RECURRENT IMAGERY AND DIDACTIC TECHNIQUE IN LUCRETIUS’ DE RERUM NATURA

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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In this dissertation, I analyze the recurrence and subtle reformulation of various images over the course of Lucretius’ *De rerum natura*. In particular, I examine the multifaceted Lucretian technique which I call “incremental didacticism.” By that term, I mean to denote the process by which Lucretius often reintroduces an image which he has used earlier in the poem, such that, with each successive recurrence of that image, its slightly modified presentation poses an increased challenge to the reader in one of a number of ways.

In the first two chapters, I focus on the ways in which Lucretius increases the reader’s proximity to the events in question and gradually tests the reader to approach a given challenge with Epicurean equanimity. More specifically, the first chapter analyzes Lucretius’ use of particular military vocabulary as a means of ushering the reader ever closer to the melee of the battlefield and challenging the reader to exercise ataraxic calm in these increasingly trying scenarios. Similarly, in the second chapter, I argue that Lucretius trains his pupil to apply the lessons of the (ever less remote) past to the present day. In the third chapter, I explore another facet of incremental didacticism by arguing that Lucretius applies a common *double entendre* to his presentation of acorns in the poem. I demonstrate that these suggestive acorns participate in the poet’s demythologization of Venus in the natural world. The fourth chapter explores Lucretius’ use of jar imagery in philosophical argumentation, showing how the poet wrests the
image from the hands of would-be philosophical detractors and applies it in ever-shifting fashion as an analogical tool in his exposition of Epicureanism. Over the course of the poem, Lucretius changes the specific referent to which the jar corresponds in these various analogies, and I track the way in which that changing specification demands increased diligence from the reader. In the fifth chapter, I explore the ways in which Lucretius employs clothing imagery as a means of signaling his affinities with the refined poetic aesthetics associated especially with Hellenistic poets, and I identify the various challenges placed on the reader which Lucretius’ subtle method of allusion to these authors entails. In a concluding section, I demonstrate how each of the sets of images studied in this project illuminates a different facet of Lucretius’ program of incremental didacticism, and I point to avenues for further inquiry on the basis of the arguments advanced in this dissertation.
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Recurrent Imagery and Incremental Didacticism in Lucretius’ De rerum natura

1. Incremental Didacticism, Introduced

This project will examine how recurrent images in De rerum natura (henceforth DRN) form a central, coherent, yet heretofore underappreciated aspect of Lucretius’ didactic program. I contend that Lucretius often reintroduces a given image and slightly changes its precise meaning when he reintroduces a related image thereafter, and I also propose that the poet frequently does so in increasingly subtle fashion, with an eye toward challenging the reader to apply more comprehensively the lessons of Epicureanism laid out in the poem. I call this technique “incremental didacticism.” My project operates on the understanding that Lucretius’ poetry thus serves a demonstrable didactic function even as it remains an end desirable in itself for the pleasure it confers both in authorial composition and in readerly consumption. Likewise, this project also assumes that the didacticism of DRN is most fully achieved by its expression in poetry, in that the images which represent the stepped lessons of the text achieve their forcefulness thanks to the vividness and power conveyed upon them by virtue of their expression in verse. As such, my study will engage principally with two major areas of Lucretian scholarship, namely Lucretius’ imagery and Lucretius’ didactic strategy.

2. Poetry and Didaxis in Lucretius and Lucretian Scholarship

Especially in the wake of David West’s landmark 1969 study The Imagery and Poetry of Lucretius, which attempted to enhance critics’ appreciation of Lucretian verse qua poetic composition, scholars have been eager to bolster Lucretius’ reputation for poetic beauty. E.J. Kenney, likewise, in a well-known article from 1970, famously links Lucretius’ meticulous versecraft with the Hellenistic (especially Callimachean) aesthetic
of setting poetic *ars* as a fundamental operating principle. These works respond to studies by Rozelaar (1943) and Anderson (1960), which treat various images in *DRN* but which do not address this idea of relatedness and continuation across the images’ recurrences in the poem. West and Kenney thus credit Lucretius with forging a demonstrable unity throughout his repeated images; yet, despite the attention they devote to recurrent imagery in the poem, and their acknowledgement that the artistry of crafting such sustained imagery goes beyond mere decoration, they do not fully flesh out the didactic import of those imagistic repetitions throughout the poem. Jane Snyder’s work (especially 1978 and 1980) has likewise reinforced the notion that poetic artistry need not be viewed as simply ornamental, with a view not only to imagery but also to specific words and phrases used in *DRN*. Snyder observes a number of instances in which Lucretius incorporates sophisticated wordplay and poetic allusion into his poetry, while also noting how those artistic features underscore serious doctrinal points in the text. West, Kenney, and Snyder thus all demonstrate that these images are not idle exhibitionism but indeed reinforce Epicurean doctrine at the same time.

Monica Gale’s 1994 touchstone study *Myth and Poetry in Lucretius* offers still further insightful analysis of imagery in *DRN*. Gale urges that images in Lucretius ought to be read at once synchronically and diachronically, thus accounting for apparent inconsistencies in an image such as that of Venus as she is later re-introduced and re-defined over the course of the poem (as at 4.1058, *haec Venus est nobis*).¹ Elizabeth Asmis (1995) likewise encourages us to read Venus as a figure of changing meaning

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¹ Anderson 1960, for instance, reads the various changes undergone by Venus as characteristic of a “discontinuity” in Lucretian imagery. Gale 1994b and others, however, have been able to identify in these same changes several aspects which bespeak a more coherent use of images in *DRN*. 
when we encounter the goddess at different points in the poem, and Daniel Solomon (2004) traces Venus’ gradual transformation over the course of *DRN*, from sensual love goddess, to instantiation of Nature, to living creatures’ sexual drive, to creative force of the universe more generally.² Indeed, Lucretius uses the word *Venus* some forty times in *DRN*, referring variously to the goddess, to women,³ to intercourse,⁴ or to the male member;⁵ for example.⁶ The poet’s address to Calliope in the final book of the poem,⁷ couched in a phrase (*hominum divumque voluptas*, 6.94) so reminiscent of Venus’ invocation in the very first line of the poem,⁸ builds on precisely this gradual reformulation, in my view testing the reader’s apprehension and application of those previous lessons. Earlier, we enjoyed the help of frequent signposts alerting us to the common practice of referring to gods metonymically when discussing the gifts or qualities associated with them, as Neptune’s sea, Ceres’ grain, or Bacchus’ wine (2.655-60); Venus herself is explicitly unveiled at 4.1058 (*haec Venus est nobis*). So whereas Venus, Neptune (2.472), and the paired Ceres and Bacchus (5.13-15) all undergo an express revelation as a metonymical concept, this latest invocation goes ostensibly

³ 4.1185, *nec Veneres nostras hoc fallit*.
⁴ 4.1276, *et simul ipsa viris Venus ut concinnior esset*.
⁵ 4.1270, *clunibus ipsa viri Venerem si laeta retractat*.
⁶ For a discussion of the implications of the widening scope of Venus in the world and its relation to the demands of incremental didacticism on the reader, see the chapter on acorns below.
⁸ *pace* Buchheit 2004: 430 n. 23 (“Nichts anderes verbirgt sich hinter der Anrufung der Muse Calliope, der *requies hominum divumque voluptas* (vgl. 1, 1),” in fact I see evidence of a complex reformulation (and an assessment of the pupil’s progress) lurking behind Lucretius’ reminiscence of the opening verse at 6.94.
unsigned, but for the clear echo of the description of Venus at 1.1. Rather, on the basis of those earlier examples, the poet charges the reader with successfully interpreting this latest divinity in the same vein as the others, this time without any assistance from the instructor. Can we readers capably recall the teachings encountered thus far and recognize that Lucretius is not appealing to a literal mythological figure but rather a concept abstracted from her? This last element, in particular, shows how my study most clearly contributes to the discussion of recurrent imagery and language in Lucretius: on a number of occasions and in a number of ways the poet issues a series of stepped challenges as he tests the reader to employ the tools of Epicurean philosophy increasingly without the aid of an instructor’s guiding presence. These constant shifts in designation compel the reader to pay close attention in order to understand the poet’s meaning at each new turn.

Scholars have long labored over the question of Lucretius’ use of verse in the face of Epicurus’ apparent prohibition of that medium. Gale and Asmis have shown how poetry can be justified in Epicurean terms, so long as the poetry is written in a clear fashion. In addition, as others have pointed out, that perceived ban seems not to have been quite so universal and systematic as has been typically understood. Sider (1995) in particular has demonstrated that verse composition was by no means an inconceivable Epicurean practice, nor an unpopular one: in addition to the well-known contemporaries Lucretius and Philodemus, Sider lists a number of attested Epicureans who are thought to

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10 See Wigodsky 1995, e.g. Asmis 1995 also points to Philodemus’ distinction between poetry which purports to teach and poetry which is lighter, more inconsequential, and thus more readily justifiable as a pure delight to compose.
have composed poetry, from Epicurus’ friend and fellow Lampsacan Metrodorus, to the second-century figure Titus Albucius mentioned by Cicero (*perfectus Epicureus, Brut.* 131), to Pollius Felix (Stat. *Silv.* 2.2.112-15), to Philodemus’ addressees (perhaps better known as Virgil’s posthumous editors) Varius and Tucca, among others. The picture which emerges from these studies paints poetry as an acceptable practice within Epicureanism, as long as the poet keeps to proper reasoning.

At the same time, the nature of the relationship between the poetic form and philosophical content of *DRN* continues to attract scholarly attention. Similar concerns exercised Deutsch (1939) and Friedländer (1941), for example, who pointed out some time ago the reflection of Epicurean “atomology” in the literal structure of the poem by virtue of the rearrangement of its constituent *elementa* (the Latin signifying both “atoms” and “letters”). Buglass 2015 has recently explored further examples of this phenomenon, especially in Book 5. Such studies bolster a “unitarian” reading of *DRN*, an interpretation by which we can understand Lucretius’ poetry and philosophy to be mutually reinforcing one another. Indeed, Hardie rightly identifies the general scholarly trend toward a unitarian reading of the poem when he gestures toward “the now orthodox version whereby the poet’s powers of empathy and imagistic association are working with rather than against the philosophical message” (1992: 299). Readers have not always viewed the poem through this unitarian lens, however. An earlier, influential approach tended to see in the poem a fundamental incompatibility between the strict rationalism of Lucretius’ philosophical argumentation and the emotional intensity of

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12 See also Dionigi 1988 on the expression of atomological phenomena even at a literal level within words and lines in *DRN*, and Thury 1987 on *DRN* as a microcosm of the universe.
Lucretia in poetry. This outlook generally springs from such concepts as Patin’s old “anti-
Lucrèce chez Lucrèce,” a characterization which owes much to Jerome’s colorful remark
(now disregarded) that a conflicted Lucretius committed suicide out of love-sick
desperation. Patin still lingers in modern bibliographies on Lucretius, but more as a straw
man than a serious interlocutor; his “anti-Lucrèce” theory has steadily fallen out of favor,
to such an extent that Joseph Farrell can confidently state, “By now the idea that these
passages represent an anti-Lucretian element is more a chapter in the history of the
poem’s reception than a credible interpretative position.” Accordingly, the present
study endeavors to contribute rather to the recent trend toward a unitarian reading of DRN
and considers how we may better understand Lucretius’ choice of poetry as a tool which
furthers the poet’s overall didactic aims and unifies the work as a whole.

How does a unitarian understanding of Lucretius’ imagery and didacticism affect
our reading of the poem? And how might Lucretius’ use of poetry befit his exposition of
philosophy? Diskin Clay, for one, offers a response to such questions in his
interpretation of the much-discussed plague scene at the end of Book 6. Clay (1976 and
1983), alongside Müller (1978), has championed the idea that the gruesome description
of the Athenian plague at the close of the poem constitutes a “final exam” for the pupil,
checking that the reader has been able to internalize the instructor’s message of ataraxia
even in the midst of the terror and chaos witnessed in that episode. In his sensitive

13 Farrell 2007: 88 n. 33. See, however, the re-evaluation of Patin’s thesis in Romani Mistretta
2014.
14 On the plague as a final test and a fitting end to the work, see Commager 1957, Giancotti 1959,
1999; Fowler 1997 supports the plague as a suitable finale, but would rearrange the order of the
specific verses which close the work. For an opposing view of the end of DRN, see Sedley 1998:
160-61, who suggests that Lucretius did not in fact finish his composition but rather would have
edited his final three books after initially modeling the structure of DRN on that of Epicurus’
1990 study, Charles Segal demonstrates the protreptic force especially of the daunting and macabre imagery of Book 3. Gale’s work (especially 1994b and 2004) also enhances our appreciation of Lucretius’ didactic strategies, particularly in her argument that Lucretius uses imagery as a means of instruction for its capacity to illustrate *vera ratio* (but, crucially, not discover it), insofar as those images allow the poet to demystify for the reader certain misguided applications of myths. She argues further that Lucretius can justify his apparently unorthodox choice of poetry because he crafts that poetry with a clarity which has power to illuminate otherwise obscure matters, a point taken up again by Asmis 1995. Such studies underscore the fundamental intertwinement of Lucretius’ poetry – vivid and memorable as it is – with the Epicurean teachings it presents.

To the observations of Clay and others, regarding the “final exam” of the plague, I would append an implication related to the claims of Asmis (2016), who reads *DRN* as Lucretius’ “conversion narrative.” In Asmis’ estimation, our instructor confidently points the way since he himself has set out upon the same path. I would add that one consequence of reading the poem on the understanding that Lucretius represents himself

treatise Περὶ φύσεως. Volk 2002 grants that the work stands as a unified whole as we have it, but also expresses reservations that the final verses were intended to be the very last lines of the poem, as she would rather expect a closing *sphragis* or a farewell to Memmius, if only to bring the intratextual didactic enterprise to a close. The present study bolsters the case for a “final exam” by arguing for a gradual but demonstrable process of repeated assessments of the reader’s attainment of *ataraxia* over the course of the poem, demanding ever more diligence of the pupil and culminating in the final plague scene (as discussed below). In my view, however, the absence of a valediction at the poem’s endpoint underscores the idea that Lucretius means his student – the living reader, not the fictive Memmius – to make a natural transition in carrying the lessons of *DRN* out of the text and into the real world.

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15 Segal 1990b. In earlier work (1970), Segal also notes the thematic and didactic relevance of passages often dismissed as “poetic digressions,” such as the famous scene of the bereaved cow’s lament for her lost calf (Lucr. 2.352-66).

16 For a different view of Lucretian *claritas*, namely as corresponding to *ἐνάργεια*, vividness, rather than to *σαφήνεια*, clearness or precision, see Farrell (forthcoming). See also Hedrick 2015 on Lucretian *ἐνάργεια*.
as such a “convert” is that it renders Thucydides a particularly apt model for Lucretius’ imitation at the end of Book 6. On Asmis’ reading, Lucretius shows how he has himself undergone the very transition from darkness to light which he recommends to his reader. This self-presentation makes Thucydides’ eye-witness account particularly attractive for Lucretian repurposing. Lucretius the “convert” can present himself as having been able to see the way of life characteristic of both the initiated and the uninitiated, as it were. As other critics have noticed, the fact that the historical plague struck Athens allows the poet to contrast that city’s terrible suffering depicted at the end of the poem with the healing boon which later thrives in Athens in the person of Epicurus, as highlighted in the proem to Book 6.17 And while it is not simply a moralizing allegory,18 Lucretius’ account of the plague demonstrates that something so evidently terrible, incurable, and unpredictable can befall humankind at any time – even in the land of the great Epicurus – and yet we students of Epicureanism can nevertheless practice our philosophy in such circumstances and meet the terrors with a sense of calm.19 Still, even as Lucretius mutes certain aspects of Thucydides’ narrative in order to emphasize others,20 the Thucydidean imprint is hardly imperceptible,21 and I suggest that Lucretius also means the reader to view this episode using something of a Thucydidean hermeneutic. That is, Thucydides prefaces his description of the Plague of Athens by expressing his hope that someone may be able to

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19 For more on the significance of the plague, see the chapter on military imagery, below.
20 See especially the borrowings and divergences highlighted by Bright 1971.
21 See Stover 1999: 72. See also Smith 1964: 49-50 on the imprint of Thucydides on Lucr. 5.1440-47
use his account of it to identify its symptoms if they should ever arise again, and I maintain that Lucretius similarly prompts his reader to be prepared to diagnose such psychological suffering in the future. The reader of the *History of the Peloponnesian War*, then, is supplied with the tools to recognize this terrible affliction in the event that it should ever reappear at a later date, just as Lucretius equips his reader to meet the unknown with equanimity. I would further suggest that Lucretius deliberately taps into the surrounding context of the Thucydidean narrative, namely the preceding encomium of Athens delivered in Pericles’ Funeral Oration. Indeed, the macro-structure of *DRN 6* enacts Thucydides’ contrast between Pericles’ praise of Athens and the chaotic suffering of the ensuing plague. Lucretius begins Book 6 with his own praise of Athens, owing primarily to the great philanthropic gifts of Epicurus’ philosophy, taking his lead in part from Thucydides’ Pericles and the idea that Athens stands as a “school” for the wider world (Ξυνελὼν τε λέγω τὴν τε πᾶσαν πόλιν τῆς Ἑλλάδος παίδευσιν εἶναι, 2.41.1) – the operative community being Hellas for the Thucydidean Pericles and for Epicurus, but of course extending to Italy as well for Lucretius, thanks to the poet’s efforts of translation and propagation. And precisely what does Athens teach? Her citizens look a lot like the versatile, self-sufficient thinkers whom Epicurus later aims to generate, so the parallel is fitting: λέγω… καὶ καθ’ ἐκαστὸν δοκεῖν ἂν μοι τὸν αὐτὸν ἀνδρὰ παρ’ ἡμῶν ἔπι πλείστ’ ἂν εἰδή καὶ μετὰ χαρίτων μάλιστ’ ἂν εὐτραπέλως τὸ σῶμα αὐταρκεῖς παρέχεσθαι,
Thuc. 2.41.1. For Thucydides’ Pericles, Athens is worthy of praise because she teaches her people how to live properly, a figure of speech which suits Lucretius’ praise of Athens since, naturally, it is the home of the man he considers the most worthwhile teacher of all. In Book 6 Lucretius thus nods to Thucydides in both his proemial tribute to Athens and the closing plague narrative, and just as Thucydides details the horrible affliction in the hopes of arming his readers for a possible future outbreak of the disease, Lucretius similarly makes a point to equip his reader – expert or not (cf. Thuc. 2.48.3, καὶ ἱατρὸς καὶ ἱδιώτης) – to evaluate the wider world independently of the instructor upon finishing *DRN*.

Because the features of Lucretian incremental didacticism suggest that the poet sets expectations on his reader, this study will naturally entail a consideration of the nature of the relationships between and among author, addressee, and audience. Katharina Volk (2002) has explored the self-conscious nature of Lucretian didacticism, including, for instance, the poet’s frequent reminders of the teacher-student relationship and the frequent use of second-person verb forms, both of which serve to erode the distinction between intratextual addressee and extratextual reader.²⁷ Philip Mitsis (1993) has explored the ways in which Lucretius uses the internal addressee of Memmius as a foil for the reader. In Mitsis’ estimation, Lucretius manipulates the reader into assenting to the teacher’s tenets so as not to resemble the figure whom Mitsis identifies as a dim-witted or intractable Memmius. In my opinion, while Mitsis may ultimately go too far in advocating “the aggressive, condescending tone of paternalism” he seeks to ascribe to Lucretius,²⁸ it is nonetheless worthwhile to acknowledge that Lucretius will frequently

²⁷ For a discussion of related phenomena see also Keen 1985 and Fanti 2017.
²⁸ Mitsis 1993: 112.
adopt different postures in his instructive efforts, such that he can at turns encourage, chastise, and cajole the reader as it suits his didactic purposes at a given moment.

Johnson (2000) seeks to combat any perception of a scheming, manipulative streak in Lucretius, restoring to the poet a benevolent, transparent didacticism and thus according Lucretius’ potential reader a greater degree of independence in absorbing the poem’s Epicurean teachings. Johnson works in parallel to critics like Donohue (1993) in arguing that Memmius is more place-holder than actual target audience and that the lessons of *DRN* are meant primarily for the extratextual, real-world reader.29 Likewise emphasizing reader autonomy in *DRN*, Whitlatch (2014) highlights the aptness of Lucretius’ analogy of the student as hunting dog, both figures being thought to sniff out, as it were, the trail that leads to *vera ratio*. Indeed, she likewise notes that the reader must “do the work for himself” in the learning process (65) and become “an active learner instead of a passive student” (46).30 This notion of active readership is central to *DRN* and to this dissertation, since Lucretius’ didactic project will be seen to exert demands on the reader which require continued focus and attention to detail.31 My study is also in line with Clay’s notion (1976 and 1983), mentioned above, that the pupil is meant to store up and internalize the teachings of *DRN* over the course of reading the poem, ultimately in order to put those lessons into practice when confronted with the “final exam” of the plague.

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29 Johnson 2000: 8: “For the ideal reader (not Memmius) who is being constructed out of the raw material Memmius furnishes (as we read/listen along with him), the few clues will suffice his acute intelligence, and he will be able to hunt down truth in its lair and, imitating Epicurus, drag it into the light (of his mind). That reader will learn the method of (Epicurean) thinking in the same way that the students of Socrates learn (but they mostly don’t) Socratic thinking; he will learn to think by thinking through questions from one problem to another: tireless hunting dogs following the scent once they’ve got it till they find what they’re looking for. Memmius isn’t like that.”


31 Flammini 2013 points to a number of signposts which alert the reader to the difficulty of certain passages, reinforcing the instructor’s calls for readerly diligence.
To Clay’s “final exam” argument I would add the suggestion that there are also various quizzes, so to speak, which test the reader to practice the intervening lessons of *DRN* along the way.\textsuperscript{32} Gale’s argument (1994b), too, and those studies which take their lead from her principle of maintaining a simultaneously synchronic and diachronic perspective in interpreting Lucretian imagery,\textsuperscript{33} likewise all accord well with my reading of Lucretius’ incremental didacticism. In short, my contribution fits neatly but uniquely into the contemporary landscape of Lucretian studies.

At all points I emphasize that there is a fundamental coherence which is at the heart of Lucretius’ use of recurrent images as well as the twin didactic and poetic aims of the work. That is not to say that there is no ambiguity in Lucretius’ terminology;\textsuperscript{34} rather,

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\textsuperscript{32} See also Feeney 2011: 64-66 for an interim “test” of the reader.

\textsuperscript{33} See especially Asmis 1995 and Solomon 2004, particularly on Venus’ changing valences of meaning. Recent dissertations have likewise incorporated aspects of Gale’s interpretive method. Gruber 2009 examines Venus as Epicurean *voluptas*, and goes on to identify similarities in atomic structure between honey and wormwood which support a justification for reading Lucretius’ poetry and philosophy as behaving “symbiotically” (30, 219). Nethercut 2012 speaks of “provisional poetics” and the “gradual redefinition of initial propositions” in terms reminiscent of Gale’s and urges an equation of form and content in Lucretius (17-19; 2); and while I would agree with Nethercut that Lucretius will often reshape an earlier image in its later iteration, nevertheless we tend to look at different images in our respective explorations of that tendency, and Nethercut also does not point to a gradual increase in intensity or difficulty in the way that I do. Holm 2013 applies a version of Gale’s phrase “latent myth” (Gale 1994b: 156) to the concepts of “latent didacticism” and “didactic latency” (Holm 2013: 4; 143-46) and explores Lucretius’ tendency to “naturalize” a popular mythological account (107-114; 179); I agree with Holm that Lucretius equips the reader to re-evaluate a repeated image in light of the intervening philosophical lessons since the image’s earlier appearance, but Holm does not explore the same images that I do, nor does he identify a stepped challenge in that process of re-evaluation. Each of these studies thus touches on some aspect of changing imagery in *DRN*, but none has addressed the idea that repeated iterations demand increasing diligence on the part of the pupil. That is, when encountering an image for a second time, the reader is often tasked with practicing increased ataraxic focus or exhibiting a greater degree of competence with Epicurean doctrine.

\textsuperscript{34} See Borchers (forthcoming) on ambiguous terms in *DRN*. Volk 2011: 107-109 discusses some Lucretian “self-contradictions,” but whereas she sees the poet playing a dangerous game whereby he risks losing his reader to his fanciful and ostensibly un-Epicurean descriptions, I would maintain that Lucretius relishes in the apparent disconnect between the surface meaning of the word or image at hand and its underlying meaning, and he challenges the reader to reconcile those seeming differences into coherence with Epicurean thought. See Wigodsky 1974 for a similar reading which takes its start from the Magna Mater passage.
I posit that moments of interpretative difficulty often play a role in the poem’s overall didactic program by forcing the reader to grapple with those challenging moments with an eye toward making progress as a budding Epicurean. Especially as regards poetic imagery, we are called to view whatever nodes of difficulty we encounter in Lucretius’ complex use of imagery as moments which, for instance, invite us to reflect on the implications of the philosophical doctrine at hand, or call us to evaluate our acceptance and application of that and other doctrines. These moments of ambiguity thus also represent teaching moments; but, crucially, they are not moments for which our instructor leaves us unprepared, since he gives us the interpretative tools for wrestling with a given problem within the very poem itself, as this dissertation sets out to demonstrate.

Another prominent aspect of Lucretian poetics which has enjoyed increased scholarly attention of late is Lucretius’ engagement with the poetic traditions which precede him. In this dissertation I explore a number of ways in which Lucretius subtly alludes to poetic forebears and frequently employs images which recall specific literary precursors, often as a way of challenging the reader not only to pick up on those allusions but also to wrestle with any apparent inconsistencies between the target text’s philosophical outlook and the Epicureanism presented by Lucretius. Lucretius makes reference to a great many literary forebears in *DRN*, but the pervasive influence of Empedocles, in particular, has been a popular topic in recent Lucretian scholarship. In a 1989 article expanded for publication as a chapter of his 1998 monograph, David Sedley charts Lucretius’ extensive use of Empedoclean imagery, especially in the opening verses

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35 The bibliography on Lucretius’ engagement with specific authors is extensive, but for a comprehensive study of general Lucretian practice see especially Gale 2007.
of *DRN*. Garani 2007 follows Sedley in identifying echoes of Empedocles in *DRN*, particularly in certain uses of analogy and metaphor in Lucretian proofs; however, she parts company with Sedley on the question of Lucretius’ Epicurean “fundamentalism,” and instead she renews a line of inquiry pursued by Furley 1970, namely that Lucretius admires not only Empedocles’ poetry but also his philosophy. Nethercut 2017, too,

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36 I hasten to stipulate that I find certain elements of Sedley’s argument considerably stronger than others. Indeed, even if, as Sedley maintains, Lucretius acquired his intimate knowledge of Epicureanism from direct consultation of Epicurus’ writings and not through some other intermediary source, still, I follow Clay: “I see other sources of inspiration at work in the *de Rerum Natura*. One of these is Empedocles, not only as he influences Lucretius’ proem but as he influences the poem as a whole; Thucydides is dramatically present at the end of the poem” as well (Clay 2000: 262), and other examples include Hesiod (Gale 2013), Nicander (Hollis 1998), Ennius (Farrell 2008), Aratus (Kronenberg forthcoming) and Cicero’s *Aratea* (Edmunds 2002 and Gee 2013 and 2016), to name a few. We must also be wary, however, of accepting wholesale Sedley’s proposed thematic ordering of Empedocles’ fragments (1998: 21-34). As it happens, we possess rather little extant Empedocles: fewer than 500 lines, to round the estimate of Obbink (1993: 53-54) slightly higher to include the windfall recovered from the Strasbourg papyrus (*P. Strasb. gr. Inv. 1665-1666*; Martin and Primavesi 1999). Indeed, debate still swirls as to whether the verses known as *Περὶ φύσεως* and *Καθαρµοί* constitute two separate works or rather two parts of a single poem (see Palmer 2009: 270 for a *status quaestionis*; Mansfeld 1994, Kingsley 1996, O’Brien 2001, and Bollack 2005 maintain a two-poem distinction, while Osborne 1987, Curd 2002, and Trépanier 2004: 1-30 champion the “compatibilist” single-work hypothesis). What is more, any attempt to reproduce what might have been the original order and structure of Empedocles’ fragments, as Sedley does (proposing on the basis of Lucretius’ poem “the deployment of the same sequence of themes” in the two poets, 1998: 28), remains inevitably speculative and subjective; Trépanier 2003, for instance, contests Martin and Primavesi’s reconstruction of Strasbourg papyrus *ensemble* A, Janko 2004 posits a different assignation of *ensemble* D, and Pierris’ 2005 edited volume offers a post-Strasbourg reconstruction of its own. As a result, we must be careful not to retroject an order or arrangement onto Empedocles simply in order to match more closely what we find in Lucretius. Let us be content, rather, simply to observe that Empedocles clearly exerts a great deal of influence on Lucretius’ poetry and use of imagery, whatever the shape of Empedocles’ work. On the influence of Empedocles on Lucretius, see the variety of treatments in Kranz 1944, Bollack 1959, Furley 1970, Snyder 1972, Castner 1987, Mesturini 1987, Edwards 1989, Sedley 1989, 1998, and 2003, Gale 2007, Garani 2007 and 2013, Trépanier 2007, Campbell 2014, Fabre-Serris 2014, Farrell 2014: §18, Nelis 2014: §6, and Nethercut 2017.

37 Furley 1970: 60 reads Lucretius’ use of Empedoclean imagery as evidence of the Roman poet’s “enrolment in the Empedoclean tradition” in philosophical terms as well as poetic; as will become clear herein, I disagree with those who would read the similarity of poetic imagery as signaling an announcement of doctrinal allegiance. When Lucretius regularly refers to Homer or Ennius, for example, Lucretius no more advocates those poets’ respective worldviews, such as they are, than he does Empedocles’ when Empedoclean resonances occur.
reads a handful of passages from *DRN* not only as allusions to Empedocles’ “roots” but as endorsements of Empedocles’ philosophical tenets.\textsuperscript{38} While it is clear that Lucretius frequently nods to Empedocles’ poetry and imagery, nevertheless it does not then naturally follow that Lucretius was for that reason indebted to Empedocles in matters of doctrine as well. Rather, at those moments of doctrinal overlap between Empedocles’ Pythagoreanism and the teachings of Epicurus, it seems to me that Lucretius exults in the felicity of Empedocles having gotten it right, as it were. Indeed, in those instances in which Empedoclean imagery finds form in *DRN*, it has been carefully brought into coherence with Epicurean thought, either immediately and \textit{prima facie} or by the time of the poem’s conclusion as part of Lucretius’ strategy of incremental didacticism, once readers can shine a light on the poetic figures of speech for themselves.\textsuperscript{39} So even as we may be able to trace such similarities as Garani and Nethercut identify between Empedocles and Lucretius, the Roman poet nevertheless expresses admiration for Empedocles principally in the realm of poetry, and generally he praises Empedocles’ school of thought only when Empedocles is in agreement with Epicurus.\textsuperscript{40} Equally, such


\textsuperscript{39} For a similar sentiment see Trépanier 2007: 261-62 + n. 35.

\textsuperscript{40} Sedley points to some philosophical common ground between Lucretius and Empedocles, but he also shows how Lucretius often employs Empedoclean language in order to argue a point which runs counter to Empedocles’ Pythagorean teachings (2003: 9-10). However, for claims that Lucretius distinctly innovates on Epicurus’ precepts at times in *DRN*, see Clay 1983: 169-91, Cabisius 1984-85, and Gottschalk 1996. Dionigi 1976 and Summers 1995 point to apparent
observations militate against reading Lucretius as a mere imitator or Latinizer of Empedocles – an interpretation Sedley’s study might otherwise tempt us to adopt since Lucretius constantly ensures that any Empedoclean imagery is rendered ideologically defensible within Epicureanism. Consequently, Lucretius regains credit not simply for recalling Empedocles’ poetry but for customizing it for application within his own philosophical system, without compromising his adherence to Epicurean doctrine. Based on the argumentation to follow in this dissertation, similar conclusions will be drawn regarding Lucretius’ engagement with other Greek precursors as well, especially with a view to image-driven allusions to specific authors.

Let me offer a word on the notion that Lucretius imposes difficult demands on his reader. A detractor may ask: “Why should we imbue these images with the meaning you suggest? How can we possibly see laundry and sloughed-off snakeskin, for example, as meaningful intertextual allusions? And is it not the case that reading acorns as innuendo is a highly subjective exercise? Further, even if Lucretius did in fact include all of these references, allusions, and double entendres as you suggest, then might we not reasonably conclude, with D. Fowler (1989) and P. Fowler (1997), that Lucretius exposes himself to the risk that his entire didactic enterprise falls flat if the reader fails to pick up on these recondite details?” To such an interlocutor I would reply that not every reader of DRN will pick up on the allusions or double entendres that I recognize in this study; nor, however, do I suggest that Lucretius expects every reader to do so. As Segal points out, differences in attitude between Lucretius and Epicurus on the matter of observing ritualistic piety, and Barney 2018 suggests that Lucretius denies the social benefit of animal sacrifice as defended by Epicurus and instead follows Empedocles in denouncing the practice in toto.

Note his protest, however: “By this stage, it should be noted, I am no longer suggesting direct translation or line-by-line imitation of Empedocles’ proem on Lucretius’ part” (Sedley 1998: 28). See especially the chapters on jars and clothing, below.
Lucretius includes material in *DRN* which will variously appeal to the learned or to the lay: “The combination of common-sense argumentation, the ‘hard’ evidence of Epicurean science, and the human wisdom and authority of an ancient poetic tradition enables him to meet diverse anxieties at many levels and for many different kinds of readers.”

Identification of every last poetic allusion, then, is not a prerequisite for a “successful” reading of the text, whatever that may be. Moreover, a reader’s unwillingness to convert to Epicureanism immediately upon finishing the poem does not for that reason disqualify that reader from appreciating the poem as a work of literature, and hardly renders *DRN* a “failure.”

The aim of the present study, accordingly, is simply to identify heretofore unexplored avenues for a critical appraisal of *DRN* which may help to enrich our appreciation of this masterfully intricate work, even if these readings are never required or assumed of all readers; rather, they provide a source of delight – and edification – for any reader who notices these subtle allusions and challenges.

3. Modeling the Reader’s Progress

The central claim of this project concerns the technique I call incremental didacticism, which will be the focus of the subsequent chapters of this dissertation. I

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43 Segal 1990b: 11.
44 But note Clay 1983: 226: “Presumably there are readers who read *De rerum natura* from its opening and the invocation to Venus to its close and Lucretius’ description of the plague in Athens. These readers are the only ones in a position to penetrate to the ‘whole secret’ of the poem, if, indeed, it contains something hidden which is not at first apparent.”
45 Recall that one explanation offered by Lucretius as to why he writes *DRN* is because it pleases him to do so (note *iuvat* and *iuvatque*, 1.927-28 = 4.2-3): it is pleasing, he says, first (*primum*, 1.931 = 4.6) because he teaches (*doceo*, 1.931 = 4.6) about great matters, but also (*deinde*, 1.933 = 4.8) because he composes such brilliant verses (*tam lucida pango | carmina*, 1.933-34 = 4.8-9) about an unclear subject. Even if Lucretius does not win the student as a convert to the Garden (as regards the motivation of his *primum*-clause), the artful work (highlighted in his *deinde*-clause) nevertheless stands on its own. Note, for example, that *DRN* evidently earned early recognition for its high quality as a work of poetry, as attested by the well-known letter of Cicero (Cic. *Q. fr.* 2.10.3), even if Cicero remained an outspoken critic of Epicureanism after reading it.
would like to turn first to a feature of the poem which is related to that technique and offers a model for the reader’s progress over the course of the work. Frequently Lucretius likens the behavior of children to that of the unenlightened individuals who fail to act in accordance with Epicurean *vera ratio*. Recall, for example, the famous analogy of the child drinking from the honeyed cup (1.936-50 ≈ 4.11-25). The pupil plays the role of the child, and Lucretius provides the caring guardianship of the doting healer who has the child’s best interests in mind. After all, the doctor in this simile is no enemy (note the phrase *deceptaque non capiatur*, 1.941 = 4.16), so a spirit of alliance motivates the healing help. Likewise, of course, Lucretius benevolently tends to his reader’s philosophical development. And while this analogy offers a particularly memorable and powerful glimpse of the poet’s kindliness toward his reader on the quest toward *ataraxia*, children in *DRN* frequently symbolize the inexpert Epicurean. Children become a leitmotif by which Lucretius signals how the reader can advance to Epicurean maturity out of the state of philosophical naïveté which childhood represents. Frequently, however, the poet conflates this language of maturation with the language of a journey, or of a climb. In each case, this matrix of images serves to model the process being enacted by the pupil as a result of adopting the doctrines of *DRN*, so an examination of those passages will shine some light on the relationship between poet and reader that we have begun to explore already. We turn to that leitmotif now.

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46 For more on this image, see the chapter on clothing imagery below.
47 See Mitsis 1993 for another view of this relationship, “coercing” the student to gulp down the cup’s contents.
48 This imagery does not mean that the poem has no utility for the returning reader, however; see Schiesaro 1994: 103-104.
The applicability of the child motif to Lucretius’ didactic program draws on two basic concepts. The first notion is straightforward enough: children do not have all the answers yet, so they make apt proxies for fools and imperfect Epicureans. This assumption underpins the poet’s polemic against metempsychosis at 3.760-64:

\[
\begin{align*}
sin\ animas\ hominum\ dicent\ in\ corpora\ semper\ 760 \\
ire\ humana,\ tamen\ quae\ cur\ e\ sapienti\ 761 \\
stulta\ queat\ fieri,\ nec\ prudens\ sit\ puer\ ullus,\ 762 \\
nec\ tam\ doctus\ equae\ pullus\ quam\ fortis\ equi\ vis.\ 764
\end{align*}
\]

Children axiomatically lack mature wisdom, we are told. Indeed, childlike folly lies at the heart of another of Lucretius’ well-known analogies:\[\footnote{2.55-61 = 3.87-93 = 6.35-41. The repetition of this passage underscores not a putative lack of revision but rather the poet’s emphatic restatement of this important paradigm. For more on wholesale and large-scale repetition in DRN, see the chapter on clothing imagery below.}

\[
\begin{align*}
nam\ veluti\ pueri\ trepidant\ atque\ omnia\ caecis\ 90 \\
in\ tenebris\ metuant,\ sic\ nos\ in\ luce\ timemus\ interdum,\ nilo\ quae\ sunt\ metuenda\ magis\ quam\ 78 \\
quae\ pueri\ in\ tenebris\ pavitant\ finguntque\ futura.\ 79 \\
hunc\ igitur\ terrorem\ animi\ tenebrasque\ necessest\ 91 \\
non\ radii\ solis\ neque\ lucida\ tela\ diei\ discutiant,\ sed\ naturae\ species\ ratiqoue.\ 92
\end{align*}
\]

Those who fear death because it is unknown, the poet tells us, behave like children who fear what they cannot make out in the darkness. Lucretius informs us that the proper understanding of the nature of things can dispel such fears and bring us out of our childish ignorance, but that is what the child so often signifies in DRN: ignorance and un-Epicurean tendencies. Attainment of ataraxia requires the appropriate knowledge as well as behavior consistent with that knowledge. The second underlying conceit of such imagery, accordingly, requires that this unknowing child be raised by a fitting instructor.\[\footnote{After all, not every adult has attained wisdom in DRN, so some adults would presumably make for unwelcome instructors. Recall the misguided hypothetical interlocutor described as grandior… seniorque (3.952-54), or the grandis arator and tristis sator who bemoan the present...} \] The poet endeavors to play that role, of course, administering the bitter
draught in the honeyed cup and illuminating the darkness with the knowledge of the true nature of things. This image complex remains a powerful tool to which Lucretius will often return over the course of *DRN* as he assures the pupil of his careful watch and periodically reinforces the teacher-student relationship in the poem.

The notion that a child needs a good teacher underpins the very first episode in *DRN* in which we encounter a child, namely the sacrifice of Iphianassa (1.80-101). Throughout this passage, Lucretius emphasizes Agamemnon’s shortcomings as the father and guardian of his daughter, highlighting his perversion of his paternal and parental role. For example, Lucretius points out that Iphianassa senses the presence of her parent (*parentem*, 1.89) at the altar. It is also of no use that Iphianassa was once the first to address him as father (*patrio… nomine*, 1.94), and at last she dies a victim of her parent’s own machinations (*parentis*, 1.99). The repeated references to Agamemnon’s identity as Iphianassa’s father heighten the outrageous perverseness of the sacrifice, especially because the appropriate relationship of a father to a child ought to be one of instruction and care – in other words, it ought to resemble the arrangement which Lucretius himself establishes in relation to his reader in laying out the Epicurean principles of *DRN*. This relationship constitutes a foil which Lucretius clearly contrasts with his own marked benevolence toward his reader as exhibited in the analogy of the honeyed cup, for instance. Agamemnon patently deserts his role as guardian and teacher, offering a negative *exemplum* which Lucretius plainly repudiates.

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state of affairs in their ignorance of the way of the world (2.1164-74). In the latter case, for a defense of *ad scopulum* at 2.1174 (owing primarily to the manuscript evidence but also preserving the neat parallelism of nautical terminology between the opening and the closing lines of Book 2), see DeGraff 1944, Segura Ramos 1982, and Possanza 1990; for a different view see Galzerano 2015.
Significantly, however, the Iphianassa episode takes its start after a brief appeal to the reader at 1.80-83. Lucretius is quick to pull the reader aside at this early stage, assuring the pupil that the work in hand is worthwhile and by no means runs counter to true piety. And here we note a phenomenon which will reappear in a number of Lucretius’ subsequent metaphors for the reader’s attainment of Epicurean wisdom: the poet conflates the language of maturation with the language of a journey, or of a climb. In this case, Lucretius couches his reassurance in the language of setting out on the right path:

\[
\text{illud in his rebus vereor, ne forte rearis} \\
\text{impia te rationis inire elementa viamque} \\
\text{indugredi sceleris. quod contra saepius illa} \\
\text{religio peperit scelerosa atque impia facta.}
\]

Several features of this passage serve to prime the reader for the gradual inculcation and education to be undergone in the course of reading DRN. For one, the idea of progressing along the proper route sets an important tone for the work. Here, Lucretius assures us that this is no “path of crime” on which we are embarking (viamque | indugredi sceleris, 1.81-82). Indeed, the language of making progress on the journey to knowledge will remain a key aspect of Lucretius’ didactic project elsewhere in the poem. In fact, in the

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51 Note the use of the multivalent word *elementa* in this passage, linking the journey of the pupil with learning the ABC’s as well as the fundamental building blocks of Epicurean physics. For a discussion of Lucretian *elementa*, especially as featured in wordplay (including the well-known *ignis/lignis* punning) and the literal instantiation of Epicurean physics within Lucretian poetics, see, e.g., Deutsch 1939, Friedländer 1941, Snyder 1980, and Feeney 2011: 50-51; note, however, the objections of Wigodsky 2007: 525-26.


53 The need for a capable guide remains paramount if the student is to pursue the proper path, since not all roads lead to ataraxia; cf., e.g., the ataraxic dead-ends of 5.1123-24 (*nequiquam, quoniam ad summum succedere honorem | certantes iter infestum fecere viai* and 5.1132 (*angustum per iter luctantes ambitionis*).

54 Lucretius’ use of the journey metaphor may be inspired in part by Parmenides’ account of his journey on the path to wisdom; on Parmenidean and earlier uses of this metaphor, see Mourelatos
programmatic conclusion to Book 1, the poet frames his didactic strategy in precisely that fashion: the light of Epicurean truth will prevent the darkness of ignorance from obscuring the proper path (nec tibi caeca | nox iter eripiet, 1.1115-16).

At 2.1122-30, the poet describes the physical growth of living beings using similar terminology of progress, this time of making an ascent.\(^{55}\)

\[
\textit{nam quaecumque vides hilaro grandescere adauctu paulatimque gradus aetatis scandere adultae, plura sibi adsumunt quam de se corpora mittunt, dum facile in venas cibus omnis inditur, et dum non ita sunt late dispessa, ut multa remittant et plus dispendi faciant quam vescitur aetas. nam certe fluere atque recedere corpora rebus multa manus dandum est; sed plura accedere debent, donec alescendi sumnum tetigere cacumen.}
\]

1125 1130

Lucretius portrays the growth from childhood to adulthood as a gradual climb (paulatimque gradus aetatis scandere adultae, 2.1123), right up until reaching one’s developmental peak (donec alescendi summum tetigere cacumen, 2.1130). Casting organisms’ growth in these terms sets physical and mental development side by side as

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\(^{55}\) Cf. Man. 2.750-87 for a similar discussion of a child learning things bit by bit, as if the knowledge is filling the whole frame of the youth; I owe this reference to Katharina Volk. Interestingly, Manilius likens the learning process both to a child learning the ABCs and to a civilization which gradually grows up out of a small community, much as his Epicurean precursor links his own passages regarding progress, elementa, bodily growth, and human technological advancement, as discussed immediately below.
comparable climbs. Not insignificantly, the poet uses similar terminology to describe the advances of early mankind at the very end of his chronicle of human history (5.1448-57):

\begin{verbatim}
navigia atque agri culturas moenia leges arma vias vestes et cetera de genere horum, praemia, delicias quoque vitae funditus omnis, carmina picturas et daedala signa polita, usus et impigrae simul experientia mentis paulatim docuit pedetemptim progredientis. sic unumquicquid paulatim protrahit aetas in medium ratioque in luminis erigit oras; namque alid ex alio clarescere corde videbant, artibus ad summum donec venere cacumen.
\end{verbatim}

While early mankind does not receive monolithic treatment in Lucretius, our primitive ancestors still exhibit a handful of traits which we may want to emulate. Lucretius couches his description of human technological advances in the language of ascent that we have already seen: \textit{artibus ad summum donec venere cacumen}, 5.1457. The poet stresses that this progress does not occur overnight, as the gnomic statement of 5.1454-

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56 For more on Lucretius’ \textit{Kulturgeschichte}, see the chapter on clothing imagery below.
57 Naturally, before Epicurus was born and bathed mankind in the light of truth, primitive humans could only do so well; and, as our instructor makes clear, those teachings are only a recent addition to human history: \textit{denique natura haec rerum ratioque repertast | nuper}, 5.335-36.
58 Nethercut 2012: 9-10, 223-24 discusses how the phrase \textit{alid ex alio} elsewhere in the poem encourages the reader to infer the truth on a given question on the basis of another truth already demonstrated, but he does not mention the occurrence of the phrase in this passage. Accordingly, I would add that the appearance of the phrase here at the end of Book 5 signals still further that there are certain aspects of early mankind which are worth emulating and which can aid in the reader’s quest for Epicurean wisdom.
59 Cf. also Lenaghan 1967, who notes that “Total vision [of Epicurean truth] is possible… but it is to be reached in stages” (236-37).
55 makes clear, again repeating\textsuperscript{60} the adverb \textit{paulatim} in 5.1454 from 5.1453.\textsuperscript{61} Further, we have already been told that it will take time for a new discovery or difficult doctrinal point to take hold in our thoughts. Recall 2.1023-29, when the poet urges us to focus when he introduces a challenging new tenet:

\begin{verbatim}
nunc animum nobis adhibe veram ad rationem.  
nam tibi vementer nova res molitur ad auris  
accidere et nova se species ostendere rerum.  
1025
sed neque tam facilis res ulla est quin ea primum  
dificilis magis ad credendum constet, itemque  
il adeo magnum neque tam mirabile quicquam,  
quod non paulatim minuant mirarier omnes.
\end{verbatim}

Lucretius understands that it often proves difficult to accept a novel concept, but he also knows that we can ultimately overcome that initial reluctance if we repeatedly ponder that idea and its merits – or else we are to combat it with better reasoning (2.1040-43). Here he draws the example of the broad sky above (2.1030-39): how unbelievable it must have seemed to those who first looked upon it! However, today we barely raise our eyes to the heavens, so accustomed have we grown to the sight of the sky and the heavenly bodies.\textsuperscript{62} Thus Lucretius emphasizes the need for this constant application of attention and the gradual (note \textit{paulatim}, 2.1029) process of habituation to these new tenets.

\textsuperscript{60}I would also insist that an editor print, \textit{sine uncis}, the verses transmitted in the manuscripts but bracketed by Lachmann and deleted by Bailey, 5.1388-89, which are identical to 5.1454-55. The reiteration reinforces the notion that time brings everything before us little by little, a notion entirely germane to both contexts. In the case of the would-be deletion, for example, the topic under discussion is the development of music, a skill learned bit by bit (\textit{minutatim}, 5.1384). For more on the appropriateness of even large-scale repetitions in \textit{DRN}, see the chapters on jars and clothing imagery below.

\textsuperscript{61}This account of gradual progress may also recall the piecemeal physical development described at 2.1128-30, discussed above; cf. also the gradual development of mankind vis-à-vis that of horses: \textit{principio circum tribus actis impiger annis | floret equus, puer haudquaquam}, 5.883-84.

\textsuperscript{62}Note, of course, the pointed contrast between the behavior of Lucretius’ contemporaries (\textit{quam tibi iam nemo, fessus satiate videndi, | suspicere in caeli dignatur lucida templae!}, 2.1038-39) and Epicurus’ daring upward gaze (\textit{primus Graius homo mortalis tollere contra | est oculos ausus primusque obsistere contra,} 1.66-67). For more on the Book 1 description, see the chapter on jar imagery below.
Further, Lucretius portrays this long, step-by-step climb as a journey which he himself has undertaken. In an expression which he employs elsewhere to describe the mental advances achieved by early mankind, after appealing to the Epicurean notion of multiple explanation to account for the movement of heavenly bodies, Lucretius refers to himself as a traveler en route as well (5.526-33):

\[
\text{nam quid in hoc mundo sit eorum ponere certum}
\]
\[
\text{dificile est; sed quid possit fiatque per omne}
\]
\[
in variis mundis varia ratione creatis,
\]
\[
\text{id doceo, plurisque sequor disponere causas,}
\]
\[
\text{motibus astrorum quae possint esse per omne;}
\]
\[
e quibus una tamen siet hic quoque causa necessest
\]
\[
\text{qua vegeat motum signis; sed quae sit earum}
\]
\[
\text{praecipere hauququamst pedetemptim progredientis.}
\]

In the final line of this excerpt, the poet describes himself as progrediens, making progress. With other scholars, I interpret the participle progredientis as a genitive singular modifying the teacher, Lucretius; after all, Lucretius defends the validity of the Epicurean technique of multiple explanation as he teaches this material to us (praecipere, 5.533), describing his own part as praeceptor with the genitive of characteristic. Yet even if this participle instead universalizes the statement and is interpreted to mean that it is the role of anyone “making headway” to possess a knowledge of the one definitive

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64 Cf. 5.1453, paulatim docuit pedetemptim progredientis.
65 See Schiesaro 1989b for a defense of the termination of progredientis at 5.533 in -is (rather than -es) as rendering the participle a genitive singular (rather than accusative plural), the singular referring to the speaker, Lucretius (cf. also Leonard and Smith 1942 ad loc.). However, on the interpretation of that participle, I part with Schiesaro and prefer to side with Bailey 1947, who understands the sense of progress in 5.533 to be progress “in knowledge.”
66 Note, too, that the verb praecipere can play double duty, as it were: both “to teach” and “to anticipate, to know beforehand” may render the sense. If we take the latter version, it can at once generalize the sense and include the reader, but also speak specifically to the role of the instructor, who insists that he does not need to know the precise cause beforehand as he lays it out for the pupil. But if we take the former sense, it clearly refers specifically to our praeceptor, Lucretius; cf. also 3.10 on the word’s use in DRN in the context of teaching, where Lucretius refers to Epicurus’ praecepta, “teachings.”
cause for any given natural phenomenon, still the concept of progress comes to the fore, and that is the point I wish to emphasize in this passage. Knowledge of Epicurean truth remains a journey, one that is undertaken quite literally step by step, pedetemptim (5.533).

