THE SEEDS OF THINGS

THEORIZING SEXUALITY AND MATERIALITY IN RENAISSANCE REPRESENTATIONS

JONATHAN GOLDBERG

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for Michael Moon, again, and always

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Chapter 1 draws upon an essay with the same title that appeared in an especially queer issue of *Massachusetts Review* 49, nos. 1 and 2 (Spring/Summer 2008); some passages from Chapter 3 appear as "The Play of Wanton Parts" in *The Forms of Renaissance Thought*, ed. Leonard Barkan, Bradin Cormack, and Sean Keilen (Palgrave, 2009), a few paragraphs of which also can be found in "Literary Criticism, Literary History, and the Place of Homoeroticism," in *Early Modern English Poetry: A Critical Companion*, ed. Patrick Cheney, Andrew Hadfield, and Garrett A. Sullivan, Jr. (Oxford University Press, 2007). Chapter 4 builds upon "Margaret Cavendish, Scribe," *GLQ* 10, no. 3 (2004), and "Lucy Hutchinson: Writing Matter," *ELH* 73, no. 1 (Spring 2006). I delivered papers that lie behind this book at The Folger Library, The Newberry Library, American University, Cornell University, University of Cyprus, Emory University, University of Hawaii, Northwestern University, and Stanford University, and I'm grateful to audiences on those occasions for a number of good discussions. I would be remiss if I didn't thank for hospitality extended and intellectual stimulation David Baker, Bradin Cormack, Barbara

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Introduction

multa modis multis multarum semina rerum
—*Lucretius,* De rerum natura

"Many seeds of many things . . . mixed up in many ways": this line from *De rerum natura* points to some of the central concerns in the book that follows.[1] In the passage from which I cite, Lucretius is explaining the multiple effects that certain plants may have on certain people, but the point he makes is the one reiterated throughout his poem, that everything that exists is the result of aleatory conjunctions. This is a beginning principle as much as it is a principle of analysis of everything at any moment; indeed, it is an analysis that extends indefinitely and infinitely, since the supply of atoms in motion is without beginning or end. In the book that follows, where my concern is to trace some of the ways in which materiality figures in English Renaissance literature, Lucretian encounters are a prime index. How Lucretius appears in texts by Edmund Spenser, Margaret Cavendish, Lucy Hutchinson, and John Milton is, of course, quite various. The range is from Hutchinson's all but complete translation of *De rerum natura* (as she notes in the margins, she refuses to English some sexually explicit lines from the end of book 4) to Cavendish's lack of firsthand knowledge of his texts (she claimed an inability

to read Latin).[2] Cavendish, however, was at first an atomist, and her later refusal of atomism, I argue, is mainly a refusal of a kind of mechanical philosophy that is not the main contribution of Lucretius to atomic thought, or so Michel Serres has forcefully maintained in his stunning book on Lucretius, *The Birth of Physics*.[3] Paradoxically, then, Cavendish's seeming ignorance or refusal of Epicureanism, I will argue, is in line with some of the knottiest issues that Lucretius engages. For Spenser and Milton, the relationship to Lucretius begins with moments in *The Faerie Queene* and *Paradise Lost* long recognized as indebted to Lucretius—in several instances constituting close translation, albeit of very limited portions of *De rerum natura*. My chapters suggest how these allusions are significant.

The prime question considered is how these writers engage a philosophical materialism. My concerns here thus are not fully congruent with what has been termed a "new materialism in Renaissance studies" but responsive to the critique offered by Douglas Bruster and Jonathan Gil Harris of a critical trend that, in studying material objects, has largely ignored the theoretical question of materiality.[4] My concern is not, that is, with what things appear in Renaissance texts and how they might relate to questions of production and consumption but with how there are things at all.[5] The answer Lucretius supplies is that things are the products of the chance meeting of atoms, which otherwise would continue falling, untouching and unproductive. Outrageously, from the point of view that prevails in early modernity, there is no explanatory principle beyond the aleatory swerve, no god behind the machine, indeed, no machine at all, since the fact that some things, once they arise, are capable of replication is not the fundamental principle of how things are.

