

*Beginnings in the De Rerum Natura*  
*Treasuries of Influence and Intertextuality*

By Nick van Schaik, s1122584

nicksname\_@hotmail.com

University of Leiden

Master Classics and Ancient Civilizations

Faculty of Humanities

Supervisor: Dr. C.H. Pieper

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## Introduction and preliminary notes

### Research question and outline of the paper

The proems of the *De Rerum Natura* (henceforth *DRN*) are a key subject in studies concerning intertextuality and influence between Lucretius and other authors.<sup>1</sup> The main proem of the *DRN* has led Sedley to argue that Lucretius paid attention to the proem of Empedocles' *On Nature*, even though this poem is known fragmentarily.<sup>2</sup> The first and fourth proem of the *DRN* have been associated with Callimachus and Alexandrian poetry.<sup>3</sup> The presence of Lucretius' example, Epicurus, is sometimes discussed by pointing to praise in Lucretius' proems.<sup>4</sup> This paper will offer a view on the way how Lucretius invites the reader to read his proems in relation to other authors, which will lead to the conclusion that Lucretius regularly builds on an existing tradition while creating a new tradition which later Roman authors have used extensively. In fact, it may be stated that the opening verses of the books of the *DRN* present themselves as great treasuries of intertextuality and influence and that Lucretius consciously refers and alludes to others, but at the same time criticizes and corrects them.<sup>5</sup> Lucretius does this from a unique position, since he has written an epic didactic poem on Epicurean philosophy. A somewhat bold statement is that, since it is in his proems that Lucretius is not limited by the core doctrine of Epicureanism and atomism, the proems offer more free ground to explore intertextual poetic topics beyond his main goal, namely presenting "the reader with a light and easy-to-read work on subjects dark, heavy and obscure."<sup>6</sup> A consequence of

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<sup>1</sup> As Graham Allen points out in his study on intertextuality, its definition is broad and complicated and also often defined in various ways by different studies. This study has therefore attempted to define its thesis as clear as possible. On the theoretical background of intertextuality see Allen 2000. For a more specific study on intertextuality in Roman poetry, see Hinds 1998. Both studies, although not often annotated, have been of great help in writing this study. It is also useful to consider the terminology about proems in classical poetry: a beginning by means of an evocation or hymn of a long poem is usually called a proem. However, it is not uncommon to see terms as 'beginning', 'opening' or 'start' when referring to a proem, but note that, although a proem is a start, opening or beginning, it is not necessarily true the other way around. Lastly, this study prefers the plural 'proems' over the Latin plural 'prooemia'.

<sup>2</sup> Sedley 1998, 1-34. This chapter is largely a reproduction of Sedley's 1989 article "The Proems of Empedocles and Lucretius" in *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 30.

<sup>3</sup> Kenney 1970; Brown 1982; Donohue 1990, 61 ff; Conte 1992; Wang 2002. The proem of book 4 contains almost the same lines as so called 'second proem' of book (*DRN* 1. 921-950). Apart from the authors just mentioned, this proem is discussed by Lenaghan 1967; Lienhard 1969, 346-349; Gale 1994(b); Segal 1998; Kyriakidis 2006. For a short summarization of the debate about the possible explanations for the double appearance of this passage, see Bailey 1947, 921: "Among those who have discussed the problem Lachmann, Giusani, and Regenbogen hold that the lines were originally written here in I; Mewaldt, Mussehl, Diels, Büchner, and Bignone that they were first written as the proem of IV and transferred here [1:921-950]. But there is great difference of opinion as to whether the transference from the one place to the other was made by Lucr. himself, the 'editor' (presumably Cicero), or a later 'interpolator'." Repetition of this passage, shorter passages and singles verses is discussed by Ingalls 1971.

<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, Clay 1983, 40 ff., 82-109; Gale 1994 (a), 192-207; Fratantuono 2015, 161-163, 315-318.