Indeed, Lucretius elsewhere employs journey metaphor to describe his own relationship to Epicurean wisdom more explicitly still.67 Lucretius tasks the reader with pursuing closely the tracks and traces of knowledge, and he styles himself as the doting caregiver of the reader-quay-child. Meanwhile, Lucretius himself plays the same role with respect to Epicurus as the reader does vis-à-vis Lucretius, as becomes clear in the proem to Book 3 (particularly lines 2-3 and 9-10):

\[
\begin{align*}
\textit{te sequor, o Graiae gentis decus, inque tuis nunc} & \quad 2 \\
\textit{ficta pedum pono pressis vestigia signis} & \quad 3 \\
\textit{tu pater es, rerum inventor, tu patria nobis} & \quad 9 \\
\textit{suppeditas praecepta} & \quad 10
\end{align*}
\]

The poet declares that he follows in Epicurus’ footsteps, explicitly employing a journey metaphor (\textit{te sequor, 2; ficta pedum pono... vestigia}, 3). Thereafter he refers to Epicurus as his father (\textit{tu pater es, 9; patria... praecepta}, 9-10), and, unlike the neglectful Agamemnon, this father figure is beneficent and caring (note the helpfulness suggested by \textit{suppeditas}, 10). Here we can again see some of the overlap among our motifs of progress. It is important to note, though, that Lucretius advocates the progress of his reader in the very terms in which he portrays his own development under his teacher. Elsewhere the poet declares himself quite literally a follower of Epicurus (\textit{cuius ego ingressus vestigia dum rationes | persequor ac doceo dictis...}, 5.55-56) and shows that he

67 See also Volk 2002: 107-116 on Lucretius’ self-presentation as an imitator of Epicurus.
is pursuing the course that the master himself has indicated (*viam monstravit*, 6.27). As this recurrent imagery reinforces time and again, we follow Epicurus’ footsteps on the very path which Lucretius walks.

Presenting himself as a fellow traveler on the path of Epicurus’ *vestigia*, then, plays into Lucretius’ didactic and rhetorical strategy by allowing him to provide the reader with a realistic model to follow on that same path. Far from Mitsis’ (1993) paternalizing coercion, this technique demonstrates that Lucretius in fact portrays himself in much the same guise as his own reader, the difference being that Lucretius has already made considerable progress on this journey. He has philosophically grown up under Epicurus, has sought out the master’s footprints on the path to *ataraxia*. He has come to the truths of Epicureanism thanks to a good deal of work on his part – not an unpleasant labor perhaps, but nonetheless a distinct exertion. Lucretius thus frames the task of attaining Epicurean wisdom as a process which will require a certain amount of time and effort, but one which he assures us is worth the work.

That work, as has already been mentioned, is not inconsiderable. Whitlatch 2014 shows how *DRN* encourages active readership, a notion which the present study aims to bolster, in that the repeat encounters of a returning image require the reader to think time and again on how best to interpret that image in consideration of the teachings we have already met. Focus is one of the keys to the Epicurean student’s success, as Lucretius is training us to see. Indeed, even though it must be admitted that we all may have different

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68 Indeed, the metaphor of a life’s “journey” is attested at *Sent. Vat.* 48: ἔπειρασθαι τὴν υστέραν τῆς προτέρας κρείττω ποιεῖν, ἐν ῥόδῳ ἄμεν ἐπειδὴ ἐπὶ πέρας ἔλθωμεν. ὁ ὑφραίνεσθαι. 69 Cf. 2.730-31 (*nunc age dicta meo dulci quaesita labore | percipe*) and 3.419 (*conquisita diu dulcique reperta labore*).
proclivities or innate dispositions (3.307-318),

nevertheless we can all train ourselves to such an extent that we can live a life that accords with Epicurean philosophy, a life worthy of the gods much in the way that Epicurus’ life is, as Lucretius assures us at 3.319-22:

\[
\text{illud in his rebus video firmare potesse, usque adeo naturarum vestigia linqui, parvula quae nequeat ratio depellere nobis, ut nil impediat dignam dis degere vitam.}
\]

Training makes such a life possible, and training is precisely what \textit{DRN} provides. The various repetitions, near-repetitions, and imagistic recurrences traced in this dissertation operate on the basic principle that difficult lessons require two main ingredients for their adoption: repeated revisiting (which allows the pupil to absorb the lesson) and readerly attentiveness (which may be trained by frequent exposure to new and challenging stimuli). Accordingly, Lucretius’ technique of incremental didacticism, as we shall examine in detail herein, finds form not only in the reappearance of a given image or lesson, but also in the change of perspective through which the poet frames our view of that image or lesson in its later iteration. This process thus affords the pupil not only the time to assimilate the material over a number of encounters in the course of reading the poem, but it also encourages continued attentiveness in the reader because the continual change in the presentation of an otherwise familiar image or lesson requires a pupil to apply constant focus in order to make sense of the change. This technique displays just how carefully Lucretius has composed this artful and complex poem.

4. Chapter Outline

\textsuperscript{70} Cf. Epicurus \textit{Ep. Hdt.} 75; for more on possible reminiscences of the \textit{Letter to Herodotus} in Lucretius (\textit{pace} Sedley 1998), see below.
In the chapters which follow, I trace the recurrence of various images over the course of *DRN* and analyze the features of these often subtle reformulations. I also explore the implications of these changes to an image’s presentation for our reading of the poem. In the first two chapters, I focus on the ways in which Lucretius increases the reader’s proximity to the events in question and gradually tests the reader to approach a given challenge with Epicurean equanimity. More specifically, the first chapter analyzes Lucretius’ use of particular military vocabulary as a means of ushering the reader ever closer to the melee of the battlefield and challenging the reader to exercise ataraxic calm in these increasingly trying scenarios. Similarly, in the second chapter, I argue that Lucretius trains his pupil to apply the lessons of the (ever less remote) past to the present day. In the third chapter, I explore another facet of incremental didacticism by arguing that Lucretius applies a common *double entendre* to his presentation of acorns in the poem. I demonstrate that these suggestive acorns participate in the poet’s demythologization of Venus in the natural world. The fourth chapter explores Lucretius’ use of jar imagery in philosophical argumentation, showing how the poet wrests the image from the hands of would-be philosophical detractors and applies it in ever-shifting fashion as an analogical tool in his exposition of Epicureanism. Over the course of the poem, Lucretius changes the specific referent to which the jar corresponds in these various analogies, and I track the way in which that changing specification demands increased diligence from the reader. In the fifth chapter, I explore the ways in which Lucretius employs clothing imagery as a means of signaling his affinities with the refined poetic aesthetics associated especially with Hellenistic poets, and I identify the various challenges placed on the reader which Lucretius’ subtle method of allusion to these
authors entails. In a concluding section, I demonstrate how each of the sets of images studied in this project illuminates a different facet of Lucretius’ program of incremental didacticism, and I point to avenues for further inquiry on the basis of the arguments advanced in this dissertation.
Chapter 1. Military Imagery and Progressive Exposure in Lucretius’

*De rerum natura*

The aim of this chapter will be to illustrate and analyze the phenomenon of Lucretian incremental didacticism as manifested in the various recurrences of military vocabulary throughout *DRN*. As outlined in the Introduction, by means of this didactic technique Lucretius gradually inoculates his reader against the threat of fear and anxiety in the increasingly troubling situations encountered in the poem. Lucretius’ extensive repetition of military imagery presents the pupil with a series of progressively demanding lessons, all with an eye toward preparing that student to apply the teachings of Epicurean philosophy in real-world situations. This process constitutes a kind of “progressive exposure” technique whereby the reader of *DRN* is gradually inoculated against a stimulus which may have deleterious consequences for the attainment of *ataraxia*, training the reader for any similar exposures in future.\(^1\)

Military language pervades *DRN*. While a number of scholars have pointed to aspects of such imagery in the poem,\(^2\) a sustained, focused investigation into the topic remains a *desideratum* in Lucretian studies.\(^3\) Pope’s (1949) catalog of major poetic imagery in *DRN* omits military metaphor altogether. Cabisius mentions battle only cursorily, in a brief, itemized list before proceeding to address non-military social organization and its metaphor.\(^4\) Rozelaar lists a number of terms which Lucretius uses to

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1 For the use of the term “progressive exposure” in modern psychology and medicine, see, e.g., Gutiérrez Maldonado et al. 2009.
4 Cabisius 1984-85: 110.
indicate fighting and battle throughout the work, but these phrases, often encountered *en passant*, are pointed out more to indicate the careful threading of Lucretius’ argument throughout the course of the poem, keeping the reader primed for the return of such vocabulary and the lessons they announce.⁵ A number of insightful analyses of certain aspects of Lucretius’ use of military language in *DRN* take their launch from the proem to Book 2, and consequently many of the studies which have offered glimpses at military language in the poem have localized their concerns on this matter to that section of the text. Roy 2013, for instance, has recently identified a number of implications of the poem’s military images as they relate to Lucretius’ epic aspirations and philosophical exposition, but largely confines that discussion to the proem of Book 2. De Lacy 1964 offers an involved and insightful commentary on the military language in the proem to Book 2, but he, too, centers his discussion on the second book. Gale usefully treats of a number of passing martial analogies in the poem, but her concern is mainly with connecting Lucretius’ military imagery with heroic epic.⁶ And even as Anderson 1960 outlines many of the elements which contribute to the multifaceted arrangement of military metaphor in Lucretius, still, he does not propose a connection across those instances in the way I do. The present study endeavors to demonstrate that Lucretius’ use of military language serves to train the reader in gradual fashion to practice Epicurean equanimity in light of the lessons presented over the course of the poem.

### 1.1. Eulogizing Epicurus

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⁵ Rozelaar 1943: 67-72.
Before exploring Lucretius’ military language itself, allow me to turn briefly to the poet’s proemial descriptions of Epicurus in *DRN*. The martial aspects of the poet’s portrayal of Epicurus as a victorious general are well documented. Gale has also pointed to the poem-long development of Epicurus’ character in *DRN*, albeit in a manner different from my conception of the process. I would add that the poet’s tributes to the conspicuously unnamed Epicurus form part of the Lucretian program of incremental didacticism themselves. In the first book, after the full and flowing hymn to Venus, Lucretius turns our attention to the man whose doctrines have paved the way for human happiness – and, not insignificantly, the poet refers to him as a man (*Graius homo*, 1.66). The praise in this section (1.62-79) makes clear that this figure deserves a great deal of thanks and admiration, but at no point in this initial encomium does our *laudandus* transcend the mortal plane (note *mortalis*, 1.66). However, by the time the poet next sings Epicurus’ praises, in the proem to Book 3, Lucretius has now introduced a number of philosophical proofs to his reader, and here the poet begins to test his reader’s application of those intervening lessons. One such lesson, mentioned above, concerns the common tendency to use the vocabulary of the divine when referring to manifestly earthly matters, as witnessed in the regular substitution of “Neptune” for “the sea,” for instance. When we encounter the poet’s next bout of praise for Epicurus, we are called to keep that earlier lesson in mind. In the proem to Book 3, Lucretius recalls Epicurus’ Greek blood (*o Graiae gentis decus*, 3.3), but now the poet adds a new element to that

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8 For two prominent treatments, see Buchheit 1971 and Gale 1994b (esp. Ch. 3).
9 Gale 1994b: 192 suggests that “the Remythisierung of Epicurus is a systematic process, spanning the whole poem, whereby the philosopher is shown to supplant the traditional gods of Graeco-Roman religion and mythology.”
description: he praises his master’s “divine mind” (divina mente, 3.15).\(^\text{10}\) The reader is fully capable of interpreting this statement as an exercise of poetic license, especially given the poet’s previous reference to Epicurus as a human being in Book 1, as well as the lessons regarding metonymy, the gods, and figurative speech in Book 2. So, just as the “gifts” of Ceres and Bacchus often lead mortals to attach gods’ names to earthly attributes in figurative language, so, too, does Epicurus’ great gift to mankind earn him a revered status, one which may permissibly be called “divine” as long as the truth of the man’s mortality is kept clearly in mind. In addition, during the rest of Book 3 Lucretius dilates on the concept of mortality, and, in the only explicit mention of Epicurus by name in DRN, the reader must acknowledge that even this great figure is not above death: *ipse Epicurus obit*, 3.1042.\(^\text{11}\)

When we meet Epicurus again in the proem to Book 5, Lucretius challenges his reader still further. Lucretius plainly refers to Epicurus as a god (*deus ille fuit, deus*, 5.8) and suggests that it would be fitting to count him among the divine (*nonne decebit | hunc hominem numero divum dignarier esse?*, 5.50-51). Significantly, however, the poet reminds us yet again that Epicurus is indeed human (*hominem*, 5.51), even after having

\(^{10}\) Note, too, the gift which Epicureanism confers: *divina voluptas*, 3.28 (on some of the implications of which description, see below) – though I hasten to point out the apologetic *quaedam* signaling and softening the figurative use; cf. Cic. *Mur*. 63 and *Mil*. 21 for a similar effect. I would also note that in the latter parallel (*Mil*. 21), Cicero employs a collocation strikingly similar to Lucretius’, resembling Lucretius’ *divina mente* (Lucr. 3.15) and *quaedam divina voluptas* (Lucr. 3.28) with his phrase *divina quadam mente* (Cic. *Mil*. 21). If we identify this phrase from Cicero’s *Pro Milone* as an echo of Lucretius, noting Cicero’s acquaintance with Lucretius’ work (Cic. *Q. fr*. 2.10.3) and casting Cicero as the imitator of Lucretius in the present instance, then this consideration would bolster the case made by Hirst 1929 in pointing to Ciceronian allusions to Lucretius in that speech. It would also reinforce the traditional dating of *DRN* to the mid-50s BCE (*pace* Hutchinson 2001; see Volk 2010), given the dating of the Ciceronian oration’s post-trial publication to early 51 BCE (Berry 1993).

\(^{11}\) Cf. also Shearin 2015 on the notable emphasis on Epicurus’ mortality in this lone mention of the master by name in *DRN*. 
referred to him shortly earlier not as a man but as a god, and in the same breath in which he portrays Epicurus’ discourse as having a divine power (note divinitus, 5.52). Herein lies the challenge: can the reader capably reconcile these seemingly contradictory statements with one another on the basis of the lessons of the text? Note, too, that the poet casts this complex arrangement into sharp relief against the backdrop of the comparison of Epicurus with Bacchus and Ceres (5.13-21), the very deities whom Lucretius has already used as case studies of the figurative language on display here in the fifth proem. Lucretius thus reminds his reader of precisely the lesson that provides the key to understanding the present figures of speech. In this way he poses a somewhat more difficult challenge to the reader, but also helps point the way to its solution.

At last, in the final proem of his six books, Lucretius serves us one more challenge as he prepares us for our approaching graduation from his tutelage. This latest description of Epicurus paints him first as a mortal man (virum, 6.5), and Lucretius openly makes reference to the man’s death (extincti, 6.7), in terms reminiscent of the Book 3 expression of that death (decursu lumine vitae, 3.1042). The poet then proceeds to complicate this picture by inserting a divine element as well (divina reperta, 6.7). What is the reader to make of this portrayal? Has Epicurus undergone apotheosis, from birth (genuere, 6.5), to death, to immortality? On my reading of Lucretian incremental didacticism, such tensions render this final proem a fitting lesson for the reader. In the sixth proem, just as in the fifth, Lucretius reminds the reader of Epicurus’ mortality even as he praises him in divine terms; crucially, however, the guiding hand of the instructor is essentially absent in this latest instance. The answer key pointing to the Bacchus and Ceres example, for instance, is nowhere to be found. The text in the reader’s hands
contains the means for arriving at the necessary solutions, of course: the gods are
deathless, but they remain supremely tranquil and uninvolved in human affairs, and no
mortal bodies can make any pretensions to immortality beyond the fundamental
indestructability of their constituent atoms. Such lessons prevent the reader from falling
into the trap of believing Epicurus to be a literal god, provided that the reader has indeed
been paying close attention, as the instructor has been insisting. In this sixth proem,
Lucretius commingles literal and figurative descriptions of Epicurus, and he tasks the
reader with properly distilling the meaning between those two modes of discourse
without further assistance from the instructor. This series of tests illustrates the way in
which Lucretius frequently challenges the reader’s concentration in increasingly subtle
but often increasingly demanding fashion. These artful laudes Epicuri exhibit the same
complex structuring which typifies Lucretian incremental didacticism and reinforces the
lessons of the text, both in these prominent proems and elsewhere in DRN, as the rest of
this dissertation will demonstrate.

1.2. *Suave mari magno*: Proem and Paradigm

On this model, then, let us turn to Lucretian military imagery proper. The famous
proem to Book 2 offers an early and direct look into some of the language Lucretius will
repeatedly use in challenging his pupil to incorporate the teachings of Epicurus into the
experience of everyday life. The second proem famously opens by praising the sense of
calm satisfaction in gazing out over the sea, spotting another person’s struggle as winds
stir up waves on the water. We see, too, a pleasure complementary to this sweet
aloofness, namely the gratifying feeling of looking out upon military exercises stretched
out across the plain, and it is here that the poet first lays out for his reader a number of
verbal cues which will recur several times throughout *DRN* and which will continually test the reader’s systematic application of Epicurean doctrine. Indeed, in many ways the proem to Book 2 constitutes the foundation upon which Lucretius will build much of the rest of his subsequent warfare metaphors, and, brief though this initial lesson may be, it will be recalled time and time again over the course of the poem.

The operative lines amount to a mere two verses, but for all their brevity they contain specific vocabulary, which will be recalled in the later reiterations (and alterations) of these cues. These keywords will continue to mark checkpoints for the reader’s progress as an Epicurean pupil. That trajectory begins in earnest with lines 2.5-6:

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suave etiam belli certamina magna tueri per campos instructa tua sine parte pericli.
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The stage is set: we are looking out over a great expanse, with no danger being posed to us.\(^{12}\) Taken together, as Roy 2013: 783 points out, these first six lines of Book 2 teach the reader how to generalize outward from a specific and localized event in order to make a broader application of a given lesson: “Lucretius demonstrates here how an Epicurean sees the events described in the first two elements of the priamel as he transforms them from events (a storm at sea and a battle on the plain) to interpretations of the human psyche (men competing with their wits and in defence of their honour).” Indeed, this call for the reader to extrapolate is surely the poet’s aim not only here, but throughout *DRN*.

\(^{12}\) As Fowler 2002: 45 notes, the topos of observing battle lines from a safe remove “is familiar from sieges, and particularly from the τειχοσκοπία in *Il.* 3.146ff.” This undercurrent of Iliadic legacy itself helps to situate Lucretius in the milieu of epic warfare, layering the military connotation of the τειχοσκοπία upon an already explicitly battle-related analogy. For more on the Homeric and otherwise epic flavoring of many selections from *DRN*, see also Murley 1947 and Gale 1994b.
Let us focus now on some of these cues in particular. First of all, the battle lines are drawn over a broad stretch of land (*per campos*, 2.6). The inclusion of this phrase bears an important implication: to quote Fowler’s succinct observation, in order to discern that these military exercises are being conducted over the expanse which the phrase *per campos* denotes, we recognize that “we are on a hill, and the army is large” (2002: 47). The remote vantage point of the reader is an element which will return in military analogy later in the poem, so it is important to note this detail’s initial presence here in the proem of Book 2. Indeed, this distanced perspective is an important detail to note, especially because, as De Lacy has observed, “the distance and detachment of the viewer are crucial” and they allow the pupil to process this lesson with ease (1964: 49). Physical distance from the observed battle scene allows Lucretius to begin to accustom his reader to practicing a mental aloofness through this easy and gentle introduction to the concept. Complementing the physical and spatial detachment from the scene, Lucretius’ use of the verb *tueri* at 2.5 likewise, as Fowler 2002 suggests, plays with the meanings of the word regarding both vision and safety. The verb *tueri* also works in tandem with the phrase *tua sine parte pericli* in the next line in serving a pedagogical function: having no personal stake in the fighting allows maximal emotional detachment from the scene,

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13 De Lacy’s “Distant Views” (1964) remains a foundational study of the language of Book 2’s proem. I agree with his assessment that warfare in the poem symbolizes “the endless conflict that characterizes atomic movement on the physical level, and, among men, the life of ignorance and folly (cf. 5.43-3). Only the philosopher, by seeing things for what they are, can with that knowledge remove himself from the conflict” (53) – it is of course this philosophical detachment at which the whole of *DRN* aims. Warfare will also be shown herein to constitute a useful test case for anxiety and fear throughout the course of the poem.

14 Fowler 2002: 47 identifies the verb’s duality of seeing and safekeeping while also suggesting that *tueri* may gesture toward the notion that the observer is *tutus*. Fowler’s reading of Lucretius’ learned word choice (*tueri/*tutus) also bolsters the poet’s reputation for erudite wordplay, to which the present project hopes to add.
minimizing the potential anxiety of watching the action on the plains below. Further, these contests are both orderly and, evidently, mere exercises. Lucretius refers to them as certamina (2.5) and qualifies them as instructa (2.6), revealing that the scene does not consist of utter chaos and disarray; rather, battle lines have been drawn up, and a certain amount of order has been imposed upon the ordeal. In addition, as Fowler notes, “Certamina may be used as the equivalent of ἀμιλλαι, the technical term for mock battles,” rendering the entire spectacle an exhibition. This window through which the reader of DRN is viewing the battle scene, then, is in every respect the easiest possible circumstance in which a person might watch a battle. Looking on from a distance, with no personal stake in the combat, in an arranged exhibition, Lucretius’ pupil has every opportunity to absorb and practice the desired lesson of complete equanimity even as battle seems to seethe below.

Not long after the opening of Book 2, Lucretius returns to military analogy, as if to check in on his pupil at an early stage after that initial introduction of these verbal cues. And so we turn to 2.39-46:16

quod superest, animo quoque nil prodesse putandum;  
si non forte, tuas legiones per loca campi  
fervere cum videas belli simulacra cientes,  
subsidiis magnis et equum vi constabilitas,  
ornatas armis pariter pariterque animatas,  
ishis tibi tum rebus timefactae religiones  
effugiant animo pavidae, mortisque timores  
tum vacuum pectus linquunt curaque solutum.

15 Fowler 2002: 47.
16 The text is corrupt at 2.42-43, and here I reproduce Rouse and Smith 1992. Bailey prints subsidiis magnis ἤπικυρί constabilitas, | ornatas armis ἤιασταισ pariterque animatas. Fowler 2002 alters Bailey’s ἤπικυρί to Mueller’s et turmis and Bailey’s ἤιασταισ to Bernays’ pariter. In any case, my argument appeals primarily to those words about which scholars are generally in agreement.
Lucretius once again situates us as though we are surveying troops, and now our retention of the lesson from the proem is first put to the test. Importantly, however, this test is only marginally more difficult than the initial practice run undergone in that first military encounter in the proem to Book 2. Lucretius returns us to a position of physical separation from the fray, as we gaze out on the battle lines which are stirring *per loca campi* (2.40) in a clear echo of their earlier arrangement *per campos* (2.6). The spectacle is again not outright warfare either: the troops are merely practicing (note *belli simulacra*, 2.41).¹⁷ Even the orderliness and care of their arrangement are still apparent: Lucretius tells us that the two opposing sides are evenly matched (*pariterque animatas*, 2.43). One significant qualification of the troops, though, represents a new addition which was not present in Lucretius’ earlier battle scene description but which may even serve to bolster our confidence in the troops at hand. Now, unlike earlier, Lucretius adds that the army boasts a robust force (*subsidiis magnis et ecum vi constabilitas*, 2.42). These legions have auxiliaries as reinforcements. That is to say, there is little need to worry about the army in question, since it is well supported with back-up troops and cavalry. This new detail, subtle though it may be, nevertheless serves to indicate that the army’s safety and success are hardly in doubt.

Yet even as the poet adds a number of legions in order to calm our anxieties on one level, at the same time he introduces another feature which may begin to test our Epicurean equanimity more seriously, if only slightly so. Although Lucretius’ choice of words makes it clear that nearly every other aspect of the former battle scene returns in the present case practically identically, now Lucretius removes the reader’s complete...

¹⁷ For a different view, see Guillaumin 2002.
detachment regarding the proceedings and now gives the reader a personal stake in the fight. No longer does the pupil have the luxury of being completely uninvolved as before
(tua sine parte pericli, 2.6); rather, the legions in question are now our own: tuas legiones... cum videas, 2.40-41. The change may be subtle, but it is nonetheless perceptible, and it implicates the reader in the action on the battlefield, if only by the smallest of degrees. Lucretius thus nudges us one step closer to the fray with this return to military analogy, and in so doing he offers us an early checkpoint to assess our progress on the road to ataraxia.

1.3. Of Sheep and Soldiers

Having established this set of keywords, as it were, Lucretius continues to assess the reader’s progress later in Book 2 as well. At 2.317-32, after introducing the phenomenon of simulacra, the poet illustrates the concept of atoms’ continual motion by the analogy of other objects which seem to sit idly at rest when glimpsed from afar but which, seen up close, prove to be in constant and frenetic motion. The poet illustrates this concept using a pair of analogies. The first (2.317-22) paints a picture of sheep grazing on a distant hilltop. From far off, the animals resemble a single wooly mass, ostensibly enjoying a moment of still tranquility.18 In reality, the sheep are very much in motion: they positively vibrate in their playfulness (coruscant, 2.320).19 The ease and relaxation which characterize this scene, however, must not be overlooked. One could hardly imagine a more amenable, non-threatening situation in which to internalize the

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18 Cf. the apparent peace witnessed in far-off objects as Lucretius describes it immediately before this sheep analogy at 2.310 (summa ... quiete).
19 See Fowler 2002 ad loc. on the “semantic field” of the word.
lessons of Epicurean physics: the proverbially peaceful lambs,\(^{20}\) content with full stomachs (*satiati, 2.320),\(^{21}\) enjoy themselves in pleasant, fawning movement (*ludunt blandaeque coruscant, 2.320).\(^{22}\) Lucretius maintains a calm atmosphere for his reader with this non-threatening, easily accessible scene.

The second analogy of this pair, however, jolts the reader back to attention when the poet thrusts legions before our eyes once more at 2.323-32. The point being made by the instructor, again, is that apparent outward tranquility may very well belie the constant but invisible commotion of atoms. The army comes back into focus, and Lucretius again takes up that familiar vocabulary: the great legions return (*magnae legiones, 2.323)\(^{23}\) and fill the plains (*loca... camporum, 2.323-24), as has been rather standard in similar scenes

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\(^{21}\) Describing the lambs as *satiati* (2.320) strikes me as a deliberate choice by Lucretius to signal that these sheep are perfectly content and can devote themselves to activities of sheer pleasure. Not only have these lambs thus dispensed with bodily pangs of hunger for the moment (as a good Epicurean may do), but they also delight themselves in movement which Lucretius describes with the adverb *blande* – a word whose related terms *blandus* and *blanditia* frequently highlight the importance of pleasure’s attainment in Epicurean thought; for more on *blanda voluptas* as pleasure (especially sexual pleasure) in *DRN*, see especially Catto 1988-89: 101-103 and Johncock 2016a: 126-28, as well as Fowler 2002: 395 and Solomon 2004: 261. In this passage Lucretius thus paints a picture of pastoral bliss, inviting the reader to share in the same level of carefree delight that these lambs have achieved. For the treatment of various creatures in the poem, see Saylor 1972, Feeney 1978, Gale 1991, Shelton 1995, Paolucci 2007, Camardese 2010, Tutrone 2012, and Massaro 2013.

\(^{22}\) Aicher 1991-92: 140-41 detects a Homeric resonance in Lucretius’ *renidescit* (2.326), corresponding to Homer’s *γέλασε* (*Il.* 19.362), each with power to denote both “shining” and “smiling.” On that model, I would further adduce the allusive power of *ludunt blandaeque coruscant* (2.320) from the other half of the two-part Lucretian analogy, not out of place since the sheep, too, illustrate the same physical concept that the battlefield commotion does.

\(^{23}\) Note the use of the verb *complent* at 2.324, which further stresses the magnitude of the army such that it is capable of filling up this entire space. Fowler 2002: 400 also identifies the transposed repetition of the adjective *magnus* here when applied to the troops themselves, the repetition emphasizing the great scale of these legions which has persisted as a feature of Lucretius’ martial descriptions since 2.5 (*belli certamina magna*); cf. also *subsidis magnis, 2.42.*
thus far. In addition, this conflict still constitutes mere drills, as Lucretius tells us in almost precisely the same language as above: the legions again enact not genuine warfare, but rather its likeness (*belli simulacra cientes*, 2.324). The difference between Lucretius’ earlier military scenes and the present one lies principally in the lack of order and arrangement in this latest iteration. Whereas earlier the battle lines had been drawn up and fixed, the scene here at 2.323-32 lacks all organization and presents only confusion and disarray. One need look only to 2.328-29 to identify the din and commotion of the scene: *icti reiectant voces ad sidera mundi | et circumvolitant equites.*

Sights and sounds are everywhere a blur.

Away from this bedlam, the reader will again enjoy the usual distanced hilltop perspective, personally disengaged from the strife. For all the stormy chaos of the plains below, there nevertheless remains a safe haven for the pupil: *et tamen est quidam locus altis montibus unde | stare videntur* (2.331-32). It is worth noting, however, that this distanced perspective is recalled only at the very end of the description, thus reassuring the reader of personal safety only after the rest of the scene’s action has been vividly laid out. Further, the abrupt shift in tone from the first analogy of atomic motion (the playful gamboling of sheep at 2.317-22) to the second (the chaotic battle exercises of 2.323-32) itself serves to jar the reader all the more strikingly at this stage of the poem. Even the pivot from one analogy to the next serves a didactic function by checking that the pupil can keep a level head even in sudden and unanticipated chaos – albeit at a very

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24 Cf. the military language of 2.41, which includes virtually identical phrasing (*belli simulacra cientes*) occupying the same metrical *sedes*.

25 Fowler 2002: 404 notes Lucretius’ use of frequentative verbs in *reiectant* and *circumvolitant* to highlight that “the soldiers, like the atoms, are constantly in motion.”
manageable level of difficulty. The tests of the reader’s equanimity are indeed growing demonstrably more demanding at every turn, if only by degrees.

1.4. Glimpses of Battle

When Lucretius next returns to these didactic watchwords and sustained military metaphor, he has covered a lot of philosophical and textual ground. This next battlefield account occurs in the context of Lucretius’ explanation of the mortality of mind and soul. That discussion leads Lucretius to expound upon the idea that what is divisible is not immortal, and he illustrates this principle with a gory battle scene that requires his readers to summon more determinedly than ever the lessons of composure that they have been exercising so often already in DRN. From the very beginning of this latest analogy, it is clear that this lesson is rather more demanding than has been the case thus far. Indeed, the poet relocates us from mere exercises to genuine warfare. The first word of 3.642, falciferos, itself signals that the chariots in question are not Roman but thoroughly foreign, since, as Leonard and Smith 1942: 477 note, “scythe-bearing chariots were not used by either Greeks or Romans.” This combat scene is not a drill. Immediately, Lucretius has raised the stakes for his reader by casting the scene as real warfare.

Yet Lucretius implicates his pupil in the action of this scene to a still greater extent: gone is the distant hilltop vantage point, and gone is any physical remove from the battlefield. The poet sets the reader down in medias res as battle rages all around. Everything is in chaos, and Lucretius’ vocabulary emphasizes that point: the chariots seethe with blood as the gore splashes all about (permixta caede calentis, 3.643), and men’s limbs are hacked off without a moment’s notice (de subito, 3.643). This entire
scene indeed constitutes an unpacking of his earlier lesson,\textsuperscript{26} which offers us a seemingly still battle formation that in fact seethes with commotion within. The insider perspective of the gory chaos of the battlefield in this passage illustrates the internal reality adumbrated in that earlier analogy of the sheep. Notably, we have departed from the safety of observing lambs at play and now find ourselves face-to-face with mortal violence.\textsuperscript{27} Motion indeed rules the scene, and Lucretius emphasizes the frenetic buzz of all the action.\textsuperscript{28} Battle lines, likewise, are certainly no longer fixed and orderly as in earlier exercises. Our distanced vantage point looking out over the plain has given way to a much closer look at the battlefield itself, a shift made clear from the poet’s telling choice of words. Phrases such as \textit{tremere in terra} (3.644) and \textit{agit… humi} (3.653) underline the proximity of the observer to the action. The nouns \textit{terra} and \textit{humus} indicate that the reader is afforded a much closer perspective in this scene, as these terms replace the various forms of the word \textit{campus} which had formerly signaled the spectator’s distant panoramic view. And while the limbs which have been lopped off and now quiver on the earth, the severed left arm which has been dragged away with shield and all, the lost leg whose toes nonetheless keep twitching on the ground even after dismemberment – while these brutally amputated body parts are not our own,\textsuperscript{29} Lucretius brings us face-to-face with the horrible realities of warfare by means of this incredibly

\textsuperscript{26} Lucr. 2.317-32.
\textsuperscript{27} Note, however, that dismemberment – and not death – is the primary focus of this scene, and that mortality is only mentioned in the very last line of the excerpt (\textit{donec reliquias animai reddidit omnes}, 3.656); Lucretius’ closing plague scene, meanwhile, will force the reader to confront suffering and mortality still more directly.
\textsuperscript{28} In addition to such phrases as \textit{mobilitate mali} (3.646) which expressly denote speed and swiftness, many of Lucretius’ chosen verbs and verb forms in this passage emphasize the motion of battle: \textit{abscidere}, \textit{tremere}, \textit{decidit}, \textit{abstraxe}, \textit{scandit}, \textit{instat}, \textit{surgere}, \textit{agitat}.
\textsuperscript{29} Markers such as \textit{memorant} (3.642), \textit{hominis} (3.645), and \textit{alias} (3.651, 3.652) allow for a modicum of separation from the violence.
detailed focalization. The point is for us, as readers of *DRN*, to look upon this scene of bloodshed and pandemonium into which Lucretius has suddenly thrust us, and to meet it with the same philosophical detachment which he has been fostering in us from so early on in the poem. Again Lucretius challenges his reader to rise to the task, in still more difficult circumstances than has been the case thus far.

1.5. Echoes of Dismemberment

Notably, the explicit watchwords and verbal cues which we have observed in earlier episodes, phrases such as *belli simulacra* or *per campos*, have already begun to give way to more notional callbacks as Lucretius gradually increases the difficulty of each successive lesson and each new iteration of the imagery. Importantly, however, even these notional callbacks are not without textual precursors. As mentioned above, the blood and gore of the battlefield example just cited, for example, literalizes the very lesson outlined at 2.323-32. Yet, even if Lucretius has by now begun to phase out the specific textual markers which he has been carefully arranging like *vestigia* for us to follow, still, we can detect identifiable signals in the text which prepare us for even these more notional or implicit associations. The various dismembered limbs and gruesome details of the warfare at 3.642-56, for instance, clearly build on lessons of Epicurean physics which Lucretius has been setting out for us thus far. At 3.104-29, for example, Lucretius offers us an easy, inoffensive glimpse into the phenomenon of the cessation of sensation after dismemberment, a lesson which will be put to the test in the bloodshed and chaos of the battlefield episode just discussed. In that earlier primer, Lucretius reminds his reader that a person can be generally healthy and yet still feel pain.

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30 See Whitlatch 2014 for more on this analogy.
in a particular body part, or feel pain in one area but feel completely fine in another (*non alio pacto quam si, pes cum dolet aegri, | in nullo caput interea sit forte dolor*, 3.110-11). Continuing his refutation of the Greek notion of body-and-soul *harmonia*, Lucretius then asserts his proof that the soul is itself a mere part of the body and that dismembered limbs actually feel no sensation. He makes this point gently, in terms which introduce us to the idea of dismemberment rather mildly, in a rather sterile and theoretical fashion within the larger passage of 3.117-29. Perhaps the most vivid section of this account occurs at 3.119-23:

*principio fit uti detracto corpore multo* 
*saepe tamen nobis in membris vita moretur;* 
*atque eadem rursum, cum corpora pauc a caloris* 
*diffugere fugasque per os est editus aer,* 
*deserit extemplo venas atque ossa relinquit…*

The discussion is distant and impersonal, delivered with an almost clinically dispassionate tone. Note, for instance, the impersonal verbal construction *fit uti…* (3.119), “it happens that…” Indeed, only with the first-person plural pronoun at 3.120 does the poet implicate his readership in this example, and notably this personalizing inclusion of *nobis* serves as a positive reinforcement: the statement “still, life often lingers in our limbs” is meant to give the reader cause for hope, in that, even if such a loss of limb should occur, “we” may yet live.31 The preparation of the pupil for observing the twitching of dismembered limbs thus begins with relatively easy, accessible lessons.

31 This placating, conciliatory tone notably occurs before Lucretius has fully set to disabusing his reader of the fear of death, so even this act of placating us by reminding us that “life goes on” will not be necessary once we recognize that “death is nothing to us” later; but since we have not yet reached that lesson at this point in the text, the poet offers us this apparent consolation for the moment, maintaining an ease and accessibility for us in our continued progress.
Another lesson occurs at 3.323-58, when Lucretius demonstrates that neither body nor soul can have life without the other. Crucially, however, while the language becomes slightly more violent (the poet describes the process of tearing the two asunder, for instance),\(^{32}\) still, these lessons remain rather theoretical and impersonal. They do not situate the reader in the very experience of dismemberment, for instance. But the reader is certainly being trained to face precisely that circumstance by all these theoretical encounters. Similarly, 3.396-416 illustrates how Lucretius employs the techniques of incremental didacticism to accustom the reader to the concept of dismemberment. The lesson of the butchered limbs lying twitching on the earth is here prefigured in such a way as to bolster our philosophical resolve when we later face this phenomenon up close and personal, as it were. Especially at 3.402-405, Lucretius foreshadows the dismemberment we will be forced to confront later in the poem, in rather similar terms. He tells us there:

\[
\textit{at manet in vita cui mens animusque remansit;} \\
\textit{quamvis est circum caesis lacer undique membris truncus, adempta anima circum membrisque remota, vivit et aetherias vitalis suscipit auras.} \quad 405
\]

The poet presents us with the similar image of a man sliced all about and robbed of his limbs, and yet we are still reminded that even in such a scenario, the man still draws breath and looks on the light of life.\(^{33}\) Yet Lucretius does not stop there: he presses on immediately after offering this example, heightening the intensity of the image still further by showing us a grisly depiction of a mangled and mutilated eyeball, described in

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\(^{32}\) Note the language of “pulling apart” and “undoing” at 3.329-30: \textit{sic animi atque animae naturam corpore toto | extrahere haud facile est, quin omnia dissolvantur.}

\(^{33}\) Of course, even this lesson is a stepped one: the reader might still take solace here in clinging to life before the famous Epicurean maxim at 3.830 reveals that death, in fact, is nothing to us.
graphic detail (3.408-409, *ut, lacerato oculo circum si pupula mansit* | *incolumis*; and also 3.413, *at si tantula pars oculi media illa peresa est*…). These descriptions render the examples all the more vivid but also all the more challenging for the reader to face without succumbing to anxiety, fear, and discomfort.

**1.6. Man, Beast, and Warfare**

In Book 5 we encounter still another checkpoint couched in military language. At 5.1297-1307, in the midst of his *Kulturgeschichte*, Lucretius recounts the development of warfare among human beings, and again we notice that the scene contains a number of foreign, non-Roman details, and thus reflects a moment of genuine battle. As earlier, we again see the patently non-Roman scythe-bearing chariots here (*falciferos... currus,* 5.1301), an identification which indicates that this scene is not a drill. This time, however, Lucretius adds still more foreign touches. The phrase *biugo curro* (5.1299), for example, achieves a similar effect: such a chariot is “traditionally the invention of the Phrygians,”\(^{34}\) signaling that this ancient war is a genuine conflict of powers and not a mere exercise among Romans. Further, the appearance of elephants (*boves Lucas,* 5.1302) demonstrates still more the notion that this enemy is definitively foreign. The Carthaginians receive direct mention (*Poeni,* 5.1303), and so Lucretius quite clearly marks this episode as genuine warfare against an external opponent. To underscore this notion, notably, the battle scene described here immediately follows the *certamina belli* which recur at 5.1296. The overlap in language sets us in our familiar milieu, but also emphasizes the change in the historical development of mankind from mere exercises to genuine warfare. Just as mankind progressed from exercises to battles, so, too, does

\(^{34}\) Leonard and Smith 1942: 753.
Lucretius’ reader proceed by dealing with first one and then the other. Naturally enough, the scene is portrayed as a disorderly and frightening affair: Lucretius describes the elephants as *taetras* and *anguimanus* at 5.1302-1303, and sorrowful strife (*discordia tristis*, 5.1305) amplifies war’s terrors with each passing day (*inque dies belli terroribus addidit augmen*, 5.1307). The situation is obviously grim for anyone who does not have the tools to combat such terrors as the fear of death. Lucretius’ point is that *DRN* equips the pupil with the proper tools to face such scenarios, and it offers the reader the experience of applying those tools in practice settings before using them to confront the everyday experiences of the world outside the text.

I add a further point regarding the elephants of this scene. Lucretius has already subtly prompted his pupil to read elephants as a signal of an army’s foreignness and thus encourages the reader to recognize that the battle in question constitutes actual combat.\(^{35}\)

The first time we encounter elephants in *DRN* occurs in Lucretius’ discussion of the Epicurean principle of *ἰσονοµία*\(^{36}\) at 2.532-40:

\[
\text{Nam quod rara vides magis esse animalia quaedam}
\]
\[
\text{fecundamque minus naturam cernis in ilis,}
\]
\[
\text{at regione locoque alio terrisque remotis}
\]
\[
\text{multa licei genere esse in eo numerumque replei;}
\]
\[
\text{sicut quadripedum cum primis esse videmus}
\]
\[
\text{in genere anguimanus elephantos, India quorum}
\]
\[
\text{milibus e multis vallo munitur eburno,}
\]


This passage signals that the elephant is rare, and somehow foreign or unique, since there are not many for Lucretius’ reader to behold in Italy (2.540). As a result, the reader is already aware of the scarcity and exoticness of elephants. Accordingly, when the animal reappears in this military context in Book 5, the reader can recognize that the battle in question must involve a foreign enemy and therefore must consist of more than a simple drill.

After Lucretius brings elephants into the warfare scene of 5.1297-1307, cited earlier, he soon reintroduces the creature during his famous description of animal warfare at 5.1308-1349. This extended passage reinforces the poet’s overarching strategy of incremental didacticism and illustrates an important feature of that technique. Already we have noted how Lucretius often forces the reader to confront the bloodshed of battle close at hand. The oft-discussed passage of animal warfare constitutes the next development in that progression for several reasons. For one thing, our explicit textual markers are absent: we have no campi, certamina belli, or other such marked phraseology. Our distant view, notably, again gives way to an up-close-and-personal vantage point. Again Lucretius reinforces this perspectival shift in his word choice, moving from campi to terra and situating the reader close enough to see bulls pawing at the earth (5.1325, et terram minitanti mente ruebant). As demonstrated at 2.317-22, it

37 Cf. Cic. Fam. 7.1.3 for an account of the “spectacular” quality of the elephant and the admiratio it inspires in Lucretius’ contemporaries at Rome in 55 BCE.
39 The nearest the poet comes to this earlier vocabulary is at 5.1308 with the phrase in moenere belli. Note, however, the similarity of the line-ending at 5.1313 to 3.643, permixta caede calentis.
would be impossible to discern such individual actions amid the larger mass of fur and hides from a distant vantage point.

On one level, then, the reader enjoys a certain amount of detachment: this episode is said to have occurred in the remote past, during mankind’s early development, a circumstance which allows the reader a modicum of separation from the events described. Still, we are thrust into the midst of serious violence, portrayed in graphic detail, so even the notional separation from this event out of man’s early history is elided by virtue of the harrowing detail of Lucretius’ description. Lions shake their manes all about in the commotion (terrificas capitum quatientes undique cristas, 5.1315); horses are terrified by the general roar (fremitu perterríta... pectora, 5.1316-17); lionesses tear at the backs of unsuspecting victims (et nec opinantis a tergo deripiebant, 5.1320); jaws and claws and horns and teeth all flash before us (morsibus... validis atque unguibus uncis, 5.1322; cornibus, 5.1325; validis... dentibus, 5.1326; feros... dentis adactus, 5.1330); we see friendly fire (socios caedebant, 5.1326) and broken, blood-stained weapons (tela infracta suo tinguentes sanguine, 5.1327). Indeed, the chaos depicted in this scene is reinforced syntactically by the asyndeton of 5.1336, a line which simply lists the various causes that drove even previously well-trained animals to madness: volneribus clamore fuga terrore tumultu. Again we find ourselves right in the thick of the slaughter.

Furthermore, from amidst all this violence in his anthropological history, Lucretius makes an effort to wrench us out of the distant past and bring the scene to the present day. The return of the elephants at 5.1338-40 helps to achieve this effect. First, it makes sense for Lucretius to employ the elephant as an analogue to the various creatures
at war in this passage, not least because the massive elephant cuts quite a formidable figure and carries an appreciably martial association, as we have already seen elephants being used for warfare very recently in the poem (5.1302-1304).\(^{40}\) Moreover, the elephant simile of 5.1338-40 reminds us that, even today, there exist creatures who are capable of the same sort of wanton destruction that we witness in this battle of the beasts in early man’s history – and not infrequently, as the introductory words of the simile make clear: *ut nunc saepe boves lucae…*, 5.1339. This simile designedly jolts the pupil into the sober realization that such havoc still frequently befalls the reader’s own contemporaries.

Importantly, however, Lucretius in the end diminishes the severity of even this latest test. First, the poet includes this episode in his anthropological history, and he indicates that the use of animals in warfare in this fashion is said to have occurred long, long ago.\(^{41}\) In addition, Lucretius has already indicated that the elephant is quite rare in Italy, so while the possibility that the reader may experience an imminent encounter with these harrowing creatures does technically exist, the likelihood nevertheless remains admittedly low for his Latin-speaking (and thus presumably Italian) contemporary audience.\(^{42}\) The authorial equivocation of 5.1341-49, however, provides perhaps the greatest mitigating factor of all, allowing Lucretius to test his reader’s equanimity in this

\(^{40}\) That a reference to the conquests of Alexander the Great may also be at play at 2.532-40 (thus Fratantuono 2015: 118) would only bolster the military cachet of the elephant. A warlike quality may also attach to Lucretius’ elephants at 5.1302 (*boves Lucas... taetras*) insofar as Lucretius’ word choice resembles a description from Ennian epic: as Sandoz 1989: 753 + n. 1 observes, Ennius portrays the creatures as *taetros elephantos* (*Ann. fr. 607 V*), and in a similar fashion “L’adjectif *taeter* qualifie encore les éléphants chez Lucrèce (5, 1302).”

\(^{41}\) As a result, these events should not bother us in the slightest, as our instructor has already pointed out at 1.464-82 and 3.832-42.

episode without yet issuing a full and unadulterated challenge. Although Lucretius has just gone into incredibly gruesome detail and reminded his audience that something similar frequently happens even in the contemporary world, he softens the implications of the story at the very end by expressing doubt that these events ever even occurred: *si fuit ut facerent*, 5.1341. That is, as disconcerting as this rather extended episode may have been for the pupil to read, the entire incident may ultimately be utter fiction. Lucretius still affords his pupil this allowance – just at the very end of the episode, and not with an outright denial, notably – in order to test the reader’s application of Epicurean principles, but at the same time to scale back the harshness of that test before issuing a still greater challenge to *ataraxia*, namely the plague narrative which concludes the work.

1.7. War and Plague

The greatest challenge to the reader’s ataraxic focus in *DRN* is its famous conclusion (6.1138-1286). Indeed, the increasingly gruesome descriptions of battle run parallel to another set of vocabulary throughout the poem, and the two sets meet in the plague scene. The other terminology to which I am referring is the language of illness and disease which has also made a number of reappearances in *DRN* and which likewise build up to a crescendo in the final plague narrative. Indeed, Lucretius has foreshadowed the present scene of suffering and grief over the course of a number of different allusions to disease and symptomology as we have progressed through the poem. The first of these passages occurs at 3.445-58, wherein Lucretius likens the physiological changes observed in an elderly person to the symptoms of the plague at the end of Book 6: the tongue raves, the mind slips, and the spirit escapes into the air like smoke. The next notional alignment comes at 3.476-86: now under the intoxicating power of wine, an inebriated individual
observes heaviness in the limbs, tottering legs, a slow tongue, swimming eyes, sounds issuing involuntarily from the body. Immediately thereafter, at 3.487-509, we learn that epileptic fits may seize a person, and the victim’s body is contorted, the tongue raves: all in terms which prefigure the bodily horrors of the closing plague scene. By 4.663-72, Lucretius has moved on to discussing the idea that the same substance or foodstuff may be beneficial for one creature and poisonous for another, so by the time we arrive at the plague it is not a foreign concept that one cure may work for one patient and another for another. Further, and complementarily, Lucretius notes at 5.348-50 that we are reminded of our own mortality when we fall ill from the very same sicknesses which have claimed the lives of other victims before us, and so we are prepared for disease to take us since it has already taken people before ourselves. Ultimately, Lucretius gives us the passage on elephantiasis (elephas morbus, 6.1114), which conjures the military-related elephants from each of the earlier episodes of elephants’ appearance in DRN but which then moves from a warfare image to a disease image (shortly before we encounter the plague, in fact), maintaining that slightly martial association at the same time.

This vocabulary of disease likewise participates in Lucretian incremental didacticism, and the plague scene draws on these two sets of intensifying descriptions. And even as we do not encounter open warfare in this final scene, Lucretius’ account of the plague nevertheless retains its clearly Thucydidean coloring and inevitably recalls the wartime setting chronicled in the History of the Peloponnesian War. In addition, the poet frames this final scene with words which reflect its martial setting and conflict-ridden nature. The very last line of the poem directs our attention to individuals quarrelling with one another in an attempt to heap corpses onto funeral pyres. These misguided people
fight with one another (rixantes, 6.1286) and spill a great deal of blood in the conflict (multo cum sanguine, 6.1285). Moreover, Lucretius begins the account with the kind of vocabulary which expressly evokes the soldiery when he describes the plague as drawing swaths of the population over to disease and death in hordes – or, more literally, in troops (catervatim, 6.1144). Lucretius chooses this vocabulary pointedly.