This analysis of matter earned Lucretius a reputation for atheism, but that is not fair. There are gods in Lucretius, they just didn't happen to create the world, nor do they have a hand in its regulation. Being gods, they live at ease, unperturbed; why would human affairs be theirs? For most of the writers I discuss, reconciling Christianity to Epicureanism would seem a formidable task, although in a seventeenth-century thinker like Pierre Gassendi it had been done, but in ways that made the Christian God the principle behind the created world.[6] Cavendish, whose Christianity seems quite perfunctory, is also in this respect most like

Lucretius insofar as what she posits about God—his immateriality—makes him of no interest in her explanations of all things in material terms: "I cannot conceive how an Immaterial can be in Nature: for, first, An Immaterial cannot, in my opinion, be naturally created; nor can I conceive how an Immaterial can produce particular Immaterial Souls, Spirits, or the like. Wherefore, an Immaterial, in my opinion, must be some uncreated Being; which can be no other than GOD alone."[7] No more than Lucretius does Cavendish believe God created the world or that the soul is immortal or immaterial spirit. For the other figures taken up in this book, various forms of Christian materialism allow for Lucretian materialism not to be judged as simply atheistical. Milton's materialism leads him to a mortalism as resolute as Lucretius's, but he, like Spenser, shares St. Augustine's insistence on the value of the created world. The Christian typological view of history is important for Milton, and especially so for Hutchinson in relationship to her Lucretian commitments, an estimation that values historical events as a part of an unfolding (and as yet unfinished) series of events that are at once real and anticipatory of a final reality, a new heaven and earth in which the body is resurrected.

In the passage cited above from *De rerum natura*, Lucretius uses one of the many phrases through which he characteristically names the atoms that subtend all things: he calls them *semina rerum*, "the seeds of things." The phrase points to the other central strand in the analyses to come: the relationship of sexuality to philosophical materialism. Lucretius's figuring of the atoms as bodies and seeds fills his poem with a sexual figuration of the atoms, which are, technically, not bodies at all. The sexualization begins in the opening lines of the poem, the invocation to Venus as the principle of existence. In the chapters that follow, I show the many ways in which the writers' engagement with materialism necessarily implicates gender and sexuality.[8] Again, how this is so varies enormously, from the place of their marital relations in Hutchinson and Cavendish (no more in the service of a heteronormativity than in Lucretius's aleatory world of unregulated possible conjunctions) to the more systematic exploration in Spenser of how his aim in the first three books of *The Faerie Queene* to fashion a gentleman is always figured as a sexual process whose ethical mode is constantly in question, or to Milton's angels, whose ability to have sex with each other suggests that "wedded

love" is not the only form of sexuality that Milton endorses. Of course, it goes without saying that Milton's fully embodied angels are a reflection of his monism as well.

The literary examples considered in this book are not meant to cover all the possibilities—Marlowe, Donne, Cowley, Marvell, Rochester, Dryden, and Behn are among the literary figures whose relation to Lucretius and to erotic experience could be explored beyond the few essays in print that take up such concerns.[9] My aim is not to be exhaustive, however, simply to be attentive enough to a few examples to encourage others to pursue the topic beyond what I have done here. I have also assumed but have not explored the multiple materialisms of philosophical and scientific thought from the late sixteenth century through to the epicurean revival of the late seventeenth century.[10] There are no chapters on Harriott or Hobbes here, since what I seek to do is to read some literary texts that contribute to these philosophical discussions. Again, the relationships are various—ranging from a figure like Cavendish, who clearly imagines herself in dialogue with Hobbes and Descartes, Van Helmont and Henry More, to other writers who are not so explicit. In taking up this topic, I am, of course, not inventing a field. The recently published *Cambridge Companion to Lucretius* ably surveys the work that has been done.[11] Probably the most significant recent antecedents for me are books by Reid Barbour and Jacques Lezra.[12] Barbour is really concerned with religious and political developments in the early seventeenth century, and his study of Epicureans and Stoics assumes that they are contributing to discussions but not really setting their terms. Lezra, in a book more like the one in your hands, takes Lucretius to prompt thought about the chance event, but for him that chance is embodied in the writings of Descartes, Shakespeare, and Cervantes, and the question he seeks to understand is how their work achieves the significance of an event rather than being simply yet another atomic conjunction. I'm not concerned here to treat my authors so momentously but rather to locate in them how their philosophical materialism and their concerns about sexuality find prompting in Lucretius (and in whatever forms of Christian materialism to which they also subscribe).

Although English literature is the main concern of this book, I open it with two introductory chapters somewhat far from that subject matter.