<sup>5</sup> Lucretius possibly makes use of the Roman literary concepts of *imitatio* and *aemulatio*. This study, thus, chiefly discusses Lucretius' proems and his predecessors. However, there is large amount of studies that discuss the place and influence of Lucretius' proems in later (Latin) literature. Recent influential studies that take the proems into account as well are Gale 2000, 18-57, who discusses Lucretius' proems in connection to those of Virgil's *Georgics* and Hardie 2009, who on the reception of Lucretius cites passages from every proem and often sees parallels with Virgil and Horace. Other recent studies on Lucretius in relation to later Latin literature in general are, for example, Giesecke 2000; Volk 2002; Hardie 2007.

<sup>6</sup> This is a paraphrase of the programmatic statement about his philosophical discourse in poetic form that Lucretius mentions in the proem of book 4 (*DRN* 4.20-22).

the fact that the *DRN* is part of poetic traditions and simultaneously part of the philosophical tradition of Epicureanism is that we could look at Lucretius' poem in various ways. This paper will therefore be divided in different chapters with specific themes. Instead of treating the poems chronologically, it seems more profitable to follow other studies and to separate Lucretius' connection with other authors thematically.<sup>7</sup> We will find that this distinction is sometimes unsatisfying, since some authors as Empedocles possibly share literary and philosophical connections with Lucretius and some passages in the poems simultaneously refer to Lucretius' poetic and philosophical tradition. Lucretius, for instance, often opposes to the beliefs of non-philosophical authors like Homer or Ennius on Epicurean grounds. However, this thesis relies on the thought that the thematic division will prove useful and appear natural as our argument progresses.

In the first chapter we discuss two influential poetic traditions on the *DRN*, namely the epic heroic and epic didactic genre. Both genres are essentially part of poetry in dactylic hexameters and in antiquity sometimes considered the same genre. Although the *DRN* is unmistakably a didactic poem on Epicurean philosophy, we cannot ignore the possible influence of epic heroic authors like Homer and Ennius, since Homer they are two of the few authors directly mentioned by name by Lucretius in the poem of book 1 (*DRN* 1.102-115).<sup>8</sup> However, we will concern ourselves in the first place with didactic poetry and start by discussing the supposed literary presence of Empedocles in the poem of book 1. We ask ourselves what Lucretius wants to achieve with these alleged Empedoclean references and where he directs us, the readers. Less apparent, yet presumably present, are Lucretius' intertexts with Hesiod, father of didactic poetry. We will notice that Lucretius often alludes to both epic and didactic poetry not merely for the sake of praise, but also for correction and polemic. Moreover, Lucretius displays awareness about his predecessors and possibly his place in classical literature.

Hereafter, we will come to realize that Alexandrian poetry and, consequently, the contemporary Latin authors of "new poetry" are an influence on the *DRN* as well. The underlying hypothesis is that any author is automatically influenced or triggered by the trends of his own day and age, even if he or she tries to part from the contemporary trend. The *poetae novi* or *neoterics* were Roman poets that probably lived alongside Lucretius and had particular interest in the characteristics and poetic ideals of Alexandrian poetry. We will analyse to what extent Lucretius has been influenced by this contemporary literary tendency, for it has often been argued that Alexandrian literary techniques and intertexts with Callimachus' poetry are present in the poems of the *DRN*.<sup>9</sup> Parallels between Lucretius and his contemporary Catullus, a *poeta novus*, have been debated as well.<sup>10</sup> While there was a period of time in which scholars assumed that Lucretius' work was isolated from contemporary literature and even anything post-Epicurus, most studies now agree

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<sup>7</sup> Fowler 2000, 138: "The celebrated opposition between philosophy and poetry in the *De rerum natura* can to an extent be rephrased in terms of an opposition between the differing reading practices of two interpretative communities." See Gale, 1994(a), who has a separate chapter for the philosophical background and the literary background of the *DRN*. For a more linear approach to the *DRN* see Fratantuono 2015. Fratantuono declares in his preface that he endeavors an extensive, epic reading of the *DRN* and states about his study that it "assumes that epics are meant to be read from start to finish, [..]"