In sum, Lucretius uses military analogy in a far more programmatic way than has been generally appreciated in scholarship on DRN. The poet pointedly reuses similar wording and imagery at different points in order to forge a connection between and among passages across the poem. At the same time as he links these various passages together, over time he also gradually reduces the number (or the obviousness) of the explicit lexical cues which signal the continuity of these passages as a coherent lesson or a related set of images. By the end of the poem, Lucretius relies less on the explicit connection of specific vocabulary and ultimately expects the reader to apply more broadly the Epicurean training offered in DRN. The didactic aim of training the reader to withstand increasingly thoroughgoing assaults on the attainment of ataraxia indeed dovetails with the intricate inter-weaving of the military vocabulary and martial imagery in the various passages examined above. This chapter thus offers evidence to bolster the claims that the protreptic function of DRN is fully realized in conjunction with, and indeed thanks to, the poetic expression conveying the instructor’s lessons. The military passages analyzed in this chapter thus highlight how Lucretius employs the technique of incremental didacticism to issue increasing demands on his reader, both poetically, in tasking the pupil with identifying the subtle connections across various passages of DRN, and pedagogically, by training the reader to implement the lessons of the text in ever
more challenging situations. Consequently, Lucretius’ use of military analogy in many ways stands as a representative model of his entire project of incremental didacticism, insofar as it challenges the reader ever more systematically to practice the teachings of Epicureanism in their lives in a consistent and thoroughgoing manner. To recognize this didactic creative technique is to appreciate the complexity and artistry of Lucretius’ poetic and pedagogical program.
Chapter 2. That was Then, This is Now: Lucretian History Lessons

As we have seen, Lucretius gradually collapses the spatial distance between the reader and the battlefield. In this chapter, we shall also see that he often reduces our temporal or our mytho-historical remove, bringing the lessons of Epicureanism to bear on our everyday life. Lucretius gradually moves from the distant past ever closer to the reader’s present day and thus prepares the reader to meet any assaults to ataraxia which may arise in the contemporary world.¹ This shift is not strictly linear, but Lucretius demonstrably increases the intensity and difficulty of facing the various historical episodes he details in DRN. The aim of this chapter will be to recognize how the poet provides ever fewer signposts for the reader in facing increasingly harrowing accounts from historical memory. While we have already examined some aspects of the plague narrative thus far in this project, we shall return to a discussion of this crucial passage – and others – in this section, exploring still another facet of Lucretian incremental didacticism along the way.

2.1. Stepping Forward

If one of the aims of DRN is to encourage the reader to apply the Epicurean lessons of the text to everyday life, Lucretius’ gradual (and, at first, gentle) shift from distant antiquity up to more recent events makes sense as one effective means of training the reader’s application of those precepts in a systematic fashion. The poet initiates this gradual move with a number of small and rather subtle shifts over the course of the poem, but perhaps the most illuminating instantiation of this chronological progression falls

¹ For a more general view of the concept of time in Lucretius, see Lavery 1987.
near the very center of the poem. This passage, 3.1024-52, shows in microcosm the move from distant past to immediate present being enacted over the course of the poem as a whole, and reminds the reader not to fear death:

hoc etiam tibi tute interdum dicere possis:
“lumina sis oculus etiam bonus Ancu’ reliquit,
qui melior multis quam tu fuit, improbe, rebus.
inde alii multi reges rerumque potentes
occiderunt, magnis qui gentibus imperitarunt.
ille quoque ipse, viam qui quondam per mare magnum
stravit iterque dedit legionibus ire per altum
ac pedibus salsas docuit super ire lacunas
et contempsit eqvis insultans murmura ponti,
lumine adempto animam moribundo corpore fudit.
Scipiadas, belli fulmen, Carthaginis horror,
ossa dedit terrae proinde ac famul infimus esset.
adde repertores doctrinarum atque leporum,
adde Heliconiadum comites, quorum unus Homerus
sceptra potitus eadem aliis sopitu’ quietest.
denique Democritum postquam matura vetustas
admonuit memores motus languescere mentis,
sponte sua letto caput obvius obtulit ipse.
ipse Epicurus obit decurso lumine vitae,
qui genus humanum ingenio superavit et omnis
restinxit, stellas exortus ut aetherius sol.
tu vero dubitabis et indignabere obire,
mortua cui vita est prope iam vivo atque videnti,
qui somno partem maiorem conteris aevi
et vigilans stertis nec somnia cernere cessas
sollicitamque geris cassa formidine mentem
nec reperire potes tibi quid sit saepe mali, cum

2 I would submit that the placement of this passage at the middle of the poem is no accident. This section is fundamental to the didactic aims of the entire work, as it endeavors to dismantle the reader’s fear of death (see, e.g., Segal 1990b on the central importance of that argumentation for DRN as a whole). This passage also (again, not coincidentally, in my view) contains the only explicit mention of Epicurus by name in the entire poem, highlighting the significance of this section for the work as a whole. On the programmatic importance of the center of a work, see Müller 1978 (esp. 204: “in der Mitte des Buches, also an bedeutungsvoller Stelle”), Conte 1984, Thomas 1985, Graca 1989, Gale 1994b, Joseph 2012: 63, Kyriakidis 2013: 356-57, and Harrison 2016. Cf. Goldberg and Manuwald 2018: 215 on the proem of Ennius Ann. 7: “If read as a ‘proem in the middle,’ it may itself be evidence for Alexandrian influence on Latin literature at this seminal stage of development,” a statement which dovetails nicely with my argument in this dissertation that Hellenistic poetry exerts a great deal of influence on Lucretius, whose own “proem in the middle” at the start of Book 4 likewise channels Hellenistic aesthetics of refinement; see the chapter on vestis imagery below for more on that subject.

3 Cf. again Volk’s (2002) concept of “poetic simultaneity,” the poetic conceit that the speaker is performing the composition at the moment of its being read.
ebrius urgeris multis miser undique curis
atque animi incerto fluitans errore vagaris?

Here Lucretius recites a litany of great figures who have lived and died. The choice to begin this list with Ancus naturally casts the Roman mind back to hallowed antiquity. Underscoring the backward distancing, and at the same time gesturing toward his great poetic predecessor, Ennius, Lucretius couches this callback to Ancus’ times in distinctly Ennian phraseology, as Kenney 2014 and others have noted. The callback to earlier times, then, achieves the double effect of setting the reader in mind of not only the ancient Ancus but also the great Ennius and his already archaic-sounding stylings, making us cast our minds back into the past in more ways than one. The very next line, moreover, carries distinctly Homeric resonances.

4 With Butterfield 2013: 59, I read aetherius at 3.1044 (rather than aerius, printed in Bailey 1947). Cf. Manilius’ praise of Plato as aetherius at Astronomica 1.774 in his list of pre-eminent souls (Man. 1.750-804), which clearly looks in part to Lucretius’ Book 3 list of deceased luminaries. The praise implicit in this portrayal of Plato has engendered speculation about Manilius’ philosophical leanings (see MacGregor 2005: 47-48 and Volk 2009: 226-30), but it would not be out of place for Manilius to reapply, for his own panegyric purposes, an adjective used in Lucretius’ reverent comparison of Epicurus with the sun. The similarity in word choice between Lucretius and Manilius is not intended to be conclusive evidence for reading aetherius in Lucretius; I simply offer the parallel for consideration.

5 See Kenney 2014 ad loc. Cf. Livy 1.32-35 on dating Ancus to the 7th-6th centuries BCE in Rome’s distant past, and see, e.g., Sanders 1902 on the Varronian chronology. The exchange between Laelius and Scipio at Cic. Rep. 2.33 illustrates nicely that while the precise biographical details of figures like Ancus may prove elusive, the individual’s fame shines no less brightly (tum Laelius: “laudandus etiam iste rex; sed obscura est historia Romana, siquidem istius regis matrem habemus, ignoramus patrem.” “ita est,” inquit; “sed temporum illorum tantum fere regum inlustrata sunt nomina”); the association of Ancus Marcius with the august and ancient past remains utterly bound up with the man’s name.


vituperation of the pupil at 3.1026 recalls the angry words of Achilles upbraiding the doomed Lycaon when he declares that even Patroclus, a much better man, met death. In what will ultimately prove to be a long list of illustrious departed, Lucretius thus links the distant Ancus – the very first figure he specifies – with the august poetry of the oldest epic poetry in Latin and Greek. Moreover, Lucretius maintains this epic register even in the next item of his list of illustrious departed, since kings and the powerful, whom he mentions at 3.1027-28, are the traditional fodder of epic. This lofty register reinforces the notion that we are in an august and distant past indeed.

2.2. Multiple Allusion and the Illustrious Departed

Xerxes occurs next in this line of illustrious fallen figures. Why does he merit mention here, and why is that mention not explicit? Surely more than the figure’s historically large army motivates Lucretius’ decision to include him in this list of great men, since military might alone would not automatically or unconditionally win approval in the eyes of the proverbially pacifist, apolitical Epicureans. To be sure, Xerxes’ yoking of the Hellespont was widely known among the Romans, and so one reason for his unnamed but unmistakable inclusion here is that the story was popular enough that he need not be explicitly called by name in order to be called to mind. Even so, why does Xerxes’ story merit mention here? As for one possible reason, Empedocles is said to

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8 Il. 21.107. See Kenney 2014 ad loc.
10 See Murley 1947 and Gale 1994b for more on heroic poetic register in Lucretius.
11 On the significance of Xerxes being clearly signalled but not mentioned by name, cf. the ille quoque ipse language which characterizes Lucretius’ treatment of even the great Epicurus at 5.8; see also Snyder 1978.
12 But see Fish 2011 for a reconsideration of such characterizations of Epicureans.
13 Cf. Rosivach 1984. See also Fowler 2002: 115-16 on a possible reference to Xerxes in 2.42-43 on the basis of his famous naval and military campaigns; cf. also De Lacy 1964: 51. Fowler also mentions Xerxes’ appearance in Roman thinkers like Cicero (Fin. 2.112) and Seneca (Dial. 10.17.1-2) as a favorite theme of moral debates.
have composed a poem on Xerxes’ crossing, either by that title (ἡ τοῦ Ξέρξου διάβασις) or else called τὰ Περσικά. Would Lucretius have understood Empedocles to have composed such a work? If so, Lucretius would conceivably be looking yet again to the oft-acknowledged poetic inspiration of Empedocles here.

In any case, introducing Xerxes at this point in *DRN* allows Lucretius to walk his reader still forward in time, marching from Ancus to Xerxes in the historical record. In addition, the popular tradition of Xerxes rebuffing the gods in his bold expedition makes the Persian leader a fitting analogue to Epicurus storming the *flammantia moenia mundi* at 1.73. Indeed, we can even observe that Xerxes is characterized in terms which may resemble the *laudes Epicuri* in some ways. Xerxes is not mentioned by name here, simply referred to rather as *ille quoque ipse*, not unlike Lucretius’ reference to Epicurs as *deus ille* at 5.8. In addition, Xerxes is described not only as a victorious commander, but as an instructor as well (*docuit*, 3.1031), not unlike Epicurus himself (note the reference to the master’s *praeeptae* at 3.10). Xerxes, a figure not entirely unlike Epicurus

14. Trépanier 2004: 20-23 expresses some reservations about the authenticity (and existence) of such a work. The belief that Empedocles composed hexameters about Xerxes stems from the account of Diogenes Laertius 8.2.57.  
15. On the portrayal of Xerxes in Herodotus, and a potential resuscitation of his character (relevant to Lucretius’ choice to include this vexing historical figure in his list of illustrious deceased), see Lateiner 1989, Baragwanath 2000, Sancisi-Weerdenburg 2002, and Bridges 2014.  
16. For Xerxes’ distrust that dreams constitute divine messages, e.g., see Hdt. 7.12-13; on his dismissal of strange portents as being divine omens, see Hdt. 7.57. See also the words of Xerxes’ advisor Artabanus, which accord well with Lucretius’ Epicurean allegiances: [sc. ὁ ἄνδρι ὁ γνώμης παρεόντος ἡ παρεόντος, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ πατρὸς, θείος θείον]; (Hdt. 7.16a).  
17. Note, too, that the language of heroic epic carries over into the description of Xerxes as a commander of legions (*legionibus*, 3.1030), maintaining the epic register which we have already observed running through the passage thus far.  
18. Herodotus tells us that a witness observing Xerxes crossing the Hellespont addresses the commander as a god, not unlike Lucretius’ phrase *deus ille fuit, deus* at Lucr. 5.8: ὁ Ζεύς, τι δὴ ἀνδρὶ εἰδόμενος Πέρσῃ καὶ οὖνομα ἄντι Διὸς Ξέρξῃν θέμενος ἀνάστατον τὴν Ἑλλάδα θέλεις ποιῆσαι, ἄγων πάντας ἀνθρώπους; (Hdt. 7.56).
and other such Giant-like rebels, is not only chronologically convenient, but also affords Lucretius another opportunity to lavish praise upon a singular *contemptor divum*.

Kenney 2014 and Nethercut 2014 have also identified further echoes of Ennius in Lucretius’ description of Xerxes.\(^{19}\) If we are again confronted with an Ennian reminiscence in Lucretius’ characterization of Xerxes, I would offer that we also find a corresponding nod to Homer to accompany it, much as we have already seen Lucretius’ paired references to those poetic predecessors just above.\(^{20}\) Lucretius portrays Xerxes as a commander who lays out a path through the sea (*viam... per mare magnum* | *stravit*, 3.1029-30) and makes it possible for his subordinates to do the same (*iterque dedit legionibus ire per altum*, 3.1030) – all while crossing on foot rather than taking to the water itself. I submit that Lucretius channels Homer in this depiction as well, referencing namely the account of Poseidon speeding to Troy in aid of the Achaean host at *Il.* 13.27-31:\(^{21}\)

\[
\text{βῆ δ’ ἐλάσαν ἐπὶ κύματ’ ἀταλλὲ δὲ κήτε ὑπ’ ἀυτοῦ πάντωθεν ἐκ κεφαλῶν, οὖδ’ ἤγνοισεν ἀνακτα’ γηθοσύνη δὲ θάλασσα διόστατο’ τοι δὲ πέτοντο ρίμψα μαλ’ οὖδ’ ὑπένερθε διαίνητο χάλκεος ἀξέων’ τὸν δ’ ἐς Ἀχαιὸν νῆς ἐδύσκαρθοιμι φέρον ἵπποι.
\]

Poseidon drives out over the deep in terminology which, I posit, inspires Lucretius’ account at 3.1029-30. In addition, Lucretius depicts a Xerxes commanding legions and granting them a route across the sea: Xerxes is the subject of the clause *iterque dedit legionibus ire per altum*.

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\(^{19}\) On the particular reminiscence of *Ann.* 369-70 Sk. at Lucr. 3.1029-33, as well as the Ennian character of much of this larger passage, see Nethercut 2014: 444-46. Kenney 2014 *ad loc.* notes that Lucretius’ phrase *salsas... lacunas* at 3.1031 recalls Ennius’ *salsas... lamas* from *Ann.* 370 Sk.


\(^{21}\) Kenney 2014 also notes the Homeric undertones of Xerxes’ crossing, even adducing *Il.* 13.19-20 as a parallel, but he stops short of drawing further connections between the passages.
**legionibus ire per altum** at 3.1030, and he himself affords them the power to advance.

The troops clearly take their lead from him. I contend that this portrayal may look in part to Homer’s Poseidon, whose subordinates are of course not legions but rather the army of sea creatures who follow in the god’s wake. Poseidon is demonstrably their ruler, and the Greek term indicates that leadership role: ὁδὸς ἡγνοίησεν ἀνάκτα, 13.28. Further, much as Xerxes’ forces are able to make their way across the Hellespont without taking to the water, Poseidon’s own chariot similarly remains dry as he heads to Troy: the sea gladly parts (γηθοσύνη δὲ θάλασσα δίιστατο, 13.29) and the bronze axle stays dry (ὁδὸς ὑπένερθε διαίνετο χάλκεος ἄξων, 13.30). Even the horses of II. 13.31 (ἵπποι) find counterparts in Lucretius’ *equis* (3.1032).24 What is more, those Homeric steeds are described with the adjective ἐὔσκαρθµοι (13.31), meaning “skipping” or “springing.” And while the corresponding Latin adjective is attributed now to the chariot-driver himself rather than to his horses, Lucretius’ *insultans* (3.1032) answers Homer’s ἐὔσκαρθµοι. Of course, these allusions to the Homeric passage are not wholesale mimicry nor mere translations; but slavish importation is not quite how Lucretius frames his relationship with Ennius on the other hand, either. These are, after all, poetic reworkings, and, as such, they naturally display the poet’s originality in incorporating (but customizing) certain features from their original source. To be sure, Lucretius does not wholly endorse the Homeric worldview which accompanies the lines of the *Iliad* to which he refers; rather, Lucretius in many ways ironizes this passage in its new setting.

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23 Note the Epicurean-friendly word γηθοσύνη. On the significance of this word as a personification of the Empedoclean concept of love and desire, see Garani 2007: 48 and cf. Empedocles fr. 25/17 line 24 Inwood; Lucretius’ admiration of Empedocles’ poetry may well have made the vocabulary of this Iliadic passage especially attractive to him as an intertext.

24 Kenney 1971 *ad loc.* calls attention to the presence of the horses in the expedition as well.
Whereas, in the *Iliad*, Poseidon rushes to the aid of the Greeks, the Persian Xerxes crosses the Hellespont with completely opposite intent. Further, Lucretius subverts the original source text with a view to overturning one of its fundamental operating principles, namely the notion of divine intervention. As we have seen so often in Lucretian allusion, the poet masterfully reshapes the text to which he makes reference, and he finds a way simultaneously to restate a given Epicurean principle and enrich his poetic composition.

Next mentioned in Lucretius’ list of the illustrious departed is Scipio Africanus, hero of the Second Punic War (3.1034-35). Lucretius enjoys a moment of learned wordplay in referring to him as *belli fulmen* (3.1034), as others have noted. The presence of an Ennian echo in these lines has likewise been pointed out in previous scholarship; the exceedingly rare noun form *famul*, itself a potentially Ennian coinage, occurs here at Lucr. 3.1035, even in the same metrical *sedes* attested in Ennius, clearly signaling an allusion to that poet. Consequently, we can appreciate just how thoroughgoing Lucretius’ engagement with Ennius is in this entire passage. But if Ennius’ poetic influence has already been detected in these lines, I would suggest that

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25 He even molds into legions what had once been Homer’s swarm of sea-monsters (κῆτε’, 13.27), whose existence Lucretius would of course deny (cf. Lucr. 2.700-10).
26 On the identification as the Elder rather than the Younger Scipio, see Leonard and Smith 194 and Kenney 2014 *ad loc.*
28 Cf. also Pierini 2013 on the presence of an Ennian Scipio in other Latin writers.
29 The form *famulus* is more widely attested. Note that the feminine form of the word also occurs in *DRN*: *quam famulae longe fugiant furtimque cachinnant*, 4.1176.
30 Cf. Sheets 1981: 73 on the word’s putative Oscan extraction.
31 Leonard and Smith 1942, Kenney 2014, and Nethercut 2014 note the resonance of the vexed fragment Enn. *Ann*. 312-13 Sk. here, which Leonard and Smith print as the following: *mortalem summum Fortuna repente | reddidit e summo regno ut famul oltimus [ultimus] esset*; other reconstructions alter various segments of the lines, but the operative word *famul* persists throughout.
3.1035 at the same time looks back to Ennius’ own poetic model, again Homer.\(^{32}\) Note that Lucretius declines to replicate the entire phraseology of Ennius, and prefers rather to reproduce only the final words of the verse. Why might Lucretius have chosen to abandon or alter the preceding metrical feet from the Ennian original? Lucretius showed no compunction about borrowing a verse from Ennius virtually wholesale only a few lines earlier (3.1025); why this reluctance now? I submit that Lucretius includes only part of the Ennian line because he also fuses it with a Homeric line, in the hopes of upending the worldviews informing each of the original verses of both of those authors. The sentiment of the Ennian excerpt (Ann. 312-13 Sk.) is doubtless activated in its new Lucretian home; after all, Ennius’ message in those lines is that fortune can reduce even the loftiest of men to the lowliest of positions in an instant. Surely Lucretius would approve of Ennius’ recognition of life’s unpredictable vagaries.\(^{33}\) Indeed, there may also be other areas of overlap between Ennius’ worldview and Epicurus’, making Ennius an attractive candidate for selective quotation and correction in Lucretius’ eyes.\(^{34}\) Yet while both Roman writers would advise not to set too much store by one’s present station, Lucretius feels the urge here to correct Ennius’ attribution of agency to a divine force. Rather, Lucretius sets the action squarely in the realm of human affairs, granting agency at 3.1035 to Scipio, who is the subject of the new, purely Lucretian portion of the line.

\(^{32}\) On Homer’s influence on Ennius, and Ennius’ penchant for refashioning entire lines of Homeric Greek, see Fisher 2012 and 2014.


\(^{34}\) Ennius’ theology, for instance, as painted by Cicero, would certainly seem to share some affinity with the Epicurean notion that the gods are not concerned with human affairs (Enn. Telamo fr. 117a-c Goldberg and Manuwald).
Still, even if Lucretius discards part of an Ennian verse and refashions the line to his own liking, where does Homer fit into this putative double reference? In my view, the Lucretian alteration of that clearly Ennian line becomes the locus for further allusion, this time to Homer, because Lucretius can point to a particular aspect of the Homeric worldview and simultaneously subvert that worldview, all while subtly signaling that very process by using specific, allusive vocabulary. At *Od.* 11.488-91, the shade of Achilles famously rebukes Odysseus in the underworld. Although Odysseus laments his own sufferings since leaving Troy (αἰὲν ἔχω κακά, 11.482) and contrasts those hardships with Achilles’ revered status both in life and, now, in death (11.484-86), the fallen hero will tolerate no such praise. Achilles’ wraith insists, rather, that he would trade whatever privilege he currently enjoys in the afterlife for the chance to occupy even the most humble station among the living. Indeed, the Homeric word here for the lowly lot envied by Achilles is that of the slave, ἐπάρομπος, to which the Latin word *famul* corresponds. Even the sneering vocative *improbe* from the opening salvo at Lucr. 3.1026 answers to the Homeric σχέτλιε by which Achilles first addresses his visitor (*Od.* 11.474). Further, Odysseus’ remark that Achilles ought not to be upset about dying (τὸ μὴ τὶ θανὸν ἀκαχίζειν, 11.486) speaks to the very lesson which Lucretius is driving home here at the end of *DRN* 3, in vocabulary which actually accords quite well with Epicurean

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35 *Od.* 11.484-86: πρὶν μὲν γὰρ σε ζωὸν ἐτίμωμεν ἧσα θεόσιν | Ἀργεῖοι, νῦν αὕτε μέγα κρατέεις νεκύεσσιν | ἐνθάδ’ ἐὸν.
36 *Od.* 11.488-91: μὴ δὴ μοι θανατόν γε παραόδα, φαίδιμ’ Ὄδυσσει. | βουλοίμην κ’ ἐπάρομπος ἐὸν θητεύμεν ἄλλῳ, | ἀνδρὶ παρ’ ἀκλήρῳ, ὃ μὴ βίοτος πολὺς εἶπη, | ἤ πᾶσιν νεκύεσσι καταρθιμένοισιν ἀνάσσεσιν.
37 Might the brilliance of the lightning bolt set in apposition to the proper name at Lucr. 3.1034 also approximate the Homeric φαίδιμ’ Ὄδυσσει at *Od.* 11.488?
teaching. By this stage in *DRN*, Lucretius aims to have combatted and corrected Achilles’ (and others’) complaints about death, and will have left no room for doubt in the reader’s mind in demonstrating that an underworld like the one visited by Odysseus surely cannot exist. The language which Lucretius uses in this passage, moreover, echoes language which he has already used much earlier in the poem, during his initial preparation to correct our misconceptions about death, and it ties the Homeric account of the underworld into this latest lesson. We recall the death of Scipio (*ossa dedit terrae*, 3.1035), and Lucretius here echoes his earlier explanation of the way in which dreamers sometimes seem to converse with those who have died (1.134-35):

*cernere uti videamur eos audireque coram,*
* morte obita quorum tellus amplectitur ossa.*

By notionally echoing that earlier account, Lucretius links the two passages and invites the Homeric allusion I have identified, since that passage from Homer, framed in similar terms, treats of this very situation, namely the notion of speaking with the deceased. The particular aspect of incremental didacticism at work here is the idea that the reader is given the opportunity not only to recognize an allusion to Homer, but also, having recognized it, to reconcile it with Epicurean *vera ratio*, if not immediately, then upon finishing the poem. After all, the express rejection of the notion that we are really encountering the dead in our dreams occurs only later, at 4.26-41 and 4.757-67. Still, by the time we have finished reading *DRN*, the poet has equipped us with all the necessary information to refute these poetic exaggerations and find truth and tranquility.

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38 Reinhardt 2004: 31 has even posited that at the end of *DRN* 3 “the reader undertakes a symbolic *katabasis*” along traditional heroic lines, thus underscoring the applicability of a precise Homeric intertext at this point in the poem.
Moreover, this double reference also allows Lucretius to levy an attack on not just Homer but Ennius, at the same time and on similar grounds. Indeed, Ennius famously claims that Homer appeared to him in a dream.\footnote{Enn. Ann. fr. 2-4 Goldberg and Manuwald.} Again, Lucretius shines the light of Epicurean truth on the errors and misconceptions underpinning Ennius’ account, ultimately subverting Ennius’ worldview as well.\footnote{Note that Lucretius expressly mentions Ennius’ story at Lucr. 1.120-26, highlighting it early and explaining it later.} By the end of \textit{DRN}, we can be confident that a conversation with the dead is impossible, rationalizing any stimuli which may otherwise lead us to false conclusions. It is hoped that, when we either re-read these earlier sections of \textit{DRN} or recall them after setting the poem down, we can profitably apply this understanding in the context of these complex allusions.

At this stage in his list of illustrious deceased, Lucretius pivots from military types to figures of literary output and achievement of thought, and here the chronology resets. To be sure, Scipio does not predate Democritus or Epicurus, for instance. Yet the timeline holds fast in each of the two sets of data, as it were, namely among the military figures on the one hand and the intellectuals on the other; and in fact Lucretius reimposes a strict chronological order after making this jump in genre or type.\footnote{Segal 1990b: 172-73 identifies these “two series of specific exempla” as discrete units and understands their structure here as Lucretius’ attempt to set “the universality of death into a diachronic perspective.”} Indeed, Lucretius’ switch from rulers and commanders to thinkers and writers is suggestive of the very model the poet wants the reader to emulate: after all, Epicurus achieved the ultimate victory with words, not arms (\textit{dictis, non armis}, 5.50). On that model, we proceed not only chronologically but also in terms of significance; the farther down this list, the more important the figure for the attainment of \textit{ataraxia}. 
With the repertores doctrinarum atque leporum (3.1036) Lucretius reinstates the chronology. Naturally, the figure of the primus inventor or πρῶτος ὑρετής looms large, and these pioneers take chronological pride of place at the head of this new class in our list. In fine, we move from Homer and the poets to Democritus and Epicurus. The list culminates with the only explicit mention of Epicurus in DRN, and then suddenly turns to upbraid the reader directly. Whereas we began this list with Ancus of old, we have gradually shifted closer and closer to the present day, concluding with a confrontation of the reader in the address tu vero… (3.1045). It now rests with the reader to put the lessons of Epicurus into practice in the present day.

2.3. History, Proximity, Intensity

As noted above, the significant placement of the list of the illustrious departed near the center of the poem helps to imbue this passage with a kind of programmatic force. I propose that Lucretius’ method of ushering the reader through that list from the ancient history to more recent events stands as a microcosm of the poet’s general practice

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43 See, e.g., Gale 1994b and Volk 2002 for the terms and the trope.
44 Lucretius’ use of adde here (twice, notably) emphasizes that these figures are being added on in a parallel fashion to those listed prior, less as a subset and rather as an “enlargement” (cf. Lewis and Short addo q.v. II.B), underlining the slight difference in the nature of their function as exempla.
46 On the philosophical and “un-Homeric” nature of Homer’s death here, see, e.g., Segal 1990a: 260. For the idea that philosophy takes hierarchical superiority over poetry thanks to the culmination in this list with Democritus and Epicurus rather than, say, Homer, see Gale 2001.
47 For more on this reference to Epicurus, see Chapter 1 above.
48 Note that the postpositive placement of vero thrusts tu to initial and emphatic position in the line (3.1045).
50 Lucretius frames the vituperative remarks of this section as the hypothetical words of the introspective reader’s self-chastisement. Still, in the midst of this lengthy litany, and without the modern typographical aid of inset quotation marks, for instance, the reader may be liable to forget just who is voicing these lines. Although this closing “tu vero” critique is not framed as a direct attack on the reader at the hands of the instructor, the rhetorical technique may test the reader to recall the slight distancing effect of having a putative mouthpiece deliver these remarks. Cf. Feeney 2011 on the modern luxury of editorial quotation marks and the difficulties of reading without them.
in *DRN*. That is, he moves us from the safe temporal (and spatial; see the chapter on military imagery above) remove of the distant past and often gestures toward the present day. This process, however, is not linear. The examples which follow in this section do not adhere to a strict chronological order, despite their general trend from antiquity to recent memory. Neither, though, do the names of the illustrious departed conform to strict chronological order, as observed above. Lucretius manipulates the historical tradition for his own pedagogical purposes, especially with the goal of increasing the intensity of his examples. He subjugates history to his didactic aims, reaching out to the student in the process.\(^{51}\)

### 2.3.1. Iphianassa

In mapping this general progression, I return momentarily to a passage discussed briefly above, namely the Iphianassa episode (1.80-101). Much has been written about this famous episode,\(^{52}\) and it is clear that the passage is meant to take aim at *religio* and superstition. An underappreciated aspect of this scene, however, is its easy accessibility for the reader at this very early stage in the poem. The Iphianassa story does not require much training in order for the reader to appreciate the lesson contained within it. Indeed, if the horror generated in the scene arises from a father’s impious killing of his daughter in the name of *religio*, later on we will come to realize that death, ultimately, is nothing to us, so the story’s appearance at this early stage of the poem appeals more to our

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\(^{51}\) After all, the poet tells us at 5.1446-47 that we need not compulsively look to history for any guidance, unless proper reasoning compels us to do so: *propterea quid sit prius actum respicere aetas | nostra nequit, nisi qua ratio vestigia monstrat*. Cf. Nethercut 2014 on Lucretius’ “revaluation” of history and historiography, especially with regard to Ennius.

untrained, visceral disgust at the girl’s slaughter than to an Epicurean acceptance of
human mortality which might in fact countervail against that indignant disgust. Before
we have arrived at the revelation that death is nothing to us, however, Lucretius takes
care to win us over gently here, as even now we can identify with the sacrifice of
Iphianassa on a visceral and emotional level at this early stage in our reading.53 One
element which contributes to the easy accessibility of Lucretius’ captatio benevolentiae
in this scene, I would add, is the reader’s temporal remove from the episode. Lucretius
clearly situates us in the lead-up to the Trojan War by recalling this ancient, well-known
story.55 At 5.324-36, Lucretius adduces the fighting at Troy and at Thebes as proof that
mankind’s history stretches back no farther than these ancient events, since there are no
events sung about which predate those war stories. As such, the Trojan and Theban
affairs are enshrined as the oldest events in human history; this status thus affords the
reader a comfortable distance between themselves and these wars of old. Our first lesson
proper, then, is that the traditional conception of religio is the real culprit, whereas
Epicurean ratio points the proper way forward. This introductory lesson, incidentally,
could hardly be gentler and more readily accessible for the reader. It repositions religio
and redefines pietas,57 but it also shields our eyes from Iphianassa’s actual death.58 There

53 Cf. Segal 1990b: 11, quoted in the introduction of this dissertation.
55 Notably, even as it anticipates and enables the action of the Trojan War, the tale itself does not
occur in Homer; yet Lucretius encourages us to read this episode in the context of the Trojan
epics when he employs the Homeric demonym “Danaans” (Danaum, 1.86) in reference to the
Greeks.
58 Lucretius of course intimates that her sacrifice looms (Iphianassai… sanguine, 1.85; ferrum
celare ministros, 1.90), and even gives us a result clause beginning with ut at 1.96 and governing
the subjunctive describing the outcome at 1.99 (hostia concideret maestu maesta parentis). To
be sure, the reader already knows how the story ends; still, an account of the actual coup de grâce
remains conspicuously absent.
is a clear lesson in this parable, but that lesson does not yet demand of the reader a particularly deep reckoning.

2.3.2. Troy

Whereas the Iphianassa episode occurs before Agamemnon and his compatriots have even landed at Troy, the Trojan War itself becomes Lucretius’ focus shortly afterward, at 1.459-82, in his argument that historical events lack external properties:

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tempus item per se non est, sed rebus ab ipsis consequitur sensus, transactum quid sit in aevo, tum quae res instet, quid porro deinde sequatur. nec per se quemquam tempus sentire fatendumst semotum ab rerum motu placidaque quietae. denique Tyndaridem raptam belloque subactas Troiugenas gentis cum dicunt esse, videndumst ne forte haec per se cogant nos esse fateri, quando ea saecla hominum, quorum haec eventa fuerunt, irrevocabilis abstulerit iam praeterita aetas. namque aliud terris, aliud regionibus ipsis eventum dici poterit quodcumque erit actum. denique materies si rerum nulla fuisset nec locus ac spatium, res in quo quaeque geruntur, numquam Tyndaridis forma conflatus amore ignis Alexandri Phrygio sub pectore gliscens clara accendisset saevi certamina belli, nec clam durateus Troianis Pergama partu inflammasset equus nocturno Graiugenarum; perspicere ut possis res gestas fuiditus omnis non ita uti corpus per se constare neque esse, nec ratione cluere eadem qua constet inane, sed magis ut merito possis eventa vocare corporis atque loci, res in quo quaeque gerantur.
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Here we learn that the events of the past do not possess an intrinsic or continued existence after they have transpired. The past does not persist in our present, cannot affect it. It follows, then, that we will be able to face any event described in the poem, no matter how harrowing and realistic, with the confidence that it is indeed done, past, and

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59 For more on Epicurean thought regarding past events, and an argument against labeling the Epicureans as “presentists,” see Warren 2006.
immaterial. In this particular case, Lucretius signals the specifically Trojan setting straightaway, with reference to Helen (Tyndaridem raptam, 1.464) and the Trojan host (Troiiugenas gentis (1.465). The poet lingers for a moment on the broader lesson about historical events and their lack of intrinsic properties, but then we zoom in on Troy once more: the case study of Helen again (Tyndaris forma, 1.473), and Paris (Alexandri Phrygio sub pectore, 1.474), and the particular happenings of this specific, remote time and place does not impinge on our present-day existence, as the poet has just pointed out to us.\footnote{On the question of the Trojan War’s status as historical (or quasi-historical) fact among the ancients, see, e.g., Möhler 1989, Segal 1990b, Rossi 2002, Jahn 2007, Putnam 2007, and Skinner 2013b. Cf. also Stok 2016 on the Propertian leitmotif of Troia resurgens, as well as Winterbottom 1993, Ross 1998, and Smolenaars 2002 on Virgil’s Troy. Note Cicero’s relegation of Priam to the realm of mythic storytelling at Div. 2.9 – as well as his exhortation to discuss matters closer to hand (abeamus a fabulis, propiora videamus), reinforcing the putative distance between the Trojan War and the present.}

\textbf{2.3.3. Carthage}

Lucretius revisits this lesson at 3.830-42, and he expects more of his reader at that juncture. This passage begins with the declaration of the famous Epicurean axiom that “death is nothing to us,” and from there it segues into a discussion of the magnitude and severity of the Punic Wars at the time of their waging, as contrasted with their utter insignificance for the atomic realities of the present:

\begin{flushright}
Nil igitur mors est ad nos neque pertinet hilum, 830
quandoquidem natura animi mortalis habetur.
et velut anteacto nil tempore sensimus aegri,
ad confligendum venientibus undique Poenis,
omnia cum beli trepido concussa tumultu
horrida contremuere sub alitis aetheris oris,
in dubioque fuere utrorum ad regna cadendum
omnibus humanis esset terraque marique,
sic, ubi non erimus, cum corporis atque animai
discidium fuerit quibus e sumus uniter apti,
scilicet haud nobis quicquam, qui non erimus tum, 840
accidere omnino poterit sensumque movere,
\end{flushright}
Lucretius here reiterates the lesson learned in the case of the Trojan War, that the past cannot impinge upon the present, however all-consuming and earth-shattering it may have appeared at the time; but he also now situates the combat much closer to home, both temporally and geographically, with the Punic Wars of a specifically Roman past. The move to this particular conflict with Rome functions in a manner similar to the perspectival shift we observed in the chapter on military and battlefield imagery above. There, we traced the change from impersonal spectator (\textit{tua sine parte pericli}, 2.6) to interested party (\textit{tuas legiones... cum vides}, 2.40-41). Analogously, we now see a shift from “proverbially great conflict” to “particularly Roman great conflict,” and Lucretius’ Latin-speaking contemporaries are to handle that subtle appeal to their putative identity as Romans with similar aplomb.

In addition to this increased temporal and geographical proximity, Lucretius further puts us to the test by implicating us personally in the situation. In the assertion at 3.830 that death is nothing to us we witness the first-person plural \textit{nos}, but Lucretius continues his personal appeals by employing the first-person plural in \textit{sensimus} (3.832) to note that we ourselves felt nothing when Carthage and Rome fought for the dominance of

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62 On the Ennian echoes in the latter parts of Book 3 (including Lucretius’ references to Ancus and Scipio in his list of deceased luminaries) and on the way Lucretius re-appropriates and undercuts elements of Ennius, see Gale 1994b: 110-11, Goldschmidt 2013: 17-28, and Nethercut 2014: 441-44. See also Bailey 1947 \textit{ad loc.} and Kenney 2014 \textit{ad loc.} on the influence of Ennius on the description of the tumult of the Punic Wars at Lucr. 3.834-35 (especially with respect to Enn. \textit{Ann.} fr. 309 Sk., \textit{Africa terribili tremit horrida terra tumultu}).

63 Lucretius mentions the Carthaginians again at 5.1297-1307 in his discussion of various wartime innovations in human history (in their case, the use of elephants in battle). In that \textit{Kulturgeschichte}, however, they are introduced in more general terms, rather than with a view to the Punic Wars specifically.

64 See the review of scholarship regarding the vexed issue of Lucretius’ audience in Gellar-Goad 2012: 15-17.
the known world. Our instructor then gives us over to a recollection of these past historical events, and then compels us once again to contemplate our own mortality, particularly at 3.838-42. The first-person perspectives of such phrases as *ubi non erimus* and *quibus e sumus uniter apti*,\(^{65}\) or *nobis* and *qui non erimus tum* all serve to insert us, Lucretius’ readership, into the lesson and urge us to ponder the doctrine with our own person in mind.

2.3.4. Athens

By the time we arrive at the final scene of the poem, the Athenian Plague (6.1138-1286), these tests and challenges have reached new heights. If the poet’s references to the legendary kings Cecrops (6.1139) and Pandion (6.1143) serve to situate the reader in Athens, then this latest visit to Athens naturally subverts whatever expectations the reader may have been harboring with regard to that city based on Lucretius’ previous descriptions of Athens. After all, the proem to Book 6 positively showers the place with praise: the city bears an illustrious name (*praeclaro nomine Athenae*, 6.2) and is shown to have been the first place to grant mankind succor for life’s travails (*solacia dulcia vitae*, 6.4), thanks to the teachings of Epicurus. Gesturing toward an Athenian backdrop thus serves to subvert the reader’s expectations that Athens is indeed such a shining city on a hill. We enter a very different Athens from the city Lucretius has so far described, already requiring the reader to recalibrate his or her assumptions.

Moreover, this closing narrative makes up a large portion of Book 6, spanning nearly 150 lines. And while the closing lessons or vignettes in the other five books may

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\(^{65}\) Note the exploded word order of this phrase, mirroring the very atomic dissolution which the poet is here describing.
occupy similar stretches of text,66 those other sections also bear clear signals of didactic handholding, which the poet conspicuously withholds during the plague narrative. Somewhere in the final hundred lines of each of the other five books,67 the poet reminds us of his comforting presence at our side by using first-person plural pronouns.68 In Book 6, by contrast, we observe a number of verbs in the second-person singular to engage us in the scene,69 but the first-person forms which formerly signaled the companionship of our instructor are now noticeably absent. The effect of this authorial distancing is to plunge us directly into the lengthy, gruesome account of the plague and make us confront its horrors on our own. Can we apply the tenets learned in the poem without our instructor offering us his assistance?

The plague scene isolates us from our instructor, fixes our gaze unrelentingly on the vivid horrors of the scene, and exposes us to these graphic details for no small stretch of time. To add to these considerable challenges, Lucretius does not allow us the same explicit consolation which has marked the previous lessons rooted in specific famous conflicts. That is, in the examples studied earlier in this chapter, the poet reminds us that the given conflict at hand bears no consequences on our present happiness: the Trojan War does not exist in itself (1.459-82), and the Punic Wars cannot affect us (3.830-42), but a similar lesson regarding the Peloponnesian War is left implicit and is not addressed in the same way that those other conflicts are. Again Lucretius expects the reader to apply those earlier lessons to the present situation, this time independently.

66 Cf. the diatribe on love (4.1058-1287) or the arguments against the fear of death (3.830-1094).
67 See especially Müller 1978 on the concluding sections of Lucretius’ six books.
68 Note, e.g., 1.1065-66, 2.1157-63, 3.1078-81, 4.1277, and 5.1446-47.
Of course, it must be remembered that Lucretius draws much of his inspiration for this closing plague narrative from Thucydides’ *History of the Peloponnesian War*. As such, how can one posit a trajectory in *DRN* from past to present, from far to near, when the poem leaves off in a time and place which are not the reader’s own? To such a question I would reply that while Lucretius’ plague narrative clearly enters into dialogue with Thucydides’, the account we read in *DRN* is not an unadulterated portrait of fifth-century Athens. Indeed, even as he nods towards its original setting, Lucretius scrubs his account of explicit historical markers. The plague represents not that affliction unique to the Athenians of the Peloponnesian War, but remains the perennial, omnipresent plight of the unenlightened. As is so often the case when examining Lucretius’ relationship to his sources, we can detect the original (here, Thucydidean) flavor of the passage, and yet the final product remains thoroughly and uniquely Lucretian. Consequently, we are not left in Thucydides’ Athens after all, but rather in an almost dystopian version of the modern day. I would even submit that we may profitably read Lucretius’ closing plague narrative through an almost Dickensian lens, if a modified one. For, much as Ebenezer Scrooge undergoes visitation by the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Future in *A Christmas Carol*, Lucretius’ reader is similarly offered a kind of threefold vision. Unlike Scrooge, however, the reader of *DRN* peers out onto exclusively horrific scenes in all three cases: Lucretius provides a glimpse into terrible past miseries, the similar sufferings of

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70 Clay 1983: 257-58: “It seems that Lucretius has made his case study of this plague both ‘poetic’ and ahistorical. We hear of these ancient figures of Athenian history [viz., the mythical rulers Cecrops and Pandion], but nothing of the Peloponnesian War, the summer of 430 B.C., or the conditions that obtained before the onset of the plague… But if Lucretius severs the plague from its context in Thucydides and the year 430, it is to set it in the syntax of *De rerum natura.*” On Lucretius’ “moralizing,” “psychologizing,” or “generalizing” refashioning of Thucydides, see also Commager 1957, Bright 1971, Phillips 1982, and Foster 2009; for a different view, see Stover 1999.
contemporary blunderers, and the grim future prospects of any unconverted reader. That is to say, Lucretius’ plague narrative is a cautionary tale, at once inspired by historical events, applicable to present sufferers, and suggestive of the ills to which we ourselves may fall prey if we fail to act on the lessons of the text. This is not exclusively Thucydides’ place and time; it is our own. Lucretius’ is a plague for all seasons. Our analysis of the poet’s appeals to a macro-scale historical arc reveals that Lucretius indeed manipulates history for his own poetic and pedagogical purposes. This tendency represents not so much a purely linear process of chronological development; rather, it suggests a more general trend of intensification and increased difficulty, using the past as a foil for our present – and our future.
Chapter 3. All the World’s a Garden: Venus and Innuendo in *De rerum natura*

This chapter aims to demonstrate that Lucretius reworks the figure of Venus over the course of *DRN* to the point that, particularly after her re-identification as the universal drive for procreation (4.1058), readers are tasked with detecting her increasingly subtle presence even in the natural world around them. As Clay 1983: 226-34, Asmis 1985 and 2015, Gale 1994b, and Solomon 2004 have shown, the description of Venus in the proem to Book 1 paints a very different picture from that of the generative force of nature she is ultimately revealed to be in Book 4.¹ In this section of the dissertation, I submit that after Lucretius disabuses the reader of romantic love and exposes Venus as the sheer sexual drive in nature, thereafter the otherwise innocent image of acorns (*glandes*) activates its secondary sexual meaning.² Acorns do not appear in *DRN* before Lucretius redefines Venus at 4.1058 (*haec Venus est nobis; hinc autemst nomen amoris*). Thereafter, I contend, with Venus’ identity as the sexual drive now clearly stated, Lucretius challenges his reader to recognize the latent sexual meaning of these images moving forward.³ In issuing this challenge, Lucretius gradually moves away from settings that abound in the explicit language of love and sex. Ultimately, acorn passages lose their clearly

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¹ See also Duban 1982 on Venus and *natura*. See Gale 1994b: 208-209 for a survey of the scholarship on the so-called Hymn to Venus in the proem to Book 1.

² On *glans* as male sexual organ, see Adams 1982: 72-73 and Richlin 1992: 42; cf. Henderson 1991: 41, 47, and 119-120 for the Greek comparanda βάλανος and φηγός. For a discussion of such items’ status in amorous exchanges within bucolic poetry, see Gale 1994b: 171.

³ The subtlety of the sexual valences of acorns approaches invisibility; Fratantuono 2015: 476 n. 84, for instance, acknowledges the acorn’s function as *double entendre* in other contexts, but denies its presence in Lucretius: “it is not clear that sexual innuendo was meant to be inferred in each use, or if the contemporary audience would have so read the vocabulary and imagery.” While detection of secondary valences may indeed remain subjective, still Fratantuono’s dismissal touches on my very point: the *double entendre* of an image like the acorn functions as one of the challenges of Lucretian incremental didacticism precisely because the relevance of the secondary sexual meaning of the image is not immediately apparent and requires, rather, the close inspection of the reader.
signposted verbal cues and require still more subtle engagement, notionally echoing the
plainly sexual description of intercourse at 4.1192-1200. Lucretius sets these
progressively more challenging demands on his readership in order to urge his audience
to constantly apply the same active attentiveness to the world around them, when their
teacher will no longer be providing them with hints along the way.

In this chapter, I will first offer a brief overview of Epicurus’ thoughts on
intercourse in order to contextualize the present analysis within Epicurean teachings.
Next, I will discuss the famous diatribe against romantic love which concludes Book 4,
examining the poet’s open discussion of sexual matters at 4.1037-1287 and exploring the
ways in which Lucretius models ideal sexual mores for his pupil. Thereafter, we will
proceed to trace the various occurrences of acorns (glandes) throughout DRN, noting the
subtle escalations in difficulty which the poet imposes upon his reader if that student is to
understand this phallic byword as an operative double entendre. In order to set the stage
for that analysis of Lucretian acorns, however, it will be useful first to establish that the
ancients conceived of acorns as having a sexually suggestive nature. Accordingly, we
will survey the relevant instances of acorn innuendo in Greek and Latin poetry before
then discussing the appearances of acorns in DRN and tracing their function in Lucretian
incremental didacticism over the course of the poem. As a result of this investigation, I

\[^4\] Recall Memmius’ own reputation as a litterateur (Cic. Brut. 247 and Casali 2018: 207) – indeed,
even as an obscene (and inferior) poet. Note also the derisive dismissal of Memmius’ poetic
output as dura by the Greek banqueters at Aulus Gellius NA 19.9, the evident brazenness of
Memmius’ verses according to Ovid Tr. 2.433-34, and Pliny’s estimation of Memmius’
indecency at Ep. 5.3.5; on the identification of this poetic dilettante with Lucretius’ Memmius,
see Hollis 2007: 91. An addressee acquainted with writing erotic verse, of course, would be a
prime target for instruction in the proper poetic crafting both of overt descriptions of intercourse
as found in DRN Book 4 and of more subtle sexual innuendo as observed in Lucretius’ use of
glandes.
aim to demonstrate that Lucretius activates these select euphemisms’ sexual valence; what is more, I will show how the poet encourages his reader to be ever more alert in detecting the sexual nature of these images as they participate in Lucretius’ program of incremental didacticism – all while our instructor reinforces his earlier lessons on the proper attitude towards sex.

3.1. Epicurus on Intercourse

What does Epicurus say about sexual intercourse? The issue has been hotly debated in recent years, owing to the relative paucity of our surviving evidence of Epicurus’ writings. In his extant works, Epicurus provides little direct discussion of the subject, although it is evident that he discussed sexual matters at some length. At this early stage, I would quickly note that we must draw a distinction between, on the one hand, Epicurus’ teachings regarding love and marriage, and, on the other, his teachings regarding sex. The question of Lucretius’ orthodoxy or innovation with respect to the former category, namely Epicurean precepts on marriage and child-rearing, remains a contentious one. However, in the present discussion, we will concern ourselves primarily with the latter category, Epicurean teachings on intercourse. Epicurus himself

5 Nussbaum 1989: 11-17 provides a useful survey of the evidence and points to the importance of Epicurus’ teachings on love and sex in his complete oeuvre, which included a treatise Περὶ ἐρωτος.
6 Arenson 2016: 299 charts the distinction as follows: “Epicurus defines love as the intense desire for sex, so intercourse is plainly the focal point of unhealthy erotic relationships. But although love and sex both involve the desire for intercourse, Epicureans believe that the desire for sex itself is free of the intensity and obsession that characterizes desire in the case of love. The desire for sex need not be a desire for anything more than the physical act itself… And unlike love, the desire for sex simpliciter is not necessarily a desire for a particular person: love is an obsession with an individual, whereas sex is generic.”
7 Kleve 1969 and Arkins 1984 maintain that Lucretius does not diverge from Epicurus on the question of the advisability of marriage, whereas Goar 1971 and Betensky 1980 hold that Lucretius adapts Epicurean marriage precepts to a specifically Roman cultural context; on the poet’s “subversive” (Gordon 2002: 101) message in the face of conventional notions of Roman sexuality and masculinity, see Gordon 2002 and Pope 2018.
famously remained a lifelong bachelor, but his own personal conduct by no means circumscribes all acceptable behaviors; after all, he makes provisions in his dying will for Metrodorus’ daughter to marry a member of the Garden.\footnote{Diog. Laert. 10.19: ὅσαυτως δὲ τῆς θυγατρὸς τῆς Μητροδόρου τὴν ἐπιμέλειαν ποιεῖσθωσαν, καὶ εἰς ἥλικιαν ἐλθοῦσαν ἐκδότωσαν ὅ ἃν Ἐρμαρχὸς ἔληται τῶν φιλοσοφῶν μετ’ αὐτοῦ, οὕτως αὐτῆς εὐτάκτου καὶ πειθαρχούσης Ἐρμάρχῳ.} He clearly conceives of intercourse as a pleasure,\footnote{Cf. fr. 67 Usener.} but for Epicurus sexual desire is a natural and non-necessary desire; that is, while it is natural for a person to experience erotic desire, a person need not satisfy that desire in order to live happily (in contrast to other bodily desires such as hunger or thirst, for example, which are natural and necessary alike). Brennan 1996 has recently restated Epicurus’ position, as articulated at fr. 62 Usener,\footnote{The fragment, which appears at Diog. Laert. 10.118, is almost identical to Sent. Vat. 51, but for the omission of the word καὶ in the latter. Brennan 1996 explores the significance of the conjunction for a proper understanding of Epicurus’ sentiment.} showing that Epicurus did not advocate an outright ban on sexual intercourse, although he certainly recommended avoiding it. Brennan paraphrases the sentiment as follows: “sex is never beneficial, and you are lucky if it doesn’t actually harm you—by implication, it usually does. The sentence does not say ‘sex is desirable.’”\footnote{Brennan 1996: 348.} For Epicurus, sexual desire is natural, but a proper Epicurean does not, by virtue of that understanding, pursue casual sexual relations willy-nilly. Lucretius, by contrast, does not inveigh against sexual intercourse \textit{per se} so much as romantic partnerships, and he plainly endorses intercourse with involves no romantic attachment at \textit{4.1073-74}.\footnote{Note also the poet’s admonishment against romantic attachment towards any one individual (\textit{unius amore}, 4.1066) at 4.1063-67.}

\textit{nec Veneris fructu caret is qui vitat amorem,}
\textit{sed potius quae sunt sine poena commoda sumit.}
In what follows, we will examine the implications of Lucretius’ refinement on this point of Epicurean doctrine. At all points it will be emphasized that Lucretius views detached sexual intercourse as a wholly natural pleasure, and one which both motivates human procreation and also finds a parallel in the natural world all around us.

