (ed.), *Latin Epic and Didactic Poetry* (London, 2004), 109–23.

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snakes in the *Georgics*. Keeping company as it does with the glorious rose gardens of Paestum and the elegant, watery endive and celery, the plump cucumber thus adds to the sense that a garden has the potential to surprise with its bounty. For an instant reminding us of the sinister snakes lurking in the grass elsewhere in the *Georgics*, the cucumber emerges as a harmless, and welcome, vegetable.

The reader is left with a multi-layered cucumber: it is there, simply, as much-loved garden produce; there, symbolically, as a reminder of nature's (and the poem's) dark and light side; there, academically, as an allusion to a cucumber of a particular variety and to one of Virgil's scientific sources.

For a postscript on Virgil's cucumber, I turn to Propertius, whose Vertumnus also mentions the vegetable, in a line often cited by commentators as a parallel: *caeruleus cucumis tumidoque cucurbita uentre* (4.2.43). Here the cucumber appears alongside its natural partner, the gourd, and it is the gourd that is described as having a fat belly.[9] Might Propertius be engaging in a gentle 'correction' here, arguing that the gourd better deserves to be called fat than its slimmer counterpart the cucumber?[10]

St Hilda's College, Oxford REBECCA ARMSTRONG
rebecca.armstrong@st-hildas.ox.ac.uk
doi:10.1017/S0009838808000402

[9] It should be acknowledged that opinions differ about how to translate *cucumis*; I am going (amongst many others) with the *OLD* definition, cucumber. For those who think of it as a type of gourd, this interpretation of Propertius' lines may not appeal. As is often the case when attempting to distinguish very similar types of plant in ancient sources, absolute certainty can be hard to achieve. Modern botanists class all cucumbers, melons, gourds and marrows among the *Cucurbitaceae*, the cucumber being *Cucumis satiuus*, the melon *Cucumis melo*, the squash *Cucurbita maxima* or *moschata*, and so on.

[10] G.O. Hutchinson, *Propertius* Elegies *Book IV* (Cambridge, 2006), *ad* Prop. 4.2.43–4 suggests a further comment on size here, as Vertumnus squeezes more vegetables into his garden than Virgil.

AUGUSTUS AND ORESTES: TWO LITERARY CLUES*

Over the last two decades, several studies have touched upon potential links between the self-presentation of Augustus and the myth of Orestes.[1] The parallels open to exploitation in this context are obvious: Orestes' father was murdered by his unfaithful mother Clytemnestra and her lover Aegisthus. The assassination of Augustus' legal father Caesar could be attributed to the anticaesarian party as a

* I should like to thank Martin Korenjak and the anonymous referee for their helpful suggestions, as well as Yvona Trnka-Amrhein for correcting my English.

[1] The most important and inclusive is T. Hölscher, 'Augustus and Orestes', *Travaux du Centre d'archéologie méditerranéenne de l'Académie Polonaise des sciences* 30, *Études et Travaux* 15 (1990), 163–8; cf. further M. Dewar, 'Octavian and Orestes in the finale of the first Georgic', *CQ* 38 (1988), 563–5; 'Octavian and Orestes again', *CQ* 40 (1990), 580–2; A. Delcourt, 'Entre légende et histoire: Oreste et le prince', *LEC* 66 (1998), 61–72; E. Champlin, 'Agamemnon at Rome: Roman dynasts and Greek heroes', in D. Braund and C. Gill (edd.), *Myth, History and Culture in Republican Rome: Studies in Honour of T.P. Wiseman* (Exeter, 2003), 295–319, at 308–10.

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