<sup>8</sup> Heraclitus and Anaxagoras are mentioned by name in *DRN* 1.635 ff. and Empedocles in *DRN* 1.716. Democritus, an atomist, is positively referred to in *DRN* 3.371, 3.1039 and 5.622. In every poem references to Epicurus or his philosophy seem present.

<sup>9</sup> Kenney 1970; Brown 1982; Donohue 1990; Wang 2002.

<sup>10</sup> Kenney 1970; Giesecke 2000, 10-30; Gale 2007, 69-70.

that this a narrow view and that Lucretius in fact displays awareness of and contact with these movements.<sup>11</sup> The intertexts that follow from this will be the subject of the second chapter.

The last theme will bend towards the presence of Epicurus in the proems and consider some philosophical intertexts in the *DRN*. Although a proem is inherently poetic and not philosophical, we must acknowledge that Epicurus is the subject of many proems. Therefore, in a study on Lucretius' proems, a discussion of the tension between philosophy and poetry is inevitable. This is not without problems, since some see Epicurus' stance towards poetry as negative.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, a significant proportion of Epicurus' texts are lost and the remainder of Epicurus' writings is fragmentarily transmitted. Consequently, a satisfying comparison between Lucretius' poem and the texts of his philosophical inspiration is difficult.<sup>13</sup> Apart from Epicurus, other philosophers are barely mentioned in the proems of the *DRN* and intertexts seem to be uncommon. In other parts of the *DRN*, however, they seem present.<sup>14</sup> A considerable debate which can be discussed in relation to the proem of book 1 revolves around the philosophical influence of Empedocles. Some have suggested that Lucretius with his main proem acknowledged the importance of the philosophy of Empedocles for the Epicurean doctrine.<sup>15</sup> However, others have been skeptical about this hypothesis.<sup>16</sup> We will also find that intertexts with other philosophers, whether or not in the proems, sometimes share resemblances with our earlier findings and thus are worthy of our examination.

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<sup>11</sup> See Ferrero 1949, whose study has been important to turn the tide. See Kenney 1970, who wrote an influential article that argues in favour of a connection between Lucretius and his contemporaries and the Alexandrians. See also Gale 2007, 74, who recently has argued again that Lucretius did not write in literary isolation.

<sup>12</sup> Gale 1994 (a), 14-18.

<sup>13</sup> Consequently, there is much debate around the Epicurean source texts of Lucretius. See Sedley 1998, 134-165, who argues that Epicurus' *On nature* was Lucretius' sole source. cf. Clay 1983, 1-26, who argues that Lucretius might not have had a source text at all.

<sup>14</sup> See, for instance, Sedley 1998, 68-93, who discusses Plato, Scepticism and Stoicism and Gale, 1994(a), 26-80, who discusses the possible appearance of Parmenides, Empedocles and euhemerism.

<sup>15</sup> Furley 1970. See also Gale 1994 (a), 50-74, who seems more cautious, yet not denying.

<sup>16</sup> Most importantly Sedley 1998, 18: "No reader of the proems to book III, V and VI can doubt that Lucretius' other philosophical debts pale into insignificance when compared with his acknowledged dependence upon Epicurus. Why then would he give his putative philosophical obligation to Empedocles the undeserved and thoroughly misleading prominence that it gains from a position in the poem's opening?"