### 3.2. Lucretius and the End of Book 4

Let us now turn to Lucretius’ diatribe against romantic love at the end of Book 4, for this section provides the necessary context for reading the proposed acorn euphemisms as being securely sexual in the first place. Scholars have long recognized that among the several internal aims of *DRN*, it is Lucretius’ intention to dispel any misguided attachment in his readers for romantic love, which the poet views as toxic and indeed a hindrance to ataraxia and true happiness. The extended treatment which this topic receives suggests in itself the importance of this lesson for Lucretius’ pupil, and its placement as the concluding argument of Book 4 would seem to bolster a case for its

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13 Sexual *double entendre* has been recognized by other scholars elsewhere in *DRN*, which bolsters the suggestive readings I propose in the passages discussed herein. Cf. Godwin 1986: 170 on the dripping water boring through stone in 4.1286-87, as well as Godwin 1991: 123 on 6.398: “There is an obscene sense to this line – cf 1.250ff (with West (1969) 4-7) for the idea of Father Sky inseminating Mother Earth, and note here how both the word *telum* and the verb *obtundi* have obvious sexual reference (see Adams (1982) 17-19 and 148) and the joke here is the painful sense of the Father’s weapon being made to bang against the earth in vain – the standard translation of the verb as being ‘to be blunted’ is of course the primary meaning but the metaphorical meaning is also there.” Likewise, Godwin 1991: 123 on 6.402-03 notes that Lucretius “again sketches a ludicrous picture of Jupiter as a bad marksman who needs to squat in the low clouds to give him a better chance of hitting the target. There is also a subsidiary obscene meaning available – Jupiter ‘enters’ the clouds and from there ‘aims the blow of his weapon’. Given Jupiter’s amorous exploits in a variety of situations, this is not as far-fetched as it may appear.”

Indeed, as Müller 1978: 204 notes, “Unsere Neigung, vom Buchschluss nach vorwärts und rückwärts zu schauen und kompositorische Beziehungen zu anderen Teilen zu finden, wird ermutigt durch eine Beziehung, die sich aufdrängt,” endowing the ends of books in *DRN* with a certain guiding force that pervades the poem. This chapter endeavors to show that the end of Book 4 operates in precisely this fashion, introducing language, imagery, and concepts that will continue to inform the rest of *DRN* whenever such elements recur. Specifically, what I contend to be Lucretius’ euphemistic use of phallic acorns will serve to recall Book 4’s naturalistic view of intercourse, aligning the botanical vocabulary of the given passages with a naturalistic Epicurean vision of sex. Something of Lucretius’ method in this regard is contained in the pithy aphorism of 4.1073, already acknowledged above: *nec Veneris fructu caret is qui vitat amorem*. This remark reflects the author’s outlook towards unromantic intercourse and perhaps contains a ludic acknowledgement that, in more than one sense, the “fruit of Venus” – intimated by botanical innuendo – may indeed remain available to an individual even if romantic love is avoided.

Sensitivity to a given *double entendre* can naturally vary from reader to reader, and subjectivity necessarily plays a part in recognizing any innuendo as containing anything inherently suggestive in it. Yet a case for the presence of sexual *double entendre* in *DRN* is bolstered by the fact that Lucretius writes explicitly about intercourse,

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15 The exploration of sexual matters, following upon the discussion of dreams, occupies some 250 lines (4.1037-1287); by way of comparison, note that the plague passage, itself an extended episode, runs for about 100 lines fewer (6.1138-1286).

16 See again Fratanutono 2015: 476. Note, however, the countervailing observation of Adams 1982: 227 that “Metaphors can be coined so freely that many occur only once. But the symbolism which generates isolated metaphors may be perceived by speakers over a long period.” Moreover, as demonstrated herein, Lucretius’ use of these images as sexual metaphors is far from isolated, in regard to both *DRN* and Greek and Latin literature in general.
using both figurative speech and overtly sexual terms. Indeed, in multiple extended passages, Lucretius describes sexual matters unflinchingly and unambiguously.\footnote{See 4.1055-56 on the exchange of bodily fluids; 4.1079-83 on the bites and miniature pains inflicted by one lover upon another; 4.1108-09 on lovers’ physical clinging and closeness; 4.1192-1207 on the pleasure of the physical act; 4.1215-17 on casting forth seeds and breathing as one; 4.1263-77 on sexual positions and movements.}

Moreover, sexual intercourse features prominently in \textit{DRN}, so it should not come as a surprise to note that an author who writes about sexual matters in plain language may also insinuate additional, more subtle remarks on the same subject. It is my hope that it will not strain credulity to identify coded language of a sexual nature within a famously subtle poet who openly devotes more than 200 verses to the discussion of plainly sexual matters.

Additionally, Martin Smith, selfsame editor of the revised 1992 Loeb edition of \textit{DRN}, has detected a similar case in Lucretius in which the poet forges a link between his Book 4 description of sex and an account of natural phenomena, in this case the kindling of fire among wind-beaten trees. In an article published in the same year in which the Rouse and Smith Loeb appeared (1992), Smith points to the similar modes of expression whereby trees are said to rub together and emit the “seeds” of their heat. He compares the inter-arboreal friction of 1.897-903 and 5.1091-1104 to Lucretius’ explanation of the accumulation and ejaculation of semen at 4.1040-48. “That Lucretius has a sexual picture in mind in both tree-friction passages,” Smith (1992: 41) argues, “is confirmed by the occurrence in them of several words and phrases which either are ambiguous or are used by him elsewhere in a sexual context.”\footnote{Smith 1992: 41 also identifies specific \textit{double entendres} in the vocabulary of the passages cited, in a fashion similar to that of my own proposals below. Cf. also W.S. Smith 2005: 71: “the appropriateness of the passage [viz., the diatribe on love at the end of \textit{DRN 4}] is enhanced by its}
parallels which I identify below: Lucretius links his account of intercourse at the end of Book 4 to other portions of the poem by means of the pointed reuse of similar phraseology.

Furthermore, Lucretius offers his own tacit approval of identifying sexual euphemisms in the poem. In Book 4, he employs a number of passing metaphors which complement his otherwise straightforwardly explicit account of love and sex. For the moment I turn our attention to one such metaphorical usage in particular, namely agricultural innuendo. Lucretius in fact employs agricultural euphemisms on more than one occasion in the diatribe on love, and I contend that his willingness to turn from sexually explicit language to metaphorical language encourages the reader to similarly identify the underlying sexual attitudes of this section whenever they occur elsewhere in the poem. His first such use occurs in his description of the passion of intercourse just before sexual climax is reached (4.1105-1109):

denique cum membris conlatis flore fruuntur
aetatis, iam cum praesagit gaudia corpus
atque in eost Venus ut muliebria conserat arva,
adfugunt avide corpus iunguntque salivas

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structural and thematic parallels with many other parts of the poem,” encouraging such connections as are drawn between Book 4 and other sections of DRN in this chapter.

19 Such metaphorical expressions include: 4.1052 on the weapons of Venus; 4.1086-90 on quenching the flames of love; 4.1120 on the compound metaphor of melting and wounding in love; 4.1146-50 on love’s snare; 4.1199 on burning desire again; 4.1202 on love’s chains; and 4.1278 on the arrows of Venus (expressly rejected as a source of causation, notably).


21 Godwin 1986 and 1991 are also helpful in several identifications of euphemistic imagery in the poem generally.
oris et inspirant pressantes dentibus ora.

In the midst of this clear description of lovers in coitus, detailing the motions of limbs, mouths, and even spittle, Lucretius also engages momentarily in poetic metaphor. He speaks of lovers enjoying the “flower of youth” (*flore... aetatis*, 4.1105-06) just as easily as he recounts the literal joining of their mouths and bodies. He describes the buildup and crescendo of intercourse in euphemistic – not explicit – terms, resorting to agricultural metaphor when he writes that “Venus is on the point of sowing the woman’s fields” (*atque in eost Venus ut multibria conserat arva*, 4.1107). The reader thus observes Lucretius’ willingness to adopt both straightforward and more oblique means of expression regarding sexual intercourse.

This capacity to modulate between overt and metaphorical sexual language indeed recurs, signaling yet again the poet’s encouragement of the pupil to achieve a level of facility in reading both methods of expression. Later in Book 4, Lucretius explicitly describes several sexual movements and positions, at 4.1263-77:

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et quibus ipsa modis tractetur blanda voluptas,
id quoque permagni refert; nam more ferarum
quadrupedumque magis ritu plerumque putantur
concipere uxoreres, quia sic loca sumere possunt,
pectoribus positis, sublatis semina lumbis.
nec molles opus sunt motus uxoribus hilum;
nam mulier prohibet se concipere atque repugnat,
clunibus ipsa viri Venerem si laeta retractat
atque exassato ciet omni corpore fluctus;
eicit enim sulcum recta regione viaque
vomeris atque locis avertit seminis ictum.
idque sua causa consuerunt scorta moveri,
ne complerunt crebro gravidaeque iacerent,
et simul ipsa viris Venus ut concinnior esset;
coniugibus quod nil nostri opus esse videtur.
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22 For a discussion of sexual climax described in plain language elsewhere in Book 4, and a proposed (if ultimately unpersuasive) emendation regarding the metaphor of “running the course of love” at 4.1196, see Allen 1991.
The vocabulary in this passage is generally of an explicit nature. For instance, Lucretius describes intercourse performed in the manner of animals by employing precise anatomical terminology: *pectoribus positis, sublatis... lumbis*, 4.1267. Rather tellingly, too, the poet shows that he is perfectly content to alternate between, on the one hand, baldly sexual terminology, and, on the other, metaphor or euphemism, even in the same sentence. Lucretius engages in precisely this practice at 4.1269-73, when he accounts for different sexual positions’ relative likeliness of resulting in conception. He combines precise anatomical terms such as *clunibus* (4.1270) with the only barely euphemistic phrase *viri Venerem* (4.1270). This coexistence of overt and oblique terminology encourages the reader to acquire a level of comfort with both modes of expression.

Further, the poet extends this metaphorical phraseology into the ensuing two-line analogy, again priming the reader to recognize capably the validity of both sorts of language. At 4.1272-73, Lucretius resorts entirely to agricultural sexual metaphor:

\[ eicit enim sulcum recta regione viaque \\
\textit{vomeris atque locis avertit seminis ictum}. \]

The furrow and the plow clearly stand in for the corresponding sexual genitalia, and the reader is meant to handle this shift from direct to metaphorical speech nimbly. Such is Lucretius’ poetic and didactic deftness, that he enables the reader to handle this sort of shift in signification and lays the foundation for later recognition of proper Epicurean

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23 Adams 1980: 52 observes that the latter phrase borders on anatomical identification. Note that the unsignalled metonymical use of Venus to signify the male member actually echoes Lucretius’ lesson on Bacchus, Ceres, Neptune, and naming in general (2.655-60) – here in an unmarked use which subtly challenges the reader to apply that lesson independently. The unsignalled use of metaphor at 4.1272-73 likewise tasks the reader with keeping pace even without the express assistance of the instructor.

24 Adams 1982 demonstrates the *double entendre* available in reading *sulcus* for vagina (84) and *vomer* for penis (24) by citing precisely this passage of Lucretius; see also Adams 1980: 51 on Lucretius’ use of metaphorical plowing and sowing.
sexual *mores* elsewhere in the poem. This euphemism in Book 4 helps to set the precedent for such instances of *double entendre* as subsequently unfold.

### 3.3. Acorn and Innuendo

We have observed, then, that the diatribe on love which occupies the close of Book 4 encourages the reader to acquire a certain level of comfort in identifying and interpreting otherwise innocent terminology as securely sexual metaphors. Now we turn to an application of that observation to the subsequent portions of the poem, in keeping with Lucretius’ practice of incremental didacticism. Specifically, the acorn will be seen to activate this lesson elsewhere in *DRN*. I posit that the word *glans* constitutes an important verbal cue for the reader of *DRN* to apply a degree of focus and learning, since the term contains multiple competing meanings. As such, *glans* and its phallic connotation require the reader of *DRN* to pay attention to the various levels of the word’s meaning whenever it appears in the text.

The acorn (Latin *glans*, Greek βάλανος) has long been recognized to have been a viable byword for the male member in ancient literature. The Latin *glans*, itself a

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25 Words such as *corpus*, *simulacrum*, and other otherwise-commonplace terms frequently activate still another (often specialized) meaning when they appear in a specific context in *DRN*, as Swanson 1962, Kelly 1980, Landolfi 2013, and others have suggested; I submit that *glans* poses a similar phenomenon. On Epicurean notions about language and naming, see Atherton 2005, Holmes 2005, and Shearin 2015.

26 Apart from its latent sexual meaning, the surface definition of *glans* as acorn also renders it the usual term among the ancients for the diet of the backward, the poor, or the famine-struck; cf. Theophr. *Hist. pl.* 3.8, Artem. 2.25, Paus. 8.4, Hdt. 1.66; Plaut. *Truc.* 3.2 describes acorns as food for cattle. On the association of the acorn as foodstuff in hard or primitive times, see Mason 1995, Campbell 2002: 16-19, Dalby 2003, and Wilkins and Hill 2006.

27 See the entries on *glans* in Adams 1982: 72 and βάλανος in Henderson 1991: 119 for a survey of this well-attested euphemism’s frequency among ancient authors; see also Henderson 1991: 47 (“The acorn suggests the erect penis”) and 120 ("φηγός, acorn, is the glans penis at [Ar. Pax] 1137") as well as Henderson 1991: 247: “ἀπεψωληψόντος and ψολός are used to mean ‘with glans exposed’ (by erection) and ‘circumcised,’” citing Ar. *Av.* 504-507, *Eq.* 964, *Pl.* 265-67, and Ach. 155-61. Aristotle employs the acorn in both senses in *Hist. an.*: as male member at 493a27, and as oak-tree product at 603b31. For its use as technical anatomical term, see also Pollux 2.171.
calque on the Greek βάλανος,\textsuperscript{28} picks up on the very associations which βάλανος evidently holds among the Greeks.\textsuperscript{29} The acorn’s availability as a phallic \textit{double entendre} among the ancients appears to have arisen from a few distinct features. Namely, based on its similarity in shape to the head of the penis and to the iron bolt-pin of a door, “These two images, the acornlike knob and the hard shaft, make βάλανος a vivid vehicle for double entendres on erect phalli.”\textsuperscript{33} Adams neglects Lucretius in his discussion of poets who pun on the word \textit{glans},\textsuperscript{34} and Fratantuono denies outright that Lucretius employs the word to such effect.\textsuperscript{35} I aim to illustrate, however, that such innuendo is not only demonstrable but self-reinforcing and ideologically justifiable, in terms of Epicurean sexual \textit{mores}, at each of the six occurrences of the noun \textit{glans} or the adjective \textit{glandifer} in \textit{DRN}. The acorn’s \textit{double entendre} in these passages is in no small part activated by the tendency of these occurrences of the word \textit{glans} either to draw explicitly upon the vocabulary of the end of Book 4 or to cast back to it notionally. I suggest that it is no coincidence that every appearance of acorns occurs only after the end of Book 4 and the treatise on proper sexual attitudes therein, and the following discussion will demonstrate just how Lucretius aligns glandes with sex and proper sexual \textit{mores} in each of these instances, asking the reader to pay closer attention at every turn.

Acorns first appear in \textit{DRN} at 5.939 with the collocation glandiferas… quercus and at 5.965 with the phrase vel pretium, glandes atque arbita vel pira lecta, and the

\textsuperscript{28} Adams 1981a: 204 and 1982: 72.
\textsuperscript{29} Cf. Martos Montiel 2014.
\textsuperscript{33} Henderson 1991: 119.
\textsuperscript{34} Adams 1982: 154 does, however, note Lucretius’ use of sexual agricultural metaphor at 4.1107.
\textsuperscript{35} Fratantuono 2015: 476 n. 84.
sexual valences of the acorn will be activated by the sense of the lines in question but also the vocabulary which precedes them. This entire extended passage (5.925-76) is situated within Lucretius’ famous anthropological history, which runs from 5.783 through 5.1457 and concludes that book. At this stage in his anthropology, Lucretius contrasts ancient and modern humans (5.925-26):

*et genus humanum multo fuit illud in arvis
durius, ut decuit, tellus quod dura creasset.*

The repetition of forms of the word *durus* is striking, and the adjective certainly lends itself to notions of hardness in the sense of erection and sexual readiness. Adams has already noted, for instance, that the synonymous adjective *rigidus* is “typically used of (male) erection,” and others have made it clear that *durus*-related words similarly carry sexual undertones. Indeed, we observe quite a few adjectives connoting firmness and rigidity in this section: note *durius* (5.926), *dura* (5.926), *solidis* (5.927), and *validis* (5.928). This concatenation links the physical hardiness of early mankind with the associations of sexual readiness and virility which that vocabulary likewise connotes.

Lucretius’ description of early humanity as *validis aptum per viscera nervis* (5.928) taps into still another set of sexual terms. We have addressed the strength and vigor of *validus*, but its pairing with the noun *nervus* is similarly telling. As Adams

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37 Adams 1982: 103. See also Katz and Volk 2006: 173, as well as Adams 1981b: 245 n. 19, citing Catull. 56.7 (on which see also Adams 1981c: 124), Petron. Sat. 134.11, and Mart. 9.47.6 and 11.16.5.

38 Thus Houghton 2009: 284 on Ov. Rem. Am. 765: “*durus*, like *rigidus*, can be used to denote an erection.” Cf. Katz and Volk 2006: 171 on Verg. Ecl. 8.80: “*durescere*… refers to an erection.” Cf. also Kennedy 1993: 31-34: “*mollitia* and related terms inevitably entail erotic connotations as well; conversely *durus* bears a male erotic sense” (31). The notion that hardness can bear erotic undertones in Latin poetry is also cast into relief by the clearly sexual sense of softness in Hor. Epod. 12.14-16, for instance: *Inachia langues minus ac me, | Inachiam ter nocte potes, mihi semper ad unum | mollis opus* (on the elliptical use of *posse* with an accusative complement to insinuate an unstated sexual act, see Adams 1981c: 122). For a discussion of other specific instances of softness and sexual impotence in Horace, Catullus, and Suetonius, see Hallett 2015.
notes, *nervus*, a word which translates variously as nerve, sinew, bow, bowstring, virility, or the male sex organ itself, can connote the penis for a variety of reasons.  Adams principally invokes the capacity of the word *nervus* to suggest the phallus in its meaning specifically as bowstring, but it can serve that purpose in its other senses as well. Henderson, too, states that it can denote the erect male member. I posit that even as *nervus* (Lucr. 5.928), on one level, certainly operates with the surface meaning of “sinew,” or “tissue,” still, the sexual associations of the term are not fully stripped of it, particularly when the term is used, as here, in conjunction with various sexually suggestive terms in the surrounding lines. Moreover, this word has already appeared in *DRN* in an overtly sexual context. At 4.1115, Lucretius uses precisely this word in describing the end result of coitus, in terms which simultaneously operate on a straightforward and on a more suggestive level: *tandem... se erupit nervis conlecta cupido*. The poet’s own willingness to invoke first literal and then figurative applications of different words in the same verse will encourage the reader to entertain multiple meanings for a given word in any one context, since the same word can be used elsewhere in the poem in a sense which is apparently altogether different – if not entirely

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39 Adams 1982: 21-22 and 38; see also Adams 1981a: 199. Primary texts cited by Adams on such phallic uses of *nervus* include Priap. 68.33, Petron. Sat. 129.8, 131.6, and 134.1, and Juv. 9.34 and 10.205. Ryan and Perkins 2009 also remark that Ovid’s use of *nervos* at Am. 1.1.18 constitutes “sexual innuendo” with reference to the male member. Cf. the use of other words which can also signify a bow or bowstring (e.g., *arcus*) which Adams 1982 likewise cites for their sexually suggestive capacity, including at Apul. *Met.* 2.16.

40 Though not exclusively: see also his discussion of the term’s nonfigurative deployment as phallus in, e.g., Cic. *Sest.* 16, Hor. *Epod.* 12.19, and Catull. 67.27 at Adams 1982: 38.

41 Adams 1982: “the capacity of the strings to tauten and relax” lends it a phallic quality (21), but the multivalent term can also be classified, for instance, “among metaphors based on pointed objects” (22).

unrelated or inextricable from its other iterations. Lucretius can thus employ a single word for the purpose of double specification within that same verse, playing on its multiple meanings. After all, Lucretius uses the word *nervus* in different senses on different occasions in the poem, so he clearly recognizes the word’s power for multivalent signification. At 4.1115, he employs *nervus* to denote the male member in coital ejaculation. Then, at 6.1190, the word refers to the quivering musculature of plague victims’ hands. The word’s appearance here at 5.928, that is to say, must not be dismissed as irrelevant to establishing a generally suggestive tone, since it can operate on multiple different levels at different points in the poem. The multiple associations of the vocabulary employed in this passage may thus suggest that early mankind was also disposed to join male and female genitalia in intercourse in an entirely natural fashion, underscoring a point which Lucretius explicitly argues in this very section.

Given the numerous suggestive valences of different words in this passage, it should not be surprising that, by the time the reader encounters the well-attested phallic symbol of the acorn in *glandiferas inter curabant corpora quercus | plerumque* at 5.939-40, a sexual reading is already available. Even the literal meaning of the verse encourages a straightforwardly sexual reading: it is no great stretch to understand sexual

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43 Cf. the changing signification of *natura* in the poem (Solomon 2004), or of *Venus* (Cerasuolo 2014), or of the various (specialized and non-specialized) applications of *animus, anima, simulacrum, or corpus*, for example, at different points in the poem. Cf. also Warren 2007: 22 on the numerous applications of otherwise commonplace Latin terms put to use in Lucretius’ exposition of Epicureanism, cutting against the claims of the poverty of the Latin language (*patrii sermonis egestas*, 1.832 and 3.260) under which the poet suggests he is laboring.

44 6.1190-92: *in manibus vero nervi trahere et tremere artus | a pedibusque minutatim succedere frigus | non dubitabat.*

45 One might further adduce the word *viscera* (5.928) along similar lines: the word can clearly mean “flesh” or “guts,” but as Adams 1982: 95 notes, “Viscera, a vague term for the internal organs, was applicable to the female internal pudenda.” See also Adams 1981b: 258.

46 5.962-65.
activity occurring in a line which notes that “among the acorn-bearing oaks they would generally attend to their bodies.” The additional, sexually suggestive resonances which I outline here serve only to enhance that already-available valence of the words’ literal suggestiveness. We have mentioned in brief the use of *glans* as a byword for penis, but I contend that the oak, too, is sexually charged. I would submit that *quercus* here operates on a plane similar to that of its synonym *robur*, which means not only oak but also strength and virility, and hence the shifting identification from oak to virility to virile member is no great leap.\(^47\) Likewise Adams notes that “In a suggestive context *corpus* could take on a precise anatomical sense,” and, similarly, “Sometimes the whole person is mentioned instead of the appropriate sexual part,” casting *corpora* at 5.939 as being suggestive of genitalia.\(^48\) We thus observe a description of the acorn-bearing oak which might be said to run parallel to the later example of the pear tree in the *Comoedia Lydiae* cited above, the phallic tree as well as its phallic produce constituting a suggestive *mise-en-abyme* of sorts.\(^49\) On this reading the tmetic interweaving of *inter curabant corpora quercus* (5.939) underscores the physical entwinement of lovers in coitus, even recalling the entangling of progenerative Venus with Mars at the beginning of Book 1 and setting us in mind of the power of suggestion. Note that neither this description of primitive man nor the Mars-Venus tableau which it recalls illustrates ideal Epicurean sexual *mores*. The rather un-Epicurean verb *curabant* at 5.939 betrays the imperfect nature of early humans’

\(^{47}\) On the phallic nature of the oak in Horace, cf. Minadeo 1982: 36-39, 139-40, 204. Note also Lucr. 4.1037-38 regarding the “stiffening” of a young man’s limbs using the related verb *roborare*, following immediately upon Lucretius’ description of the boy’s nocturnal emissions (*sollicitatur id in nobis, quod diximus ante, | semen, adulta aetas cum primum roborat artus*).

\(^{48}\) Adams 1982: 46; see also Adams 1981b: 259.

\(^{49}\) See Adams 1982: 29. Cf. also Minadeo 1982 on the phallic use of the tree in Horace (e.g., “trees intimate the phallus,” 1982: 20).
attempts at satiating their desires. Meanwhile, Lucretius has already fervently warned us against the “wound of love” which Venus can impart, as with mens unde est saucia amore at 4.1048 and the ensuing description up to 4.1057. Yet Mars is patently guilty of falling victim to such affliction (aeterno devictus vulnere amoris, 1.34) – habitually, at that (saepe, 1.33) – and Venus interlocks herself with him (circumfusa, 1.39), hardly displaying the freedom from concern which our instructor preaches, and which the gods are purported to enjoy in their divine detachment. It would seem that early man and lovestruck god are not wholly dissimilar in their failure to adhere to proper Epicurean principles, then, even if primitive man appears to have successfully escaped falling headlong into the trap of romantic love that Mars evidently proves frequently unable to avoid. So why these imperfect exempla, and why this allusion to such lack of restraint?

The notional callback to the Venus of the proem may remind the reader of that earlier Mars-Venus tableau, but after Lucretius has explicitly stated for us the correct vision of Venus at 4.1058 he can allude to that earlier flawed model of the intertwined Venus and Mars and expect his reader in Book 5 to no longer be susceptible to misapplying that introductory appeasement or enticement at the outset of the poem. Further, primitive mankind displays a number of attractive and emulation-worthy qualities, but without the guidance of Epicurus, which will only arrive much after these individuals’ lifetimes, they

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51 Although the poet may indeed be making use of an established literary trope linking wounds with love, still I see more complexity in his intricate refashioning of such imagery across DRN than, for instance, Marković 2008b: 97 would seem to grant (“Lucretius simply took advantage of a popular literary motif to drive his point home”). See also West 1969 and Brown 1987 on the analogy.
52 Ernout 1916: 152 explicitly likens Mars to the wounded lover of 4.1048-49.
53 On the Hymn to Venus in the proem to Book 1 as an attractive opening advertisement to the reader, see, e.g., Segal 1990, Gale 1994, Gruber 2009, Holm 2013, and Asmis 2015.
can only do so much. The important point is that they are managing fairly well at this initial stage, before later developments and distractions derail them still further. The reader can in effect retroactively correct that earlier reading in the present moment in light of the lessons presented since the time of that earlier illustration; and certainly the pupil can apply this new lesson moving forward, even if that past iteration is left unrevisited. Revision and increased scrutiny is thus a prerequisite for the attentive reader’s most profitable progress through the poem.

While the acorn is a well-attested euphemism for the phallus, it is clear that a number of its appearances as a double entendre in Latin poetry have thus far gone unremarked in scholarship, as I believe is the case in Lucretius. Specifically, I propose that we turn briefly now to an intriguing appearance of an acorn in Eclogue 10. At Ecl. 10.20, Virgil narrates the arrival of the sopping-wet Menalcas: uvidus hiberna venit de glande Menalcas. Commentators have variously attempted to explain this unusual description. Fantazzi notes that the language of 10.19-20 is unique: Virgil employs “words never seen before or since in poetic contexts” in order, Fantazzi suggests, “to emphasize the lowliness of his Muse.” Kidd detects a Theocritean allusion and posits that “the acorns in winter (20) recall Id. 9.19-20.” Van Sickle notes the rustic backwardness of acorn-eating and proposes that the practice casts Menalcas’ Arcadia in

56 Ancona 1994: 162 n. 6 identifies the Eclogues, and the tenth in particular, as a locus of Virgilian double entendre: “For cresco used elsewhere in an erotic sense, see, e.g., Vergil Eclogue 10.54 (where it is also repeated) and 73. In both passages from Vergil the ‘increase’ of love is associated with the growth of trees which, particularly in the latter passage, seems to have a phallic sense.” See Katz and Volk 2006 for suggestive language elsewhere in the Eclogues.
57 Fantazzi 1966: 183.
58 Kidd 1964: 56. An allusion to Theocritus may then introduce some of the erotic aspects which pervade the Idylls.
an unflattering, unsophisticated light;\(^{59}\) and even as Van Sickle highlights the intricate symmetry of the line’s arrangement,\(^{60}\) nevertheless, on the question of the precise meaning of the description, he remains noncommittal.\(^{61}\) Coleman sees in Ecl. 10.20 a “realistic image” in which Menalcas is wet “either from gathering the acorns on the wet ground or from steeping them in water.”\(^{62}\) After the discovery of the “New Gallus” in 1979,\(^{63}\) Fairweather proposes that the newly recovered Gallan verses are the fragments of an amoebic contest, in part so that she may posit a more direct literary model for Virgil’s tenth Eclogue, in which Gallus figures so prominently. Part of her case draws on the frustrating opacity of Ecl. 10.20, and she ventures that “such obscurity as we find in [Ecl. 10.20], uvidus hiberna venit de glande Menalcas (why should acorns make one wet?), also suggests allusion to lost poetry.”\(^{64}\) I survey these widely divergent interpretations in order to demonstrate the sheer consternation which this verse has caused readers of the Eclogues. These and other readings are surely profitable, and by no means do I intend to supersede them.\(^{67}\) Rather, by way of addition, I propose still another way forward in dealing with the line’s difficulty, namely a sexual double entendre on the model of the

\(^{59}\) Van Sickle 1970: 909.

\(^{60}\) Clearly the formal arrangement of the line alone indicates that the poet took no small degree of care over its composition. Cf. Gagliardi 2014 ad loc.: “il verso si segnala per l’elegante struttura,” and indeed it constitutes “l’unico versus aureus dell’ecl. 10 (ve ne sono cinque ‘concentrici’ nelle Bucoliche, ecll. 4, 4; 6, 8; 7, 12; 9, 15; 10, 20).” See also Morani 1985 on formal features of this and other lines in the Eclogues in which “i due sostantivi sono collocati con effetto chiastico rispetto ai due attributi” (1985: 70).

\(^{61}\) Van Sickle 1970: 909: “Whether Menalcas was gathering in the wet winter woods or damp from cooking and mashing is perhaps immaterial.”

\(^{62}\) Coleman 1977 ad loc.

\(^{63}\) PQasrIbrim inv. 78-3-11/1 (LI/2); Anderson, Parsons, and Nisbet 1979.

\(^{64}\) Fairweather 1984: 171. Whitaker pushes back against Fairweather’s reading, and rather argues that the tenth Eclogue’s “blending [of pastoral and elegiac elements] is new, not second-hand” (Whitaker 1988: 456).

\(^{67}\) On suggestive readings which supplement rather than supplant the surface meaning of a text, cf. Ancona 1994: 162 n. 6 and Minadeo 1982: 142.
phallic acorns we have encountered already. Virgil’s Menalcas, on such a reading, joins the Arcadian retinue in *Ecl.* 10 after relieving the winter-fueled passions of his sexual organ; i.e., Menalca is returning from a sexual encounter. Yet even if this reading offers us an explanation for the phrase *hiberna... de glande*, still, what are we to make of Menalca’s description as *uvidus*? I submit that Menalca’s wetness also signals that he has just had sex, since “An act subsequent to intercourse was washing.” Indeed, Menalca has already been recognized for his vaguely erotic associations in the *Eclogues*. A sexual reading of the acorns of 10.20, then, allows us to make sense of the line in a way which reinforces the erotic aspects of the tenth *Eclogue*’s pastoral-elegiac pastiche all the more potently.

### 3.4. *Lucretian glandes*

To return to Lucretius, the entire extended passage under discussion (5.925-76) echoes select vocabulary cues which appear during the excursus on love and sex at the end of Book 4. These concrete verbal connections provide a still stronger case for the availability of a sexual reading in the present passage. For instance, Lucretius shows us

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69 Ancient thinkers considered winter a time for masculine sexual wantonness, just as summertime was the season of female lasciviousness; see Skinner 2013a: 39. Arist. *Pr.* 879a31-35 holds that men consist of a hot and dry nature, whereas women are colder and wetter, resulting in the seasonal disparity of their respective sexual proclivities. See also Hes. *Op.* 582-88 and Arist. *Hist. an.* 542a33-542b2 for the idea; Alc. 347a (implicitly) and Plin. *HN* 10.172 (explicitly) draw on the Hesiodic adage. Cf. Celsus *Med.* 2.1.17 on the good health of men “between youth and old age” during winter (*tutissimi sunt... iuvenes hieme quique inter iuventam senectutemque sunt*).  
70 Adams 1982: 196.  
71 Berg 1965: 14 notes the erotic associations of Menalca’s beloved Daphnis, and Segal 1967: 297 n. 22 makes the “probable erotic implications” of Menalca’s interaction with Daphnis still clearer, adding further erotic undertones in Menalca’s behavior in *Ecl.* 2.29 and 3.74-75. Note, too, Menalca’s declaration of the love he shared with Daphnis at *Ecl.* 5.52: *Dapnnin ad astra feremus: amavit nos quoque Daphnis*. For another identification of Menalca’s dear Daphnis (namely, Daphnis as Lucretius), see Kronenberg 2016, on which cf. Van Sickle 2017.
at 5.932 that early mankind lived life in a manner which resembles that of wild beasts, in my view pointedly using the specific adjective vulgivagus (wide-ranging, promiscuous): *vulgivago vitam tractabant more ferarum*. While Leonard and Smith 1942 *ad loc.* suggest that *vulgivago* here is a transferred epithet that properly belongs with *ferarum* to describe the manner of life of wandering wild beasts, I suggest that the adjective is attributed quite suitably to the word *more* here: the phrase *vulgivago… more* indicates that early civilization lived according to the wide-ranging custom of sexual intercourse practiced by animals, in a manner precisely recalling *vulgivagaque vagus Venere* of 4.1071. Even the phrase *more ferarum* itself looks back to an antecedent at 4.1264 for the sexual position of animals that most probably produces offspring. Line 5.932 stands as both a clinical assessment for successful procreation and a call to live free from romantic love in the way of wild animals. One course of inoculating oneself against love, then, entails living in precisely the manner that beasts and early humans do: by eschewing romantic love in favor of practical and demythologized intercourse. Similarly reminiscent of the conclusion of Book 4 is line 5.944, in which we are told that the world’s blooming freshness thrives because it bears hard sustenance (*pabula dura tulit*). Not only does the sexually charged word *dura* return here, but it in fact replaces the poisonous love found in the Book 4 formulation of the similar phrase *pabula amoris* (4.1063). Both grammatically and ideologically, hardness and sexual readiness in early

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72 Note the resonance from *Republic* 9 (586a), recalling Plato’s phrase βοσκηµάτων δίκην κάτω. Whereas Plato’s Socrates uses these words as a pejorative description of pleasure-seekers, Lucretius reappropriates the phrase to denote a positive quality of early mankind. For more on this phrase and Lucretius’ pointed refashioning of Plato, see the chapter on jar imagery below.

73 Fratantuono 2015: 363 observes that these are the only two occurrences of the adjective in Lucretius.

74 4.1263-67. For more on this passage, see above.

75 The phrase likewise recalls the *pabula laeta* of 1.15, again in a markedly Venusian context.
mankind take the place of romantic love, reinforcing early civilization’s emulation-worthy, nature-grounded way of life.

Yet still more verbal echoes recall Book 4 and sexual matters in the present extended passage. At 5.945-52, the imagery of early man’s wanderings among the regions of nymphs (nympharum, 5.949) again contains possible sexual innuendo, not only demythologizing nymphs but also drawing on the Greek yonic euphemism of the same name, νύμφη, synonymous with μύρτον in such an association. Lucretius thus insinuates that early mankind was better served by ranging freely and arbitrarily among sexual partners. What bolsters this sexual reading still further, moreover, is the linguistic tie between the enjammed anadiplosis umida saxa, | umida saxa at 5.950-51 and the polyptotonic repetition of stone in the closing lines of Book 4 (4.1286-87):

nonne vides etiam guttas in saxa cadentis
umoris longo in spatio pertundere saxo?

The emphatic doubling and the corresponding wetness of both sets of stones serve to align the passages notionally, allowing for a generally suggestive aura to pervade the Book 5 setting given its resonances from Book 4. Moreover, the closing rhetorical question of 4.1286-87 itself contains a sexual pun on pertundere, again signalling to the reader that even in the midst of explicitly sexual language it is possible to observe a more euphemistic turn of phrase. Note, too, that the participle modifying the repeated umida saxa of 5.950 and 5.951 is the evocative stillantia (5.951), “dripping.” Earlier in the

76 See Adams 1982: 98.
78 Adams 1982: 148: “Tundo and pertundo are not certainly attested as substitutes for futuo or pedico, but there are indications that they would have been capable of sexual undertones in a suggestive context.” The end of Book 4 manifestly provides such a context.
poem, that same verb describes the onset of the dangers of romantic love, immediately
after Lucretius instructs us on the true meaning of Venus (4.1058-60):

haec Venus est nobis; hinc autemst nomen amoris;
hinc illae primum Veneris dulcedinis in cor
stillavit gutta, et successit frigida cura.

The links to the previous discussion of love and sex are thus plentiful and demonstrable,
and they serve to connect the two passages all the more closely.80

The suggestive imagery continues into 5.952, where the water which runs over
these erotically reminiscent rocks is described as bubbling (scatere) and bursting forth
(erumpere).81 This depiction conjures the image of the wet dreamer of 4.1030-36,82
where Lucretius describes nocturnal emissions using the similar imagery of swelling
(loca turgida semine multo, 4.1034) and overflowing (profundant | fluminis ingentis
fluctus, 4.1035-36). Such verbal signposting with loaded terms for water and pouring
indicates the entirely appropriate linking of inlaid sexual innuendo and the explicit
discussion of sex in Book 4, and demonstrates Lucretius’ willingness to revisit an earlier
lesson in the text by means of both a general notional alignment and rather precise verbal
parallelism.

By the time we arrive at the second appearance of acorn-related terms in DRN,
then, and the first standalone mention of the noun glans (5.965), we ought to be entirely
prepared to read the acorn in a sexual light. At this stage in the poem we are still situated
squarely in Lucretius’ anthropological history, and the poet is busily describing the

80 The sexual association of water here accords well with the oft-noted umor/amor wordplay in
82 Not insignificantly, this passage forms the entrée en matière by which Lucretius pivots out of
his investigation of dreams and takes up his excursus on love and sex.
minimalism of early society. In the operative acorn-related lines, 5.962-65, Venus makes 
an early appearance in the first metrical foot of 5.962. Already the reader may recall the 
poet’s identification of Venus as sexual desire from the end of Book 4, which has already 
been revisited in the course of a number of metaphorical or metonymical uses following 
the goddess’s reformulation at 4.1058. Lucretius describes mankind’s early sexual 
encounters as occurring either out of mutual desire (5.963), by force (5.964), or due to a 
present (vel pretium, glandes atque arbita vel pira lecta, 5.965). The traditional reading 
of this third circumstance has tended to focus on the rather camp mental image it 
conjures, one party approaching the other with a barter proposition.  

I propose that this 
last line constitutes something of a sly tongue-in-cheek remark by Lucretius. The acorns 
offered as an enticement in exchange for sex are a euphemism for the literal sexual 
terences the two sides enact.  

Lucretius is inviting this reading of innuendo and 
showing off his poetic skill all at once, as both the primary definitions of the words and 
their secondary sexual euphemisms can coexist in a reading of the passage. 

The next recurrence of glans demonstrates the same mastery, this time at 5.1361- 
69 with Lucretius’ description of the origins of sowing, grafting, and practicing 
agriculture:

\begin{quote}
at specimen sationis et insitionis origo
ipsa fuit rerum primum natura creatrix,
arboribus quoniam baceae glandesque caducae
tempestiva dabant pullorum examina subter;
\end{quote}

\footnote{Leonard and Smith 1942 call this detail “an amusing touch,” and Gellar-Goad 2012: 75 sees it 
as a “quaint, charming” characterization which highlights Lucretius’ comic talents. These 
elements may surely be at play; I simply suggest that another valence can also be detected here.}

\footnote{Cf. Theoc. Id. 7.120 for a sexually suggestive pear. On that passage, Hatzikosta 1982: 177 
remarks, of the adjective for “ripe” in either the positive or the comparative degree, that “πέπων 
or πέπειρος in an erotic context, as is the case here, is used metaphorically to denote a person who 
is perfectly mature to be made love to.” Cf. also Nisbet and Hubbard 1978: 84-85 on “unripe 
grapes” and the erotic associations of various fruits.}
unde etiam libitum stirpis committere ramis
et nova defodere in terram virgulta per agros.
inde aliam atque aliam culturam dulcis agelli
temptabant, fructusque feros mansuescere terra
cernebant indulgendo blandeque colendo.

As we have already noted, agricultural metaphor provides particularly fertile ground, as it were, for sexual double entendre. Such metaphor has already been employed in DRN, priming the reader for this recurrence of similar imagery. Sowing (sationis 5.1361), for instance, bears particularly suggestive connotations, and Adams cites Lucretius as employing precisely this metaphor: “‘Sowing’ was a literary metaphor (cf. σπείρω at, e.g. Soph. Aj. 1293): Lucr. 4.1107 ‘muliebria conserat arua.’” The agricultural innuendo continues at 5.1366 when Lucretius tells us that early man found it pleasing to plant shoots throughout the fields (et nova defodere in terram virgulta per agros). The expression is again suggestive of a sexual subtext: Adams 1982: 152 explains that the language of digging, as seen here with defodere, carries sexual connotations, and he notes that “The presence of nominal metaphors of an agricultural kind alongside fodio… suggests that fodio retained its metaphorical character.” The notion of the field also lends itself to a sexual reading, and as Adams notes, apropos of the agros of 5.1366 and dulcis agelli of 5.1367, “The Latin sexual language is full of images which may be called ‘agricultural’ or ‘rustic’” including “in particular various words for the cunnus and culus: ager, agellus…” and others. Such digging and agricultural imagery thus draws on an

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85 Even the repetition of durus and related words immediately preceding this passage at 5.1359-60 might again prompt the reader to think in suggestive terms (durum… atque opere in duro durarent membra).
87 Note that the seedlings are evidently planted anew (nova… virgulta, 5.1366); such a statement is in line with the Epicurean attitude towards sex, on which view a person need not pair with the same partner for life but ought rather to join with whomsoever they choose, ever “planting anew” as deemed appropriate.
established vocabulary of *double entendre*. Further, the phrase which introduces the infinitive *defodere* is the rather Epicurean-sounding *libitumst* (5.1365). This agricultural sexual innuendo is thus expressly linked with the language of pleasure, further activating a suggestive reading of the passage and keeping it in line with the guiding principles of Epicureanism. Moreover, we are expressly situated in the realm of *rerum natura creatrix* in the beginning of this passage at 5.1362. She herself is the “model” and “source” of these various techniques (*specimen... et origo*, 5.1361); to practice them is by definition to live in accordance with nature, which could be said both of these lines’ literal meaning and likewise of the sexual attitudes which underlie them.

The *glandes* in this passage (5.1363), notably, are described as *caducae*, “ready to fall” – i.e., ripe, and not least of all in the sexual sense of ripeness. Yet it is significant that these acorns are described as *caducae* not only because it speaks to their ripeness, especially in the sexual sense of ripeness. In addition, moreover, the act of falling is itself another sexual innuendo. Adams explores a number of euphemisms for intercourse, beginning with words like “*Volutor* (‘have a roll’),” and he proceeds with an observation relevant to the present discussion: “With *uolutor* can be compared *cado* (‘tumble’),” a verb which shares an obvious etymological connection with the adjective *caducus* of Lucr. 5.1363.89 It might be said, then, that these acorns are given to tumbling in more than one sense. At 5.1364, they give rise to seeds which are themselves described as *tempestiva* (seasonable, i.e., gotten at a time of ripeness), all of which would support a case for further innuendo.90 The birth of man’s agricultural fervor is described by the pleasure of *libitumst* in 5.1365 as seen above; similarly, when cultivating their “sweet

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little field” (*dulcis agelli*, 5.1367),

it is with gratification that early humans tend them

(*indulgendo*, 5.1369), and in a fashion that is charming or seductive, *blandeque* (5.1369).

Lucretius links these agricultural terms with the language of pleasure at the same time, ever keeping a sexual reading available, especially as the implications of the innuendo serve to support the very philosophy he is presenting to us.

By the time *glans* next reappears in the poem, at the very end of Book 5,

Lucretius is lamenting mankind’s faulty turn away from all that had enabled civilization’s early success, including, subtly, the demythologized intercourse which the poet advocates. Nethercut 1967: 98 comments on the description of this decline, namely lines

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91 Note the diminutive form *agellus*, which speaks both to the practical logistics of early mankind’s small plots of land and to the affection bred by habit. Incidentally, such affection would by no means be out of tune with Epicurean teachings on love and friendship, especially in a school whose practitioners famously constitute a Garden (cf. Kronenberg 2016: 27 n. 8), as Lucretius makes clear at 4.1282-83 (*ut facile insuescat te secum degere vitam. | quod superest, consuetudo concinnat amorem*). On the sexually suggestive power of κῆπος and the language of gardens, see Cazzato 2013: 273, who notes that “the image of a κῆπος or ἀλσος seems to have been employed euphemistically for female pudenda.” See also Henderson 1991 on the suggestive power of the terms κῆπος, garden (135-36, 244), and λειμών, meadow (27, 136). Note Aphrodite’s connection with λειμών at Empedocles fr. 69/66 Inwood. Cf. Martos Montiel and Padilla García 2013 and Swift 2016: 266-67, as well as Housman 1931: 404, rendered by Jayo as follows: “It isn’t sufficiently clear that Burmann’s invention *pastum* can give the necessary meaning. *Pratum*, I think, can, that is, λειμώνα (meadow)—an apt term for an ass—which, since Euripides had written it at *Cyclopes* 171 about the female part, it’s not unbelievable that the poet of the *Priapeia* then transferred it to the male, just as a boy’s *hortus* (garden) is mentioned at 5.4, while κῆπος (garden) in Greek is γυναικός αἰσθών (female genitalia)” (Housman trans. Jayo 2001: 184); see Ingleheart 2018 on the multiple layers of Housman’s article (and on Jayo’s translation). On the versatility of the above terms (*agellus, pratum, κῆπος*, and λειμών) to signify either vagina or anus, see also Adams 1982: 84 and 113. Adams evidently does not admit of a yonic sense in *hortus* although he identifies the use of *hortus* as anus and of *hortulus* as female genitalia (Adams 1981b: 245-46 and 1982: 84), despite his express acknowledgement that “There is a good deal of interchange between words (particularly metaphors) for ‘anus/rectum’ and those for ‘vagina’ (see, e.g., p. 84 on *hortus/κῆπος…*)” (Adams 1982: 96), a statement which would seem to run counter to those very denials of yonic significance; still, Henderson 1991: 135 n. 147 identifies the yonic capacity of *hortus* as well.

92 Cf. the use of *blandus* (*vel sim.*) in contexts which connote pleasure – especially sexual pleasure – rather expressly, such as *blandaque... voluptas* at 4.1085 and *blanda voluptas* at 4.1263. For more on this vocabulary, see especially Catto 1988-89: 102 and Fowler 2002: 395, as well as Solomon 2004 and Johncock 2016a: 125-28.
“5.1380-1435, which picture the debasement that accompanied man’s increasing mastery over his environment, and which include what may well be the saddest words in Latin literature—*sic odium coepit glandis.*” There is another element which Lucretius laments in these lines, namely the turn away from the sexual *mores* advocated by the poet. When Lucretius describes the beginning of mankind’s decline at 5.1416-17, it is the spurning of the acorn – and the rejection of all that is natural about sexual intercourse – which precipitates that fall: *sic odium coepit glandis, sic illa relictæ | strata cubilia sunt herbis et frondibus aucta.* I would submit that the *herbis* and *frondibus* (5.1417) correspond to Theocritus’ greenery as seen above. Yet, in addition, the perhaps more general sexual association of the leafage is supplemented by Lucretius’ description of the disappointing abandonment of their natural beds (*cubilia*, 5.1417). Much like the state-of-nature sexual intercourse which they signify and enable, these *cubilia* and their entirely natural components have been done away with (*relictæ*, 5.1416). In any case, the beginning of societal decline, as Lucretius draws it, maps precisely with the abandonment of the simple and natural acorns, beds, and sexual intercourse which once characterized early humanity’s bliss.

The final two appearances of *glandes* in *DRN* occur in Book 6, in settings largely dealing with macro-scale natural phenomena like weather patterns. At both 6.179 and 6.307, the acorn in each passage is no longer the acorn of an oak tree but rather a leaden missile flying through the air, used as an analogue to elucidate a given point about the

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94 Cf. Adams’ treatment of the vocabulary of “sleeping with” or “lying with,” especially regarding words closely related to *cubile* such as *cubo*, *cubito*, *concubitus*, *cubitura*, and *cubitus* (1982: 177).
features and effects of thunder, lightning, wind, and clouds. Because the *glandes* in these
Book 6 passages stand for missiles shot from slings, Fratantuono 2015: 476 n. 84 rejects
the notion that *double entendre* lurks here, since the purely botanical sense of *glans* has
given way to its use as a missile or bullet. Yet this changed context constitutes a stepped
challenge on the model of Lucretian incremental didacticism, as I intend to make clear.
Consequently, I contend that even as *glans* takes on a new surface definition (as missile
or bullet) in these final two passages, still, the word’s suggestive valence and capacity for
innuendo have by no means disappeared, and the shift in meaning actually requires still
greater diligence on the part of the pupil if the secondary sexual meaning is to be
recognized as a valid reading, entirely germane to the poet’s broader didactic aims.