In them, however, I first broach the kinds of thematic concerns that underlie the book. The first chapter, circling around an early painting by Tintoretto depicting the conversion of St. Paul, allows me to associate some of its stylistic features with Lucretian materialism even as its subject matter invites a discussion of Pauline flesh, not least in the theoretical contexts provided by Alain Badiou and Giorgio Agamben in books that are part of an ongoing revaluation of Paul.[13] The analysis is frankly couched in such theoretical and philosophical terms. This, in turn, prompts the following introductory chapter, which takes up the status of Lucretius in theory, for a classicist like Duncan Kennedy but more centrally for Marx, Bergson, Deleuze, Serres, Derrida, and Foucault.[14] In part, I take up the suggestion made late in his career by Althusser about a philosophy of the chance encounter, which is a secret other history of philosophy that belies its resolute idealism.[15] Throughout the book, the ways in which matter and bodies have been thought involves a number of theoretical encounters, even beyond those Althusser imagines, including, for instance, Arendt on Augustine as the discoverer of the faculty of will and thereby of the "inner man" and especially Foucault in his attention to the practices that make a philosophical life precisely in the activity of making a self.[16] The second chapter of this book offers a number of matrices for locating Lucretius in theory, and the remainder of the book, again, variously, reads some examples from English Renaissance literature along the theoretical lines that seem most apt for the understanding of such questions as why the outspokenly married Duchess of Newcastle is so devoted to her female friends or why Spenser's Knight of the Red Crosse proves his holiness by regaining the woman he first abhorred. Such questions subtend a study that hopes to suggest that there is more to Christianity than body hatred and seeks to show that Lucretius provides a significant matrix for understanding the philosophical commitments and embodied representations of English Renaissance writers. By situating them within a materialist tradition that recognizes ultimately how everything arises from and is composed of the same materials, I engage throughout in the difficult question of sameness and difference. Being made of the same matter in no way precludes difference: Lucretius is, after all, the philosopher of the swerve and the aleatory. Differences-within-the same cannot be the basis for invidious and divisive difference

or foundational for juridical concepts of the normal. As Jane Bennett shows in her inspiring *Enchantment of Modern Life*, Lucretian materialism invites us to see how we are all attached to the world.[17] In quite another vein, but equally inspiring for the book that follows, Leo Bersani has posited a sameness as the root of a sexuality that is not a matter of lack but of the fullness of material existence.[18] Differences, being the product of chance and of vital, ever-moving matter in Lucretius, are entirely compatible with what we all share as material beings—share with each other and with the world we inhabit, which is, after all, made of the same stuff.

ONE

Conversions: Around Tintoretto

This chapter opens with work of Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit that follows upon Bersani's turn from a psychoanalytic version of the subject whose desire testifies to a primordial lack to a version of the subject whose attempts at relationality stem from an original relatedness. "Each subject reoccurs differently everywhere" is one succinct version of a thesis that Bersani offers in the service of a claim that "all love is, in a sense, homoerotic," where the sense invoked by Bersani is the notion of an original sameness that is rediscovered in erotic relations.[1] Those claims seem to me to relate to the Lucretian universe, in which everything arises from a basic material substratum that survives the mortality of particular, contingent life forms. I begin with a formulation of the connectedness that Bersani and Dutoit find in a Caravaggio painting as a way of undertaking a similar foray into Tintoretto's oeuvre, in which I focus on an early, for him small canvas (approximately five feet by eight feet) as pointing to some of the central features of his work. This opening is almost immediately critical, insofar as I find the sexual implications—the homo-ness of an underlying material sameness—disappointingly

abandoned in Bersani and Dutoit's analysis of Caravaggio in favor of an abstracted formal unity; the opening pages of the chapter that follows are devoted to restoring those implications in this initial inquiry into the relationships between sexuality and materiality in Renaissance representations.

* * *

Writing about Caravaggio's *Conversion of St. Paul* in the Cerasi Chapel (Santa Maria del Popolo, Rome; fig. 1), in *Caravaggio's Secrets*, Bersani and Dutoit discover the saint—prostrate on his back, knees raised, arms extended—in a "'turn toward' a new relatedness, but one without transcendence, a relatedness with the *natural* nonhuman."[2] This is exactly what is displayed in Tintoretto's depiction of the same subject (in a painting of his in the National Gallery, Washington, D.C.; fig. 2), I would argue, and in the pages that follow I do not seek so much to connect the two paintings (it is doubtful that Caravaggio knew Tintoretto's painting) as to further the analysis offered by Bersani and Dutoit. Although I subscribe to their phrasing about the kind of "new relatedness" on offer and am therefore prompted to begin an inquiry occasioned by Tintoretto's painting with their words, I would locate this "new relatedness" in contexts other than the ones that they offer. These critical differences can be related to their provocative translation of *conversion* as a "turn toward." What is a conversion? Is it, as the etymology of the word suggests, a turn with? Or is it a turning around? Or back? Does it represent a break? An end? A beginning? In fact, these are questions raised by the conversion of Paul and have been at the center of Pauline scholarship for the last several years.[3] This scholarship is but one of the contexts that I will adduce in the discussion that follows.