## Chapter one: Lucretian beginnings and previous poetic traditions

### Proems and the didactic and epic tradition

The beginning of a long poem, a proem, had a long tradition in Classical literature. From Homer onwards poets evoked a god usually at the beginning of their work in a particular and reoccurring fashion.<sup>17</sup> The proem is usually seen as a poetic device to present the subject to the reader. Stylistically it has not been unaltered over the course of the centuries: different genres had distinctive features and poets gave their proems a personal touch. This is not surprising considering the length of classical antiquity. When comparing the proems of the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* with the first proem of the *DRN*, it is quickly realized that Homer evokes a Muse while Lucretius evokes Venus.<sup>18</sup> The evoked god or goddess is just one of the examples by which poets have personalized their proem, but poets seem to align themselves at least partially to the genre in which they write.<sup>19</sup> Although the proems ascribed to Homer, generally seen as the first in Classical literature, laid the prototype of the proem, these works belong to the genre of epic heroic poetry. The *DRN* is often considered to be a didactic epic poem and most modern studies have treated Lucretius as a didactic author.<sup>20</sup> Since this chapter attempts to look into the connections Lucretius has or consciously makes with previous poetic traditions, we will consider first and foremost the didactic genre. However, as mentioned above, Lucretius explicitly refers to Homer and Ennius and therefore we will look into that genre as well. In the last section of this chapter we consider a passage of the *DRN* that seems to contain Lucretius' own vision of his place in literature and his use of previous traditions. We then try to conclude how this passage stands in relation to the other findings.

### The main proem: a debt to the didactic poetry of Empedocles?

Aenaedum genetrix, hominum divumque voluptas,  
alma Venus, caeli subter labentia signa  
quae mare navigerum, quae terras frugiferentis  
concelebras, per te quoniam genus omne animantum  
concipitur visitque exortum lumina solis:  
te, dea, te fugiunt venti, te nubila caeli  
adventumque tuum, tibi suavis daedala tellus  
summittit flores, tibi rident aequora ponti  
placatumque nitet diffuso lumine caelum.

*Ancestress of Aeneas' race, pleasure of humans and gods, nourishing Venus, who beneath the gliding signals of the sky frequents the ship-bearing sea and fruit giving lands, because of you is the entire race of creatures conceived and views, being born, the lights of the sun: From you, goddess, the winds*

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<sup>17</sup> See Dunn, F. and Cole, T. (eds.) 1992, where we find various articles concerning the proem that draw a more adequate history of this tradition.

<sup>18</sup> Hom. *Il.* 1.1-2; Hom. *Od.* 1.1-10; Lucr. *DRN* 1.1-49; in other passages, for instance *DRN* 4.1-25, Lucretius does refer to the Muses.

<sup>19</sup> See Race 1992, esp. 20-36, who discusses proems in different genres of Greek poetry. A large quantity of the article is about beginnings in the epic and didactic tradition.

<sup>20</sup> See Gale 1994 (a), 99-106, who rightly mentions that there are few exceptions to the treatment of the *DRN* as a didactic poem, but accomplishes to give a few, most importantly Hardie 1986. Gale also gives an excellent outline on the ambiguity and progress of the division between the epic and didactic genre in antiquity. By the time of Lucretius, a distinction seems to be existent.

*flee from you, from you and your arrival the clouds of the sky flee, for you the Daedalan earth pushes up flowers, for you the plains of the sea laugh and the sky, being in rest, shines with diffused light.*<sup>21</sup>