In both of these final instances, Lucretius describes the *glans* as *plumbea*, i.e.,
leaden. To treat these instances in order of appearance, *glans* recurs for the penultimate
time in the following passage, 6.175-82:

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ventus ubi invasit nubem et versatus ibidem
fecit ut ante cavam docui spissescere nubem,
mobilitate sua fervescit; ut omnia motu
percalefacta vides ardescere, plumbea vero
glans etiam longo cursu volvenda liquescit.
ergo fervidus hic nubem cum perscidit atram,
dissipat ardoris quasi per vim expressa repente
semina quae faciunt nictantia fulgura flammae...
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To be sure, the image of a leaden bullet being launched certainly fits the context of the
line as an appropriate surface meaning; but the sheer solidity connoted by *plumbea*,
particularly if applied to the suggestive sense of *glans* as penis, invites further
inspection.95 In this passage, there are multiple spheres of sexual innuendo in operation.

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95 On the erotic association of red lead with the male member, see Adams 1981a: 204. Consider
also lead’s weightiness (acknowledged, e.g., at Prop. 4.3.65, *plumbea*... *pondera*) and the
discussion of the weight or heft of the *mentula* (on which see Adams 1982: 71) in Mart. 10.55,
We have already mentioned the suggestiveness of hardness (*plumbea*, 6.178); likewise the notion of turning recurs as a euphemism for having sex (*versatus*, 6.175; *volvenda*, 6.179). Indeed, if we read the leaden acorn here as an erect phallus, and the act of turning as having intercourse, the softening denoted by the verb *liquescit* (6.179) lends itself to being read as post-coital flaccidity, particularly after the course is completed (*longo cursu*) at 6.179. Indeed, this account echoes the similar vocabulary of softening (*liquescunt*, 4.1114) and “running the course of love” (*spatium decurrere amoris*, 4.1196) seen in Lucretius’ earlier descriptions of intercourse. On this suggestive reading, the once-hard leaden member, after undergoing a turning and running its course, begins to grow soft, and so Lucretius appropriates physical phenomena such as the formation of lightning bolts to further align sex with the natural universe.

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96 For a discussion of hardening and softening as erotic reminiscences, in Verg. *Ecl. 8* in particular as well as Latin literature more broadly, see Katz and Volk 2006: 171-73.

97 On the suggestive capacity of lightning bolts, consider the lightning which reportedly struck second-century consul and censor Q. Fabius Maximus Eburnus and earned him the nickname *pullus Iovis* as the god’s plaything (Festus q.v. *pullus*; see Richlin 1992: 288-89, Williams 1999: 26, and Wypustek 2013: 148), as well as Jupiter’s unhappy incineration of his dear Semele upon greeting her for sexual intercourse in all his lightning-bearing splendor (as at Ov. *Met. 3.296-307*).
Lucretius marks even this passage as sexually suggestive by the vocabulary of heat, build-up, and release, all while in the discussion of this *glans*, a word which we have already stressed is an attested byword for the male member, and all, likewise, accompanied by words and concepts which have a firm basis in sexually suggestive Latin vocabulary, as we shall now observe. For one thing, the natural phenomenon being compared with the motion of the leaden acorn of 6.178-79 is the wind’s active penetration of a hollow cloud (*cavam... nubem*, 6.176). The wind, itself described as *versatus* (6.175) and thus recalling the euphemism of “turning” pointed out by Adams, has not only entered this hollow cloud, but also brought thickness to it (*spissescere*, 6.176). The language of heat is similarly suggestive in Latin and appears here in abundance: *fervescit*, 6.177; *percalefacta*, 6.178; *ardescere*, 6.178; *fervidus*, 6.180; *ardoris*, 6.181. These words all speak to an intense heating being emphasized over these few lines. Further, the inchoative -*sc*- verb-forms in *spissescere*, *fervescit*, and *ardescere* all indicate not merely the final state of the verb’s action but rather the process itself of heating, and even *liquescit*, mentioned above, speaks to the process or beginning of softening. By contrast, while these inchoatives may be suggestive of intercourse *in medias res*, the abrupt end of the act finds expression in the quite literal ejaculation described by *dissipat... semina* (6.181-82). Again, while it was the process being

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98 The suggestive power of hollows and caves is discussed at Adams 1982: 85-86.
100 Recall the imagery of a burning flame at 4.1068-90 in the poet’s diatribe on love: *namque in eo spes est, unde est ardistis origo, | restingui quoque posse ab eodem corpore flammam. | quod fieri contra totum natura repugnat; | unaque res haec est, cuius quam plurima habemus, | tam magis ardescit dira cuppedine pectus.*
emphasized in the preceding lines, the suddenness of *expressa repente* (6.181) indicates that the deed is now quite done.

Even in the above passage, a certain notional alignment with the end of Book 4 is evinced by Lucretius’ appeal to the language marking the process of moving and heating, which finds expression in 4.1192-1200:

*Nec mulier semper ficto suspirat amore quae complexa viri corpus cum corpore iungit et tenet adsuctis umectans oscula labris; nam facit ex animo saepe et, communia quaerens gaudia, sollicitat spatium decurrere amoris. nec ratione alia volucres armenta feraeque et pecudes et equae maribus subsidere possent, si non, ipsa quod illarum subat ardet abundans natura et Venerem salientum laeta retractat.* 1195

In this overtly sexual passage, heat finds clear expression in the emphatically asyndetic phrase *subat ardet abundans* (4.1199). Not only does heat characterize intercourse here, but likewise *spatium decurrere amoris* (4.1196)\(^\text{102}\) indicates the euphemistic “running the full course of love” to which the *longo cursu* of 6.179 corresponds. Similarly, the motion indicated by *mobilitate* and *motu* at 6.177 draws conceptually on the movements of women, particularly prostitutes, during intercourse, described at 4.1268-77:

*nec molles opu’ sunt motus uxoribus hilum; nam mulier prohibet se concipere atque repugnat, clunibus ipsa viri Venerem si laeta retractat atque exossato ciet omni corpore fluctus; eicit enim sulcum recta regione viaque vomeris atque locis avertit seminis ictum. idque sua causa consuerunt scorta moveri, ne completerunt crebro gravidaeque iacerent, et simul ipsa viris Venus ut concinnior esset; coniugibus quod nil nostris opus esse videtur.* 1270

\(^{102}\) See Jacobson 1990 for an interpretation of this phrase.
Kinetic energy abounds: note *motus* in 4.1268, *ciet* in 4.1271, *fluctus* in the same line, and *moveri* in 4.1274. Yet, by this late stage in Book 6, the explicit signposting has given way to more subtle notional alignment. If the linguistic echoes of Book 4 seem to be growing slightly more faint by the end of the poem, it should come as no surprise: I contend that precisely this gentle phase-by-phase stepping away from the beginner lessons, so to speak, bespeaks Lucretius’ general programmatic aim, namely to challenge readers to implement for themselves the tenets of Epicureanism laid out in *DRN*. And why might a sexual reading be applicable here at all? Again, Lucretius builds upon previous lessons about sexual *mores* which are based more firmly in nature as viewed by an Epicurean. Now the poet challenges us to see the same kind of free-form intercourse as a process or act which is thoroughly embedded in the very workings of the universe. Explicit references to the sexual attitudes detailed in Book 4 thus initially come thick and fast in the early Book 5 allusions, but each subsequent return to sexual imagery requires increasing attentiveness on the reader’s part and will require a greater cognitive application of the concept of Epicurean sexual *mores* with each new iteration.

Our attentiveness to the subtleness of Lucretius’ use of the word *glans* is assessed still one last time in *DRN*:

```plaintext
Fit quoque ut interdum venti vis missa sine igni
ingiscat tamen in spatio longoque metu,
dum venit, amitens in cursu corpora quaedam
grandia quae nequeunt pariter penetrare per auras;
atque alia ex ipso conradens aere portat
parvola, quae factunt ignem commixta volando,
non alia longe ratione ac plumbea saepe
fervida fit glans in cursu, cum multa rigoris
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103 The fact that the sexual valence of the acorn is activated after the conscious placement of the discourse on love at the end of Book 4 is in my view no coincidence. For more on the careful organization of the poem’s books, see especially Farrell 2007: 85-87 and Segal 1990b: 234.
corpora dimittens ignem concepit in auris.

Much like the previous glans passage, this instance involves erection and stiffness (note the mention of rigor at 6.307 in the context of our “leaden” glans). In addition, the language used by the poet here conjures notions of heat (fervida, 6.307), running the course (in cursu, 6.307), and even ejaculation (dimittens, 6.308). But the compression of this final glans recurrence, as we have often witnessed in Lucretian incremental didacticism, now enfolds that familiar idea of sexual innuendo into this merely three-line analogy in 6.306-308. The operative ideas are all to be found in this passage, as well. Heat and the process of heating recur in 6.300-301, in which the vis initially thrusts flamelessly (sine igni, 6.300) but ultimately catches fire.\textsuperscript{104} Likewise, that kindling is a process, and the fire begins to be lit in spatio longoque meatu, suggestive again of coitus itself.\textsuperscript{105} The evocative terms penetrare (6.303)\textsuperscript{106} and commixta (6.305),\textsuperscript{107} in concert with the doubling of the phrase in cursu (6.302 and 6.307), match the ejaculatory amittens (6.302) as well as the grinding of conradens (6.304).\textsuperscript{108} All that is to say that, even at this latest instance of sexually suggestive glans metaphor, Lucretius makes it clear that a sexual reading is available by again describing the relevant natural phenomenon in terms laced with double entendre.

I hope to have established by the above argumentation that specific moments in Lucretius’ text not only lend themselves to being read as innuendo but even positively (if

\textsuperscript{104} Observe the inchoative verb igniscat at 6.301.
\textsuperscript{105} Adams 1982: 87.
\textsuperscript{107} Adams 1982: 181-82.
\textsuperscript{108} Adams 1982: 168 classes the related verb radere, to shave or scrape, among euphemisms which are ambiguously yet securely sexual; cf. Henderson 1991: 175 and 176 on suggestive rubbing and chafing.
subtly) mark themselves to be read as such. But what is to be gained by such a reading? What effect does this inclusion of sexual innuendo have on our understanding of DRN? I submit that Lucretius’ conscious signposting of suggestive acorns serves a threefold purpose. First, in linking subsequent parts of the poem back to the discussion which concludes Book 4, Lucretius reveals something of the poetic blueprint governing his work. Each recurrence of sexual imagery includes not just the operative innuendo but even a subtle verbal or notional connection back to the Book 4 discussion of sex, requiring active readership on the part of the pupil. The intermittent recurrence of sexual imagery within new and different contexts following Book 4 likewise demands what Gale 1994b has called a simultaneously synchronic and diachronic appreciation of a given image. That is, each recurrence of a formerly familiar or established image in a new and somehow changed or unlikely setting encourages the reader to grapple with multiple, mutually-reinforcing contexts of a given image at the same time. What is more, each successive recurrence of botanical sexual double entendre receives steadily fewer textual markers of the sort which might expressly alert the reader to the presence of such innuendo. As a result, Lucretius’ readers undergo an increasingly more involved set of tests checking their alertness to various Epicurean teachings. This process of challenging the reader to interpret and reinterpret an established set of images, particularly in increasingly more difficult or unassisted scenarios, is a central component of Lucretian incremental didacticism.

Further, in addition to illuminating the architectural aims of incremental didacticism built into DRN, these various instances of innuendo also serve to underscore

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and reinforce the poet’s philosophical lessons throughout the work. In each of the *glans* passages in the poem, the surface content of a given passage is concerned with early humanity’s admirable and unspoiled relationship with pure nature, or else with macro-scale natural phenomena, such as wind, clouds, and the heat of fast-moving missiles. In each circumstance, the content of the section emphasizes nature and the natural. By inserting sexual innuendo into these nature-based images and settings, Lucretius subtly aligns his vision of proper sexual attitudes with his picture of all that is natural. That is, for an Epicurean, intercourse is and must be a purely natural, demystified, and demythologized act, based in nature just as much as early humans’ foraging or a missile’s heating. In this way, Lucretius underscores precisely the philosophical principles he aims to instill in his readership.

Finally, these various intimations likewise highlight Lucretius’ poetic skill. The sheer dexterity involved in encoding subtle, sexually suggestive language in an otherwise apparently neutral setting bespeaks Lucretius’ mastery of his craft. Indeed, that Lucretian sexual innuendo has gone greatly undertreated in scholarship illustrates just how sophisticated and seamless Lucretius’ artistry has proven. It is my hope that this discussion of *double entendre* in *DRN* has demonstrated that Lucretius indeed laces his poem with thoughtful innuendo in a way that solidifies his claim to both poetic and pedagogical subtlety and skill.
Chapter 4. The Fault in Our Jars: Allusion and Instruction in Lucretian Jar

Imagery

Already in this project we have examined how Lucretius will often offer subtle variations of an apparently repeated image when he reintroduces it later in De rerum natura. Thus far, we have largely explored incremental didacticism as Lucretius’ practice of training his readers to apply for themselves the tenets of Epicureanism laid out in the poem. At the same time, however, the poet will often use these recurrent images as the locus for intertextual allusion and a correction of sources, as observed in several of Lucretius’ Homeric or Ennian echoes, for example, discussed above.¹ The present chapter foregrounds this secondary aspect of Lucretius’ incremental didacticism, namely its capacity for intertextual allusion and philosophical polemic, while at the same time noting similar kinds of subtle variation as we have already traced in our analysis of Lucretius’ images. In this section, we will analyze Lucretius’ use of jars (Latin vas or vasum).² We trace the poet’s skillful manipulation of the image of a jar in ways which encourage the reader to grapple with those changes and contemplate just what a given jar analogy might mean: now the jar corresponds to the body, container of the soul, yet later the jar represents an individual’s mind and outlook, the locus of a person’s ability (or inability) to apply true reason to the world around them. The changes in Lucretius’

¹ My reading presupposes that identifying an intertextual allusion in DRN serves to enrich or enhance a reader’s appreciation for the complex literary artistry of the poem, and at the same time it presupposes that such an identification of intertextual allusion also provides the reader with the opportunity and the challenge to apply the poem’s principles of Epicureanism to other texts and other settings outside of DRN. On Lucretius’ “predatory” use of sources, see, again, Hardie 1986: 18 and Gale 1994b: 128, as well as Gale 2007; on the “correction” of sources, cf. Thomas 1982: 146 and Horsfall 1990.
presentation of this image reflect also these changes in the precise signification of the jar. At the same time, the jar or vessel remains a loaded image especially in philosophical writing, and Lucretius consciously wrestles this image from his philosophical rivals in order to reappropriate it for Epicurean teaching. This latter aspect will demonstrate that Lucretius crafts his jars with an acute awareness of other authors’ use of that image, and at the same time Lucretius refashions those vessels in order to outdo his rivals using that very same jar imagery. It is to the jar’s suitability as a vehicle for intertextual allusion to which we now turn.

To be sure, the jar or vessel enjoys a long life as a philosophical trope before Lucretius. Schrijvers 1978 in fact notes that Lucretius actually recycles a typical philosophical image ("une métaphore traditionnelle," 107) in referring to the body as vessel of the soul. He expresses concern that in doing so Lucretius exposes himself to the risk of losing his reader by introducing them to such apparently un-Epicurean imagery. In response to Schrijvers’ anxiety, however, I maintain that Lucretius in fact consciously references earlier, un-Epicurean uses of the vessel, but that at the same time the poet gradually encourages the reader to see how he is re-appropriating those same images into coherence with Epicurean thought, all as part of his increasing (and increasingly subtle) demands on the reader’s attention. Precisely that, I contend, is what

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4 Reinhardt 2004: 46 n. 62 also wonders about Lucretius’ interaction with rival schools of thought: “Lucretius’ reading of Gorgias is tendentious in the sense that, by highlighting the connection between the pleasure passage and the end myth, he neatly pushes into the background a reading of Gorgias which would take into account that the discussion of pleasure is in Plato intertwined with a discussion of the good. Clearly, that is an aspect of the Platonic argument which an Epicurean must want to avoid.” I contend, however, that Lucretius is not afraid of any of Plato’s argumentation and invites the connection with texts like the Gorgias specifically in order to refute the points of competing philosophies in the very terms which bring those texts to mind.
motivates Lucretius’ use of the image of the jar, since he makes what is a rather pointed use of the image, despite its status as philosophical commonplace.⁵ After all, Lucretius himself acknowledges at 3.554-57 that another image besides a vessel or jar may serve just as capably to illustrate the philosophical point at hand:

\[
\text{sic animus per se non quit sine corpore et ipso}
\]
\[
\text{esse homine, illius quasi quod vas esse videtur, 555}
\]
\[
\text{sive aliud quid vis potius coniunctius ei fingere, quandoquidem conexu corpus adhaeret.}
\]

By no means, then, does Lucretius choose to employ the specific image of the jar idly. Indeed, as Reinhardt has pointed out, “the metaphor of the soul as a vessel is not to be found in any other Epicurean text,”⁶ and so, while the jar may be a fairly conventional image in philosophical analogies, it is not unavoidably incumbent upon Lucretius to use vessel imagery in accordance with some longstanding Epicurean practice. He looks to rival thinkers’ employment of the image and coopts it for Epicurean use.

If the jar or vessel can be viewed as a standard philosophical trope or a loaded vehicle for intertextual allusion, as I contend, then we must first identify those texts in which jars notably appear. Afterward we shall turn to an examination of Lucretius’ manipulation of the image over the course of DRN, paying particular attention to the jar’s role in Lucretian incremental didacticism. But first we identify the relevant uses of jars

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⁵ So, too, Garani 2007: 192, adducing Plato’s Gorgias as an intertext: “the seemingly conventional Platonic image [of the jar] becomes creatively appropriated into the atomic context and turns out to be an integral part of Lucretius’ poetic imagery.”

⁶ Reinhardt 2002: 296; see also Görler 1997. Yet while Reinhardt notes that a jar “seems to be ideally suited to describe the state of katastematic pleasure, that is, the state of calm and detached unperturbedness of the soul in which the Epicurean experiences ἀταραξία” (2002: 296), the converse of that image – that is, not an unperturbed, full jar but rather a shaking, leaky one – seems to have appealed to detractors of Epicureanism and other perceived systems of hedonism; herein I attempt to explain how Lucretius skillfully wrests jar imagery from the hands of such detractors. Cf. Kronenberg 2005: 407 on co-opted myths and competing definitions of piety and impiety.
and vessels predating DRN. Lucretius himself uses the word vas or vasum eleven times in DRN, and his employment of the image on these occasions is hardly monolithic. As such, I posit that the various intertexts which I discuss below may apply to Lucretius’ use of jars in different ways at different moments in the poem. Not all of the works under discussion are to be classed as philosophical treatises, but whether a given text to which Lucretius makes reference actually professes an express philosophical allegiance or not, Lucretius will be shown to engage with each of these predecessors’ overarching philosophical worldviews – particularly at those moments in the texts which conflict with what constitutes (or will later constitute) Epicurean teaching.

4.1. Jar Imagery as Analogical Tool before Lucretius

When considering jars in ancient literature, one might immediately call to mind the famous urns of Zeus described in Homer. At Il. 24.525-28, during Priam’s memorable tête-à-tête with Achilles, the Greek hero describes the pitiable lot of mortals, to whom Zeus capriciously distributes good and ill. These good and evil things are reportedly stored in two different jars, πίθοι, and Zeus’ allotment of good and evil from these jars determines the quality of mortals’ lives. This passage presents itself as an attractive occasion for Lucretius to engage in correction of sources, since a good Epicurean would naturally reject the Homeric notion that the divine might have any determining part in human affairs. To an Epicurean, an entirely flawed conception of the

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7 Homer and Hesiod, for instance, are not generally regarded as Greek philosophers, even if we can glean something of a guiding worldview from their poems. For a related discussion of a specifically didactic typology against the conception that the ancients viewed all poetry as having the potential to instruct, see Volk 2002: 34-43, with further bibliography.

8 Il. 24.525-28: ὡς γὰρ ἐπεκλώσαντο θεοὶ δειλοί βροτοίς | ζῶειν ἀχυμένοις: αὐτοὶ δὲ τ’ ἀκηδέες εἰσί. | δοιοὶ γὰρ τε πίθοι κατακείσται ἐν Διός οὐδεὶ | δόρφων οία διδωσὶ κακῶν, ἔτερος δὲ ἐάν.
gods flows from these πίθοι, enticing Lucretius to correct the Homeric vision in his own text. Not all of this passage needs correction, however: at *Il.* 24.526, immediately before proceeding to describe the jars and their implications for mortal life, Achilles hits on one of the premises of what will later constitute Epicurean dogma: the gods themselves are ἀκηδέες, free from care. By applying the image of the jar in his own poem, Lucretius can subtly direct his attentive reader to this Homeric episode, and an important process is signalled by that nod: while the proto-Epicurean portion of this *Iliad* 24 passage will naturally earn Lucretius’ approval, still the very jars in Homer which Lucretius’ vessels may prompt the reader to recall are fundamentally incompatible with Epicurean thought. The employment of the jar as an intertextual allusion to earlier literature and rival worldviews, then, bears an inherent challenge for the reader. But where Schrijvers 1978 saw possible pitfalls to progress, I see pointed application of an image in order to reinforce specific Epicurean tenets, all while training the reader to keep an active mind at all times. The texts to which Lucretius makes reference will not all align with Epicurean thought, and as such Lucretius challenges his reader to apply the lessons of *DRN* to those outside texts, at the same time as the poet continues to vary the presentation of the jar analogy altogether. The process is highly complex, to be sure: it partakes of allusion (to literary forebears, highlighting Lucretius’ intellectual pedigree and the potential for doctrinal correction), instruction (presenting the reader with a set of intratextual analogies on what a jar or vessel might capably illustrate in Epicurean terms), and independent analysis (by which Lucretius encourages the reader not only to fortify their own metaphorical vessels by poem’s end but also to identify faulty jars in settings outside of

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9 Cf. again the idiosyncratic formulation of Johnson 2000: 8, quoted in the Introduction above.
DRN, both literary and lived). The challenge may be demanding, but Lucretius lays out a way for his attentive reader to handle even these difficulties with aplomb.

At the same time as we identify the challenge that such an intertextual allusion may entail, it must also be stated that this Homeric echo derives not from some arcane or recondite detail. Indeed, much like the other Homeric resonances identified herein, the reference in question derives from a well-known description in Homer. Consequently, involved though this process of intertextual allusion may be, nevertheless the targets of Lucretius’ allusive gesturing are not impossibly obscure passages; on the contrary they can be presumed to come fairly readily to mind for Lucretius and for his reader. This accessibility of the image of the jar and its ready availability as a vehicle of intertextual allusion are precisely what motivated Schrijvers’ (1978) anxiety about Lucretius’ use of the image; as I hope to demonstrate, however, Lucretius does not send his reader to these indicated texts unprepared.

Hesiod, too, famously employs the image of a jar, and Lucretius’ jars can be read in relation to Hesiod’s as well. Again, the vessel in question is well known: what is today conventionally called Pandora’s box was of course Pandora’s jar (πίθος). The story of Pandora likewise makes sense for intertextual engagement, as it portrays a rebellion against the gods for the good of mankind and the consequent divine retribution enacted on mankind in recompense. A good Epicurean, of course, could not abide such divine involvement in mortal affairs. Consequently the very plot of the Prometheus-Pandora myth makes it an appealing locus for Lucretian correction. The jar specifically figures

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10 Works and Days 94, 97, 98.
11 See Works and Days 50-105 and Theogony 565-616 for the two iterations of the tale in Hesiod, with some notable variations in presentation, as addressed below.
into the intertextual allusion because Lucretius’ own language is reminiscent of the Hesiodic description in a few ways. For instance, Pandora is endowed with a gift from all the gods, as her name famously reflects. Nature’s rebuke at Lucr. 3.935-39 may recall Hesiod’s gathering of all these gifts into a single vessel, as the Lucretian jar holds all these boons within it in a similar fashion:

nam si grata fuit tibi vita anteaacta priorque et non omnia pertusum conagenta quasi in vas comoda perfluxere atque ingrata interiere, cur non ut plenus vitae conviva recedes aequo animoque capis securam, stulte, quietem?

The collection of all these goods (commoda, 3.937) into a single container may also be somewhat reminiscent of the scene from Iliad 24 just discussed, and might also call to mind the gods’ contributions of gifts into the very person of Pandora, the individual serving as the vessel. This kind of multivalent intertextual allusion to multiple literary

12 See also Gale 2013: 38-41 for an exposition of Lucretius’ close engagement with Hesiod, especially the Prometheus and Pandora myth, with further bibliography. Beye 1963 also notes several Hesiodic connections in DRN codified in earlier scholarship. For more on Lucretius’ rejection of the Hesiodic worldview, save those aspects which felicitously accord with Epicurean dogma, see Gale 2009: 190 and Rosati 2009: 356-57.
14 Op. 80-82.
15 On this reading of the Pandora passage, with further bibliography, see Beall 1989.
16 The Hesiodic and Homeric πίθοι in question may well engage in a dialogue of their own, and Adams 1932: 195-96, for instance, has already drawn a parallel between those two episodes. I would contend that such multiplex referencing to more than one single work, either in one instance of the image or across a number of jar images encountered in DRN, is not beyond ken for a poet of Lucretius’ erudition, subtlety, and skill. Consequently I maintain that both intertexts can profitably be read in DRN, whether at the same time or on multiple different occasions over the course of the poem.
17 Pandora herself is described in the language of craftsmanship as a vessel molded by Hephaestus; on this visual aspect of Hesiod’s description see Steiner 2001: 116-17 and Wickkiser 2010, as well as Adams 1932 and especially Pucci 1977: 88 on the Pandora of the Works and Days being “molded like a vase” at 94-99 and essentially resembling the very πίθος she carries. Recall also, of course, that Pandora and the πίθος are expressly mentioned only in the Works and Days account; but note, too, that even in the Theogony version (570-616) the vocabulary of craft still pervades the description (cf. Hephaestus’ act of “molding” the female form denoted by σύμπλασε at Theog. 571, for instance, matching his “molding” of Pandora with πλάσσε at Op. 60).
predecessors in any given iteration would also reflect Lucretius’ nuanced employment of
the jar to represent now the body, and now the mind at different points in the poem.\textsuperscript{18}
Moreover, this story from Hesiod makes particularly good sense as a moment of
intertextual allusion for Lucretius because the telling of the myth of Pandora and the
divine punishment to mankind which she signifies actually follows immediately upon
Prometheus’ act of defiance against the gods,\textsuperscript{19} which itself finds form in DRN. While
Lucretius naturally rejects the notion that the gods might care to devise evils for mankind
of the sort which Pandora comes to represent, he would also ostensibly approve of
Prometheus’ rebellion against traditional \textit{religio}, as Lucretius even describes Epicurus
and his philosophical victory for mankind in terms which recall Hesiod’s Prometheus.\textsuperscript{20}
At Lucr. 1.62-79, Epicurus defies the overbearing and personified \textit{religio}, which
Lucretius describes as an entity looking down upon mankind from the heavens.\textsuperscript{21}

\textit{humana ante oculos foede cum vita iaceret
in terris oppressa gravi sub religione,
quae caput a caeli regionibus ostendebat
horribili super aspectu mortalibus instans,
primum Graius homo mortalis tollere contra
est oculos ausus primusque obsistere contra,
quem neque fama deum nec fulmina nec munita
murmure compressit caelum, sed eo magis acri
inritat animi virtutem, effringere ut arta
naturae primus portarum claustra cupiis.
ergo vivida vis animi pervicit, et extra
processit longe flammantia moenia mundi
atque omne immensum peragavit mente animque,
unde refert nobis victor quid possit oriri,
}

\textsuperscript{18} Contrast, for instance, the jar-as-body analogy at Lucr. 3.440-44 and 3.554-57 with the jar-as-

mind paradigm at 3.1003-1010 and 6.9-23.
\textsuperscript{19} On the tendency of Roman poets to conflate or combine the myths of Prometheus and Pandora
(e.g., Hor. \textit{Carm}. 1.3.27-33), see Musäus 2004: 165-68.
\textsuperscript{20} On the parallels between the protagonist of \textit{Prometheus Bound} and Lucretius’ \textit{Graius homo}
(and Thoreau’s apparent identification of that \textit{Graius homo} not as Epicurus but as Prometheus),
see Seelinger 2013.
\textsuperscript{21} Much has been made of Epicurus’ heroic characterization in this famous passage; on Epicurus
as epic or military hero, see, e.g., Murley 1947 and Gale 1994b.
Promethean elements may be detected in Epicurus’ defiance of *religio*, including the resistance signaled by the repeated *contra* occupying the same metrical *sedes* ending both lines 66 and 67. In these same two verses, Lucretius depicts Epicurus as raising his gaze to the heavens in a way previously unavailable to lowly humanity, and Epicurus champions mankind in a way which recalls Prometheus’ similar philanthropy in Hesiod.

Epicurus’ benefaction, of course, is far greater than the gift of fire which Prometheus is thought to have provided. After all, Epicurus endows mankind with the means of

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22 With these lines compare also Lucr. 5.1194-1211, in which the poet derides traditional acts of religious observance. In the Book 1 excerpt above, the imposing figure of *religio* shows its head for all to see (*quae caput a caeli regionibus ostendebat*, 1.64), while in Book 5 that same skewed sense of *religio* compels mankind to veil its collective countenance (*velatum saepe videri*, 5.1198). Yet the practitioners of faulty piety from Book 5 lie on the ground as pathetically as those who predated Epicurus altogether (note that the imperfect tense of *ostendebat* at 1.64 situates the unchecked tyranny of *religio* in a distinctly ante-Epicurean past): observe the parallelism and similarity of expression of 1.62-63 (*iaceret | in terris oppressa*) and 5.1200 (*procumbere humi prostratum*). Such conduct, of course, contrasts sharply with the enlightened behavior made available to mankind after Epicurus first establishes the appropriate model, as emphasized by *primum*, 1.66; *primusque*, 1.67; and *primus*, 1.71; on the significance of this vocabulary of primacy see esp. Minadeo 1969: 39 and Eckerman 2013: 794-96.

23 Lucretius can also be seen to be in dialogue with Plato at this same time, in Lucretius’ characteristically complex, layered fashion of allusion. In Republic 9 (586a-c), Plato describes those who lack wisdom and virtue in similar terms, living life with downcast eyes like cattle (*βοσκήματων δίκην κάτω άκι βλέποντες καὶ κεκυφότες είς γήν*). Not one to simply coopt terminology without also customizing it for his own purposes, however, Lucretius retools Plato’s characterization of the ignorant – which goes on to fault these people for copulating like cattle, for instance – and in fact praises pursuit of the very sort of intercourse which Plato rebukes (cf. *more ferarum* at Lucr. 4.1263-66 and 5.932) since that lifestyle avoids the romantic follies of the sort outlined at the end of *DRN* 4.

24 Cf. Ov. *Met*. 1.84-86, in which Prometheus grants mankind the ability to raise their eyes to the heavens, in contrast to the downturned gaze of all other creatures: *pronaque cum spectent animalia cetera terram, | os homini sublime dedit caelumque videre | iussit et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus.*

25 Lucretius duly debunks the notion that fire is the gift of Prometheus at Lucr. 5.1092-93: *fulmen detulit in terram mortalibus ignem | primitus, inde omnis flammarum diditur ardor.* Note again Lucretius’ insistence on Epicurus’ philanthropic primacy, answering the implied Promethean
rivaling the gods not through technological innovation but in psychological ataraxia.\textsuperscript{26} Indeed, the proverbial cleverness of Prometheus\textsuperscript{27} even finds new form in Epicurus’ victory for humanity, which is accomplished primarily through mental processes: note that it is Epicurus’ vivida vis animi which wins the day at 1.72.\textsuperscript{28} The thunder and lightning and tales of the gods which frightened others into submission to religio instead set Epicurus’ mind to action (inritat animi virtutem, 1.70), and he figuratively journeys the universe in mental terms (mente animoque, 1.74), all of which elements serve to highlight Epicurus’ achievement of mind. Lucretius appropriates to Epicurus this Promethean garb and so he aligns the two figures in a sense, while at the same time correcting the Hesiodic worldview which informs the divine retribution in which Hesiod’s tale results, simultaneously claiming for Epicurus the status of truest and most valuable benefactor to mankind. The jar acts as the fulcrum around which such intertexts can profitably pivot.

Another famous employer of jar imagery is Plato. Scholars have already noticed that Lucretius seems to be looking at Plato’s Gorgias in DRN.\textsuperscript{29} Of course, Gorgias makes sense as an intertext since in that dialogue Callicles advances a pleasure principle agency in the adverb primitus (5.1093) in his laudes Epicuri (primum, 1.66; primus, 3.2; princeps, 5.9; primae, 6.1 and 6.4).

\textsuperscript{26} Technological progress, after all, does not meet with unqualified praise in DRN; for more on Lucretius’ ambivalence regarding technological advancement and the development of mankind, see especially Holmes 2014, with further bibliography.

\textsuperscript{27} Hesiod frequently highlights Prometheus’ intelligence and cunning, describing him as ἀγκυλοµήτης at Op. 48 and Theog. 546, for instance, and πάντων πέρι µήδεα εἰδώς at Op. 54 and Theog. 559.

\textsuperscript{28} On this phrase see also Kenney 1974. For the idea of mentally traversing the world or going beyond its boundaries, cf. [Longinus] Subl. 35.2-3 and Leigh 2006: 231. See Conte 1991: 29-30 on Lucretius’ implied injunction for the reader to apply his or her own mental faculties for a similar journey of the mind.

\textsuperscript{29} Grg. 493a-494a. See, e.g., Shorey 1901, Kenney 1971 and 2014 ad Lucr. 3.1008-1010, Reinhardt 2004, and Garani 2007: 191-92 (“This imagery [of jars], which is not found in Epicurus’ writings, undoubtedly carries an intertextual allusion to Plato’s Gorgias,” 2007: 191).
which might resemble a kind of proto-Epicureanism, however flawed it might seem in relation to Epicurean orthodoxy; yet while Callicles’ espoused hedonism obviously predates Epicurus’ own precepts, nevertheless to a later observer Callicles’ formulation of the good life might be seen to bear striking similarities to Epicureanism, even if the Calliclean version in the Gorgias does not ultimately accord with the doctrines of Epicurus.\(^{30}\) The discussion of these jar analogies only begins after Socrates extracts a clarification from Callicles: Callicles takes the stance that those who pursue the satisfaction of their desires are acting in accord with virtue, an idea which Socrates proceeds to untangle and which leads directly to a consideration of two different scenarios in which jars function as an analogical tool.\(^{31}\) In the first of these scenarios,\(^{32}\) we hear that what is effectively the appetitive part of the soul resembles a jar (πίθος), and that this part of the soul in an intemperate person amounts to a leaky jar (τετρημένος πίθος) because of its insatiability. Such licentious pleasure-seekers, Socrates continues, are those with the greatest struggle in the underworld, since they attempt to fill their leaky jars with water using a similarly leaky sieve; but it is unclear that any amount of storytelling will change Callicles’ mind. Still, Socrates persists: in a second analogy, he relates the tale of two men, each possessing jars contained with lovely things like wine, honey, and milk, though the contents are not so plentiful that they are inexhaustible by any means; and while one of these men drinks his fill and finds peace (ἡσυχία, 493e), the other cannot rest and is constantly worried about filling up the jars. The conversation then turns to Callicles’ preference for the constant acquisition of pleasures rather than the

\(^{30}\) On Callicles’ hedonism, see Rudebusch 1992.

\(^{31}\) Grg. 492d-e. For more on Plato’s use of jars in this passage, see Blank 1991, Carone 2004, and Sommerville 2014.

\(^{32}\) Grg. 492e-493c.
fixed state of having satisfied one’s desires, rehearsing a flawed hierarchy of what to an
Epicurean might be called kinetic and katastematic pleasures. It is no wonder that the
influence of Plato’s *Gorgias* has been detected in *DRN*; but what more are we to make of
this engagement?

As was the case with the jars of Homer and Hesiod above, Plato’s jars make apt
targets for intertextual engagement by Lucretius because of the opportunity for doctrinal
correction which they present. Indeed, Plato was a customary target for Epicurean
polemic long before *DRN* was composed, so Lucretius’ engagement with Plato’s *Gorgias*
makes sense given the larger context of Epicurean anti-commentaries, as it were, on the
Platonic dialogues.\(^3^3\) Moreover, as has been mentioned, Lucretius pointedly employs
what is an established philosophical analogy when he uses the image of the jar, and even
Plato was conscious of doing precisely the same thing. Indeed, the jars in Socrates’
stories to Callicles are not portrayed as Socrates’ own creation but rather as the subject of
other thinkers’ expositions. We hear Socrates attribute the jar analogy evidently to a rival
intellectual, who is not mentioned by name but instead simply referred to as a clever
myth-teller from Sicily or Italy (καὶ τοῦτο ἥρα τις μυθολογῶν κομψὸς ἁνήρ, ἴσος
Σικελός τις ἢ Ἰταλικός, παράγων τῷ όνόματι διὰ τό πιθανόν τε καὶ πειστικὸν όνόμασε
πίθου, *Grg.* 493a).\(^3^4\) Socrates’ second jar analogy, about the two men with jars of various
things, is likewise the product of another thinker, from the same philosophical school as
the teller of the earlier analogy (Φέρε δή, ἄλλην σοι εἰκόνα λέγω ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ γυμνασίου

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\(^3^3\) Epicurus may even have railed against Platonic doctrines himself; see Asmis 1995: 19 n. 24.
On the tradition of anti-Platonism among Epicureans, see De Lacy 1948a: 13-15 and 1983, Kleve

\(^3^4\) Debate still swirls as to whether Plato may be talking about Empedocles, Philolaus, or some
other figure or school; on such speculation see especially Edmonds 2013: 272 n. 83, with further
bibliography.
If we take Plato’s playful swipes at these other thinkers as any indicator, then it is clear that the image of the jar indeed carries quite a good deal of philosophical currency even in Plato’s day. Lucretius, too, I contend, is by no means unaware of the popularity and availability of this image, especially in philosophical discourse, which is precisely what motivates his pointed use and still more pointed refashioning of this very image: Lucretius joins the conversation by using an image which he rightly identifies is popular in philosophical analogies, and at the same time as he wrests it from the hands of a would-be detractor like Plato, who employs the image to criticize an albeit skewed vision of a sort of proto-Epicurean hedonism, Lucretius also puts the image towards the service of Epicurean argumentation. Far from admitting defeat when others try to use the jar as a means of attack, Lucretius counters by emptying the jar of its earlier content and thus renders it a fully suitable tool for Epicurean instruction.

We have seen Plato acknowledge that the jar can indeed serve as the vehicle of a philosophical analogy. Another Platonic reference, I submit, helps drive this point home and also makes sense as a backdrop to Lucretius’ use of the image. Later in the
Gorgias,\textsuperscript{37} as well as in the Laches,\textsuperscript{38} Plato employs the image of the jar – and again, notably, the image is attributed to another source, namely folk wisdom. This received wisdom evidently cautions a person not to make their early attempts on something at too advanced a level of difficulty before first mastering more manageable projects with lower stakes; in other words, start small. I hold that this proverb is ideal for Lucretius to consciously commandeer and suits his methods in \textit{DRN} perfectly. It is not insignificant, further, that the saying in Plato is drawn from some shared font of common knowledge, as the acknowledgement that this jar imagery is already available in popular parlance lends it a kind of accessibility or applicability which Lucretius will also acknowledge in his own use of the image.\textsuperscript{39} Further, this jar aphorism in the \textit{Gorgias} and \textit{Laches} speaks to Lucretius’ project in a way that may afford Lucretius some degree of hierarchical didactic posturing over Plato. On the surface, the proverb warns that a person should not start learning pottery by first trying to make a large jar (πίθος), and thus advises on another level that a novice should begin with an appropriately small-scale endeavor as they gradually proceed to mastery by degrees. Not only, then, can Lucretius take a slight jab at Plato by reappropriating his imagery and in a sense outdoing him at that game, but at the same time Lucretius endeavors to show that, in fact, he can perfectly well teach his pupil how to construct a better macro-scale project (in the form of living a good Epicurean life) by beginning with precisely the thing which the proverb in question advises against using for that purpose, namely a jar. Lucretius’ use of jar imagery for

\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Grg.} 514e: τὸ λεγόμενον δὴ τούτο ἐν τῷ πίθῳ τὴν κεραμεῖαν ἐπιχειρεῖν μανθάνειν.

\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Lach.} 187b: εἰ γὰρ νῦν πρῶτον ἀρξεῖσθαι παιδεῦειν, σκοπεῖν χρῆ μὴ οὐκ ἐν τῷ Καρὶ ὑμῖν ὁ κινδύνος κινδύνευσαι, ἀλλ’ ἐν τοῖς υἱείς τε καὶ ἐν τοῖς τῶν φίλων παισί, καὶ ἀτεχνῶς τὸ λεγόμενον κατὰ τὴν παροιμίαν ὑμῖν συμβαίνῃ ἐν πίθῳ ἢ κεραμεία γιγνομένη.

\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Lucr.} 3.554-57. Cf. Morgan 2007 for proverbs and folk wisdom in imperial Rome, including some aphorisms regarding jars.
didactic purposes as well as philosophical intertextual allusion thus shows how
masterfully he crafts DRN.

I have focused on the above authors’ use of vessel imagery because these
instances seem to me to have the greatest relevance to Lucretius’ project. Other names
might also be invoked in a discussion of philosophical jars, but these seem to me to be
those which best color the backdrop to Lucretius’ own use of the image. It is my hope
that in surveying some of the more prominent uses of jar imagery before DRN we will
now be able to see that the image had been put to a great many uses for different ends,
philosophical and otherwise, and that Lucretius’ engagement with these uses can reflect
his own philosophical and didactic aims in DRN. Not all of the above instances may be
credible direct targets for Lucretius’ deployment of jars, but undeniably Lucretius’
pointed use of jar imagery can be seen to engage with a popular trope and refashion it to

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40 Consider, e.g., Diogenes the Cynic, famous inhabitant of a πίθος (Diog. Laert. 6.23, Lucian
— to which compare the Danaids’ cava doliaria at Tib. 1.3.79-80). Note, too, that Varro composed a
Menippean satire entitled Doliun aut Seria (fr. 93 Astbury), a work which was evidently
philosophical in nature; I owe this reference to Leah Kronenberg. Cf. also Democritus’ claim that
atoms’ motion is dictated by attraction of like to like, as observed in the movement of pebbles and
beans when filtered through a κόσκινον, sieve (Sext. Emp. M. 7.117-18 ≈ D6 Taylor, 68B164
DK; to which compare the winnowing basket, πλόκανον, of Pl. Tim. 52e6-53b4), as well as
Aristotle’s discussion of part and whole with the illustration of an amphora, άμφορευς, and its
contents (Physics 4, 210a-b). Other possibly relevant uses include: Aristotle Politics 6 (1320a) on
ways to encourage financial prosperity in a given polity, using the imagery of a specifically leaky
jar (ὁ τετρημένος γάρ ἐστι πίθος ἢ τοιαύτη βοήθεια τοῖς ἀπόροις); Theophrastus Characters 20
on the harmless but annoying sort of man who claims that his friends are like leaky jars which he
can never seem to fill up despite his continued beneficence toward them, a description which
notably likens the entire person to the leaky vessel (καὶ τοὺς φύλους αὐτοῦ εἶναι τὸν τετρημένον
πίθον· εὖ ποιών γὰρ αὐτούς οὐ δύνασθαι ἐμπλήσαι); Xenophon Oec. 7.40 on the popular wisdom
that a person without assistance on regulating inflow and outflow in domestic affairs is like a
leaky vessel (οἱ εἰς τὸν τετρημένον πίθον ἀντέλει λεγόμενον) – a notion which may also filter
through Cicero’s famous translation of that work into Latin in his youth (Cic. Off. 2.87,
Columella De re rustica 11.pr.5 and 12.pr.7, Macrobius Sat. 3.20.4) and which perhaps
influences Cicero’s later employment of the image in casting the body as the vessel of the soul at
Tusc. 1.52, a work traditionally thought to postdate DRN.
suit his own purposes. It shows that he is aware of the literary or philosophical cachet that the image of the jar possesses, and that Lucretius indeed participates in the very same discourse as his learned predecessors with the image of the jar, attempting to outdo them with it at the same time. Indeed, Lucretius himself evidently acknowledges that he does not have to use the specific image of a jar in order to make a philosophical point; that is, he does not choose the jar idly and as a result we can read his employment of this image as participating in a rich dialogue with those previous users of this image. Now that the popular discourse of jars in earlier literature has thus been reviewed, let us turn to an examination of the jars in Lucretius and the ends to which he employs them.

4.2. Body, Soul, and Epicurean Containers

The first two mentions of jars in *DRN* occur in the passage 3.434-44, in the midst of Lucretius’ argumentation for the corporeality of the soul and the minute quality of its constituent physical particles:

\[\text{nunc igitur quoniam quassatis undique vasis difluere umorem et laticem discedere cernis, et nebula ac fumus quoniam discedit in auras, crede animam quoque diffundi multoque perire oocius et citius dissolvi in corpora prima, cum semel ex hominis membris ablata recessit. quippe etenim corpus, quod vas quasi constitit eiusmod, cum cohibere nequint conquassatum ex aliqua re ac rarefactum detracto sanguine venis, aere qui credas posse hanc cohiberier ullo, corpore qui nostro rarus magis incohiescit?}\]

Jars are used in two distinct ways in this first encounter with the image, and as such Lucretius is already paving the way for the pupil to deftly toggle between a familiar real-world experience and an analogy or didactic tool which can help codify and characterize

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41 See again Lucr. 3.554-57.
42 With *vasis* at 3.434 and *vas* at 3.440.
that experience within Epicurean physics. That is, Lucretius meets us at this early stage both on the level of common knowledge and on that of the early application of Epicurean hermeneutics. The anecdotal lesson is initiated at 3.434 and invites the reader to attest to the truth of the principle in very approachable terms: whenever jars are shaken and shattered (quassatis... vasis)\textsuperscript{43} it is possible to see the liquid flowing out from them on all sides once it splashes out of the open mouth at the top of the jar.\textsuperscript{44} The shaking of these vessels may also recall an intertext adduced above, namely the jars of Plato’s \textit{Gorgias}.

To be sure, Lucretius employs these jars in the broader context of a philosophical analogy in this extended passage, just as Plato does (\textit{corpus, quod vas quasi constitit}... \textit{conquassatum}, Lucr. 3.440-41). Moreover, Lucretius’ jars have been shaken back and forth,\textsuperscript{45} not unlike Plato’s jar, described as the part of the soul which Socrates’ unnamed source punningly portrayed as a vessel which can be “moved”\textsuperscript{46} “to and fro” (ἀνω κάτω, \textit{Grg.} 493a).\textsuperscript{47} The shaking of these vessels, I would maintain, is by no means unintentional in Lucretius. In Lucretius’ move from observational experience to slightly more abstracted philosophical analogy, we are first made to witness the power of this image as a hermeneutic tool in \textit{DRN}, in a way which maps with the passage from Plato’s \textit{Gorgias} but which is also being made to serve a new use in Lucretius.

\textsuperscript{43} On this passage see West 1975: 100 and Kenney 1971 and 2014; cf. also Johncock 2016a: 193-94.

\textsuperscript{44} Note the use of \textit{cernis} at 3.435 to invite the reader into the proof.

\textsuperscript{45} Note the frequentative forms \textit{quasso} and \textit{conquasso}, highlighting the repeated movement, rather than the basic verb \textit{quatio} employed elsewhere in \textit{DRN} (e.g., at 2.330 and 6.388). For an evaluation of the various functions of frequentative verbs, especially in Plautus, see Viti 2015.

\textsuperscript{46} i.e., persuaded or changed. The pun lies in the well-known wordplay (abundant in this passage as a whole) on the linguistic similarities of πίθος, ἀναπείθεσθαι, and μεταπίπτειν.

\textsuperscript{47} Cf. also the phrase κινεῖσθαι ἄνω καὶ κάτω at Arist. \textit{Resp.} 7 (473b) describing the theory of respiration as laid out in the klepsydra analogy of Empedocles DK B100; see below for more on the correspondence of this fragment of Empedocles with the jars of \textit{DRN}. 

4.3. Changing Specification

These first encounters of jar imagery in *DRN* bid the reader to conceptualize the body as the vessel of the soul. The next several uses of jars will take up this same analogy, but the philosophical point at hand in each iteration will vary slightly, and ultimately the terms or referents of the analogy will change altogether. That is, whereas the jar first represents the body, and the soul then corresponds to the jar’s contents, eventually the jar will stand for one’s mind or mental processes. The very next time we encounter a jar in *DRN*, for instance, it is being put to use in the service of the proof that the soul cannot survive separately from the body (3.551-57):

*et veluti manus atque oculos naresve seorsum secretae a nobis nequeunt sentire neque esse, sed tamen in parvo liquuntur tempore tabe, sic animus per se non quit sine corpore et ipso esse homine, illius quasi quod vas esse videtur, sive aliud quid vis potius coniunctius ei fingere, quandoquidem conexu corpus adhaeret.*

We have already examined part of this passage (3.554-57) for its role in Lucretius’ acknowledgement that he is using the image of the jar pointedly, since he might well have employed another equally suitable analogy to illustrate the interdependent bond of body and soul. Regarding the internal terms of the analogy, the body again represents the jar and the soul its contents. Even if the analogy is avowedly imprecise (for the pointed reasons we have outlined), we are still being urged to be comfortable reading the body as the vessel of the soul.

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48 See also Welser 2009 on the shift in the use of the image to illustrate first physical and then ethical lessons.

49 On the inadequacy of the jar analogy to illustrate this body-soul interdependence, see, e.g., Kenney 1971 and 2014 *ad loc*. I maintain that the image is employed for its multivalent associations (namely, as intertextual allusion and changing didactic analogy), rather than as a strict or optimal illustration of the principle in question.
Likewise, when we next encounter a jar, it is a metaphor for the entire person, and we are meant to develop a fluency in reading the jar as a human container of the soul. In his proof that everything has its own set place for growth and existence, Lucretius notes that a tree cannot grow in the sky, fish cannot survive on land, and proceeds to show that the soul cannot exist outside its proper place in the body (3.787-97):

```
certum ac dispositumst ubi quicquid crescat et insit.  
sic animi natura nequit sine corpore oriri  
sola neque a nervis et sanguine longius esse.  
quod si posset enim, multo prius ipsa animi vis  
in capite aut umeris aut imis calcibus esse  
posset et innasci quavis in parte soleret,  
tandem in eodem homine atque in eodem vase manere.  
quod quoniam nostro quoque constat corpore certum  
dispositumque videtur ubi esse et crescere possit  
sorsum anima atque animus, tanto magis inquit quantum  
totum posse extra corpus durare genique.  
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When we first encountered jars in the poem, they were the jars familiar to us from everyday life. Immediately thereafter they appear in analogy rather than being invoked from lived experience. Now they are situated not in analogy but in unmarked metaphor: `tandem in eodem homine atque in eodem vase manere`, 3.793. We are still meant to acquire an easy understanding that the body is the vessel of the soul, but we must of course understand that image as an analogy even when it is not explicitly marked as such. This is all the more important when the terms of the analogy are muted ever so slightly as well: earlier, Lucretius expressly connects the body and the man as apparently interchangeable entities (`sic animus per se non quit sine corpore et ipso | esse homine`, 3.554-55), whereas now he leaves us to connect the dots for ourselves in using an

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50 Recall the relatability of `nunc` and `cernis` complementing the generalizing ablative absolute phrase `quassatis vasis` of 3.434-35.
51 Note quasi at 3.440 and 3.555.
unmarked metaphor and supplying only half of that earlier pair (*in eodem homine*, 3.793). He is thus training us to spot such nuances in his use of the analogy.