Bersani and Dutoit read this painting by Caravaggio in the course of an exploration of the secrets of his art. Refusing the almost mandatory coupling of secrecy and sexuality that Foucault argues is central to modern regimes of truth in the introductory volume of his history of sexuality, they deny that the provocations of Caravaggio's art can be attributed to the painter's presumptive homosexuality; equally adamantly, they refuse to treat the painting as posing a hermeneutic problem. What they offer instead is a beyond of sex that is also a before. In the conversion that they offer, any determinate sexuality is merely a parenthesis within

an encompassing circulation of a before and beyond sex.[4] The supine "ecstatic passivity" (*Caravaggio's Secrets*, 60) of Caravaggio's St. Paul, which might call up for readers the emphasis in Bersani's earlier writing on a primary masochism as fundamental to sexuality—a form of sexuality, he insists in "Is the Rectum a Grave?" most flagrantly displayed by a gay man on his back, legs aloft (almost exactly the pose of Caravaggio's recumbent, bent-kneed Paul, I would note, although this is not a point that Bersani and Dutoit venture)—is here instead read as "a new receptiveness to the austere sensuality of a universal connectedness of forms" (ibid.). Rather than sex, Bersani and Dutoit venture into a well-established formal analysis. Thus (rather surprisingly, given Bersani's earlier work), we are invited to note the visual congruence between the raised horseshoe and the bit of curved leather between the saint's legs rather than ponder as meaningful the replacement at the site of the genital by an empty loop, a space and form doubled in the poised hoof. However, my point is less to emphasize the willfulness of the translation (conversion?) of what Bersani might once have called "sexuality" into an "austere sensuality" than to wonder about the connectedness ("a relatedness with the *natural* nonhuman") as well as the version of nature on offer.

Certainly, the refusal of a transcendental meaning to this conversion experience is persuasive; it is even congruent to a degree with more conventional readings of this painting: Walter Friedlaender's, for example (this is not a casual example, of course, given his standing as a Caravaggist, being, indeed, the one cited most often by Bersani and Dutoit). Friedlaender claims that the formal composition of the painting produces a kind of reality effect—offering a depiction of what he terms "the common world"; he reserves "spirituality" only for the uncanny light in the picture, which has no obvious source, since Caravaggio has dispensed with the visual representation of Jesus that can be found in other depictions of the scene, his own earlier venture included. Tintoretto offers such a representation, as does Michelangelo in his roughly contemporaneous late fresco in the Cappella Paolina (Vatican).[5] But whereas Friedlaender takes Caravaggio's naturalism to be in the service of "a truly human experience" (27), Bersani and Dutoit insist instead on the "relatedness with the *natural* nonhuman" already noted. As they phrase this

elsewhere, Caravaggio is intent on "the incompatibility of existence and being" (*Caravaggio's Secrets*, 88), where "existence" means "human existence" and "being" is another word for "nature." (The distinction is Heideggerian.) This translation of "nature" into "being" draws the analytical terms in the very transcendental direction that the refusal of any spiritual import to the depiction had denied.[6] And, indeed, by the end of their study, the connectedness on hand is said to be a mode of rejoining "metaphysical being" (83). This beyond and before the human and the sexual is allied in their analysis to the Lacanian Thing, or so Graham Hammill suggests. His reading of Caravaggio takes off from Bersani and Dutoit but also restores a form of sexuality to his art, albeit also a radically anti-identitarian one; the Thing is the unknowable and yet absolutely determinate situation that subtends each human existence.[7] How easily embodied difference can be translated into a transcendental vocabulary is suggested when Slavoj Žižek conjures up "the sacred *place* of the Thing" in the course of an inquiry into what of the Christian tradition is worth saving.[8]