These first lines of the *DRN*, which are part of the proem of book 1, have already been the subject of a famous debate. Many studies have discussed the strange fact that Lucretius, an Epicurean, starts his poem by evoking, praising and even accepting the power and force of Venus, since this would be inappropriate for an Epicurean and actually against the philosophical conviction of Epicureanism to state that the gods are influential, intervening and controlling entities in human life.<sup>22</sup> However, Lucretius represents Venus as exactly that kind of a goddess in the first 43 lines of the *DRN*. Especially as Lucretius seems to continue the first book by unfolding a view of religion and the gods that does fit Epicurean philosophy (*DRN* 1.50-136), this start is remarkable.<sup>23</sup> We might ask ourselves if Lucretius wants to point to something else than an expected Epicurean discourse. If we read these lines closely, we notice that the first five verses contain imageries of sky (*caeli subter labentia signa*), sun (*lumina solis*), sea (*mare navigerum*) and land (*terras frugiferentis*). These imageries bear close resemblance to Empedocles' four elements, respectively air, fire, water and earth.<sup>24</sup> In the subsequent verses we notice a reference to the four elements of Empedocles again: *venti* (air), *nubila caeli* (air/fire), *daedala tellus* (earth), *aequora ponti* (water) and *diffuso lumine* (air/fire). Interestingly, Lucretius uses the word *caelum* (sky) instead of the sun and writes that it shines with *diffuso lumine*. Perhaps it is merely a metrical convention, but forms of *caelum* are used three times in these first lines and the imagery around fire and air might be left intentionally ambiguous. It is plausible that Lucretius wants to indicate a philosophical difference between atomism and Empedocles' elements.<sup>25</sup> We must also note that Venus visits the sea and earth and not the sky and is responsible for the fact that earth produces flowers, the ocean laughs, while the clouds and winds flee and the sky is at rest with diffused light, and not concentrated light. Venus is responsible for peace on earth and ocean, because the air and fire of the sky are gone and at rest.

After these verses, moreover, in *DRN* 1.29-43, Lucretius alludes to the romance between Venus and war-god Mars, who in Empedocles' poem are sometimes used to represent respectively Love and Strife, according to Empedocles the two forces that influence everything in the world.<sup>26</sup> In Empedocles' doctrine Love produces unity and rest as Venus does in this proem, while Strife produces separation and movement. It is possible that Mars represents strife, war, air and fire in Lucretius' proem and therefore should be held away from earth and sea as Venus must do in *DRN* 1.29-30. We might also notice a thoughtful parallel between Mars and *religio*, which in *DRN* 1.62-65

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<sup>21</sup> Lucr. *DRN* 1.1-9. This translation and others in this study are from authors' hand unless otherwise stated. The text edition used for the passages from the *DRN* is Bailey 1947. See also Rouse 1992, whose translation has occasionally been advised.

<sup>22</sup> See Lienhardt 1969; Clay 1983, 82-110; Gale 1994 (a), 208-223; Sedley 1998, 15 ff.; Courtney 2001; O'Hara 2007, 55-76; Fratantuono 2015, 15-22. cf. Lucr. *DRN* 2.655-660, where Lucretius is critical of the allegorical use of divinities, which adds to the surprise over this beginning.

<sup>23</sup> Sedley 1998, 16: "It would scarcely be an exaggeration to say that he [i.e. Lucretius] spends the remainder off the poem undoing the damage done by the first forty-three lines."

<sup>24</sup> Sedley 1998, 16-21. cf. Furley 1970. Furley mentions this resemblance, but Sedley adds that the *caeli subter labentia signa* could represent fire as well. cf. Lucr. *DRN* 1.763-829.

<sup>25</sup> In Empedocles' theory fire is on top and thereafter come air, water and earth. Thus, fire and air are close to each other, but two separate primordial materials. Lucretius, as an Epicurean, is an atomist and thus opposes to the theory of the four elements, as he indicates in *DRN* 1.734-762. See also page 31-32 of this study.

<sup>26</sup> See Sedley 1998, 26, who rightly mentions that "Aphrodite would be Empedocles' preferred divinity" in an opening hymn.

also comes from above and thus from the sky. At least it seems plausible that these lines indeed contain several allusions to Empedocles' elemental system and that these allusions, so prominently at the beginning of Lucretius' poem, are conscious. Some studies have coined the idea that Lucretius here credits Empedocles as a philosophical forebear of the Epicurean doctrine.<sup>27</sup> Others, however, object to his view, since Lucretius delivers criticism of Empedocles in other passages and states that Epicurus is his only philosophical example. They see the allusions to Empedocles more as a literary accolade.<sup>28</sup>