Even the brief metaphor of 3.873 reinforces the various subtle changes to which Lucretius puts his jar analogy, even though the line does not contain the words *vas* or *vasum* and uses only the phraseology of the “ring test,” ostensibly *en passant.*

Specifically, Lucretius uses the metaphor to dismiss a person who fears for the state of their corpse after death, 3.870-75:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{proinde ubi se vides hominem indignarier ipsum,} \\
&\text{post mortem fore ut aut putescat corpore posto} \\
&\text{aut flammis interfiat malisve ferarum,} \\
&\text{scire licet non sincerum sonere atque subesse} \\
&\text{caecum aliquem cordi stimulum, quamvis neget ipse} \\
&\text{credere se quemquam sibi sensum in morte futurum.}
\end{align*}
\]

Such a person does not “ring true” in their professed acknowledgement that a body can feel no pain after death since, the reasoning goes, the person betrays their concern for their corpse when they fret over its putrefaction or the like. The metaphor in the phrase *non sincerum sonere* – regarding this person who “does not ring true” – derives “from pottery that is cracked and gives a dull flat sound when tapped,” as Leonard and Smith 1942 *ad loc.* have noted.\(^\text{52}\) Important to our discussion is simply the notion that Lucretius again subtly equates the jar with the whole person: the accusative subject of the phrase *non sincerum sonere* at 3.873 (introduced by *scire licet* immediately preceding these words) is the understood *hominem... ipsum* from 3.870. That very individual fails to ring

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true, and again even this passing reference serves to prime the pupil to continue to track Lucretius’ use of the jar as it even here is used as a reference to the person themselves.

The stakes are raised once again when Nature herself berates those of us who persist in fearing death at 3.933-39:

\[\text{quid tibi tanto operest, mortalis, quod nimis aegris lucribus indulges? quid mortem congemis ac fles? nam si grata fuit tibi vita anteacta priorque et non omnia pertusum congesta quasi in vas commoda perfluxere atque ingrata interiere, cur non ut plenus vitae conviva recedis aequo animoque capis securam, stulte, quietem?}\]

Now Lucretius turns to the trope of a vessel which is specifically leaky,\(^{53}\) adding a new wrinkle to the analogy which is growing so familiar as we proceed through \textit{DRN}. This leaky vessel may recall earlier writers’ employment of that image, possibly even the uses of the image as an attack on the kind of hedonism which one might try to ascribe to Epicureanism – irrespective of what a proper Epicurean would doubtless call the skewed vision of pleasure-seeking which such an attack presupposes. Lucretius’ use of the leaky vessel here, however, snatches the image from the clutches of such detractors and reappropriates it as an image which, far from undercutting Epicurean doctrine, actually reinforces it. The poet reapplies the language of fullness to the banqueter (\textit{plenus... conviva}, 3.938)\(^{54}\) and bodily satiety, in effect literalizing the very analogy (jar as body or person) which is elsewhere put to use against an Epicurean or proto-Epicurean sensibility and which Lucretius himself employs in the forestalling of such critiques in his earlier jar

\(^{53}\) Again note this feature of perforation in, e.g., Plato \textit{Gorgias} 493b-c and 494a, Aristotle \textit{Politics} 6 (1320a), Theophratus \textit{Characters} 20, and Xenophon \textit{Oeconomicus} 7.40.

analogy.\textsuperscript{55} One need only turn to Lucr. 3.793 discussed above to find Lucretius’
equation of the jar and the individual; he thus smoothly transfers the vocabulary of
fullness onto the right-minded person while using the jar proper to signify now the mental
capacity by which a person possesses and processes the good things which it encounters.
Nature’s argument, unpacked, goes something like the following: if your life up to this
point has been pleasurable (grata, 3.935), then you have clearly had cause for happiness
in your lifetime; if you no longer view your life as having contained those happy
moments which you profess to have experienced, then the fault lies in your mental
processing of those pleasures, since at one time they clearly registered with you as good
things and you no longer take that into account;\textsuperscript{56} but since you do in fact recognize that
these experiences have been to your liking, then meet death calmly since you have had
your fill of life’s boons. Nature grounds her rebuke on the foundation that the addressee
has indeed experienced pleasures in life and recognized them as such, a premise which is
established in the initial conditional clause of 3.935 and followed up with the ensuing
assumption that life’s pleasures have not flowed right through a leaky jar, have not
passed away unwelcome (3.936-37), since we have already noted that this person has in
fact recognized that they have enjoyed good things in their life. Nature stipulates that it
is not the case that these good things have poured out through a leaky vessel, as the
indicative mood of the verbs in the si-clause of 3.935-37 makes clear; in Nature’s
conditional argument, then, we have successfully employed our mental powers and

\textsuperscript{55} As Gale 1994b: 112 notes, with further bibliography, Heraclitus derided what he and others
characterized as Epicurus’ “Phaeacian” philosophy of pleasure; Lucretius removes the sting from
this intended attack and insists that the life of the full banqueter, rightly envisaged, should indeed
be our proper aim. Cf. also Gordon 1998 and 2012.

\textsuperscript{56} Cf. Epicurus Kyriai Doxai 18, Letter to Idomeneus Usener 138, and Letter to Hermarchus
Usener 122 on the mental happiness achieved by recalling past pleasures.
recognized that life has granted us good things. This person does indeed have a jar full of good things, and they are indeed full of what life has to offer (*plenus vitae*, 3.938).

Nature will continue to berate those who fail to take stock of what good things they have experienced in life at 3.952-62 by faulting them in the very same terms she has just used: she establishes that her addressee, an older man now,\(^57\) has enjoyed all the prizes life provides (*omnia perfunctus vitae praemia*, 3.956);\(^58\) then she takes him to task for failing to become the very banqueter she has urged us to be immediately above, since this man – though he has enjoyed the good things life can offer – nevertheless allows his life to slip away unappreciated (*in perfecta tibi elapsast ingrataque vita*, 3.958). He was not able to change his mental outlook before death came to his side, and now he has missed his chance to become the full banqueter he could have been, in the same terminology of fullness which we saw above: *ante | quam satur ac plenus possis discedere rerum*, 3.959-60. That is to say, the problem has not been with the acquisition of pleasure, or even in the recognition of those pleasures as actually being pleasures, since Nature establishes that we have clearly enjoyed them as such. Rather, the trouble lies in the appreciation of having gotten one’s fill of those enjoyments, which is avowedly easy for the Epicurean to do and which is ultimately the role of the mind,\(^59\) an important point which the jar analogy’s change in signification bids us to begin to

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\(^57\) Note that this interlocutor laments his plight in a way that goes beyond what is truly merited (*obitum lamentetur miser amplius aequo*, 3.953).

\(^58\) Compare the *vitae praemia* that this individual has enjoyed to the *praedia vitae* attained by the attentive, searching minds of early mankind (5.1450), to be contrasted with the *vulnere vitae* which afflict the greedy pursuers of honors and wealth (3.63).

\(^59\) Cf. the *tetrapharmakos* precept that “good is easily acquired” (Philodemus *Ad […]*, *PHerc.* 1005, 4.9-14) and a similar notion in *Kyriai Doxai* 15 and 21, as well as a formulation of mind’s role in recognizing the limits of the body in *Kyriai Doxai* 20.
This subtle twist thus shifts the correspondence of the jar analogy’s terms and challenges the reader to keep track of this changed signification. Whereas we have been growing accustomed in the past several iterations of the image to read the jar as the body and its contents as the soul, here Lucretius makes the jar correspond to one’s mental power, with its contents being not the soul but all the good things a person has experienced in their lifetime. The effect of this change is to subtly make the reader more comfortable with the idea that the familiar jar analogy may not be quite so monolithic after all, and so Lucretius prepares us to read this analogy in an important new way.

The reader must be careful to track the changes of Lucretius’ image as it evolves over the course of the poem, as the successful comprehension and application of the principles at hand depend upon it.

The leaky vessels return at 3.1003-1010 with the famous plight of the Danaids, the young daughters of Danaus whose eternal punishment entails pouring water into jars.

Indeed, this very lesson will be replayed at 5.170-73, unmarked by analogy and set openly in Lucretius’ rhetorical questions regarding the tranquility of the gods: nam gaudere novis rebus debere videtur | cui veteres obsunt; sed cui nihil accidit aegri | tempore in ante acto, cum pulchre degeret aevom, | quid potuit novitatis amorem accendere tali? Lucretius thus continues to subtly incorporate elements from earlier lessons into later ones. The banqueter from the jar analogies above, then, will do well to depart in satiety rather than seek still other pleasures because such a person can merely vary their fullness but not increase it; cf. Kyriai Doxai 18.

This new application of the analogy is made somewhat easier for the reader to manage thanks to the return of marking language such as quasi (3.936). As is consistent with his practice elsewhere, Lucretius can simultaneously intensify a challenge while also making an aspect of it more manageable in view of that increased difficulty overall; recall this effect in Lucretius’ military analogies above, for instance.
which can never be filled. Though these maidens are unnamed in *DRN*, they are readily identifiable as the Danaids in Lucretius’ depiction:

\[
\text{deinde animi ingratum naturam pascere semper atque explere bonus rebus satiareque numquam –}
\]

\[
quod faciunt nobis annorum tempora, circum cum redeunt fetusque ferunt variosque lepores,
\]

\[
\text{atque membrandam vitai fructibus umquam – hoc, ut opinor, id est, aequo florente puellas quod}
\]

\[
\text{memorant laticem pertusum congerere in vas, quod tamen expleri nulla ratione potestur.}
\]

Their constant filling of unfillable jars, Lucretius tells us, is in fact not the fate of these girls (*aevo florente puellas*, 3.1008) in the afterlife but of those among us who suffer from the hedonism which Plato’s Callicles, for instance, might be taken to task for

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62 Note that the water-carriers in Plato’s Hades at *Gorgias* 493b are likewise left unnamed, a pointed omission which (more greatly than any perceived metrical concerns, *pace* West 1982: 146, given Lucretius’ poetic skill and penchant for periphrasis as evidenced in, e.g., the *laudes Epicuri*) may have inspired Lucretius’ similar decision not to call these figures by name in his depiction of the afterlife – in stark contrast to the expressly-named individuals such as Tantalus, Tityos, and Sisyphus who populate the rest of Lucretius’ real-world Acheron.

63 The Danaids receive a good deal of attention from Roman poets after Lucretius as well. Tibullus paints them as spurning Venus and pouring the waters of Lethe at 1.3.79-80. Propertius includes their statues in his description of the Temple of Apollo on the Palatine at 2.31.4, on which see Steenkamp 2012. At *Carm*. 3.11.23-52, Horace praises the unnamed Hypermnestra, the only daughter of Danaus to spare her husband from murder, and he also recalls the daughters’ collective ignominy at *Carm.* 2.14.18-19. Virgil emblazons the Danaids on Pallas’ sword-belt at *Aen*. 10.497-99 (on which see especially Harrison 1998 as well as Spence 1991 and Shelfer 2011). Note Virgil’s intricate allusions to the complex relationship between Danaus’ father Belus and, on the one hand, Palamedes and the Trojans (*Aen*. 2.82), and, on the other, Dido and the Tyrians (*Aen*. 1.619-22 and 1.729-30). The last reference mentioned in this list is even replete with a wink to the ever-pouring granddaughters of Belus with *implevitque* at 1.729. All of these references in Virgil, however, stand in contrast to the notable omission of the patronymic Belides *vel sim.* in that baldric ekphrasis of *Aeneid* 10. Ovid situates the Belides at *Met*. 4.462-63 in the traditional roundup of eternal underworld toilers rehearsed in *DRN*, and at *Met*. 10.43-44 he tells us in punning language (playing on the two senses of *vacarunt*, 10.43) that the Belides were momentarily “unoccupied by” the jars which they perpetually “empty.” Ovid also highlights the Danaids at *Am*. 2.2.4, *Ars am*. 1.74, and *Tr*. 3.1.62, on which trio of passages see Barchiesi 2005: 284. For more on the representation of the Danaids in antiquity, see Keuls 1974 and Beriotto 2016 (esp. 95-96 on the Romans’ tendency to highlight the Danaids’ connection to their punishment in the underworld).

64 On this phrase see West 1982.

65 Note *nobis* at 3.1005.
advocating. That is, Lucretius likewise rejects Callicles’ faulty hedonism and uses the same image as Plato to do so. At the same time, Lucretius continues to pursue his own particular didactic ends, and so he engages his reader with this analogy of the vessel which has shifted its referents from jar-as-body to jar-as-mind, a switch which he signaled in Nature’s rebuke just above. Again, then, the jar stands for a person’s mental faculty: all of an individual’s past pleasures are heaped together into the jar of their evaluation of their experiences in life. Moreover, these miserable water-pourers are the very people whom Nature has just castigated, as these Danaid-like sufferers engage in the same activity of mentally gathering (congerere, 3.1009) their experiences into a leaky vessel (pertusum... in vas, 3.1009) in the precise fashion which Nature has just instructed us to avoid.66 Again, this act of pouring greedily is clearly signaled as a mental process (ingratam animi naturam, 3.1003) and the people in question experience no shortage of good things (bonis rebus, 3.1004). The limiting factor is their mind’s inability to properly evaluate these goods, and it is precisely this cognitive act which the jar now comes to symbolize.

If we are to understand the image of the jar as undergoing a series of subtle changes in what it signifies, what do we do when the image seemingly reverts to a previous signification and apparently makes reference again to the jar-as-body rather than jar-as-mind? After all, at 5.137 Lucretius repeats wholesale line 3.793: tandem in eodem homine atque in eodem vase manere. I would suggest that while lines 5.128-41 largely – though not exactly67 – duplicate 3.784-97, the new introductory remarks of 5.126-27

66 Note the verbal echo by which even the verb congerere returns, recalling congesta from 3.936.
67 The slight variations here, as in the famous near-repetition (but crucially, again, not the exact duplication) of 4.1-25 ≈ 1.926-50, encourage us to read the second iterations of these passages in ways which will obviously draw on the first iterations but which also give the second iterations a
serve to remind the reader to carefully apply the lessons they have learned since their last encounter with similar material. Again we rehearse a series of *adynata* and observe that trees do not grow in the sky and fish cannot live in fields, and finally we again see that the mind must likewise exist in its own proper home within the body and remain, as our familiar analogy goes, within the same person and the same jar. Even if these lines appear to rehash their almost identical formulation from earlier, however, their new context makes all the difference to their present interpretation. Shortly after these lines’ first appearance in the poem, Lucretius proposes the famous thought experiment at 3.847-61 whereby even if our atoms were rearranged after our death exactly as they are now, we would not be the same person that we are today. In light of that lesson, how are we to understand the repeated line *tandem in eodem homine atque in eodem vase manere*?

What does it even mean for something to reside in the “same” person in the wake of such a thought experiment? Before returning to these questions, I would first briefly posit that this purposeful repetition of the earlier passage at length and nearly wholesale might serve to recall Heraclitus, who was famous for the theory of perpetual flux which

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69 Cf. Plato *Cratylus* 402a: ἰέγει ποι ὧν Ἡράκλειτος ὅτι πάντα χωρεί καὶ οὐδὲν μένει, καὶ ποταμοῦ ῥοῆ ἀπεικάζουν τὰ ὄντα λέγει ὡς δις ἐς τὸν αὐτὸν ποταμὸν οὐκ ἂν ἐμβαίης. Let us be careful at this juncture not to confuse authenticity (that is, the notion that a given doctrine may have truly originated with Heraclitus) with attribution (the popular association of a precept with Heraclitus in the later tradition). As Hülsz 2013: 103 is quick to point out, the characterization of universal flux as being Heraclitean may owe more to Plato, Aristotle, and the doxographical tradition than
Lucretius’ own *Gedankenexperiment* might invite the reader to contemplate. The same person, so the Heraclitean saying goes, never enters the same river twice; for neither is any river the same at any two given moments, nor is the person the same at those different times.\(^7^0\) Indeed, Heraclitus’ famous (though unattested)\(^7^1\) axiom, \(\pi\acute{a}ντα \ \rho\varepsilon\iota,\) may even be hinted at in Lucretius’ use of the evocative phraseology *omnia... perfluxere* at 3.936-37.\(^7^2\) Whatever the case, Lucretius’ pointed reuse of an earlier passage and image in a new and seemingly inappropriate context forces us to consider just what this repeated analogy may actually mean for us, which brings us back to the questions posed above. Generating this kind of critical analysis in the reader is precisely the value in the apparent tension which Lucretius’ verse-repetition brings about, and as a result I cannot subscribe to the belief that such verse-repetitions are idle, careless, or the would-be deletions of an *ultima manus* which simply never got around to erasing duplicates.\(^7^3\) Indeed, line 5.137 and the recycled verses which surround it follow a new set of introductory remarks which suit the new context of the passage, situated in a discussion
to Heraclitus himself; for instance, for the notion that Lucretius relies more on Epicurus’ critique of Heraclitus than on Heraclitus’ own writings, see Sedley 1998: 73 and 123-26.
72 See Johncock 2016a: 150-51 for other similar phraseology in *DRN*. Note, too, that even if Lucretius may be nodding to Heraclitus in the above lines, nevertheless he carefully undermines his rival with the inclusion of the introductory *non* in 3.936.
73 Lucretius’ use of repetition, then, has its own didactic function, similar to but separate from the role of memorization in Epicureanism; these lengthy repeated passages are not intended as mnemonics to be learned by heart but rather as checkpoints for re-evaluation of seemingly familiar material to ensure comprehension or evoke new lessons upon a second reading. On the function of repetition as a teaching tool in Lucretius, see Maguinness 1965: 73-75, Schrijvers 1969, Clay 1983: 176-85, Gale 1994b: 116 and 211-14, Schiesaro 1994, Erler 1998, and Reinhardt 2002: 303 n. 37; on some other types of repetition in *DRN*, see Deutsch 1939, Ingalls 1971, and Buglass 2015, and see Snyder 1980: 82-83 on the playful small-scale repetition or near-repetition of words punningly deployed for *figura etymologica.*
of the mortal and inanimate nature of the world we know: *quippe etenim non est, cum quovis corpore ut esse | posse animi natura putetur consiliumque* (5.126-27). In other words, proper levels of cognitive thought (*animi natura... consiliumque*, 5.127) cannot be assumed to exist in any body whatsoever. Lucretius forces us to confront the uncomfortable reality that not all containers house equally capable minds. Indeed, that consequence has already been borne out by the lot of the modern-day Danaids, those who suffer in life and fail to value their goods as having been sufficient pleasures due to their own mental error. If only these people would properly bear in mind the quality of their lived experiences, the poet insinuates, then they would achieve happiness – and it is not that they are incapable of achieving it, since Lucretius is at pains throughout the whole of *DRN* to show that anyone can come to the light of *vera ratio* and see the world properly. Rather, they simply have their work cut out for them if they are going to plug the gaping holes of their mental jars. Not all jars may be created equal, but that doesn’t mean they cannot all eventually achieve similar states of ataraxic tranquility. Indeed, even the “same” jar, however well functioning, needs to be constantly reassessed in order to ensure it maintains proper function as it inevitably undergoes a relentless bombardment of new experiences and challenges, which is why I suggest the repeated jar analogy returns as a kind of check-up or check-point at 5.137. That, *in nuce*, is Lucretius’ reason for employing recurrent imagery in the first place: to test the reader to implement Epicurean teaching on their own, and at the same time to lead the reader to develop a self-confident security in that philosophy which allows for successful application of those lessons one after another, even if not in an ultimately altogether linear fashion. Success
on these terms requires constant reevaluation of even the seemingly familiar, and
Lucretius will happily supply the pupil with opportunities for just such reassessment.

4.4. Epicurus’ Understanding

The productive tension in Lucretius’ call to read an image both forwards and
backwards, if we can phrase it in that way, stimulates the critical thought which the poet
is training the reader to practice throughout DRN. When we finally arrive at Book 6,
then, we have been prepared in a number of ways to read jars as bound up with a
fundamentally mental process. Indeed, the discovery that the vessel itself is responsible
for the mental anguish mankind suffers is precisely what prompts74 Epicurus to speak out
in his truth-telling words, as we learn at 6.17-23:

intellegit ibi vitium vas efficere ipsum,
omniaque illius vitio corrumpier intus
quae conlata foris et commoda cumque venirent,
partim quod fluxum pertusumque esse videbat,
ut nulla posset ratione explerier umquam;
partim quod taetro quasi conspurcare sapore
omnia cernebat, quaecumque receperat, intus.

Epicurus properly diagnosed the problem as residing in the mind, and noticed that the
problem lies not with any external incursions into the jar from outside but rather with the
jar itself. As this passage makes clear, this jar signifies the mind and the mental
processing of that which comes into it. Epicurus himself saw that the flawed jar would
pollute everything it took into itself (6.22-23), ascribing the agency and fault to the vessel
and the mental process it denotes. Again, Lucretius illustrates this revelation from
Epicurus in the same language we have seen in his jar imagery thus far: the fault lies not

74 The postpositive igitur of 6.24 establishes the causal connection between the recognition of the
vessel’s flaw and the cleansing of his people’s hearts. Note the plural pectora (not merely a
poetic plural) and the implied proselytizing of veridicis... dictis in 6.24, signaling that Epicurus’
recognition led him to purify not only his own heart but those of his neighbors as well.
with the good things \((\text{commoda}, 6.19)\)\textsuperscript{75} which come into the jar from without; the vessel in question is evidently leaky and riddled with holes \((\text{fluxum pertusumque}, 6.20)\) and simply cannot be filled as it presently stands \((\text{ut nulla posset ratione explerier umquam}, 6.21)\). Because we have grappled with this particular meaning of the jar analogy already, Lucretius presents the above discoveries in the terms of a metaphor; when he pivots to a partially new point of the lesson, though, and tells us that the jar of our minds runs the risk of befouling everything that it receives, Lucretius still allows us the small aid of the word \textit{quasi} \((6.22)\) to signal the lesson as a simile and make this last new development, bitter-tasting though it is, just the slightest bit more palatable. Ultimately, Lucretius leads us to Epicurus’ revelation that the jar constitutes the mental process by which we evaluate the world around us, and we are thus alerted to the need to keep our own vessels salutary and in good working order.

As we now know, thanks to Epicurus, an individual’s own mental fortitude, not the forces of the outside world, determine a person’s success or failure in practicing Epicurean equanimity. The natural phenomena of that larger world, though, are of course the subject of the rest of Book 6. Lucretius seems to ask us: can we keep our mental jars steady and achieve ataraxic calm? Of the final three occurrences of jars in \textit{DRN}, two come in the same passage \((6.225-38)\), when the poet shows how quickly lightning moves and how powerful it is:

\hspace{1cm} hunc tibi subtilem cum primis ignibus ignem
\hspace{1cm} constituit natura minutis mobilibusque
\hspace{1cm} corporibus, cui nil omnino obsistere possit.
\hspace{1cm} transit enim validum fulmen per saepta domorum,
\hspace{1cm} clamor ut ac voces, transit per saxa, per aera,
\hspace{1cm} et liquidum puncto facit aes in tempore et aurum.
\hspace{1cm} curat item vasis integris vina repente

\hspace{1cm} 225

\hspace{1cm} 230

\textsuperscript{75} Lenaghan 1967: 243 also notes the repetition of this vocabulary.
diffugiant, quia nimirum facile omnia circum conlaxat rareque facit lateramina vasi adveniens calor eius, et insinuatus in ipsum mobiliter solvens differt primordia vini. quod solis vapor aetatem non posse videtur efficere usque adeo pollens fervore corusco: tanto mobilior vis et dominantior haec est.

Lightning causes the wine in the jars to evaporate but leaves the vessels intact (vasis integris, 6.231). That, of course, is our goal: to keep our minds steady and unharmed no matter what goes on around us. Nowhere in this passage, however, is the mind mentioned, nor even the body; the poet employs a simile, but it is neither an equation of jar and body nor jar and soul. Yet I would submit that Lucretius bids us to interpret these jars in a similar fashion to the manner in which he has been guiding us to do all along. He tests our ability to live up to such a model as these jars afford us, a model which derives from our experience of the natural world, since at the same time he compels us to grapple with an earlier iteration of such jar imagery and deal with the tensions and complications which this internal allusion may bring with it. The earlier passage which may come to mind occurs at 3.441-44 in Lucretius’ first two uses of jar imagery in the poem. The relevant lines describe the putative departure of the soul from the body once all the blood has drained from its veins (ac rarefactum detracto sanguine venis, 3.442).

In 6.233-34 Lucretius now describes the rarefaction not of a corpse (our erstwhile “jar” of the soul) but rather of the literal jar of wine: rareque facit lateramina vasi | adveniens calor eius. To be sure, such self-referential literalizing reveals Lucretius’ considerable

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76 Cf. Plin. HN 2.51.137, adduced by Leonard and Smith 1942 here: tertium [fulminis genus] est quod clarum vocant, mirificae maxime naturae, quo dolia exhauriuntur intactis operimentis nulloque alio vestigio relicto, an account which itself may be looking to Aristotle Meteorologica 3.1 (371a). I would suggest that in this passage Lucretius may also be gesturing toward Heraclitus, who is famously said to have praised fire – especially the immensely fine fire which makes up the lightning-bolt – as an encapsulation of universal flux; one might compare Lucretius’ dominantior at 6.238 with Heraclitus DK B64 (τὰ δὲ πάντα οἰακιζεὶ κεραυνός).
artistry; but it also forces the student to grapple with that earlier jar analogy in a new setting. Whereas the jar in that earlier passage stood for the body, we might be inclined here to read the jar as the mind now that we have learned of Epicurus’ discovery that the jar of the mind can pollute what it holds. Again, I believe this kind of tension can be productive, as it challenges the reader to take this new conception or formulation of the jar analogy and apply it to a new setting and reconsider just what it might signify. This constant reassessment is crucial to ensuring that our own mental jars indeed remain inviolate just as Lucretius’ *vasa integra* above.

The final instance of jar imagery in *DRN* likewise reinforces the need for the reader to vigilantly see to the security and tranquility of their mental jar. The natural phenomenon under discussion at this point in Book 6 is that of the earthquake, and at 6.552-56 he proceeds to demonstrate the effects of a large landmass falling into a great body of water:

\[
\textit{fit quoque, ubi in magnas aquae vastasque lacunas}
\textit{gleba vetustate e terra provolvitur ingens,}
\textit{ut iactetur aquae fluctu quoque terra vacillans,}
\textit{ut vas interdum non quit constare, nisi umor}
\textit{destitit in dubio fluctu iactarier intus.}
\]

The jar in question is again a literal vessel, with no stated link to the mental vessel which we have been alerted to look for following the account of Epicurus’ realization at the beginning of Book 6. This jar, like the earthquake it describes, shakes and cannot stop from shaking until the waters within it calm down. Indeed, even the words which make up the passage appear to enact the very choppiness described in the imagery: the irregular

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77 Cf. the concretization in 3.642-56 of the battlefield commotion of 2.323-32, discussed in the chapter on military imagery above.
78 For more on Lucretius’ description of earthquakes see Ceronetti 2003.
anapestic or spondaic scansion of *aqua* in 6.552 may unsettle the reader, only to see the same word return to its customary metrical quantities a mere two lines later in *aqua* at 6.554. The passage does not make for smooth sailing. Further, the shaking vessel here may recall that earlier account of shaken jars at 3.434-44 discussed earlier. The difference between those shaken jars and the present one, however, in light of our reading of Epicurus’ revelation at 6.17-23, is that we may read the shaking jar of Book 6 not as an analogue for the body as we once did, but now as indeed the mind. We must supply the proper reading of this jar – as mind rather than as body – without being led expressly to that reading, as both of these concluding jar passages in Book 6 require. The task in these passages, once we have the key to properly unlocking their meaning following the Book 6 proem, is to read the jar as denoting the mind, and cognitively taking the next step in order to ensure that our mental vessels achieve the ataraxic calm that can only arise once all the internal turbulence comes to a rest.

Lucretius’ subtle alterations to his jars throughout *DRN* not only reinforce the lesson that we have the power to achieve mental tranquility, but they also prepare the student to apply serious thought to those nuanced uses over the course of reading the poem. In addition, as analogical vehicles with different valences of meaning at different points in the poem, Lucretius’ vessels also challenge the reader to capably engage with the lessons of *DRN* as they are encountered and to contend with any concomitant tensions which those changes in signification may bring with them. Lucretius also urges the reader to revisit the jars of other authors and read those other texts with a critical eye, correcting any doctrinal inconsistencies with Epicureanism and corroborating felicitous

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79 Cf. Rouse and Smith 1992 *ad loc.* See also Garrod 1914 and Butterfield 2013: 81 on peculiarities of the word’s appearance (or omission) and scansion in various editions of *DRN.*
philosophical commonalities. At all points, the reader is made to assess and reassess the quality of their mental fortitude and their grasp of the doctrines of the poem. Lucretius’ jars thus play an important and multifaceted role in the guiding didactic structure of *DRN.*
Chapter 5. Fine Garments: Clothing as Metapoetic Meditation and Intertextual Cue in Lucretius

This chapter examines how Lucretius employs marked descriptions of clothing (vestis) as a means of alluding to literary predecessors, especially Hellenistic poets. I will show that clothing imagery in DRN thus illuminates still another facet of the poem’s program of incremental didacticism. We have already explored related features of Lucretius’ didactic technique: military imagery poses an ever greater test to the reader’s achievement of ataraxic calm; increasing temporal proximity encourages the reader to draw lessons for his or her own lived experience; acorn imagery challenges the reader to toggle deftly between a term’s surface meaning and its secondary meanings; and jar imagery tests how the reader tracks the changing uses of a philosophical analogy. With clothing, Lucretius adds another wrinkle to this technique, as it were: he introduces garments into DRN in ways which recall the use of similar imagery in the Hellenistic poets before him, challenging the reader to identify the intertextual allusions at hand.¹ Further, Lucretius groups these allusive uses of vestis into significant clusters, each marked by its own telling vocabulary and each pointing to a specific intertext in its given recurrences. Consequently, when clouds-as-clothes images recur, for instance, or the vestment of snakes and spiders, those specific clusters operate as self-contained allusions to particular Hellenistic poets (Aratus and Nicander, respectively, in the two instances mentioned). My reading of DRN accords with Conte’s principle that a poet’s imitation of a previous author will ordinarily announce the relationship to the earlier text with distinct

¹ For another argument that clothing imagery may serve to point the reader’s gaze in a certain direction, cf. Bender 2001 on the significance of particular garments in the Aeneid and their reflections of contemporary Roman costume.
verbal echoes, while nevertheless sufficiently customizing that predecessor’s presentation so that the innovation of the alluding poet is recognizable as such. This latest aspect of incremental didacticism that I propose thus poses a macro- as well as a micro-level challenge to the reader in recognizing a given resonance and reconciling that allusion with the broader aims of DRN.

5.1. Lucretius and λεπτότης

Why might clothing imagery constitute an apt vehicle for intertextual allusion to Hellenistic poetry? For one thing, many of the poets to whom Lucretius alludes depict clothing in noteworthy fashion in their own works, as I examine in greater detail below. Yet even as the Roman poet gestures toward a particularly Aratean fleece-like cloud, or describes the Nicandrian “vestment” of snakes and spiders, or rebukes the pursuit of fine fleeces so suggestive of the Argonauts’ quest in Apollonius, at the same time, Lucretius is seamlessly incorporating these poetic images into his unrelenting Epicurean argumentation. Further, the act of weaving a garment carries clear metapoetic undertones, and the Hellenistic poets often display a keen sensitivity to poetological concerns in their pursuit of crafting fine-spun verse. Indeed, the watchword of so much

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2 Conte 2017.
3 On clothing metaphor used in Greek conceptualizations of emotion, see Cairns 2016.
Hellenistic poetry is that famous adjective λεπτός,\(^5\) which bespeaks sophistication and translates not only to “slender” or “fine” but also “refined” or “fine-spun,” as a garment.\(^6\)

Scholarship following Kenney’s landmark study in 1970 has highlighted Lucretius’ engagement with the Hellenistic poets, especially with a view to a refined poetic aesthetic.\(^7\) In a forthcoming article, Kronenberg illuminates another facet of Lucretius’ complex relationship with the Hellenistic tradition of refinement, specifically regarding the allusive power of acrostics.\(^8\) She points to a Lucretian acrostic which spells \(LUCE\) (5.712-15), and she connects it to the famous (if apparently unintentional) \(ΛΕΥΚΗ\) acrostic in Homer (\(Il.\ 24.1-5\)) and the clearly deliberate gamma acrostic spelling \(ΛΕΙΘ\) in Aratus (\(Phaen.\ 783-87\)). Kronenberg notes that Aratus makes an apt target for Lucretian allusion for a number of reasons, all of which are germane to the principles of refinement so representative of Hellenistic poetry and \(DRN\) alike. I would add that this acrostic can also denote an allusion to Nicander for similar reasons.\(^9\) Like Aratus, Nicander sets an acrostic within his text (\(Ther.\ 345-53\)), this one spelling out the poet’s own name. So just as Kronenberg links Lucretius’ \(LUCE\) with the same poet’s \(nomen\), I would suggest that Lucretius participates in such name-play in the tradition of Nicander’s.

\(^5\) Recall, e.g., Aratus’ famous \(ΛΕΙΘ\) acrostic first pointed out by Jacques 1960 (\(Phaen.\ 783-87\)), as well as Callimachus’ preference for the “slender Muse” advocated by Apollo (\(Μούσαν… λεπταλέην, Aet.\ fr. 1.24\) Harder) or his praise of Aratus’ fine verses (\(λεπταί | ρήσεις, Ep.\ 27.3-4\) Pfeiffer). On the notion that a given work might qualify as \(λεπτός\) in style even if \(μέγας\) in length – an issue worth considering when reading Lucretius’ lengthy yet refined poem – see, e.g., Klein 1975.

\(^6\) Lyne 1995: 100-101 highlights the connection of the word \(λεπτός\) with garments in particular.


\(^8\) On the popularity of acrostics in Hellenistic poetry, see, e.g., Luz 2010.

\(^9\) Cicero pairs Aratus and Nicander in his praise of their poetic brilliance on technical subjects (\(De or.\ 1.69\)), so an association of the two poets is not unparalleled even among Lucretius’ contemporaries.
acrostic signature as well. Further, Kronenberg connects the important Lucretian theme of light (especially that of the sun, sol) with a pun on Aratus’ hometown of Soli.11 Lucretius’ illumination leitmotif, marked by words like clarus, renders Nicander an attractive intertext for similar reasons,12 since the author of the Theriaca closes his poem with a sphragis declaring himself a citizen of Clarus (Κλάρου, 958).13 The metapoetic value of a bilingual pun on this toponym is certainly not lost on Lucretius.14 All of the above is to say that Lucretius reads Hellenistic poets such as Nicander very closely and models his own verses on Hellenistic poetic aesthetics, as will be examined in detail below.

In addition to using clothing imagery as a reference to Hellenistic poetics, I also argue that Lucretius suggests in the Kulturgeschichte of Book 5 that his reader practice the kind of active discovery which originally leads mankind to employ clothing for human use. After all, vestes (5.1449) are among the praemia (5.1450) which early man is said to have learned by experience, and the process of achieving the discovery of clothing closely resembles the very learning process which Lucretius urges his pupil to

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11 Callimachus refers to Aratus as a resident of Soli (ὁ Σολεὺς) at Ep. 27.3 Pfeiffer. Cf. Haslam 1992: 203-204 on the possibility of a similar Soli/sol pun at Verg. G. 2.438-39.
12 Tatum 1984 remains required reading on the programmatic importance of clarus and related words in DRN. For a somewhat different view of Lucretian claritas, as corresponding more to ἐνάργεια (vividness) than to σαφήνεια (clearness or precision), see Farrell (forthcoming).
13 While modern scholars normally refer to the poet of the Theriaca as Nicander of Colophon rather than as Nicander of Clarus, Overduin 2014b: 537 notes that the Romans were aware of both distinct localities, citing Tac. Ann. 2.54. Overduin also cites Ov. Tr. 1.6.1 artfully referring to Antimachus of Colophon with the phrase clario... poetae, to which I would add Cicero’s play on Nicander’s hometown by recognizing both Colophon (Nicandrum Colophonium) and Clarus (praeclare) at De or. 1.69.
14 For other bilingual puns on Greek proper names in DRN, see Gale 2001.
To be sure, Lucretius reconciles the various allusions noted herein with his Epicurean conception of the physical world; he also stresses, though, that in the hunt for vestes we mirror the process of active discovery by which early man first makes progress. Lucretius thus teaches his pupil to train the mind to be actively searching and assessing at all times.

5.2. Aratus, Clouds, and a Lucretian Water Cycle

I begin by looking at the famous analogy in Aratus Phaenomena 938-39 in which fleece-like clouds portend rain:

πολλάκι δ’ ἐρχομένων ὑετῶν νέφεα προσάραθην
οία μάλιστα πόκοισιν ἐντόκτοις ἰνδάλλονται.

Sens 1994 has explored the relationship between these lines and Theocritus Id. 22.19-22, and I would also suggest that another Hellenistic poet engages with this Aratean imagery in addition, namely Apollonius of Rhodes. This cloud-clothing imagery evidently held fast in the ancient Greeks’ cultural imagination, and Roman writers would later pick it up as well. Thomas 1988 and Kidd 1997 note that both Virgil (G. 1.397) and Pliny (HN 18.355) likewise refashion the image in their own projects, and Nethercut 2012: 113-15 has recently discussed Lucretius’ allusion to these lines of the Phaenomena in 6.503-505. I propose that four additional passing references to clothesline laundry in DRN cooperate with the above lines as part of a sustained image-driven allusion to Aratus: suspensae

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15 With Lucretius’ description of mankind’s step-by-step journey to greater knowledge (5.1452-57, for more on which, see below in this chapter), compare the pupil’s own incremental education (for good, not ill: illud in his rebus vereor, ne forte rearis | impia te rationis inire elementa viamque | indugredi sceleris. quod contra…, 1.80-83) and the natural growth of organisms (paulatimque gradus aetatis scandere adultae, 2.1123).

16 Argon. 4.123-26, τῶ δὲ δὶ ἀτραπιτοίῳ μεθ’ ἵερων ἄλος ἱκοντο, | φηγὸν ἀπερείπον διζημένον, ἃ ἐπὶ κώδας | βέβλητο, νεφέλη ἐναλήκτω, ἃ τ’ ἀνίόντος | ἡμίῳ φλογερῆσιν ἔρευθεται ἀκτίνεσσιν.

17 Cairns 2016: 32-36 also discusses metaphors linking clouds and clothing, although in a different connection (especially regarding emotions, such as ᾧχος and αἰδός).
vestes, 1.305; suspensam vestem, 6.114; vestes... suspensae, 6.471-72; vestis umore madentis, 6.617. By looking briefly at each collocation’s surrounding description within its broadly meteorological context, I show how – with slight but meaningful changes of detail – each of these verses participates in the same process of evocative resonance by which Lucretius systematically re- appropriates Aratus for his own purposes in *DRN.*

The first of these passages to which we now turn has long been noted in scholarship for its connection to Aratus.\(^18\) In Lucr. 6.503-505, clouds pick up moisture just as hanging fleeces of wool do:

\[
\text{concipiunt etiam multum quoque saepe marinum umorem, veluti pendentia vellera lanae, cum supera magnum mare venti nubila portant.} \quad 505
\]

The reworking of Aratus is rather straightforward here; but why point to Aratus? And why here? As for the first question, Aratus commands such gravitas as a beloved didactic poet that he rather demands reference if Lucretius is to occupy space in the same tradition.\(^19\) And the particular moments at which these allusions occur happen to cluster largely in Book 6, with still another reference in Book 1. I suggest that this placement makes perfect sense. Book 6, for instance, represents a portion of the poem which in part, along with Book 5, treats of astronomical phenomena, so engaging with the poet of the stars is not inappropriate in such a setting. The Book 1 instance, moreover, allows for an early, muted acknowledgement of a great didactic predecessor, all while Lucretius signals his reinterpretation of the Aratean cosmos.

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\(^{18}\) See, e.g., Ernout-Robin 1925-28 *ad loc.*

\(^{19}\) As Kronenberg 2016: 49 notes, “Gee (2013, 57-109) has recently made a strong case for Lucretius’ pervasive, polemical engagement with Aratus via Cicero’s *Aratea.*” My study bolsters the case for such engagement with Aratus and the Aratean tradition.
Indeed, alluding to a rival is by no means out of place in *DRN* 1. Recall Lucretius’ derisive remarks peppered throughout the first book, some attacks directed at a specific figure, other gibes left anonymous: he knocks various Presocratics\(^20\) and possibly Stoics,\(^21\) as well as Empedocles,\(^22\) Ennius,\(^23\) and others. I add Aratus to the list, specifically for the oblique criticism Lucretius levies against him at 1.305-310.\(^24\)

\begin{quote}
denique fluctifrago suspensae in litore vestes \\
uvescunt, eaedem dispansae in sole serescunt; \\
at neque quo pacto persederit umor aquai \\
visumst nec rursum quo pacto fugerit aestu. \\
in parvas igitur partis dispargitur umor, \\
quas oculi nulla possunt ratione videre. \\
\end{quote}

These lines describe the same physical process that Lucretius recounts in the verses from Book 6 discussed above, 6.503-505. These Book 1 verses zoom in on the clothes as they grow damp (or dry), and the passage at 6.503-505 shows how clouds often behave similarly, absorbing moisture unto themselves just as clothes do. Accordingly, I suggest

\(^{24}\) Butterfield 2015: 31-39 offers a number of complicated and in my view unnecessary proposals to emend dispansae, which has been transmitted by the manuscripts. The sense of the passage does not require a change, as Butterfield himself admits: the twofold contrast contained in the complex juxtaposition of dispansae and suspensae “may be Lucretius’ intention, and therefore his correct text could be transmitted” (2015: 32). Butterfield objects in part that the contrast between growing damp and growing dry is compromised or complicated by another contrast between clothes being hung by the shore and being spread out in the sun. I would object that the intricate arrangement of images in these lines is unsurprising in a poet whose imagery is so carefully ordered throughout his work. In addition, the subtle variation between the two adjectives suspensae and dispansae need not strike the reader as so vexing a contrast: indeed, precisely their similarity reinforces the poet’s point that invisible particles are everywhere around us even in seemingly contrasting physical processes. The suggestive lexical similarity of suspensae and dispansae, in addition to the asyndeton thrusting the two images against one another syntactically, as well as the express conceptual linking of the images through the modifier eaedem (1.306), all serves to underscore the similarity of the processes of moistening and drying, even in apparently dissimilar circumstances.
that Lucretius deliberately draws a connection between the two passages. And as the
Book 6 verses (6.503-505) have long been identified as an allusion to Aratus, I propose
that those lines’ intratextual link with this passage from Book 1 similarly encourages a
dialogue with Aratus. Lucretius’ muted polemic against other rivals in Book 1 makes
these lines’ placement in the poem an appropriate moment for this veiled commentary on
Aratus – and, indeed, the allusion serves as an acknowledgement of that great didactic
forebear but also a reappropriation of that same model, as we have seen is customary
Lucretian practice.

As mentioned above, the remaining instances of cloud-like clothing and clothing-
like clouds are to be found in Book 6, a section of the poem which, along with the middle
of Book 5, focuses particularly on astronomical matters and macro-scale natural
phenomena, opening the way for an allusion to Aratus.25 A third instance uses similar
imagery 6.470-75:

\[
\begin{align*}
praeterea permulta mari quoque tollere toto \\
corpora naturam declarant litore vestes suspensae, cum concipiunt umoris adhaesum. \\
quo magis ad nubis augendas multa videntur posse quoque e salso consurgere momine ponti; \\
nam ratio consanguineast umoribus omnis.
\end{align*}
\]

470 475

Here the poet portrays clouds as behaving in precisely the same fashion that the
recognizably Aratean clouds do. Lucretius’ clothes hanging by the shore “announce”
(declarant, 6.471) nature’s method in this respect. The laundry collects the moisture of
the sea in the same way clouds draw from the waters of the deep, as we have seen in each

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25 Cf. Volk 2015: 263 n. 29, who identifies among the ancients “the conceptual equation
‘(knowledge about) the sky = Aratus.’”
of the examples discussed.\textsuperscript{26} The effect of connecting hanging laundry to Aratus in this way is that Lucretius declares victory over his didactic rival in matters of both meteorology and imagery. Lucretius appropriates Aratus’ image into his Epicurean framework, adopting it in revised form into his own illustration of the universe and its workings.

Let us take a closer look at just how Lucretius transforms Aratus’ image for his own purposes. Indeed, he repeatedly recycles this clouds-as-clothing simile in \textit{DRN}, demonstrating that this image does not belong exclusively to Aratus but indeed perfectly suits his own exposition of Epicurean physics. Lucretius’ deployment of this simile at 6.108-115, for example, illustrates how the poet keys the image to his own imagery used previously in the poem. Clouds resemble hanging clothing not only because they wick moisture from the sea but also because they often thunder like wind-beaten laundry on a clothesline (6.108-115):

\begin{quote}
dant etiam sonitum patuli super aequora mundi,  
carbasus ut quondam magnis intenta theatris  
dat crepitu malos inter iactata trabesque,  
interdum perscissa furit petulantibus auris  
et fragilis sonitus chartarum commeditatur  
(id quoque enim genus in tonitru cognoscere possis),  
aut ubi suspensam vestem chartasque volantis  
verberibus venti versant plangunte per auras.  
\end{quote}

This passage takes its start from Lucretius’ usual seaside setting for cloud-clothing similes (note \textit{aequora}, 6.108). This comparison, however, cites the connection not with seawater but with the sounds that thundering clouds and windblown clothes make. Lucretius presents these laundry-like clouds in terms which are entirely his own,

\textsuperscript{26} Note the terms \textit{in litore} (1.305), \textit{mari} and \textit{litore} (6.470-71), and \textit{marinum} and \textit{mare} (6.503-505).
signaling that he can capably use Aratus’ imagery for the purposes of illustrating Epicurean physical principles. Further, this passage is also self-referential: Lucretius compares clouds thundering over the deep not only to loudly flapping clothesline laundry but also to buffeted theater awnings (6.109-110), using precise verbal echoes\textsuperscript{27} to recall his previous account of similar awnings which bathe everything beneath them in their own particular color (4.75-77).\textsuperscript{28} That self-reflexive correlation, paired with his use of similar terminology to invoke Aratus elsewhere, suggests that Lucretius strives to outdo his didactic model in putting that great predecessor’s imagery to new use. The Epicurean poet thus accomplishes both inter- and intratextual allusion with the same set of images and self-consciously nods to his Hellenistic forebear even as he innovates upon that model.

One further element of Lucretius’ reappropriation of this Aratean image occurs in Lucretius’ final use of the word \textit{vestis} in \textit{DRN}. This final instance illuminates still another facet of Lucretius’ method of commandeering a previous thinker’s image and customizing it for his own use. The episode in question is the account of the sun drawing off water from the surface of the sea at 6.616-22:

\begin{quote}
praeterea magnum sol partem detrahit aestu. quippe videmus enim vestis umore madentis exsiccare suis radiis ardentibus solem; at pelage multa et late substrata videmus; proinde licet quamvis ex uno quoque loco sol umoris parvam delibet ab aequore partem, largiter in tanto spatio tamen aederland undis. 620
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{27} The collocation \textit{malos... trabesque} occurs in both 4.77 and 6.110, and the phrase \textit{magnis intenta theatris} occupies the same metrical \textit{sedes} in both 4.76 and 6.109. 

\textsuperscript{28} Consider, too, that the earlier discussion of the buffeted theater awnings in Book 4 pertains to the ineffably slight \textit{simulacra} leaping from the surface of those flaps. Consequently, the slender \textit{simulacra} of the tinted awnings may conjure notions of Aratean \textit{λεπτότης}, reapplied to Lucretius’ refashioning of Aratus’ imagery.
The process by which the sun dries the soaked clothing precisely enacts the very situation presented in our first encounter of the word *vestis* in the poem, when at 1.305-310 clothes by the shore grow damp or, as here, clothes spread in the sun grow dry. By returning again at this late stage of the poem to the lesson outlined in the first book, the poet closes the loop, as it were: the Book 1 lesson has now been reiterated and re-examined in the various laundry-related lessons thereafter in the poem. Lucretius thus simultaneously gestures toward Aratus in co-opting his clothing-*cum*-cloud imagery and also neatly cross-references his own novel uses of that imagery in *DRN*. His artful use of these hanging laundry similes tasks his reader with recognizing the skillful repackaging of an earlier lesson over the course of the poem, and at the same time it challenges the reader to detect an allusion to, and refashioning of, Aratus. Lucretius thus presents us with a complex reappropriation of a poetic model and a thorough reworking of that model’s cosmology into coherence with Epicurean physics.

### 5.3. Nicandrian Snakes and Spiders

At the same time, Lucretius employs clothing imagery as an allusion to other poetic predecessors as well. At 3.385-86, 3.612-14, and 4.61, Lucretius applies the language of clothing to snakes and spiders, even using phraseology which has given commentators pause. I submit that one way to profitably read such vexing passages is to see them as allusions to Nicander, functioning within a process similar to what Hardie 1984 has called the “distribution” of a theme. Hardie examines “the procedure whereby Virgil uses different parts or aspects of a single Lucretian passage or episode to help structure two or more episodes in his own poetry,” focusing on three reworkings of the

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sacrifice of Iphianassa in *Aeneid* 2. I propose that Lucretius refashions Nicandrian material in a similar manner. Just as we observed in the series of allusions to Aratus, Lucretius can be seen to parcel different bits of an intertextual allusion into discrete moments across the poem. The snakes and spiders of the cited passages match well with the very creatures who are the focus of Nicander’s *Theriaca* and *Alexipharmaca.* The “vestment” of these spiders and snakes in Lucretius becomes more comprehensible, I propose, when we identify these garments in conjunction with their Nicandrian counterparts. Hollis has already identified some stylistic similarities between Nicander and Lucretius, and I would now point to the following close lexical correspondences as well.