Now, it is certainly the case that in Caravaggio's painting Paul is not related humanly to the other figures in the painting—the horse and the older man attending to it—his link to those figures is, as Bersani and Dutoit claim, a matter of form (and also of color). That the horse's raised hoof is unthreatening, even as Paul seems to have been thrust down and forward to the edge of the canvas—and yet not by the only force in the painting that could have effected this—certainly suggests that his (non)relationship to the animal figures something of the nonhuman relatedness to whatever that force might be. Indeed, the passivity of Paul is perhaps matched by the docility of the horse (as Friedlaender insisted, it is an ordinary working animal, not a stallion), who hardly seems to need to be restrained by the man adjusting its bridle. Further, as Bersani and Dutoit emphasize, the jungle of arms and legs that fills the space between the horse's body and the prostrate saint, appendages that do not touch each other and that are all rather confusingly related to upper body parts (in the case of Paul, one further wonders about the location of the lower part of his right leg), is in line with an analysis that has suspended thought as decipherment—hermeneutic analysis—as being what the painting requires. Rather, their claim here and throughout *Caravaggio's*

Secrets is about submission to something that seems incapable of formulation. What cannot be named is nonetheless called up in a variety of terms; "metaphysical being," the ultimate clincher, unites Heidegger to the Lacanian Thing. The thing not to be named and yet so designated in this beyond/before of "being" tips the analysis of the natural in the direction of the supernatural. (I phrase the condition of unnamability in this way to recall the well-known formulation about sodomy as the crime not to be named among Christians, and I thereby mean to suggest that Bersani and Dutoit have perhaps not entirely sidestepped the question of sexuality so much as they have displaced/converted it.) By way of this submission to the inhuman, the threat of the "unnamable finality of inorganic matter" (*Caravaggio's Secrets*, 5) is mastered—a submission, I would say, to a transcendental, if not humanly comprehensible, force. This passive mastery is the task of aesthetics (this explains why their analysis ultimately is formal), as is made explicit in Bersani and Dutoit's book on Derek Jarman's 1986 film *Caravaggio*, when they write of "the disclosure of Being which perhaps only art brings about."[9] Just as their book on Caravaggio refuses a homosexual key to the secrets of his art, here too Jarman's assertions of the relation of his film to a militant homosexual politics are dispelled in favor of an analysis that finds it remarkable that "non-desiring connectedness is shown even in homosexual love." This is, for them, the seemingly counterintuitive truth of Jarman's encounter with the "plenitude of Being."

It is from these transcendental and desexualizing gestures that I would seek to save their analysis. For I would note that strictly theological accounts of the conversion of St. Paul have a term that would cover what Bersani and Dutoit describe; the term would be "grace." This is the point about Paul's conversion emphasized in the *Legenda Aurea*, a compendium of lives of the saints that served as a useful repository of information and interpretation from its initial mid-thirteenth-century publication on: its account of Paul is heavily indebted to Augustine.[10] That the incomprehensible doings of a deity who turns a persecutor of believers in Jesus into the founder of his church might have a shattering effect on the subject is part of the argument that Leo Steinberg offers in his analysis of Michelangelo's painting of the scene, where precisely this experience is offered as one that must surpass merely human doing and be the gift

of "unmerited grace."[11] This claim is congruent with the approach of Bersani and Dutoit, and equally to be resisted if the inhuman is simply to be another way of saying the divine. Rather, the route to follow has been suggested by Hammill, who, acknowledging the erotic thrust of Caravaggio's St. Paul, remarks stunningly that it "resuscitates the flesh that Paul relinquishes" (66). Hammill supports his analysis by pointing to Augustine's considerations of the significance of creation and of historical time. This is clearly a quite different reading of Augustine than that offered in the *Legenda Aurea*, and I will return to it below.[12] Beside these theological contexts, there is another context that I would venture is relevant here as well, Epicurean materialism. This philosophical tradition, I argue, provides terms for the natural (but not human) matrix that Bersani and Dutoit claim for Caravaggio, in a fully serious philosophical manner that has no need of any metaphysical notion of Being to explain the nature of matter.

Bersani and Dutoit claim that Caravaggio's paintings give access to a oneness of being that is natural. This connectedness would join the human and the nonhuman in what they describe at one point as the "depersonalized resourcefulness of the real" (*Caravaggio's Secrets*, 33); this "real" includes human mortality even as it refuses that limit. Caravaggio's strangely alive-dead Lazarus, or the crucified Jesus in his Deposition, or Mary on her bier, all similarly infused with a life that pervades their corpses, suggests a life beyond mortality that is nonetheless housed in flesh, "an unmappable extensibility of being" (39) beyond mortal limit. Extension, pulsating energy even in "dead" flesh: for Bersani and Dutoit, the only way to describe these beyond/before states is to call up a notion of "Being" that cannot be explained further. Yet the fully materialist vocabulary of Epicurean philosophy does this without having to resort to any figuration of the unspeakable. In *De rerum natura*, for example, Lucretius makes a similarly unverifiable claim, that underlying all the forms of life that we can see and extending beyond life in human terms there is a form of life that is invisible but nonetheless material—it is housed in the atom, a germinative, ever-moving minimal and irreducible principle of life that nonetheless cannot be said to be alive (since it is not mortal and since its life is seen only in its chance motions, its connections and disconnections, which bring in and out of existence forms of

life in which the atoms are never extinguished).[13] This form of life is, moreover, not alive precisely because it always is: that is, it is mortal and immortal at the same time.