It is this idea that we should discuss in this chapter, because it would establish a poetic connection between Lucretius and Empedocles and may bring up the thought that Lucretius has used literary models for his proems. At first thought, the suggestion of Empedocles as literary model for Lucretius might not seem strange, since they were both didactic poets who wrote about philosophy and used the dactylic hexameter. We also know that Lucretius was familiar with Empedocles' poetry, since he refers to him directly in *DRN* 1.716-733 with considerable praise. However, Lucretius also holds a long discourse (*DRN* 1.733-829) in which he opposes to Empedocles' theory of the elements. A comparison between the title of Lucretius and the supposed title of Empedocles' *On Nature* must be taken with care, since this title, which we nowadays use to refer to a work of Empedocles, could have been coined as a mere convention by Diogenes Laërtius and is not necessarily the original title given by Empedocles. The history of the title of Lucretius' poem is similar.<sup>29</sup> With these pros and cons in mind we could look at Empedocles' proem or other passages and compare these to Lucretius' opening. This practice, however, is complicated, because Empedocles' poetry has only survived fragmentarily. Moreover, there is an ongoing debate about the locations of the fragments within Empedocles' works, which are often assumed to be two (*On Nature* and *Purifications*).<sup>30</sup>

In this context Sedley has tried to reconstruct the proem of Empedocles' *On Nature*, to which he ascribes many known fragments. He argues that its structure and vocabulary are similar to Lucretius' proem.<sup>31</sup> He even concludes that Lucretius with his main proem not only pays his debt to the form of Empedocles' proem, but even attempts to copy and adept its structure, although he departs from Empedocles' philosophical ideas.<sup>32</sup> Some of the minor evidence of Sedley points is quite doubtful: the fact that Empedocles and Lucretius address a friend or acquaintance in their proems (Pausanias in fragment 1 and Memmius in *DRN* 1.25-26, 42), for instance, is not astonishing, since

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<sup>27</sup> See, for instance, Furley 1970. cf. Gale 1994 (a), 59-74.

<sup>28</sup> Sedley 1998, 18-21.

<sup>29</sup> *On Nature* and similar titles, which are sometimes later conceived, are common in Classical literature, especially in Greek philosophy. Examples are found with Heraclitus, Parmenides, Empedocles, Epicurus and Anaximander. See also Clay 1983, 82-87, who explains by pointing to our sources that it is uncertain if the title *De Rerum Natura* was used in the first century BC.

<sup>30</sup> See Osborne 1987, esp. 26-28 and Diogenes Laërtius (D.L.) 7.77 about the supposed title of Empedocles' poem. Osborne here also discusses the fragments of Empedocles in relation to the question if the two alleged works of his hand (*On Nature* and *Purifications*) were actually one work. Osborne supports this thesis. cf. Sedley 1998, 2-8, who argues that there were two poems, but most known fragments come from *On Nature*. On this topic, see Gale 1994 (a), 59-60 and *fn.* 221, who concludes from Osborne that Lucretius was familiar with our known fragments of Empedocles, both traditionally assigned to *On Nature* as well as *Purifications*, and that the two works are more connected than the traditional division of fragments would suggest.

<sup>31</sup> Sedley 1998, 22-34.

<sup>32</sup> Sedley 1998, 23: "Lucretius is imitating Empedocles' proem, but adapting it, as he goes along, (a) to a Roman patriotic theme, and (b) to Epicurean philosophy [...] His object? To announce himself as *the Roman Empedocles* – the great Roman poet of nature. In short, he is laying claim to a literary, not a philosophical, heritage."