At 3.385-86, Lucretius describes the slough or web of a spider as a shriveled or wrinkled coat that falls onto a person’s head from above (*nec supera caput eiusdem cecidisse vietam | vestem*). In the surrounding lines (3.381-90), Lucretius argues that there is a great distance to travel between the atoms of the body and the atoms of the soul, which is illustrated by the frequent lack of sensation in a person’s skin upon being touched by lightweight matter such as dust, chalk, feathers, and thistle-down. One such lightweight material appears in a vexing collocation as the spider’s *vietam | vestem* (3.385-86), which has been variously interpreted by commentators as denoting a spider’s discarded husk or sloughed skin, or else the spider’s web. I do not endeavor to untangle

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32 Hollis 1998: 178 also explores Lucretius’ nod to Nicander in the lines immediately subsequent (3.386-87).
33 Bailey 1947, for instance, notes that Donatus and others seem to take *vestis* to signify a spider’s “web” in such a context, whereas Ernout and Robin 1925-28 offer that it may well mean the “withered body of a dead spider” in line with Lucretius’ use of *vestis* for sloughed-off snakeskins in the next two iterations of the word in *DRN.* Bailey ultimately pleads *aporia:* “There is not
this knot, as it were, with any definitiveness here; rather, I suggest that the phrase is intentionally ambivalent and occupies a place of productive polysemy in the poem, in that it offers a metapoetic reflection on refined creations like spider’s webs and poets’ verses (supporting a reading as web) while also looking to a similar description of a particular spider and its bodily texture in Nicander (informing a reading as slough or husk). If understood as the spider’s sloughed skin, the vietam vestem corresponds to the snakeskins described as “shriveled” in Nicander; and if we read the phrase as the spider’s web, it signifies the artful product of the creature’s marvelous weaving. Lucretius’ phrase can entertain these related meanings at once because it functions as an intertextual allusion to Nicander’s multiple modes of using clothing to describe similar creatures’ skins or husks and because it presents a metapoetic reflection on refined poetry and intricate web-weaving. Indeed, Lucretius’ use of the adjective tenuis here (aranei tenvia fila, 3.383) – that buzzword for refinement and Latin answer to λεπτός – signals that an appearance of “slender” and “refined” poetry such as Nicander’s is not out of place in this passage.

Below I include the Lucretian lines in question as we turn to a closer inspection of their function as a specific intertextual allusion (3.381-90):

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\begin{align*}
&\text{nam neque pulveris interdum sentimus adhaesum} \\
&\text{corpore nec membris incussam sidere cretam,} \\
&\text{nec nebulam noctu neque aranei tenvia fila}
\end{align*}
\]

really enough evidence to decide.” No scholarly consensus has yet been reached: Ernout and Robin believe “le mot ne peut désigner la toile de l’araignée”; Kenney 1971 maintains quite the opposite; Brown 1997 prefers a partial return to Ernout and Robin and reads the phrase as “an allusion to the spider’s moult, a chitinous coat which it sheds on several occasions between emergence from the egg and maturity”; and Giussani 1980 remains silent on the phrase altogether.

34 Cf. Poliakoff 1985 on the metapoetic valence of spiders and fine-spun webs in Catullus 68 and the programmatic opening of the Culex.

35 So Poliakoff 1985: 249 (with further bibliography at 249 n. 5): “Tenuis is a Latin (and probably Neoteric) translation of the Alexandrian λεπτός.” See also Clauss 1995: 240-42. Cf. Clausen 1964: 194 on the Callimachiean vocabulary of Verg. Ecl. 6.8: “tenuis is more than ornamental… it implies a concept of style; it is the Latin equivalent of λεπτός or λεπταλέος.”
obvia sentimus, quando obretimur euntes, 
nec supera caput eiusdem cecidisse vietam 
vestem, nec pluma avium papposque volantis, 
qui nimia levitate cadunt plerumque gravatim, 
nec repentis itum cuiusvisviscumque animantis 
sentimus, nec priva pedum vestigia quaeque, 
corpore quae in nostro culices et cetera ponunt.

I suggest that Lucretius’ use of the peculiar phrase *vietam vestem* in his description of the spider recalls Nicander. For his part, Nicander styles a sloughed snakeskin as ῥυκνῆν, shriveled, at *Ther.* 137, and at *Ther.* 376 he characterizes the skin of the legendary amphisbaena as ῥωγαλέον, tattered. As Overduin posits, Nicander’s use of this word to describe “a snake’s ragged skin reflects the idea that the skin is just a covering (like a tunic) that envelops a body.” Earlier, Nicander tells us of a snake “taking off” its old skin (ἀπεδόσατο, *Ther.* 31). Nicander indeed puts clothing imagery to regular use in his account of venomous creatures and their outer coverings and may thus stand out as an appropriate model for Lucretius’ use of similar phraseology in descriptions of his own snakes and spiders.

Beyond the notional or atmospheric similarities in such vocabulary, however, I detect a still more direct intertextual link between Lucretius and Nicander. Specifically, I see the above lines from *DRN* (Lucr. 3.381-90) invoking elements of Nicander’s account at *Ther.* 759-68:

36 Overduin 2014b *ad loc.* notes that ῥωγαλέον appears only in Homer before Nicander, where it describes a “tattered” tunic or a “ragged” pouch.
37 Overduin 2014b: 327.
38 Cf. too the tmetic “stripping off” of flesh from Marsyas’ limbs like clothing at Nic. *Alex.* 302 (ἀπὸ φλόα δύσατο γούιον).
Several features of this passage of Nicander stand out as intertextual fodder for Lucretius. To begin, Nicander represents a natural model on whom Lucretius might fashion his own spiders, since those creatures so famously feature in Nicander. More specifically, several details of this passage of Nicander in particular resurface in altered form in *DRN*, starting with the broader context of the Lucretian lesson. I suggest that the spider’s *vietam vestem* in Lucretius, for instance, looks to the spider’s parched, withered frame in Nicander (ἐσκληκός, 766). Further, in 3.381-90 Lucretius is teaching about lightweight matter like chalk (*cretam*, 3.382) and dust (*pulveris*, 3.381) when he introduces his example of the spider. I suggest that this arrangement partially picks up on the dust (κονίης, 762) and ash (σπληδοῦς, 763) in Nicander. Both Lucretius and Nicander even play on the bodily lightness of their illustranda as contrasted with the gravity of their outcomes or guiding principles. At 3.387 Lucretius balances the lightness of *nimia levitate* against the weightiness of *gravatim*; and at *Ther.* 762-63 Nicander pairs the creature’s downy lightness with its weighty stomach (βαρύνεται, *Ther.* 766). Nicander’s spider also eyes its victims from overhead: note that it strikes the head (κεφαλή, 767) or the uppermost

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39 Gow and Scholfield 1979 translate: “Consider now monsters which the grim land of Egypt fosters, like the Moth which the evening meal-time brings in to flutter round the lamps. All the wings are dense and covered with down, even as a man appears who may chance to touch dust or ashes. Such in appearance, it is reared among the leaves of Perseus’s tree. Its terrible head nods ever in grim fashion and is hard, and its belly is heavy; its sting it plants in the top of a man’s neck or on his head, and it may easily and on the spot bring the doom of death.”

40 On this wordplay see Kenney 2014 *ad loc.*

41 Cf. Overduin 2014b *ad loc.* on Nicander’s innovative literal use of a word “previously only used metaphorically” in the similar verb βαρύθει at *Ther.* 135.
part of the neck (αὐχένι τ’ ἀκροτάτῳ, 767). The vietam vestem of Lucretius’ spider likewise falls onto the head from above (supera caput... cecidisse, 3.385). Yet, again, even as he nods toward Nicander in certain details of poetic expression, naturally Lucretius subordinates that poet’s proposed antidotes to the supreme healing power offered through Epicureanism.

One persistent problem in interpreting Lucretius’ phrase vietam vestem (3.385-86) is that it divides opinion as to its precise referent. I hope to have shown in the above discussion that an intertextual allusion to Nicander allows us to read the phrase productively as a recollection of Nicander’s shriveled spider, which paves the way for a gloss as “husk” or “slough.” At the same time, however, that interpretation does not preclude a reading of the phrase which understands it to denote the spider’s web, which is also readily suggested by the context. Indeed, reading the phrase as referring to the web can profitably enhance our understanding and appreciation of the passage. After all, the adjective vietus can mean not just shriveled but “plaited” or “woven” (from the verb vieo), so it can also essentially rephrase the collocation just above it (aranei tenvia fila, 3.383), describing once more the fine threads of the spider-web, the fine threads which the creature has woven into a garment. Yet why should Lucretius ostensibly repeat an example with the same image twice in rapid succession, if we are to read the vietam vestem, then, as a web in this case? To be sure, the phrase does not constitute an idle rewording. If we take both phrases (aranei tenvia fila and vietam vestem) to mean

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42 Cf. Overduin 2014a: 637 on Ther. 764, describing the creature “sitting amid the leaves of a tree.”
43 Cf. Varro Ling. 5.62.
44 With the fine web of Lucr. 3.383 compare Catull. 68.49-50 (nec tenuem texens sublimis aranea telam | in deserto Alli nomine opus faciat); on the Catullan spider see Poliakoff 1985 and Clauss 1995.
“spider-web” (rather than taking the phrase *vietam | vestem* to mean its body or husk), then we do not have mere rephrasing but we encounter another facet of the argumentative proof altogether. The first example of the spider-web (*aranei tenvia fila*, 3.383-84) shows that we often fail to feel the fine spider-web that we have walked into, showing that we can see that it has ensnared us even if we fail to feel its weight against our skin. In the second situation, however, if the phrase *vietam vestem* is interpreted as spider-web, Lucretius indicates that the woven garment “of the same creature”\(^{45}\) likewise does not rise to the level of sensation when it falls onto the head from above, *supera* (3.385), and is hence evidently unseen. So whereas the lesson in the first scenario is that we can see ourselves walking into the web but not feel its touch, the second *exemplum* removes sight, awareness, or foreknowledge from the situation and offers a new aspect of the proof by showing that if we failed to sense it even when we saw ourselves walk into its net, we certainly have a much harder task in sensing the web without the luxury of seeing that it has touched us as well. I suggest that Lucretius enjoys this node of tension in the meaning, where the polysemy of the vexing phrase productively enables multiple interpretations regarding the internal logic of the passage as well as an external allusion and its relationship with previous didactic poetry. This difficult passage challenges the reader to grapple with what I hope to have shown is a productive tension in the text.

Importantly, Lucretius does not import Nicander without modification. For instance, Lucretius offers an analogy with snakes when he rejects the immortality of the soul. The soul does not depart the body unscathed when a person dies, Lucretius tells us.

\(^{45}\) Note the power of *eiusdem* to link the two passages.
If that were the case, then the soul would discard a corpse the way a snake sheds its skin (3.612-14):

... quod si inmortalis nostra foret mens,
non tam se moriens dissolvi conqueretur,
sek magis ire foras vestemque relinquere, ut anguis.46

Lucretius argues that the soul does not exit the body and leave behind its outer garment, the soul. Here Lucretius may indeed be tapping into a common metaphorical trope when he portrays the body as the clothing of the soul, as Schrijvers 1978 maintains.47 Yet this passage can also serve as a tempering or modulation specifically of Nicander’s imagery, considering Nicander’s treatment of snakes and his account of mankind’s loss of eternal youth to the snake (Ther. 342-58).48 Lucretius rejects Nicander’s aetiological tale of snakes’ eternal youth as having any bearing on our reading of the world. Lucretius’ statement thus cautions that we cannot extrapolate outward on the basis of Nicander’s imagery.49

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46 I translate: “but if our mind were immortal, in dying it would complain not so much that it was being destroyed, but more so that it was going outside and leaving behind its clothes, as a snake does.”
48 Note that Nicander’s acrostic signature occurs in the space of these lines, so it makes sense that this marked passage would attract attention and comment from Lucretius.
49 Not all of Lucretius’ snakes are Nicandrian snakes, just as not every cloud in Lucretius is an Aratean cloud. Naturally, a watchword or surrounding textual clue will be necessary to convincingly activate a given image’s availability as an intertextual allusion. See Gee 2013 and Bishop 2016 on snakes which channel Cicero’s Aratea, for instance, rather than Nicander’s poetry. Consider, too, the experiment of the sliced serpent that still shows animation at Lucr. 3.657-63, a passage which does not seem to owe its expression to anything parallel in Nicander; on the vexed transmission of those lines, and for differing proposed readings, see Possanza 2014 and Shearin 2014. A key element in signaling an allusion to Hellenistic poets in such a context, I would suggest, is a particular echo or alert such as vestis, which carries with it both a lexical resonance with the earlier author as well as a host of its own metapoetic associations.
In another example of what I see as a Nicandrian resonance, at Lucr. 4.61, Lucretius has just concluded his “proem in the middle”\textsuperscript{50} which restates his pedagogical plan and proclaims once more his allegiance to Hellenistic poetic aesthetics. His are the pathless regions otherwise untrodden, the untouched springs, the new flowers; all of which have been discussed for their metapoetic significance in previous scholarship.\textsuperscript{51} But that expression of affinity reaches still deeper, I propose. When Lucretius soon thereafter takes up his proof of simulacra, those extremely fine films which leap off the surface of objects, he uses the vocabulary of fineness and thinness which invites a comparison with Hellenistic poetic aesthetics. Note, for instance, the slenderness of \textit{tenuis/tenvis}, which appears twice in this passage, not only in 4.63-64 (\textit{quaes quoniam fiunt, tenuis quoque debet imago | ab rebus mitti summo de corpore rerum}) but also in 4.65-66 (\textit{nam cur illa cadant magis ab rebusque recedant | quam quae tenvia sunt, hiscendist nulla potestas}). The full passage I include below (4.54-71):

\begin{quote}
\textit{principio quoniam mittunt in rebus apertis corpora res multae, partim diffusa solute, robora ceu fiumum mittunt ignesque vaporem, et partim contexta magis condensaque, ut olim cum teretis ponunt tunicas aestate cicadae, et vituli cum membranas de corpore summo nascentes mittunt, et item cum lubrica serpens exuit in spinis vestem (nam saepe videmus illorum spolis vepres volitantibus auctas)—quaes quoniam fiunt, tenuis quoque debet imago ab rebus mitti summo de corpore rerum. nam cur illa cadant magis ab rebusque recedant quam quae tenvia sunt, hiscendist nulla potestas, praeassertim cum sint in summis corpora rebus multa minuta, iaci quae possint ordine eodem quo fuerint et formai servare figuram, et multo citius, quanto minus indupediri pauca queunt et quae sunt prima fronte locata.}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{50} On the concept see Conte 1984; cf. also Conte 2000 on the declaration of poetic allegiance at the outset of \textit{DRN} 4.
The remarkable fineness of the *simulacra* is illustrated with a few examples, one of which involves snakes sloughing their skin in a manner reminiscent of Nicander, as I shall demonstrate. Consider Lucret. 4.60-62:

*et item cum lubrīca serpens*  
*exuit in spīnis vestem (nam saepe vīdēmus illorōm spōlis vepres volitantibus auctas).*

The snakes which shed their clothing here in Lucretius – and which may thus recall Nicander’s similarly “disrobing” snakes – now leave their sloughed skins stuck waving in the thorn-bushes. Lucretius’ *vepres* (thorns, thistles), I submit, share some similarities with Nicander’s thorny white thistle (*aiγληντα χαμαιλεον*, *Ther.* 656). Indeed, as Cusset 2012 has shown, Nicander’s thistle and thistle-down draw on a tradition of literary imagery picked up from Theocritus and Homer – and, I would add, Aratus\(^{52}\) – so this plant already makes an attractive target for erudite allusion by Lucretius. In addition, as Overduin 2014b points out regarding the description of the *aiγλης χαμαιλεος*, Nicander’s “descriptions of plants… bear resemblance to his descriptions of snakes,”\(^{53}\) so in linking his thistle-bushes with snakeskins Lucretius is following something of a Nicandrian precedent. Indeed, Nicander’s thistle “wears” its head in its center, further underscoring Nicander’s use of clothing metaphor (with the effect of tmesis enacting its centrality even lexically, *μέσση δ’ ἐν κεφαλή δόεται*, *Ther.* 662). Moreover, Nicander’s thistle “exults in” its leaves (*πετάλοισιν ἀγαυρόν*, *Ther.* 661), using military-tinged vocabulary which, as Overduin 2014b points out *ad loc.*, is seen before Nicander only twice: in Hesiod describing Typhoeus’ hundred snaky heads “exulting in” the battle-cry like a bull (*ὁσσαν ἄγαύρου*, *Hes. Theog.* 832), and in Herodotus relating Xerxes’

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\(^{52}\) *Phaen.* 921-23.  
\(^{53}\) Overduin 2014b: 423.
immense “pride” in arriving in Greece with his soldiers (ἀγαυρότατα, Hdt. 7.57).\textsuperscript{54} Military language regarding snakeskins occurs earlier in Nicander as well, including at Theriaca 379 “where the verb σκυλεύω is used for the stripping of a snake’s skin. This has close parallels to the despoiling of a slain enemy, taking off his arms after battle.”\textsuperscript{55} Lucretius may approximate this sense of glorying in battlefield victory when he describes his thorn-bushes as auctas, 4.62, “enhanced” or “increased” by the newfound “spoils” (spoliis, 4.62) hanging airborne (volitantibus, 4.62) in the bushes’ thorns, linking a sense of glory or pride with what looks like the plant’s flowering blooms. In sum, Nicander’s didactic form, arachno-herpetological subject matter, learned reputation, and marked vocabulary make him an attractive target for intertextual allusion in Lucretius for a variety of reasons and, accordingly, Lucretius makes reference to Nicander in a number of ways.

5.4. Lucretius and Callimachus

The connection between Nicander and Lucretius above stems from a combination of consonant imagery and keywords which activate the allusion. I would argue that the same circumstance provides us with an allusion to another author in another set of lines within this same passage, namely at 4.57-58, this time comparing the slender simulacra to the fine robes which cicadas shed in summer: ut olim | cum teretis ponunt tunicas aestate cicadae. Indeed, I maintain that in this context the adjective teres\textsuperscript{56} approximates

\textsuperscript{54} Cf. also Overduin 2014b: 100 on Ther. 832, regarding a tree “‘flourishing in full pride’ (δενδρείου... πολλὸν ἄγαυρότατον θαλέθησι).”

\textsuperscript{55} Overduin 2014b: 126.

\textsuperscript{56} Edmunds 2002 and Gee 2013 note that Lucretius’ phrase tereti cervice in 1.35 looks to Cicero’s Aratea (fr. 9.5 Pellacani); Edmunds proceeds to note that the phrase in Cicero, which does not appear in Aratus and is thus itself an innovation on a Hellenistic model, signals “a characteristic neoteric gesture” (2002: 352). My emphasis on the programmatic importance of the adjective teres would only serve to enhance the significance of that gesture.
the Greek λεπτός, just as words like tenuis and lepidus do. This word makes sense as a descriptor of Callimachean poetic aesthetics, since it connotes that which is refined, polished, or tightly woven. And if the word teres is redolent of Callimacheanism, so, too, are the nouns which accompany it here, namely the woven tunics of the cicada. Using clothing imagery to describe the body is not unknown in Callimachus, either.

Consider fr. 60a Harder = fr. 677 Pfeiffer:

τὸ δὲ σκύλος ἀνδρὶ καλύπτεται
gynómevnon, νυφετοῦ καὶ βελέων ἔρυμα.

57 Irwin 1974: 53 points to the semantic similarities of such words as λεπτός, τέρην, τέρυ, tenuis, and teres.
58 Cf. Clausen 1964: 194, Hubbard 1984: 45 n. 15, Poliakoff 1985: 249, Clauss 1995: 240-42. Thury 1987: 274 notes another stylistic synonym of tenuis, namely parvus: “Lucretius makes it clear that parvus is to describe his poem as well as the song of the swan, and that parvus means ‘fine’ and is, in a sense, a synonym of tenuis.” And while she does not connect this vocabulary with Callimacheanism, I would simply add that at Lucr. 4.180-82, significantly, the adjective parvus describes the song of the swan which Lucretius prefers (melior, 4.181) and which likewise carries Callimachean overtones (for more on which, see below).
60 Cf. Karakasis 2011: 132 for a similar claim with regard to Verg. Ecl. 8.16 and Calp. Ecl. 4.152: teres “also possesses a figurative literary usage with reference to style… More importantly, the adjective seems to belong to the Roman Callimachean jargon as well, suggesting, along with e.g. tenuis, gracilis and levis, Callimachus’ λεπτότης.” Cf. also Karakasis 2016: 42 and 46, as well as Gervais 2017 (ad Stat. Theb. 2.710) who points to a semantic overlap between levis and teres in Statius. It must be noted that the Latin words lévis and lēvis can convey different senses even if they share an identical written representation as levis; I understand Lucretius as consciously playing with these two words (cf. his studied vagueness regarding animus and anima), locating both adjectives within the Callimachean aesthetic vocabulary. Indeed, the sets of meanings appropriate to each of these adjectives (lévis as “light, slight, slender,” and lēvis as “smooth, polished, refined”) fit neatly within the semantic range denoted by λεπτός.
61 On the implication that teres denotes a quality of literary style, cf. Hooley 1997: 72-76, who examines the adjective’s appearance in Pers. 5.15 alongside similar instances of the term’s use for stylistic signification in Cic. De or. 3.199 and Hor. S. 2.7.86.
62 On the metapoetic value of fine garments in Callimachus, see Harder 2012 on fr. 7.11-12 Harder: “The dressed Charites must have served Callimachus’ purposes well, as they enabled him to treat not only the radiance of their hair, but also the colours and transparency of their dress as metaphors for the quality of his own poetry.”
Much like untrodden paths or pure springs, the cicada can be read as an image representative of Callimachus’ poetic aesthetics.  Callimachus aligns his poetic persona with the cicada, whose shrill song is much preferred to the loud, unsophisticated braying of donkeys. Indeed, as Crane has noted, “the identification between Callimachus and the cicada is extraordinary—typically Callimachean.” So when we encounter the language of slenderness that describes Lucretius’ thin simulacra, coupled with the fine-spun tunics which so readily carry a metapoetic valence, all in the company of a creature famously endorsed by the discerning Callimachus, I submit that an intertextual allusion is eminently available and that Lucretius is deliberately signaling his affiliation to Callimachean poetics. So in this passage Lucretius continues to declare his poetic allegiance to Callimachean aesthetics just as he has done in the preceding lines in the proem to Book 4, and simultaneously manages to incorporate that poetic aesthetic into his scientific proofs with ease.

5.5. Callimachus, Nicander, and Lucretius’ Honeyed Cup

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63 Acosta-Hughes and Stevens 2002: 249 refer to the cicada as “the image that Callimachus consistently uses in the Aetia to describe his own voice.” See Hunter 1989, Ambühl 1995: 210 and Acosta-Hughes and Stevens 2002 and 2012 for a discussion of the importance of the cicada in Callimachus, cicadas in literature predating the Aetia, and further bibliography, to which one may add Janko 2017. Elements of my reading of Lucretius’ clothing imagery share an affinity with the way in which Acosta-Hughes and Stevens read Callimachus’ cicada as “both poetic metaphor and as metatext” (2002: 251).

64 See fr. 1.29-36 Harder.


66 Cf., e.g., Lucr. 1.418: sed nunc et repetam coeptum pertexere dictis.

67 As with Lucretius’ Aratean clouds and Nicandrian snakes and spiders, however, not all cicadas in DRN are Callimachean. So when cicadas appear at 5.803, it is hard to see the same sort of metapoetic valence since the surrounding lines do not immediately present other contextual markers. The keyword vestis (vel sim.) remains an important indicator for intertextual allusions and metapoetic reflections.
Lucretius’ invocation of Nicandrian and Callimachean elements speaks to his proclivity for “predatory” allusion and adoption of imagery for his own designs.\textsuperscript{68} That is as true of metapoetic clothing imagery as it is of a more famous programmatic image, that of the honeyed cup.\textsuperscript{69} While the use to which that image is put in DRN is uniquely Lucretian, I offer two important forerunners to Lucretius’ description that have not yet been appreciated in modern scholarship. Specifically, I propose that Lucretius draws on similar imagery from the poetry of Nicander and Callimachus in his analogy of the cup of honey and wormwood in DRN. This much-discussed analogy runs as follows (1.936-50 \approx 4.11-25):\textsuperscript{70}

\begin{verbatim}
sed veluti pueris absinthia taetra medentes
   cum dare conantur, prius oras pocula circum
   contingunt mellis dulci flavoque liquore,
   ut puororum aetas inpovida ludificetur
   laborum tenus, interea perpotet amarum
   absinthi laticem deceptaque non capiatur,
   sed potius tali pacto recreata valescat,
   sic ego nunc, quoniam haec ratio plerumque
   videtur
tristior esse quibus non est tractata, retroque
vulgus abhorret ab hac, volui tibi
   suaviloquenti
   carmine Pierio rationem exponere nostram
et quasi musaeo dulci contingere melle,
   si tibi forte animum tali ratione tenere
versibus in nostris possem, dum perspicis
   omnem
   naturam rerum qua constet compa figura.
\end{verbatim}

Nam veluti pueris absinthia taetra medentes
   cum dare conantur, prius oras pocula circum
   contingunt mellis dulci flavoque liquore,
   ut puororum aetas inpovida ludificetur
   laborum tenus, interea perpotet amarum
   absinthi laticem deceptaque non capiatur,
   sed potius tali pacto recreata valescat,
   sic ego nunc, quoniam haec ratio plerumque
   videtur
tristior esse quibus non est tractata, retroque
vulgus abhorret ab hac, volui tibi
   suaviloquenti
carmine Pierio rationem exponere nostram
et quasi musaeo dulci contingere melle,
si tibi forte animum tali ratione tenere
versibus in nostris possem, dum perscipis
   omnem
   naturam rerum ac persentis utilitatem.

The imagery of this passage is justly famous, and we shall turn to a fuller examination of it in a moment. First, however, I offer a word on the near-repetition of these lines. It is

\textsuperscript{68} The term is from Hardie 1986: 18; see also Gale 1994b: 128, 2005, and 2013, and Gee 2013 for more on this use of predecessors in DRN.

\textsuperscript{69} The bibliography on the metapoetic and programmatic value of this famous image is vast; see, e.g., Boyancé 1963: 57-68, Gale 1994b: 46-48, Kilpatrick 1996, Clay 2003, Comte-Sponville 2008, Gruber 2009, and Holm 2013 for an overview.

\textsuperscript{70} I underline the differences between the Book 1 and Book 4 passages.
important that this is not a wholesale repetition, and I cannot agree with editors who
bracket such repetitions or quasi-repetitions. The attentiveness with which the poet
manifestly composed *DRN* militates against such recklessness. Moreover, both sets of
lines fit their respective settings comfortably, as Gale 1994a has shown. The doubling of
lines, then, is not to be disregarded as carelessness or lack of revision, would-be
transpositions left regrettably undone. No; repetition often shines a light on the repeated
lines, as we observed in the chapter on jars above, in our discussion of the lines repeated
after the thought experiment by which a body undergoes complete atomic dissolution and
reconstitution. To borrow a phrase from Armstrong 1995, metathesis is impossible, both
in nature and in its exposition in *DRN*.

The doubling of the above lines in particular bears a twofold significance: in
Book 1, the lines prove crucial in establishing a programmatic statement early in the
poem; and in the case of Book 4, that manifesto is renewed in the pregnant “proem in the
middle.”71 Significantly, the poet does not reproduce exactly the same lines in the two
passages, and the subtle alterations are important to note. What are the differences
between the Book 1 passage and the Book 4 passage, and what might those differences
tell us about the way the reader is to approach the experience of reading *DRN*?72 The
first difference to observe is the introductory word of each passage: *sed* on the one hand
(1.936), *nam* on the other (4.11).73 Appropriately enough, *sed* directs our attention to the

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71 On the concept see Conte 1984; cf. also Conte 2000 on the declaration of poetic allegiance at the outset of *DRN* 4.
72 On the large-scale repetition and near-repetition of verses between Book 1 and Book 4 see also Conte 1984, Kyriakidis 2006, and Farrell 2008.
73 Butterfield’s call to alter the text here – by proposing to print *nam* in both places – strikes me as invasive and unjustified (2015: 27-29). As Butterfield himself notes (2015: 27-28), our manuscripts are in agreement: one verse begins with *sed*, the other with *nam*. Even the indirect tradition to which Butterfield appeals quotes the line as beginning with neither conjunction (*ac*,
new simile, whereas the use of *nam* reflects the expectation of the reader’s presumed familiarity with the image from its earlier presentation. The change is subtle, but it reflects a demonstrable shift in the poet’s expectation of the pupil’s comprehension.

The remaining differences between the two passages underscore that new expectation. In 1.949-50, the poet uses the verb *perspicis* to indicate that at the same time as the teacher endows his potentially unattractive dogma with the charm of his verse, meanwhile the pupil “examines” the nature of things – note the self-conscious allusion to the poem at hand – and sees “in what shape it is arranged” (*qua constet*

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2015: 28-29); Butterfield takes this third variant as license to alter the direct manuscript evidence – and not even to the word *ac* that is found in those *testimonia*, but to *nam*, evidently because he prefers its sense. I disagree that the passage transmitted in our manuscript tradition requires a textual change. I would counter Butterfield’s citation of *ac veluti* collocations in other poetry with a reference to the phrase *sed veluti* found in Horace, that close reader of Lucretius (*Epist.* 2.1.235); cf. also Petron. *Sat.* 119.54. Butterfield tries to cajole us into assent (“almost all [editors] have retained both *nam* and *sed* in their transmitted places, displaying the conservatism that is inherent not only to textual criticism but also to human nature,” 2015: 28) and evidently wants to hustle us past a consideration of just how his invented textual variation might have come into existence (“The origins of the corruption do not merit serious thought,” 2015: 28). I cannot agree; the matter of deviating from a perfectly well-attested and intelligible manuscript tradition, in a passage in which the sense does not obviously require a change, warrants quite a good deal of serious thought. The adversative force of *sed* (Lucr. 1.936) bothers Butterfield and prompts him to advocate emendation. On the contrary, I find the sense of *sed* perfectly acceptable here as the poet pivots from a set of metaphors delivered in rapid succession (more than five distinct metaphors in the ten preceding lines) to a single, sustained simile of another sort (itself spanning eight lines on its own). Naturally enough, in our return to this simile in Book 4, the resumptive *nam* instead takes over; but the arresting *sed* in Book 1 suits Lucretius’ first introduction of this simile quite well in signaling a transition from the preceding analogies and setting the subsequent simile apart. Consequently, I maintain that the text does not warrant emendation on the basis of Butterfield’s claims.

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74 Butterfield 2015: 26-27 posits scribal error for the difference between *perspicis* and *percipis* and believes that the direct object of both verbs, namely *naturam rerum*, better suits the sense of the former verb than that of the latter. However, I suggest that Lucretius intends the subtle semantic difference between the two, as will be discussed immediately below.
The emphasis rests on the visual: the reader is to “look into” the nature of things and see the form which the universe takes, and, by extension, the form which Lucretius’ account of it takes. To examine that arrangement is to notice the pleasing poetry of Lucretius’ exposition, the ways in which the poet presents Epicureanism with honey-sweet allure. By the time we encounter the nearly identical lines at the outset of Book 4, however, Lucretius changes course and employs the verb *percipis* at 4.24, in addition to his use of a new line-ending in the subsequent verse (*ac persentis utilitatem*, 4.25). The poet subtly switches his verb choice to *percipis* since he is at this later stage of the poem emphasizing that the reader must by now be not only “examining” the nature of the universe as with *perspicis* above, but “grasping” or “perceiving” the true nature of things with *percipis* – and we must go beyond looking into “how everything is arranged” and now rather “be fully aware of the utility” of not only (our knowledge of) the nature of things but likewise the poem on the nature of things. The poet now emphasizes our understanding. The phraseology of the first passage, using *compta figura* and the rest, indicates that in the Book 1 iteration of these verses the poet is concerned with setting out an attractive introduction in order to win over the reader. The wording in Book 4, on the other hand, signals a subtle change in Lucretius’ message, moving away from simply noticing the attractive beauty of the verses and rather recognizing the benefit of the verses and what they contain. By this

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75 Note that *compta* derives from the vocabulary of weaving and braiding (a point not addressed by Snyder 1983 and Johncock 2016b, however). I submit that the word carries metapoetic significance here; cf. the second entry in the *OLD* definition of *comptus*: “(of speech or writing) Elegant, neat, polished.”
76 Gale 1994a: 11: “The emphasis in book 1 is on the visual quality of Lucretius’ poetry, which enables the reader to see the hidden structure of the world.”
77 The root meaning of the verb in question, of course, derives from seeing (*OLD* q.v. *perspicio*).
78 See *OLD* q.v. *percipio*.
later stage in the poem we have progressed far enough along our route to Epicurean
maturity to be able to understand more thoroughly the philosophical utility of Lucretius’
verses beyond their attractive poetic qualities. Lucretius may draw his reader into the
poem with beautifully arrayed poetry, but he expects a more serious intellectual
engagement with the material as the reader proceeds.

Further, this programmatic image partakes of imagery from earlier poets and fuses
them into this uniquely Lucretian formulation. Both iterations of these verses follow the
words *musaeo contingens cuncta lepore* which occur two lines above in both cases (1.934
= 4.9), and both passages include the verse *et quasi musaeo dulci contingere melle* (1.947
= 4.22). The notion of touching one’s poetry with honey, I propose, plays on
Callimachus’ address to the Graces\(^7\) in *Aet. fr. 7.13-14* Harder:\(^8\)

\[\text{έλλατε νῦν, ἔλαληγοισὶ τῇ ἑνψῆ} \text{σαθιεῦ ἔμπωσὶς} \]
\[\text{χεῖρισ ἔμοις ἓξισ τῷ μοι ποιλο μένωσι} \text{τινὶ ἔτος.}\]

The operative word in these lines is *ἐνψῆσαθε*, by which Callimachus expresses his
wish that the Graces “wipe” their dripping (*λιπώσας*) hands on his poetry (*ἐλέγοισι*…
*ἐμοίς*). In a similar way, Lucretius will “touch”\(^\text{81}\) his own philosophical exposition as
though with the Muses’ honey (*quasi musaeo dulci contingere melle*, 1.947 = 4.22) – or
with their charm (*musaeo contingens cuncta lepore*, 1.934 = 4.9), using that evocative
noun *lepos* which so readily recalls the Hellenistic watchword *λεπτός*. The parallels are

\(^7\) As Harder 2012 comments *ad loc.*, “The passage is addressed to the Charites (cf. the second-
person plural in 3, 10, and 13) and it can be inferred from 13 f. that the speaker is Callimachus.”
\(^8\) Harder 2012 translates: “be gracious now, and wipe your shining hands upon my elegies, so
that they will remain for many years.”
\(^\text{81}\) On the multiple possible meanings of Lucretius’ *contingens*, see, e.g., Snyder 1973 and
Butterfield 2015: 30. I quite agree with Snyder that Lucretius’ honey pervades the whole poem
as though having been infused into it; Lucretius’ skillful lexical ambiguity surely reflects his
poetic virtuosity, even as he draws on aspects of his imagery from other works and customizes
them for his own purposes.
clear, but the differences are no less important: Callimachus seeks the Graces’ favor so that his poetry will enjoy a long life (ἵνα μοι ποιλὴ μένωσιν ἔτος), whereas Lucretius makes no claims to longevity or immortality\(^8^2\) but rather invokes the Muses, he states, in order to proffer his philosophy in an attractive fashion and adopt the reader into Epicureanism in the immediate present \((si \ tibi \ forte \ animum \ tali \ ratione \ tenere \ | \ versibus \ in \ nostris \ possem, \ 1.948-49 \ = \ 4.23-24)\).\(^8^3\) Further, the honey-sweet charm of Lucretius’ expression may derive from the Muses, but Lucretius seeks to apply that charm to his work himself, in marked contrast to Callimachus’ prayer that the Graces extend their touch to his verse. So even as he models his passage on that of his great poetic predecessor, Lucretius nevertheless innovates on that Callimachean model and rather literally takes the image into his own hands.

Moreover, Lucretius does not draw the imagery for this well-known analogy of the honeyed cup from one source alone, but skillfully combines the above imagery with elements inspired by Nicander as well, producing in the process a hybrid image of his own. And if Lucretius looks in part to Callimachus when describing the honey-sweet charm of his poetic exposition in general, in the specific analogy of the honey and wormwood Lucretius takes partial inspiration from Nicander. Consider *Alexipharmaca* 298-99:\(^8^4\)

\[τῷ \ μὲν \ τ’ \ ἐὔβραχεος \ ἄψινθιον \ ἀλγός \ ἐρύζει \ \\
ἐνστύφων \ πόμα \ κεῖνο \ νεοθλίπτει \ ὑπὸ \ γλεύκει.\]

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\(^8^2\) On Lucretius’ attitudes toward the concept of poetic immortality see especially Segal 1989.

\(^8^3\) Cf. the discussion of “poetic simultaneity” in Volk 2002.

\(^8^4\) Gow and Scholfield 1979 translate: “The familiar astringent draught of wormwood steeped in freshly pressed grape-syrup will check his pain.”
Nicander prescribes a “bitter draught of wormwood” (ἀψινθίου… ἐνστύφον πόμα) for a victim of poisoning, but, notably, he also tempers the bitterness of that wormwood with a sweeter drink at the same time (εὐβραχέος… νεοθλίπτῳ ὑπὸ γλεύκει). This combination of the bitter and the sweet obviously features prominently in Lucretius’ rendition: note Lucretius’ use of the cognate noun absinthium (1.936 = 4.11, 1.941 = 4.16), the emphasized bitterness (taetra, 1.936 = 4.11; amarum, 1.940 = 4.15), the addition of a sweetener (mellis dulci flavoque liquore, 1.938 = 4.13), and the close reproduction of Nicander’s collocation ἀψινθίου… ἐνστύφον πόμα in Lucretius’ amarum | absinthi laticem (1.940-41 = 4.15-16). Appropriately enough, Lucretius’ premise of healing a suffering patient (medentes, 1.936 = 4.11; valescat, 1.942 = 4.17) itself reflects the basic conceit of the Alexipharmaca. As was the case above, however, Lucretius refashions his model in significant ways, and here he turns the Nicandrian original entirely on its head. Lucretius co-opts details which described the poison-drinker for Nicander, now reappropriating those terms to describe children who drink not poison, but medicine. In a set of lines which occur shortly before those quoted above, Nicander warns the reader about the dangers of ingesting this toxin (Alex. 279-80).86

ιξιόεν δέ σε μή τι δόλῳ παρὰ χείλεσι πόμα οὐλόμενον λήσειν ὁ τ’ ὀκιμοειδές ὀδοὺς.

The naïveté of the children in Lucretius (aetas inprovida, 1.939 = 4.14) contrasts with Nicander’s call for vigilance (σε μὴ… λήσεις), and by showing that the children have been tricked to drink the tonic (ludificetur, 1.939 = 4.14), Lucretius channels the same

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85 Lucretius naturally puts even this premise to new use, extending it to the plague scene which concludes the poem, for instance. On Lucretius’ use of the healing trope, see, e.g., Gale 1994b, Nussbaum 1994, and Kilpatrick 1996; cf. also Gigante 1975 and Epicurus fr. 221 Usener.

86 Gow and Scholfield 1979: “Beware lest by craft there pass undetected on the lips a deadly drink brewed with the chamaeleon-thistle, which has a smell like that of basil.”
treachery we see in Nicander (τι δόλῳ) – and even draws our attention to the drinkers’
lips, substituting labororum tenus (1.940 = 4.15) for Nicander’s παρὰ χείλεσι. Yet while
the expressions are similar, the ends to which Lucretius puts his Nicandrian vocabulary
here differ greatly from the presentation of the related passage in Alexipharmaca.
Nicander presents us with a toxin and shows us how to stave off its lethal effects with a
bittersweet concoction; but whereas in Nicander it is the poisoned victim who is tricked
and requires an antidote, Lucretius repositions the trickery as a tool of the healer. The
metapoetic implications of this simile are well documented and need no rehearsing
here; but the point of the above discussion is simply to note that Lucretius’ strategy of
ringing the cup of Epicurean doctrine with poetry’s honey appeals to an esteemed literary
model, even as the poet reworks that same model. Indeed, for Lucretius, as becomes
increasingly clear to the reader over the course of the poem, the true remedy for what ails
mankind is not to be found in Nicander’s works but in the curative doctrines of
Epicureanism laid out in DRN, so it makes sense that Lucretius would look to Nicander in
poetic imagery and yet retool that imagery for his own particular didactic program.

5.6. Pre- eminent Pleasures, Pre- eminent Poets

As we have seen, each of these poets assumes a major role in informing Lucretian
poetics. These latest examples illustrate just how pervasive the influence of those poets
proves to be. Having explored Lucretius’ sustained engagement with Hellenistic poets
and their poetic aesthetics, we now examine how this complex program of allusion and
refashioning manifests itself specifically through Lucretius’ use of clothing imagery. The
following passage builds on the above discussion of Callimachean influence on DRN in

87 Again, see, e.g., Boyancé 1963: 57-68, Gale 1994b: 46-48 and forthcoming, Nussbaum 1994,
particular, but the present examination also expands the scope of what that influence looks like. Consider Lucretius’ list of pre-eminent sensory delights at 2.500-507:

\[
\begin{align*}
\textit{iam tibi barbaricae vestes Meliboeaque fulgens purpura Thessalico concharum tacta colore,} & \quad 500 \\
\textit{aurea pavonum ridenti imbuta lepore saecla, novo rerum superata colore iacerent} & \\
\textit{et contemptus odor smyrnae mellisque sapores,} & \\
\textit{et cycnea mele Phoebeaque daedala chordis carmina consimili ratione oppressa silerent; namque aliis aliud praestantius exoreretur.} & 505
\end{align*}
\]

This passage forms part of a larger proof which aims to teach us that the number of possible atomic shapes must be finite, since, if the case were otherwise, then whatever we consider to be the most pleasant sight or smell or sound would continually give way to some other more pleasant phenomenon which comes into existence and displaces it, a scenario which Lucretius rejects. These particular lines have clearly been very intricately composed, but of late they have not been the subject of a great deal of scholarly discussion.\(^{88}\) Picking up the conversation, Fratantuono 2015 has recently identified something of the metapoetic nature of these lines, and sees in them, as I do, a set of literary references to esteemed predecessors. For my part, I would add that the metapoetic image of \textit{vestes} (2.500) helps to signal precisely such a metapoetic reflection, especially in tandem with the noun \textit{lepore} (2.502) so redolent of the refinement associated with the programmatically similar Greek adjective \textit{λεπτός}.\(^{89}\) In this litany of choice pleasures, Lucretius covers the range of different senses by which we experience these delights, but the notion that poetry can elicit or inform these pleasures underpins the

\(^{88}\) Edwards 1993: 72-73, however, does note that Lucretius here distances himself from the various manifestations of “imitative \textit{lepos}” which the sensory delights of these lines represent. \(^{89}\) Cf. Batstone 1998: 125 n. 1 on Catullus’ engagement in “the translingual lexical play of using \textit{lepidum} to recall Callimachean \textit{λεπτός}” in Catull. 1.1.
whole passage as well, as becomes clear in light of the passage’s subtle literary allusions, to which we now turn.

Fratantuono (2015: 115) cites a Homeric resonance in the “barbaric” clothing of the passage and the reference to Achilles’ homeland of Thessaly; he notes that the peacocks of Lucr. 2.502-503 recall Ennius’ dream in which that poet assumes the form of a peacock himself (Ann. fr. 11 Skutsch); and he notices Lucretius’ nod to Cinna’s Zmyrna encoded in the fragrant myrrh (smyrnae) of line 504. Already, then, we enjoy an allusive tour de force in this passage, setting multiple intertextual echoes into the space of a few short lines. Fratantuono’s list, however, is incomplete. I see a further literary allusion in these lines, namely to Callimachus, since the swan of this passage is also an image that features prominently in Callimachus for the beauty of its song. In Callimachus, the swan and its beautiful song are also often associated with Apollo, as in line 5 of Callimachus’ hymn to that god. And while the connection between Apollo and the swan was widely felt in antiquity, Lucretius’ expression in this passage owes a particular debt to Callimachus for the specific wording of his description. The swan’s song and the melodic strains of Apollo in Lucr. 2.505 look partly to details from Callimachus’ Hymn to Delos 249-57:

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90 We have already noted the aptness of Lucretius’ allusions to Homer and Ennius, those great poetic precursors often acknowledged in DRN. Cinna, too, constitutes an appropriate target for acknowledgment and allusion, since his style accords well with the aesthetics of refinement which Lucretius carefully channels as well; cf. Cinna’s emulation of Callim. Epig. 27.3-4 in his own praise of Aratus in fr. 11 Courtney, on which see Batstone 1998: 127. Recall, too, Catullus’ praise for Cinna’s Zmyrna in Catull. 95 (as well as the declaration of his friendship with the man at Catull. 10.29-30).
92 ὁ δὲ κύκνος ἐν ἡρι καλὸν ἁεὶδεν.
93 Cf. Pl. Phd. 84c3-85a3.
Lucretius looks to Callimachus for elements of his vocabulary in this section, an allusion at once potent and compressed. As Donohue 1993 has observed, in the Lucretian passage, line “505 is remarkable for being all Greek except the connectives,” a statement which encourages our reading of Greek models into the text at this juncture in particular. 94 Indeed, Lucretius’ words cycnea, mele, and chordis (2.505) directly echo the κύκνοι (249), µέλος (257), and χορδὰς (253) of Callimachus. As a result, the memorable account of the birth of Apollo in Callimachus’ hymn and, by extension, the melodic swansong that typifies Callimachus’ poetic aesthetic, earn admission into Lucretius’ exclusive list of metapoetic allusions to prized poets.

Still, inclusion on this coded list of great poetic predecessors does not denote unqualified praise. With this catalogue Lucretius offers proof that atomic shapes must be finite, or else whatever is now considered to be the finest pleasure (of whatever sense one might select) would cede its topmost place to some other newly-formed configuration still more pleasurable than the last, new pleasure yielding ceaselessly to new pleasure. 95 I would suggest that this passage operates in a fashion similar to the Iphianassa passage in

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94 Donohue 1993: 29 n. 94; cf. Sedley 1998: 56 n. 71, who notes that “Graecisms indicate the exotic character” of the passage’s pleasures.

95 The notion that Epicureans behaved in precisely that manner of pleasure-seeking, however, was a standard, if skewed, critique of the school (see Gordon 1998: 189-98). Lucretius combats the charge that the philosophy condones unbridled hedonism in passages like the denunciation of the Danaid-like existence of perpetually pouring pleasures into a leaky vessel (3.1003-1010); for more on that passage, see the chapter on jar imagery above.
the book preceding it. The Epicurean neophyte absorbs Lucretius’ early admonition against the dangers of religio in the Iphianassa episode in Book 1 on a visceral or emotional level as much as on a philosophical one,\(^96\) whereas the Epicurean pupil who has proceeded to Book 3 knows that death, after all, is nothing to us (*nil igitur mors est ad nos*, 3.830). Much as the invocation to Venus in the opening lines of *DRN* has been read as an attractive entrée, a palliative to ease our initiation into an otherwise difficult or possibly uninviting subject matter,\(^97\) similarly the Iphianassa passage shortly thereafter in Book 1 can win the reader’s assent and cooperation even on an emotional level at this early stage of doctrinal exposition. The poet appeals to the reader in different registers at different points in the poem according to the pupil’s level of progress on the path to Epicurean maturity.

Accordingly, at 2.500-507 Lucretius rehearses this list of evidently unimpeachable prime pleasures to convince us that atomic shapes are finite in number, even as the premise for that proof – that, otherwise, one paramount pleasure would give way to another in unending succession – might later be reasonably called into question once the reader makes progress through the poem. After all, as Lucretius himself later goes on to say, formerly chief pleasures do in fact frequently cede place to newer and fresher ones (5.1412-15):\(^98\)

\[\textit{nam quod adest praesto, nisi quid cognovimus ante}\]

\(^96\) Cf. Segal 1990b: 10-11 on the different methods Lucretius employs “to meet diverse anxieties at many levels and for many different kinds of readers” (11).


\(^98\) This passage marks the beginning of mankind’s precipitous decline in the *Kulturgeschichte* of Book 5, and even if he is cagey or ambivalent about mankind’s historical developments elsewhere in that book, here Lucretius clearly signals that this condition is an unfortunate blight on humans’ capacity to act in accordance with *vera ratio*, as it impels them to scorn simple food and dress for needlessly more refined versions of those staples.
suavius, in primis placet et pollere videtur,
posteriorque fere melior res illa reperta
perdit et immutat sensus ad pristina quaeque. 1415

According to Lucretius, this tendency to change tastes is not some inaccessible condition
unique to early mankind but rather continues to afflict us today: note the present-tense
and first-person verb forms of this gnomic statement.\textsuperscript{99}

This lesson follows closely upon a similar formulation from the different Ages of
Man at 5.1276-80:

\begin{verbatim}
sic volvenda aetas commutat tempora rerum:
quod fuit in pretio, fit nullo denique honore;
porro aliud succedit et e contemptibus exit
ique dies magis adpetitur floretque repertum
laudibus et miro est mortalis inter honore. 1280
\end{verbatim}

As these subsequent lessons attest, in order to win the reader’s assent, Lucretius at times
deploys reasoning which the relative neophyte can accept \textit{prima facie} but which the same
reader may perhaps reconsider later in the work – though by that time Lucretius will have
enumerated still other philosophical proofs and presumably will have convinced the
reader of the value of Epicureanism by other demonstrations. So, by the time the reader
is equipped to realize that he or she has assented to an incomplete proof, the pupil will
have passed the point of no return. Just like the child in the famous analogy of the
honeyed cup, at that stage the reader has already ingested the philosophical doctrines
expounded in the poem, and, though deceived, has not been done in \textit{(deceptaque non
capiatur}, 1.941 = 4.16).

\textsuperscript{99} adest, 5.1412; \textit{placet et pollere videtur}, 5.1413; \textit{perdit et immutat}, 5.1415; note also
\textit{cognovimus}, 5.1412, a perfect-tense verb with present-tense force (“we have become acquainted
with” = “we know”).
I would not call this process paternalistic (à la Mitsis 1993), malevolent, or wholly disingenuous, either, since, after all, the poet himself ultimately equips us to evaluate those proofs again at a later date, perhaps after we have set the poem down or once we have begun a second reading of it. This rhetorical tactic aims to win over the newcomer and simultaneously allows the poet to wink at the reader who is in the know. The technique forms a fascinating aspect of the poet’s incremental didacticism, by which we realize only after the fact that something may have been amiss, and even then we might easily overlook that discrepancy, which dissolves upon later retrospection like a half-remembered dream. Lucretius’ twin aims – teaching and crafting fine verse – work perfectly in tandem at such a moment: the protreptic argumentation is aided by the poetic imagery which can win the reader’s assent to a given proof, and likewise the allure of Lucretius’ fine verse is what entices readers to undertake this difficult philosophical journey (1.943-45 = 4.18-20) and keeps them reading line after carefully crafted line. As part of this process, Lucretius consequently undercuts the apparent supremacy enjoyed by the great poets to whom he alludes in 2.500-507. He shows, as we have seen, that trends and tastes do in fact change, and these erstwhile favorites will cede their place of preeminence. So, even if these other poets have won praise among Lucretius’ readership, nevertheless, when we apply the revisionary lesson from later in the poem (5.1412-15), we can be sure that those poets, too, will not hold pride of place forever – undermining the utility of this proof’s various exempla and along with it the supposed importance of any poets who may be lurking just beneath the surface of 2.500-507.101

100 Note the deployment of tibi in 2.500 which subtly distances Lucretius from the claims of these items’ (or poets’) preeminence.