One reason for conjuring up Lucretius here is that he provides one of several intellectual contexts that make historically plausible aspects of the art of Caravaggio that Bersani and Dutoit seem to produce entirely theoretically. Bersani and Dutoit are not historicists, of course, and it is not my point that they need to be; nor am I endorsing some claim about historical purity in opposition to theory. Rather, I believe that their intervention becomes more forceful and more precise by contextualizations that can further the philosophical purchase of their analysis.

Moreover, in their reading of Jarman's film about Caravaggio, Bersani and Dutoit concede something that they refuse to Caravaggio's art (unnecessarily, I believe): that a relatedness to "being" can be seen best in and as a form of homo-relation. I would connect this also to Lucretius, to his notion that at the most elementary level everyone and everything is made up of the same stuff ("element" is in fact one of his terms for the atom—the Greek word is not found in *De rerum natura*). This sameness does not preclude difference. Indeed, the Lucretian system, being entirely a matter of chance, is better situated to explain difference than it is to understand how certain forms of being replicate themselves (not that any two examples of any kind are in fact identical to each other—this is the Lucretian counterpart to the Lacanian Thing). Writing of Jarman's film, Bersani and Dutoit insist that it allows one to see that "*we are already out there*" (*Caravaggio*, 72), and thereby promotes the discovery of an "*other sameness*" (80). Part of the thrust of this sense of a connection that exceeds personal identity is ethical. The kind of passive acceptance and ecstatic tameness of the scene of the conversion of St. Paul might relate it to the end of Epicurean philosophy as a way of life: the unperturbedness to which Epicurean practices tend, precisely through the cosmic realization that death is not to be feared because it really is the end—there is no afterlife to worry this one. The continuity of matter, while neither personally consolatory nor threatening, is nonetheless a warrant of the value of material existence, an assurance that the "meaning" of life lies precisely in the persistence of atomic existence, which, at least for Lucretius, is eternal and infinite. It is not Being that goes on but matter.

And at every level of connection there is also a disconnection between the aleatory forms of existence that we know and the life that continues in and through and beyond them. The matter which we are does not allow us to know or understand the matter from which we are made in the ways in which we normally understand the material world, among other reasons because the atoms have almost none of the sensible qualities by which we ordinarily apprehend matter.

As I noted, the intervention I wish to make here is not simply theoretical, locating in Lucretius terms that might support the kind of materiality that Bersani and Dutoit describe. A Lucretian analysis of Renaissance painting is also possible historically. So Stephen J. Campbell has argued persuasively in a recent essay on the notoriously mysterious Giorgione *Tempest* that now hangs in the Accademia in Venice (fig. 3).[14] There are aspects of Campbell's analysis that I will want to question; his account, moreover, does not extend a Lucretian case to the 1540s, when Tintoretto probably painted his *Conversion of St. Paul*, and certainly not to early-seventeenth-century Rome. I take Campbell to have laid the historical ground for an inquiry that extends well beyond his own rather circumspect historicism, which limits its case to Venetian humanistic contexts of the opening decade or so of the sixteenth century, the same time as Giorgione's painting (usually dated c. 1510). Campbell attaches the painting to the particulars of Venetian intellectual culture, and likewise would attach each motif and figure in the painting to a prompt in Lucretius—or in contemporary misunderstandings of the Epicurean tradition corrected by way of Lucretian truth. Giorgione's painting is provocatively described as a "rendering of the natural world in an instantaneous moment of shifting appearances" (305). That is, both the painting itself and its analysis offer an entirely aleatory conjunction that does not signify in any way beyond itself. Everything refers back to Lucretius, but to a Lucretius who not only espouses detachment but whose text is decomposed back into detached atomic units: "All of the crucial elements of Giorgione's painting . . . can be accounted for through Lucretius' poem" (316), Campbell claims, and I would underscore *elements*, a reduction to atomic particles that matches the historical method of particularization. These elements don't add up. This method is uncannily like Lucretius, insofar as atoms are material and yet fairly incomprehensible units that have no necessary