this is a reoccurring feature in poetry since Hesiod's *Works and days*. The argument that both might share a similar title could be criticized for reasons mentioned above. A reference to Lucretius' work in a letter of Cicero next to a translation or imitation of Empedocles by Sallust, the *Empedoclea*, does not necessarily mean anything and is only a natural occurrence if it is certain that Lucretius' proem of book 1 models the proem of Empedocles' *On Nature*.<sup>33</sup> Be this as it may be, Sedley does give a large array of textual similarities between Lucretius' proem and fragments of Empedocles: in verse one of the *DRN hominum divumque voluptas* could resemble the Greek γηθοσύνη (Delight) from fragment 17.24 of Empedocles.<sup>34</sup> *Alma* (nourishing) in verse two could resemble ζείδωρος (life-giving), an epitaph Empedocles gives to Aphrodite in fragment 151, or φυτάλμιος (nourishing), an adjective also found in fragments of Empedocles. *Navigerum* and *frugiferentis* are argued to be both transcended from Greek compound adjectives and akin to an Empedoclean style, while similar compound adjectives are scarce in the *DRN*.<sup>35</sup> The structure in lines 56-61 is believed to have parallels with fragment 17. The praise of Epicurus (*DRN* 1.62-79) may have a model in Empedocles' reference to Pythagoras (fragment 129). Empedocles' fragment 137 displays an example of a father sacrificing a son and could be compared to the sacrifice of Iphigeneia in *DRN* 1.80-101.<sup>36</sup> Lines 136-145, where Lucretius evaluates the difficulty of expressing yourself in the Latin language, are, albeit cautious, thought to correlate with fragment 8-11 and 15, where Empedocles comments about the occasionally imprecision of ordinary language. Clay argues that Venus in verses 21-28 controls nature in a sense where nature could mean 'birth' and this resembles the use of the word φύσις by Empedocles in fragment 8.<sup>37</sup>

The arguments above proof an influence of Empedocles' proem on Lucretius' proem especially on grounds of vocabulary. Sedley perhaps comes as near to reconstructing the proem of Empedocles from fragments as one could. However, some of his evidence is doubtful and we must certainly be aware of the fact that Sedley leans on the assumption that many fragments should be placed near or in the proem of specifically Empedocles' *On Nature* (and not *Purifications*). However, at the moment, there is no general consensus about the locations of Empedocles' fragments in his works.<sup>38</sup>

### An homage and literary model or a tool?

Other evidence to establish a literary connection between Empedocles and Lucretius is found in the use of repetition and similes. As argued convincingly by Gale, Empedocles "already adapted the Homeric simile and the formulaic style of archaic epic as vehicles for philosophical argument." She also mentions that Empedocles explicitly explains the use of repetition in this way in fragment 25: "it is good to say what is necessary even twice."<sup>39</sup> Perhaps Lucretius applies a similar use of repetition in the proem of book 2, when he opens by repeating the word *suave* next to the already

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<sup>33</sup> Sedley 1998, 1-10, 21-22.

<sup>34</sup> See Sedley 1998, 24 ff. who also mentions that similar words are used with the invocation of Calliope in *DRN* 6.94 (*Calliope, requies hominum divomque voluptas*), which, along with the lines around it, are often considered Empedoclean. cf. Gale 1994(a), 208-223.

<sup>35</sup> cf. Empedocles fr. 20.6-7, 21.11-12, 40, 60-61, 76.1-2.

<sup>36</sup> For a discussion about to which work of Empedocles we can ascribe this fragment, see Sedley 1998, 30 fn. 107. cf. Furley 1970.

<sup>37</sup> Clay 1983, 83-95. cf. Sedley 1998, 25-26.

<sup>38</sup> Gale 1994(a), 59-60, fn. 221.

<sup>39</sup> Gale 2007, 61-62. See also Ingalls 1971.

discussed word *voluptas* and forms of *magnus*. The message of the entire proem seems to be a core part of Epicurean thought and its approach to life:

**Suave**, mari **magno** turbantibus aequora ventis,  
e terra **magnum** alterius spectare laborem;  
non quia vexari quemquast iucunda **voluptas**,  
sed quibus ipse malis careas quia cernere **suave** est  
**suave** etiam belli certamini **magna** tueri       5[6]  
per campos instructa tua sine parte pericli.       [5]  
sed nihil **dulcius** est, bene quam munita tenere  
edita doctrina sapientum templa serena,  
despicere unde queas alios passimque videre  
errare atque viam palantis quaerere vitae, [...]