101 This passage is not the first time Lucretius undermines rival predecessors by likening their output to ultimately hollow sensory delights. At 1.643-44, he widens his critique of Heraclitus’
5.7. Empedocles and a “Matryoshka Allusion” in Lucretius

In the above passage, Lucretius alludes to other authors as he offers commentary on literary tastes and the high esteem in which select poets are held, and at the same time he structures that commentary in a way that alludes to still another great poetic model, namely Empedocles. While the immense influence of Empedocles on Lucretius’ poetry is frequently rehearsed in modern scholarship, this particular passage under discussion (Lucr. 2.500-507) has not yet been examined for its specifically Empedoclean character. In fr. 122 Inwood = fr. B128 D-K, Empedocles lists the fine things that once characterized a happy community of a bygone era:

οὐδὲ τις ἦν κείνοις Ἄρης θεὸς οὐδὲ Κυδομός
οὐδὲ Ζεὺς Βασιλεὺς οὐδὲ Κρόνος οὐδὲ Ποσειδόν,
ἀλλὰ Κύπρις βασιλεία..........................
............................................................
τὴν οἳ γ’ εὔσεβεσσιν ἀγαλμασιν ἤλασκοντο

quasi-oracular poetisms to attack any peddlers of substance-less baubles designed to appeal gratuitously to a given sense or senses — and Lucretius accordingly takes to task the fools who eagerly consume such drivel. Fools (stolidi, 1.641), he says, indiscriminately follow anyone who delights their senses: veraque constituant quae belle tangere possunt | auris et lepido quae sunt ficata sonore (1.643-44). As Rouse and Smith 1992 note ad loc., Lucretius may be parodying Heraclitus’ style in this mocking synaesthesia, with descriptions of expressions that might “prettily touch the ears” or are “tinted with charming sound”; see De Felice 2014 on similar phenomena elsewhere in Latin poetry. Even when, at 2.500-507, Lucretius carefully distinguishes the individual senses which he suggests his literary predecessors exploit in insincere, inelegant, or dilettantish fashion, Lucretius associates such hollow ostentation with authors who may win a modicum of acclaim but who will ultimately be revealed as unsuccessful aspirants to truly worthwhile esteem.

Even as Lucretius acknowledges that these poetic predecessors have won popular acclaim as preeminent figures, he subtly distances himself from those who would rank them topmost (tibi, 2.500).

The Lucretian metapoetic watchword vestis may also draw on Empedocles’ figurative use of clothing imagery; cf. fr. 113/126 Inwood: σαρκῶν ἄλλογνωτι περιστέλλουσα χιτώνι. Inwood 2001 translates: “[s]he dressed [him/it] with an alien robe of flesh.”


Inwood 2001 translates: “They had no god Ares or Battle-Din, | nor Zeus the king nor Kronos nor Poseidon; | but Kupris the queen [Aphrodite] … | … | her they worshipped with pious images, | painted pictures and perfumes of varied odours, | and sacrifices of unmixed myrrh and fragrant frankincense, | dashing onto the ground libations of yellow honey | … | [her] altar was not wetted with the unmixed blood of bulls, | but this was the greatest abomination among men, | to tear out their life-breath and eat their goodly limbs.”
The central four lines of this Golden Age description offer particularly close parallels. Empedocles’ myrrh (σµύρνης, 6) and honey (µελίτων, 7) prefigure Lucretius’ use of their Latin cognates in the adjacent nouns smyrnae mellisque (2.504). Lucretius may also approximate Empedocles’ painted images (γραπτοίς τε ζῷοις, 5) by personifying his own visual delights, likewise reminiscent of living beings since they are “steeped in laughing charm” (ridenti imbuta lepore, 2.502). Lucretius’ daedala (2.505) likewise nods to Empedocles’ δαιδαλεόδοµοις (5). Yet even as the structure of the passage helps to inform Lucretius’ framework, Lucretius tailors the details to suit his own purposes. For instance, Lucretius explicitly tours the different senses by making each of his boons a pleasure for a different sense, enlivening his passage with elements which appeal directly to sight (fulgens, 2.500; colore, 2.501 and 2.503), smell (odor, 2.504), taste (sapores, 2.504), and sound (carmina, 2.506; silerent, 2.506), emphases which differ somewhat from Empedocles’ treatment. Moreover, for Empedocles this section describes a

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107 The different senses naturally shape Empedocles’ presentation as well (consider the fragrance suggested by θυώδους in line 6, for example); but Empedocles does not expressly highlight the senses in the way that Lucretius’ systematic tour of the senses does. Further, while it is difficult to know for certain, since the passage from Empedocles is only fragmentary, I would hazard that Lucretius has added the auditory elements as his own innovation; recall, after all, that Empedocles has just informed the reader in lines 1-3 of the fragment that this earlier community focused its worship on Aphrodite above other gods, so a reference to the music of Apollo presumably does not feature in Empedocles and instead likely originates with Lucretius; the metapoetic and intertextual significance of the Apollo section has already been discussed above. In any case, the emphasis and the express tour of the senses are certainly distinctive in the Lucretian passage.
bygone Golden Age in which animal sacrifice did not pollute religious worship, whereas Lucretius redirects this sense of piety and appreciation. The Empedoclean scene portrays the blissful worship of Aphrodite, but Lucretius tells us at 1.44-49 = 2.646-51 that the gods are by no means moved by acts of propitiation. Lucretius strips the Empedoclean version of the central Aphrodite, needless of worship in the Epicurean’s eyes, and he alludes instead to the poets who populate his literary pantheon.

This passage (2.500-507) constitutes what I shall call a “matryoshka allusion.” I distinguish this kind of reference from a “window allusion,” “two-tier allusion,” or “multiple reference,” since this technique does not entail an author looking to one author or text which is in turn looking to another model or text (to Homer by way of Apollonius, for example). Rather, a matryoshka allusion is an allusion to a certain source, rendered in the trappings of an allusion to still another source; it is an allusion within an allusion. I derive the name for this technique from the famous Russian nesting dolls, each painted wooden figurine containing a smaller doll within. In the present case, Lucretius alludes to a series of literary greats who have won popular acclaim; meanwhile, the structure of that list alludes to Empedocles’ list of offerings to Aphrodite. That is, in an argument demonstrating the finite number of atomic shapes, Lucretius alludes to Empedocles by innovating on Empedocles’ litany of propitiatory gifts to Aphrodite, but he strips that list of its sacrificial trappings – which Lucretius would deride as futile – and instead populates the list with sensory pleasures, which themselves recall certain other

108 See Trépanier 2004: 15 for a brief commentary on this passage.
109 Though see Sedley 1998 for the argument that the Aphrodite of this passage informs Lucretius’ proem to Book 1.
acclaimed poets. Thus, in 2.500-507, Lucretius alludes to Homer, Ennius, Cinna, and Callimachus, situating those allusions within an allusion to Empedocles. Again we observe how Lucretius re-appropriates his models, innovates on their poetic expressions, and martials them in service of Epicurean argument in masterfully intricate fashion.

5.8. Extravagant Garments and the Quest of the Argonauts

Still another poetic predecessor features in Lucretius’ allusive use of clothing imagery. Gale 2013 and Gee 2013 have recently analyzed Lucretius’ selective appropriation of Hesiod’s poetry and Cicero’s Aratea, respectively, in ways which show how Lucretius alludes to those authors “locally” (to use Gale’s phraseology) while rejecting in more “global” terms the worldview represented in those poets’ verses. I posit that Lucretius employs a similar strategy in each of the above cases mentioned in this chapter, but a particularly illuminating example of this phenomenon is Lucretius’ engagement with Apollonius of Rhodes. The quest at the heart of the Argonautica would be a laughable enterprise for a proper Epicurean, so Lucretius would certainly balk at the idea of encouraging his reader to travel to the ends of the earth in search of a rare and extravagant fleece amid all manner of peril and anguish. Indeed, as discussed above, Lucretius frequently reappropriates imagery from heroic epic in describing the triumph of Epicurus in DRN.\(^{111}\) In related fashion, the poet upbraids anyone who would foolishly seek lavish clothes (which would include the golden fleece, for instance), since illness does not respect the high status which a gold or purple garment attends. As we learn, sumptuous material goods do not do the body any particular good, and they certainly do

\(^{111}\) See, e.g., Buchheit 1971 and Marković 2016.
not give true succor to the mind. Any old cloak will do the job, as Lucretius tells us at 2.34-36:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{nec calidae citius decedunt corpore febres,}\ \\
\text{textilibus si in picturis ostroque rubenti}\quad 35 \\
\text{iacteris, quam si in plebeia veste cubandum est.}
\end{align*}
\]

I suggest that Lucretius’ description of lavish garments in these lines draws upon imagery from Apollonius’ *Argonautica*, not only as Lucretius rejects the Argonauts’ quest in global terms, but also thanks to the specific lexical choices which recall Apollonius’ descriptions of fine garments like the mythical golden fleece. Extravagant clothing is neither natural nor necessary in Epicurean terms, so Lucretius’ denunciation of such luxuries is not surprising.\(^{112}\) Of note, however, is the phraseology of that di savowal. I posit that Lucretius’ *ostroque rubenti* (2.35) echoes Apollonius’ description of the golden fleece at the climactic moment when Jason first sets eyes upon the prized object at *Argon*. 4.123-26:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{τὸ δὲ δὲ ἀτραπτοῖο μεθ᾽ ἱερὸν ἅλσος ἰκονο,}\ \\
\text{φηγὸν ἄπειρεσιν διζημένω, ἢ ἕπι κάδας}\ \\
\text{βέβλητο, νεφέλῃ ἐναλίγκιον, ἢ τ᾽ ἀνιάντος}\quad 125 \\
\text{ἡλίου φλογερῆσιν ἐρεύθεται ἀκτίνεσιν.}
\end{align*}
\]

Apollonius describes the color of the fleece as definitively golden elsewhere,\(^{113}\) but here it blushes a deep red like the light of dawn.\(^{114}\) I suggest that Lucretius channels the “blushing” of Apollonius’ verb ἐρεύθεται (*Argon*. 4.126) when he qualifies his own

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\(^{113}\) See, e.g., *Argon*. 1.4, 1.889, 2.1144-45, 2.1193, 3.13, 4.176, 4.1142, and 4.1319.

\(^{114}\) See above for a discussion of Apollonius’ engagement with the fleece-like clouds of Aratus *Phaen*. 938-39. Alfaro 2016: 276-77 also notes that other versions of the myth recount Phrixus mounting not a golden but rather a purple ram, “since, this way, it can fly unnoticed in the stormy sky” (276).
garment as *rubenti* at Lucr. 2.35. Indeed, aside from the two uses of the verb in his approximation of Thucydides’ plague narrative at the end of Book 6, whenever Lucretius employs the verb *rubere* elsewhere in *DRN*, the verb shows a connection to clouds and the sun: for instance, at 6.204-210 Lucretius uses *rubere* to describe how clouds take on the redness of the sun, and at 5.460-66 he employs it in his account of the reddening of the dawn’s morning light. This triangulation of the fine garment, the clouds, and the sun thus encourages a connection between Lucretius’ poetic vocabulary and Apollonius’ account of the significant moment when Jason first spies the dawn-like radiance of the golden fleece in person.

Even the heroic elements which Lucretius lists shortly following his *ostroque rubenti* (2.35) at 2.49-52 recall Jason’s epic quest, which entails fighting battles, consorting with kings and rulers, and acquiring the famous fleece:

... sonitus armorum nec fera tela
audacterque inter reges rerumque potentis
versantur neque fulgorem reventur ab auro
nec clarum vestis splendorem purpureai.

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115 Note that redness is not a feature of the ominous clouds of Aratus *Phaen*. 938-39, encouraging our reading that Lucretius looks directly to Apollonius in that detail. Cf. Verg. *Aen.* 8.622-23. Cf. also the purple waves reflecting the light of dawn at Catull. 64.275 (*purpureaque procul nantes ab luce refulgent*); on the difficult question of priority and direction of influence between the contemporaries Lucretius and Catullus, see Frank 1933 and Skinner 1976 (both of whom see Catullus shaping *Carmen* 64 after Lucretius) for a brief review of earlier scholarship.

116 It should be noted that each of these two occasions imitates the corresponding Thucydidean version closely: Lucr. 6.1145-46 (*principio caput incensum fervore gerebant* | *et duplicis oculos suffusa luce rubentes*; cf. Thuc. 2.49.2, ἀλλ᾽ ἔξαψαις ὑγεῖς ὡς τὸν πρῶτον μὴν τῆς κεφάλῆς θέρματι ἵσχυρα τῷ ὄφθαλμῳ ἐπεμβαίνει καὶ φλόγοις ἐλάμβανε) and Lucr. 6.1165-67 (*sed potius tepidum manibus proponere tactum | et simul ulceribus quasi inustis omne rubere* | corpus; cf. Thuc. 2.49.5, καὶ τὸ μὲν ἐξωθὸν ἀπτομένῳ σῶμα σοῦ ὅπερ ἂν θερμὸν ἦν οὐτε χλωρόν, ἄλλ᾽ ὑπέρυθρον, πελιττόν, φλοικταίνας μικραῖς καὶ ἐλεκκεῖν ἐξηνοθηκός). The remaining instances of *rubere* in *DRN* thus reflect a more freely idiosyncratic use.

None of these heroic pursuits, however, can dispel the fears and cares which beset mankind. Accordingly, just like the fancy fleece at the heart of the Argonauts’ journey, these other heroic elements are likewise useless for human happiness and duly meet with the poet’s reproach.\textsuperscript{118} Even the quality which ostensibly makes a handsome cloak so valuable, its color, is by no means an inherent feature of the garment, as Lucretius shows at 2.826-34. The poet notes that when a purple cloth is pulled apart into threads, its color apparently vanishes.\textsuperscript{119} Neither the journey nor the prize earns an Epicurean’s praise.

Garments figure prominently in the \textit{Argonautica},\textsuperscript{120} and even as the famous golden fleece may predominate in the narrative, it is clear that the minute details of Apollonius’ extended ecphrases on other cloaks did not go unnoticed among later writers in antiquity, Virgil among them.\textsuperscript{121} Alongside Virgil I would include Lucretius as an attentive reader of Apollonius, an inclusion which requires no great conceptual leap in consideration of Lucretius’ voracious consumption of Greek literature. Indeed, just as Lucretius elsewhere nods to other poets but reappropriates their themes or images in service of his own unique aims, likewise in this case he recasts the epic tale of the Argonauts as the reader’s quest to achieve Epicurean wisdom.\textsuperscript{122} As we have noticed, Lucretius frequently describes the needlessly extravagant garments he spurns\textsuperscript{123} in terms

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{118} These aspects may suggest a rejection of epic journeys more broadly, but I posit that the fine garments of the last two lines of the passage hint at a distinctly Argonautic connection.
\item \textsuperscript{119} Consider especially 2.829-31: \textit{ut fit ubi in parvas partis discerpir tur austrum: | purpura poeniceusque color clarissimu’ molto, | filatim cum distractum est, disperditur omnis.}
\item \textsuperscript{120} On the various cloaks associated with Jason see Levin 1970, Shapiro 1980, Rose 1985, Merriam 1993, and Bulloch 2006.
\item \textsuperscript{121} See, e.g., Nelis 2001: 158 on the way in which Virgil fashions Aeneas’ cloak after Jason’s.
\item \textsuperscript{122} On the elements of heroic epic in \textit{DRN} see, e.g., Murley 1947 and Gale 1994b; on the poem as a conversion narrative, see Asmis 2016.
\item \textsuperscript{123} Cf. Edwards 1993: 72 on Lucretian phraseology which “is designed to evoke the contempt of Roman moralists for the tainted cloths of luxury.”
\end{itemize}
which recall Apollonius. Lucretius forges a general association between gold and purple as unnecessary luxuries specifically in connection with clothing: consider the rejection of gold’s glimmer and the shine of purple clothing at 2.51-52,\(^\text{124}\) the extravagance of imported purple clothes and the sudden shift in focus to the golden gleam of peacock feathers at 2.500-503,\(^\text{125}\) and the laughable expenditure of a lover who purchases gold-inlaid jewelry and sea-purple\(^\text{126}\) garments at 4.1126-27.\(^\text{127}\) Each of these passages offers examples of extravagant luxuries which the reader would do well to eschew. I submit that the poet ties this mutual purple-and-gold association specifically to clothing imagery in a way which skillfully promotes a dual connection: on the one hand Lucretius uses clothing imagery to allude to Hellenistic forebears like Apollonius, and on the other he links these gold and purple luxuries with Apollonius’ garments of purple and gold which likewise ought to be shunned. The golden fleece may initially predominate when we think of fine clothing in the *Argonautica*, but other garments enjoy detailed descriptions in Apollonius as well, and they glow with the dark red and purple which make them so appropriate for Lucretius’ philosophical polemic. Among those garments is the cloak

\(^{124}\) *neque fulgorem reverentur ab auro | nec clarum vestis splendorem purpureai.*

\(^{125}\) *iam tibi barbaricae vestes Meliboeaque fulgens | purpura Thessalico concharum tacta colore, | aurea pavonum ridenti imbuta lepore | saecla.*

\(^{126}\) The adjective *thalassinus* means “sea-colored,” and while the precise tint has been variously interpreted, the word seems to denote a purple hue; see André 1949: 104, Rosivach 1980: 401 n. 2 (“Perhaps *thalassina*… refers to the same thing” as *purpura*, adducing as a comparandum Plaut. *Mil.* 1179, *ferrugineum—nam is color thalassicus est*), Sebesta 2001: 69 (“This hue is mentioned only by Lucretius in a passage which implies that it is particularly costly, however, and so it is most likely a hue of purple”), and Bradley 2009: 184 n. 47 (“*thalassina uestis* at Lucr. 4.1127, referring to sea-purple”). On the perception and vocabulary of purple and other colors in antiquity, see Gipper 1964, Reinhold 1970, Irwin 1974 and 1990, Edgeworth 1979 and 1987, Elliott 2008, Bradley 2009 (esp. 189-211 on purple), Harris 2012, Stocks 2014, and Goldman 2015.

\(^{127}\) *scilicet et grandes viridi cum luce zmaragdi | auro includuntur, teriturque thalassina vestis.*
woven for Jason by Athena which he wears when he arrives on Lemnos (*Argon*. 1.721-67). Let us turn only to lines 1.721-29 in particular:

αὐτὸν δὲ ἀμφοτερὸς θεᾶς Τριτωνίδος ἔργον, διπλακα πορφυρέην περονήσατο, τήν οἱ ὀψάσαν Πολλάς, ὁτε πρῶτον δρυώχους ἐπεβάλλετο νηὸς Ἀργοῦς, καὶ κανόνεσι δὲς ζυγία μετρήσασθαι. τῆς μὲν ῥητερίν κεν ἐς ἥλιον ἀνίόντα ὅσσος βάλος, ἤ κείνο μεταβλέψειας ἐρευθος. δὴ γάρ τοι μέση μὲν ἐρευθήσεσσ᾽ ἔτέκτυκτο, ἀκρα δὲ πορφυρή πάντη πέλεν: ἐν δ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ἐκάστῳ τέρματι δαίδαλα πολλὰ διακριθὸν εὖ ἐπέπαστο.

When Lucretius’ fleece blushes red in the passage discussed above, Lucretius may likewise be looking to this extended passage from Apollonius in elements of his expression, since we note in the *Argonautica* the deep red and purple coloration of the cloak, emphasized by the polyptoton between πορφυρέην (1.722) and πορφυρέη (1.728), as well as the repetition of the related adjectives ἐρευθος (1.726) and ἐρευθήσεσσ᾽ (1.727).

This cloak is likened to the gleaming sun at dawn (ἐς ἥλιον ἀνίόντα, 1.725) to underscore its incredible shine and to link this garment with the golden fleece which will be described in similar terms.\(^{128}\) And as Apollonius stresses, this handiwork is incredibly finely crafted, as the almost redundantly emphatic phrasing of *Argon*. 1.729 makes clear: δαίδαλα πολλὰ διακριθὸν εὖ ἐπέπαστο. I maintain that this major, early ecphrasis from the *Argonautica* may be coloring the extravagant garments so spurned in *DRN*, including the blushing purple garment of Lucr. 2.35 (*ostroque rubenti*).

We might also examine Lucretius’ engagement with the rich description of the cloak given by Hypsipyle to Jason. This gift is described twice, at *Argon*. 3.1204-1206 and 4.421-34. Green 2007 has already pointed out that the connection of this cloak with

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\(^{128}\) See the discussion of *Argon*. 4.123-26 above.
Jason and Hypsipyle’s romantic history is highlighted in both of these descriptions. I would suggest that Lucretius imports even this conceptual link between the extravagant garment and erotic love when he incorporates these Apollonian garments into *DRN*. For instance, in the latter example from the *Argonautica*, Apollonius again notes that this finely wrought cloak (ἐὐεργές, 4.428) is purple in color (πορφύρεον, 4.424). It is evidently a delight for the senses – yet it can never provide true pleasure, in Epicurean terms, since the beholder is always left with a nagging yearning for more: οὐ μὲν ἄφάσσον, | οὔτε κεν εἰσιρόθων γλυκὸν ἵμερον ἐμπλήσειας, 4.428-29. I propose that this extravagant garment partially inspires Lucretius’ description of the many expensive luxuries which the love-sick fool pours out for his beloved in Lucr. 4.1121-34, as mentioned above. Indeed, Apollonius’ description of the boundless yearning elicited by Hypsipyle’s cloak is precisely mirrored in Lucretius’ account of insatiable libido at Lucr. 4.1101-1104:

*sic in amore Venus simulacris ludit amantis,*

*nec satiare queunt spectando corpora coram,*

*nec manibus quicquam teneris abradere membris*

*possunt errantes incerti corpore toto.*

Even the emphasis on sight and touch echoes Apollonius’ sentiment. Indeed, Apollonius’ earlier description of that same cloak in the *Argonautica* asserts a still more explicit connection between the garment and the romantic history shared by Jason and Hypsipyle. At *Argon*. 3.1204-1206, Jason shrouds himself in the cloak, a memento of

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130 As Green 2007: 294 notes, this description “instantly links [the garment] to Jason’s delight in the Fleece (170-82), which itself, as we later learn (1141-42), was spread on Jason and Medea’s marriage bed,” further bolstering the conceptual association of these garments with erotic love.
131 The burning desire of onlookers to touch the fleece as they behold it recurs at *Argon*. 4.1146-48: τοῖον ἀπὸ χρυσέων ψυχάνον ἄμαρυσσετο φέγγος. | δαίε δ’ ἐν ὄφθαλμοῖς γλυκερὸν πόθον: ἴσχε δ’ ἐκάστην | αἰώδως ἰμένην περ ὅμως ἐπὶ χεῖρα βαλέσθαι.
their frequent love-making (ἀδινής μνημήνον εύνης, 3.1206). Thus Lucretius follows Apollonian precedent and preserves the erotic association of these lavish garments.

These details from the *Argonautica* find form in Lucretius’ linking of extravagant garments with the excesses associated with romantic love at the end of Book 4. The gold and purple gifts of the doting lover at 4.1124-28 invoke Apollonius’ connection of the prominent garments of purple or gold with erotic love, especially Lucretius’ remark that the garment “drinks the sweat of Venus” in its repeated use:

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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.
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These details recall from Apollonius that both the golden fleece and the purple robe were used as bedspreads during intercourse: Hypsipyle’s gift of the purple cloth retains its divine fragrance long after Dionysus first lay upon it with Ariadne (*Argon*. 4.421-34), and Jason and Medea spread the golden fleece on their bed when consummating their passion (*Argon*. 4.1141-43). Lucretius seamlessly incorporates these subtle allusions in such a manner that even if the reader misses the reference to Apollonius, the thrust of his own argument in *DRN* remains clear. It is a testament to Lucretius’ skill that the purple and gold garments of *DRN* can easily be read as generalizable tropes and at the same time serve as specific intertextual allusions in the manner here described.

Moreover, the garments at the end of Book 4 of *DRN* forge an important intratextual connection with one another. I point in particular to four episodes presented in two extended passages, namely the bed-wetting of 4.1026-29; the nocturnal emissions described immediately subsequently at 4.1030-36; the sweat of Venus sullying the sheets at 4.1124-28; and the trifling luxuries bestowed by the lover following thereafter at
4.1131-33. An examination of these passages in reverse order affords us the ability to see all the more easily that the reader is gradually encouraged to liken the needlessness of extravagant garments to the futility of chasing romantic love. Let us turn to the last passage first, 4.1131-33:

eximia veste et victu convivia, ludi,
pocula crebra, unguenta, coronae, serta parantur—
nequiquam…

Lucretius’ deployment of asyndeton structurally enacts the profusion denoted by crebra (4.1132) and heightens the sense that the lover’s presents are coming from every quarter in all speed and abundance. Ultimately, the choice garments of 4.1131 (eximia veste) are shown to be hollow offerings to Venus, who, qua goddess, needs no propitiation and who, qua naked sexual drive (haec Venus est nobis, 4.1058), can offer no true satisfaction to a lover blinded by desire. Ultimately, these lavish gifts are all exercises in futility, as nequiquam and the subsequent verses make clear. But Lucretius similarly devalues the luxury garments which appear in the directly preceding lines, 4.1124-28, briefly touched upon above:

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.

These garments are clearly sumptuous: note the imported nature of the goods (Babylonia, 4.1124; Sicyonia, 4.1125) and the gleam of their expensive coloration. Lucretius explicitly links these garments with Venus, and so Lucretius ties the image to the continuous\textsuperscript{132} erotic desire which he shows to be insatiable and futile. He even prefigures

\textsuperscript{132} Note adsidue and exercita, 4.1128.
that description of garments tainted by love when in 4.1030-36 he describes adolescents’ nocturnal emissions as staining their garments, the pubescent youths likewise let down by a flawed sense of desire:

\[
tum quibus aetatis freta primitus insinuatur semen, ubi ipsa dies membris matura creavit, conveniunt simulacra foris e corpore quoque, nuntia praeclari voltus pulchrique coloris, qui ciet inritans loca turgida semine multo, ut quasi transactis saepe omnibu’ rebu’ profundant fluminis ingentis fluctus vestemque cruentent.\]

Lucretius notes that this ejaculation is caused by a faulty apprehension of \textit{vera ratio}. The pubescent children are led to believe that a beautiful figure stands before them when in reality it is all a dream, just as \textit{simulacra} sometimes combine to give us the impression of centaurs and other non-real images (4.722-48). The \textit{simulacra} which bring about the nocturnal emissions, moreover, illustrate the lesson from that earlier discussion of centaurs: the adolescent dreamers’ senses are dulled in sleep, as we know is often the case after 4.762-64 (\textit{hoc ideo fieri cogit natura, quod omnes | corporis effecti sensus per membra quiescunt | nec possunt falsum veris convincere rebus}), so their minds are susceptible to accepting these images \textit{prima facie}. But whereas the dreamers can blame their deviation from \textit{vera ratio} on the sluggishness of a sleeping mind, the wakeful lovers who dote on the objects of their affection have no such excuse. And indeed the account

\begin{footnote}
133 I agree with Fitzgerald 1984: 75-76 that \textit{cruentent} (4.1036) skillfully links the section on dreams with the diatribe on love. However, I prefer to read less sarcasm into Lucretius’ use of the word than Fitzgerald seems to (1984: 76), since this usage typifies the perfectly Lucretian practice of connecting notionally related passages with vocabulary germane to both settings, even if the vocabulary is appropriate to each in different senses (as here). I would suggest that the phrase also recalls the description of another reddening garment, namely the superfluous finery of 2.35 (\textit{ostroque rubenti}); appropriately, each passage illustrates divergence from \textit{vera ratio} in its own way.
\end{footnote}
of the unconscious ejaculators draws on the same language as that of the bed-wetters immediately prior (4.1026-29):

parvi saepe lacum propter si ac dolia curta
somno devincti credunt se extollere vestem,
totius umorem saccatum corpori’ fundunt,
cum Babylonica magnifico splendore rigantur.

These dreaming youths act under the mistaken impression (bound as they are by those same mind-blunting forces of sleep, somno devincti, 4.1027) that they are lifting their clothing to relieve themselves (credunt se extollere vestem, 4.1027), when in fact they end up soaking their lavish imported garments (Babylonica, 4.1029). From this earliest passage of our set, then, we see that extravagant clothes are tied initially to the entirely innocent image of children wetting themselves, and gradually the examples take on a more adult tone, as though guiding the reader through his or her own maturation (a favorite leitmotif in Lucretius, as examined in the introduction, above). The poet establishes a connection between the misapprehension of vera ratio and the vain pursuit of lavish clothing and erotic love. Lucretius thus forges a notional chain which, read sequentially, undercuts the value of exquisite garments by associating them ever more closely with the ruinous effects of hollow desires.  

5.9. Observing Nature’s Standards

Lucretius teaches us that the best sort of clothing, by contrast, is that which aligns most closely with nature’s provisions. Still, a fine line separates the sufficient from the excessive. As we learn at 5.222-34, mankind is born utterly resourceless, justly crying out with infant wails upon entry into an utterly hostile world. Moreover, humans lack the

134 With the persistent debasement of lavish garments compare what Day calls Lucretius’ “deflationary tactics” (Day 2013: 47; see also Porter 2007), whereby the poet reduces apparently wondrous imagery down to the level of the mundane.
physical attributes which would mitigate the harshness of that environment, setting us in contrast with wild beasts, who are equipped with hides and other useful protections.\textsuperscript{135} Nature endows them with a certain physical advantage in that regard, since, unlike us, those animals have no need to change clothes to suit the changing seasons (\textit{nec varias quaerunt vestes pro tempore caeli}, 5.231). Indeed, Lucretius tells us that in an earlier era, humans did not feel a pressing need for clothing, since at that time nature effectively provided it for them in the form of comfortable weather conditions (\textit{terra cibum pueris, vestem vapor, herba cubile | praebebat multa et molli lanugine abundans}, 5.816-17).

Furthermore, the poet explains, even today nature provides mankind with figurative clothing on the path to adulthood. Indeed, in accordance with their age, pubescent boys are made to don soft clothing, figuratively, and to see a tender beard spread along their cheeks (5.672-74):

\begin{quote}
\textit{nec minus in certo dentes cadere imperat aetas tempore et inpubem molli pubescere veste et pariter mollem malis demittere barbam.}
\end{quote}

In discussing these verses I would first point out yet another learned allusion occurring in a passage in which Lucretius employs the word \textit{vestis}. Specifically, the phraseology of this passage looks to Callimachus, \textit{Hecale} fr. 274 Pfeiffer:

\begin{quote}
\textit{άρμοϊ ποιο κάκείνῳ ἐπέτρεχε λεπτὸς ίουλος ἄνθει ἐλιθρόῳ ἐναλήκιος.}
\end{quote}

From Callimachus the recent appearance of the delicate (\textit{λεπτὸς}) downy beard (\textit{ίουλος}) finds form in the Lucretian passage with the emphasized softness (\textit{molli}, 673; \textit{mollem}, 674) of the new beard upon the child’s attainment of puberty. The Hellenistic watchword

\textsuperscript{135} The trope of man’s physical resourcelessness vis-à-vis wild beasts is also found in earlier authors; cf., e.g., Pl. \textit{Prt.} 320c-321e.
λεπτός finds its answer in Lucretius’ mollis. The soft garment employed by Lucretius in this allusion to Callimachus again demonstrates that vestis often serves as a marker for intertextuality in DRN. The Lucretian verses also include an instance of figura etymologica, exhibiting the playfulness of which Lucretius is so fond in this poem. Specifically, the poet offers the punning collocation inpubem... pubescere at 5.673, which plays not only on the contrast between maturity and immaturity but also on the difference between the hirsute and the hairless, the clothed and the naked. Nature may not endow humans with protective clothing at birth, but in DRN she figuratively clothes mankind at puberty, reinforcing the notion that clothing which comes from nature or aligns with her provisions is indeed the best sort of clothing.

It should be added that even if nature serves as a model in many ways, Lucretius by no means idealizes primitive mankind as living in a pristine Golden Age. After all, humans lacked the saving doctrines of Epicurus to grant them access to the ultimate mental tranquility. At the same time, Lucretius is also not purely pessimistic about innovation, so technological advances do not always accompany a corresponding moral backslide in DRN. It is clear that any innovation must meet Lucretius’ standards of suitably aligning with the natural world and vera ratio. The practice of weaving, for instance, which can only follow upon the invention of iron, accords well with the natural world. Indeed, it was nature herself who bade men to weave at first. This particular

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137 Garnier 2010: 182 points out that the verb pubescere covers the semantic range of being covered in foliage in agricultural terms (“se couvrir de feuillage”) – a suitably naturalistic image – and also of reaching maturity and being covered in down (“se revêtir de duvet”), versus the related adjective inpubis/impubis which denotes the opposite condition (“lisse, sans poils”).
138 See, e.g., Holmes 2013 on this ambivalence towards early mankind.
innovation by early humans was not objectionable by Lucretian standards, insofar as it

took its lead from nature’s precepts (5.1350-60):

nexilis ante fiuit vestis quam textile tegmen.
textile post ferrumst, quia ferro tela paratur,
 nec ratione alia possunt tam levia gigni
insilia ac fusi radii scapique sonantes.
et facere ante viros lanam natura coegit
quam muliebre genus (nam longe praestat in arte
et sollertius est multo genus omne virile),
agricolae donec vitio vertere severi,
ut muliebribus id manibus concedere vellent
atque ipsi pariter durum sufferre laborem
atque opere in duro durarent membra manusque.

Not insignificantly, Lucretius describes the clothing woven in this process in terms which
might also forge a conceptual link with Hellenistic poetic aesthetics, since these woven
products show the delicate refinement (see levia, 5.1352) which is the hallmark of such
aesthetics. Again, innovation is by no means reproachable per se, since it can produce
worthwhile results. Mankind has long been in need of protection from the natural
elements which have only become truly hostile to man’s nakedness relatively recently in
human history, Lucretius tells us, so the creation of clothing fits perfectly well with
Lucretius’ injunction to live in accordance with nature’s circumstances. Similarly, as
long as a fine-spun literary product meets those same conditions set forth by nature, then
that work, too, is worthy of commendation. Accordingly, Lucretius shows us over the
course of DRN that his poetry indeed accomplishes that aim.

139 For the connection of levis with λεπτός, see how Lucretius uses precisely that Latin adjective
in conjunction with the similar word tenuis (nil adeo posses cuquam leve teneve membris |
vertere in utilitatem, 6.1170-71) to approximate Thucydides’ use of λεπτός (2.49.5, τὰ δὲ ἐντὸς
οὗτως ἐκάτω ὀστὲ μὴ τῶν πάνω λεπτὸν ἱματίων καὶ συνόδων τὰς ἐπιβολὰς ηὕρ’ ἄλλο τι ἢ
γυμνοὶ ἀνέχεσθαι). Batstone 1998: 127 notes that Cinna’s use of levis in fr. 11 Courtney
corresponds to Callimachus’ λεπταί of Ep. 27.3. Cf. also Papaioannou 2014: 231 + n. 35, with
further bibliography.
A brief word on a particular vestis-related textual crux and the role of DRN in representing the external world will not be inapposite here. Although I admire the utility and ingenuity of Oppenrieder’s (1847: 19-20) suggestion of reading vitrum instead of vestem (accepted by Bailey 1947, among others) at 4.147 and 4.152, nevertheless I hesitate to alter the text where the manuscripts evidently agree and the sense does not require a change, as is the case in the present situation. I include the operative text below (4.145-54):

\begin{verbatim}
semper enim summum quicquid de rebus abundat quod iaculentur. et hoc alias cum pervenit in res, transit, ut in primis vestem. sed ubi aspera saxa aut in materiam ligni pervenit, ibi iam scinditur, ut nullum simulacrum reddere possit. at cum splendida quae constant opposta fuerunt densaque, ut in primis speculum est, nil accidit horum; nam neque, uti vestem, possunt transire, neque autem scindi; quam meminit levor praestare salutem. quapropter fit ut hinc nobis simulacra redundent.
\end{verbatim}

True, Oppenrieder’s vitrum in a certain sense eases the logical flow of the passage, insofar as the emendation would show how we can see simulacra pass through vitrum, glass, without difficulty. Still, the notion of emending for vestem not once but twice in this passage (in both 4.147 and 4.152) remains a problematic proposition. Further, the

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140 Oppenrieder’s proposal has triggered rather strong responses from both sides. Among proponents of the change to vitrum, Richter 1974: 55-57, for instance, goes so far as to supplement Oppenrieder’s emendation with an additional explanatory verse of his own creation. Housman, on the other hand, evidently disapproves of Romanes’ printing vitrum and marks the verse with a marginal “x” (Butterfield 2006-2007: 107), and in a review of Martin’s 1953 edition of the text Elder positively “rejoice[s] to see the vestem of the MSS retained” (Elder 1956: 196).

141 The only other uses of vitrum in the poem suggest that Lucretius indeed found the word useful in proofs describing the movement of sensory particles through various channels: cf. 4.598-602, on the capacity of sounds to pass through walls, in contrast to images’ inability to do so unless the barrier offers smooth passage-ways like glass does; and 6.991-97, on the relative powers of different media to conduct different materials, as heat passes easily through silver, or images through glass.

142 Richter 1974: 56 amends to vitrum but acknowledges the difficulty of the repetition: “Aber was in V. 147 geändert wurde, mußte folgerichtig auch in V. 152 geändert werden. Die Lesung
unaltered passage retaining *vestem* is not wholly illogical as we receive it. Indeed, the aptness of *vestem* has already been accepted in the sense of “veil” by Merrill and others.\(^{143}\) Lucretius is demonstrating that we can indeed make out images seen through a thin sheet or veil, even if only in silhouette. The point is that these objects’ *simulacra*, being incredibly fine, can navigate the narrow straits available in woven garments, which they cannot do in stone, wood, and other like matter. After all, woven clothing naturally contains tiny airy pockets through which the *simulacra* can travel, simply given the interlaced nature of the article’s composition. Further, Lucretius indicates in this passage that, as porous as wood is,\(^{144}\) woven garments are more porous still.\(^{145}\) As a result, it is possible to see through the one and not the other.\(^{146}\)

If we accept the manuscript readings of *vestem*, then, what are we to make of 4.145-54? It seems to me that this passage provides yet another metapoetic reflection on

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\(^{143}\) Merrill 1907 glosses the word as “veil” and compares it to the gossamer-fine *vestem* of 3.386, at the same time noting the trouble in theorizing a double corruption: “Although *vitrum* is very attractive, it is hard to see how *vestem* could have been twice corrupted into it.” Leonard and Smith 1942 obelize but retain *vestem* and note that the “[r]eadings of the ancient MSS. seems incredible, and yet none of the proposed emendations, of which *uitrum* seems the best, takes account of the improbability that the same word would be twice corrupted in the same way within a few lines,” and consequently, “[i]f *uestem* is retained, it must refer, here and in l. 152, to a veil or the transparent clothing worn by wanton women and effeminate men.”

\(^{144}\) Cf. 6.1059-61, where wood is too porous for a magnet to pull it.

\(^{145}\) At 6.995-97, Lucretius caps his preceding discussion of the varying capacities of different materials to conduct heat, for instance, or sound: *scilicet id fieri cogit natura viarum | multiformis varians, ut paulo ostendimus ante, | propter dissimilem naturam textaque rerum*. Tellingly, the poet describes the porosity of the various materials as differing according to their own “woven structures” (*textaque rerum, 6.997*) – perhaps in more ways than one, especially since the phrase *ut paulo ostendimus ante* (6.996) can in part refer to the passage under present discussion (4.145-54).

\(^{146}\) In his *Brutus*, Cicero likens a given oratorical style to a soft and translucent garment: *ita reconditas exquisitasque sententias molli et perlucens vestiebat oratio* (*Brut*, 274). It is clear that, among Lucretius’ contemporaries, too, thin clothing was thought to “let through the light” (note Cicero’s *perlucens*) and would thus make an apt vehicle for the above Lucretian proof. Cf. also Mart. 8.68.7, *femineum lucet sic per bombycina corpus.*
the power of “fine-spun” poetry. Again understanding the slender garment as the poet’s refined verse,\textsuperscript{147} we note that fine poetry indeed offers a glimpse of the real-world \textit{simulacra} around us. As Thury 1987 has argued, poetry has the power to cast \textit{simulacra} into the reader’s mind.\textsuperscript{148} Poetic imagery can thus be dangerous, which Plato famously warns against in the \textit{Republic} and which Lucretius himself acknowledges. Indeed, the (possibly deleterious) potency of poetic imagery is precisely what prompts Lucretius to constantly warn his reader to be on guard, lest a given poetic expression win uncritical acceptance as fact. Yet Lucretius assures us that his own poetry is designed to give us an accurate understanding of the universe. That is, \textit{DRN} serves a function which is a natural physical feature of woven garments: it is a fine-spun medium through which we can perceive the \textit{simulacra} of the world around us.

Let us return now to our discussion of clothing and nature. The end of Lucretius’ anthropology in Book 5 amply demonstrates the folly of pursuing lavish garments and shows that with every innovation – however necessary and appropriate it may be in its origins – we must always guard against perversions of its use or unintended anxieties accompanying its invention. Precisely those ills attend the early adoption of clothing among humans, as we observe at 5.1418-33:

\begin{quote}
\textit{pellis item cecidit vestis contempta ferinae;}
\textit{quam reor invidia tali tunc esse repertam,}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{147} The phrase \textit{in primis} (4.147) indicates that the garment is necessarily thin if it is to stand as a particularly apt example in Lucretius’ proof.

\textsuperscript{148} Thury 1987: 271 notes that “in its representation of reality, Lucretius’ poem functions as a \textit{simulacrum} of the \textit{rerum natura} in the technical sense, that is, that the poem presents word-pictures or images of the real world that enter the mind of the reader and are susceptible to evaluation in the same way as the actual \textit{simulacra} given off by material objects.” Further, just as Lucretius’ poem emits \textit{simulacra}, so, too, do other works of literature (cf. Thury 1987: 280, 291-92); the difference, of course, is that the \textit{simulacra} emitted by Lucretius’ are helpful or salutary for the reader. The danger of rival thinkers’ irresponsible use of language (cf. 1.641-44) lies precisely in the capacity of those works to produce faulty images of reality in the reader’s mind.
This passage voices Lucretius’ frustration with those who fail to see that simple clothing is all we need to shield ourselves from the elements effectively. As we have seen so frequently in *DRN*, the unnecessary indulgences of purple and gold again occur in connection with this clothing as a harbinger of excess and wrong-headed thinking.

Lucretius grants that the first wearer even of animal hide – a rather mean garment by later standards but presumably a marvel upon its initial introduction – is likely to have attracted considerable envy, and in a way the poet likens those desirable early pelts to the lavish garments of today on the basis of the anguish and jealousy they generate among the respective wearers’ peers (*tunc igitur pelles, nunc aurum et purpura curis | exercent hominum vitam belloque fatigant*, 5.1423-24). Even so, the two are not the same, and the poet draws a clear line between humble staples and extravagant garments. Both types of clothing, he submits, will have inspired strife upon their introduction, but, as he points out at 5.1426-29, only the simple covering is strictly necessary for shelter, whereas we can easily live without the lavishness of purple and gold clothing. The one type of garment constitutes a wholly appropriate response to natural circumstances, while the other remains a frivolous and misguided pursuit. In both cases, however, the fault of jealousy attacking the first wearers of the garment rests squarely with the assailants,
those who fail to see the limit of possession \((\textit{habendi} \ | \ \textit{finis}, \ 5.1432-33)\) and the bounds of true pleasure \((\textit{omnino quod crescat vera voluptas}, \ 5.1433)\). Unlike those greedy miscreants of then and now, however, Lucretius suggests that we have the benefit of our instructor’s tutelage to warn us about such pitfalls and steer us away from erroneously ascribing value to frivolous luxuries. The implication is that an innovator need not feel distressed if he or she meets with a hostile reception from his or her contemporaries, so long as the innovation is grounded in right-minded thinking and proves salutary for the human condition. That statement applies equally to the first wearer of animal pelts and to the man who first dared to campaign against dire \textit{religio} for mankind’s sake – as well as to that man’s innovative disciple presenting Epicurean truths in Latin verse.

As mentioned at the opening of this chapter, Lucretius models the behavior of the proper Epicurean student on the continuous critical thinking practiced by early mankind. Those early figures, however flawed in other respects, nevertheless point the way to the achievement of the various \textit{praemia vitae} which will ultimately lead them to the high point described at the end of Book 5 (\(5.1448-57\)):

\begin{quote}
\textit{navigia atque agri culturas moenia leges}\\
\textit{arma vias vestes et cetera de genere horum,}\\
\textit{praemia, delicias quoque vitae funditus omnis,}\\
\textit{carmina picturas et daedala signa polita,}\\
\textit{usus et impigrae simul experientia mentis}\\
\textit{paulatim docuit pedetemptim progredientis.}\\
\textit{sic unumquicquid paulatim protrahit aetas}\\
\textit{in medium ratioque in luminis erigit oras;}\\
\textit{namque alid ex alio clarescere corde videbant,}\\
\textit{artibus ad summum donec venere cacumen.}
\end{quote}

The key to attaining such heights, Lucretius suggests, is to maintain an active mind at all times. We must continually seek out that which accords with nature and guides us toward \textit{ataraxia}. This mission is unlike the quest for lavish garments and is rather a
search for what is truly salutary for mankind. At the same time, innovations in refinement are by no means intrinsically abhorrent, since weaving, for instance, arises only after humans’ basic need for clothing has already been met (*nexilis ante fuit vestis quam textile tegmen*, 5.1350). Clearly a good Epicurean would not foreswear indulgence in the (hardly immoderate) pleasure of such refinement.\(^{149}\) The danger, rather, lies in the angst of obtaining these garments or in allowing any flawed reasoning to inform one’s pursuit of them.

In this chapter, then, I have argued that the fine clothes which Lucretius presents to his reader throughout *DRN* often point to previous writers, especially Hellenistic poets, who themselves discuss fine poetry in terms reminiscent of descriptions of fine clothing. Lucretius invokes these earlier writers at pregnant moments in *DRN*, often in passages which discuss aspects of refinement with specific echoes of those predecessors’ works. However, as has been shown regarding other intertexts in studies by Gale 2013, Gee 2013, and others, allusion does not equate to wholesale approval in Lucretius, so even when our poet channels earlier authors in *DRN*, he shapes those allusions to suit his exposition of the given philosophical principle at hand. Lucretius thus challenges the reader to detect these subtle allusions using specific vocabulary which serves to invite that comparison. Naturally, though, identifying these references is by no means necessary or universally expected of every reader.\(^{150}\) If we take from *DRN* only the means by which we might figuratively clothe ourselves in the doctrines of Epicureanism, then the practical aspect of the poem’s didacticism has achieved its desired effect. If, in

\(^{149}\) Notably, Lucretius sets *vestes* and other *praemia vitae* alongside life’s pleasures (*delicias quoque vitae funditus omnis*, 5.1450), including poetry (*carmina*, 5.1451).

\(^{150}\) Cf. again Segal 1990b: 10-11 on the poet’s ability to reach “many different kinds of readers.”
addition, we trace the erudite allusions to these similarly subtle and refined poets, then in our own way we share in Lucretius’ pleasure of composing this artful poem. Indeed, in that respect we can delight both in recognizing these learned allusions and in coming to appreciate still more greatly the masterful artistry of this remarkable work.

151 Recall the emphatic repetition of *iuvat* at 1.927 = 4.2 and *iuvatque* at 1.928 = 4.3, signaling the sheer pleasure Lucretius derives from setting the doctrines of Epicureanism to verse. For more on Lucretius’ justification of poetry, see, e.g., Tatum 1984, Gale 1994b, and Asmis 1995.
Conclusion

This study has shone a light on a number of different but related aspects of the phenomenon I call incremental didacticism in Lucretius. The findings of the first two chapters suggest that Lucretius often employs imagery in such a way as to implicate the reader in the lessons of the poem ever more closely and to train the reader to maintain Epicurean equanimity at all times. The test of incremental didacticism takes a slightly different form in the imagery explored in the third chapter. There, we evaluate how Lucretius extends the implications of his careful demythologization of Venus. In his use of innuendo and double entendre, Lucretius tests the reader not with increased proximity or intensity, but rather with a challenge to fill in the blanks, as it were, without the instructor’s assistance. The pupil must attain a level of facility with balancing the competing meanings denoted by a given word. At the same time, the structure of those challenges calls for the reader to reinforce the poet’s lessons from elsewhere in the text regarding proper sexual mores. In the fourth chapter, I proceed along a similar line of inquiry by showing how incremental didacticism often involves a change in the exact meaning of an image or term – in this case, the jar – in such a way as to challenge the reader to detect a new specification denoted by that term, especially without the assistance of the instructor in later stages. The fifth chapter analyzes the way in which the poet encourages the reader to detect intertextual allusions to other authors and re-interpret those other texts through the lens of Epicurean truth, often in the context of a group of allusions organized around a related image, again showing how the poet tests his reader to detect subtle allusions and make sense of them in reading DRN. Each chapter thus examines a different but complementary aspect of the Lucretian technique of
incremental didacticism and demonstrates how our recognition of that technique enhances our appreciation of the complex artistry of *DRN*.

Further avenues for inquiry on the basis of this study’s methods and findings may include an exploration of images in *DRN* which operate along similar lines with regard to Lucretian incremental didacticism. Two sets of images present themselves for particular consideration, namely medical imagery and maritime imagery. A study of Lucretius’ use of medical and illness-related imagery would expand on the vocabulary of disease outlined briefly at the end of chapter 1. This imagery likewise increases in intensity, in telling fashion, leading inexorably to the harrowing narrative of disease and plague at the end of Book 6. The other proposed direction for future study concerns nautical imagery, as Lucretius frequently alludes the sea with a perceptibly wary tone. The poet cautions us that the sea may at first glance appear to be friendly and welcoming as it smiles at us from the shore, even as it contains a great many obstacles to our attainment of *ataraxia*. Early in the poem Lucretius frequently remarks on the treacherous nature of the sea’s smile, but his later commentary regularly makes reference to that apparent smile without accompanying such observations with any concomitant warnings. The reader is left to recall the poet’s lessons independently of the instructor.

It is my hope that this study will prompt further discussion of the highly intricate nature of Lucretius’ poetic and didactic techniques.
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Journal abbreviations follow the conventions of *L’Année Philologique*, with the following exceptions: I print *P* rather than *Ph* in abbreviating titles which use the word “Philology,” “Philological,” *vel sim.*; and I abbreviate *Papers of the Liverpool Latin Seminar* to PLLS and *Modern Language Notes* to MLN, as is customary.

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