*Sweet, when winds roar up the ocean depths in the great sea, to look from earth upon the great toil of another person; not because there is joyous pleasure that someone is tossed around, but because it is sweet to see those evils of which you self are free. Sweet it is again to look upon the mighty disputes of war having been drawn up over the fields without your own share of the danger. But nothing is sweeter than to hold the bright open heights well-fortified by the teaching of the wise, from whence you can look down upon others and see that they wander around scattered and, roaming, search the path of life [...]*<sup>40</sup>

Lucretius formulates an image or rather a contrast of a person that is free from care and trouble and holds the metaphorical temples of wisdom, while on the other hand there are toiling persons, who are wandering and look for a good life. It is almost as if the repetition of *suave* forms a contrast with the toils amplified by the forms of *magnus* and it is tempting to read the comparative *dulcius* as climactic and more-to-the-point than *suave* in respect to the essential point Lucretius makes in *DRN* 2.7-10.<sup>41</sup> These lines and the rest of the proem of book 2 plausibly remind the reader of the needed satisfied or tranquil approach to life and the following state of the soul that might be the most important conviction and reward of the Epicurean doctrine, Epicurean ἀταραξία.<sup>42</sup> It is possible that Lucretius uses repetition here to back up this essential part of Epicureanism. Moreover, as it is argued that “the extended simile is transformed by Empedocles into an argumentative and heuristic tool”, Lucretius seems to apply this in some passages of the *DRN*.<sup>43</sup> Taking all the above into account, it appears that Lucretius has a debt to Empedocles in terms of stylistics in didactic poetry.<sup>44</sup> However,

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<sup>40</sup> Lucr. *DRN* 2.1-10.

<sup>41</sup> Clay 1983, 65.

<sup>42</sup> Clay 1983, 65, 185. Similar images about rich, ambitious persons in contrast with poor, yet happy people that follow in *DRN* 2.11-39 and continue the thought of ἀταραξία. See for the presence of Epicurean morals and ethics in the proem of book 2 also Fratantuono 2015, 85-89.

<sup>43</sup> See Gale 2007, 62, who also argues with multiple passages from the *DRN* that repetition and similes “by Lucretius, as by Empedocles, serve the didactic purpose of ‘footnoting’ connections between passages on similar themes.” See, for the use of the extended simile, also fragment 23 and 84 of Empedocles. cf. Sedley 1998, 10-11: “Lucretius is thus [...] a practitioner of the ‘multi-correspondence simile’, a legacy that he was to pass on to Virgil. What I would myself add is that, although Homer and Apollonius may offer no adequate model for the technique, Empedocles does.”

<sup>44</sup> cf. Gale 1994(a), 73.

let us bear in mind as well that, while most didactic poets have a debt to Hesiod, these techniques of repetitions and similes partially originate from Homer.<sup>45</sup>

It is, therefore, too bold to state that Lucretius imitated and copied the structure of Empedocles' proem and probably better to say that Lucretius reminds the reader of an important previous author in the didactic genre. He does this not only with Empedocles in particular, but also with others poets of the dactylic hexameter.<sup>46</sup> Lucretius does not merely want to praise, which we will soon come to realize further on. The basic structure of opening with a hymn and continuing with a personal address, as mentioned before, originates from Hesiod's *Works and days*. Lucretius plausibly knew this work and we could ask ourselves if Hesiod is an influence on the proem of book 1 as Empedocles as well.<sup>47</sup> Parallels between Hesiod's *Works and days* and Lucretius' *DRN* are visible: although Hesiod first evokes the Muses, he proceeds to evoke Zeus and lists his power in a similar way as Lucretius does with Venus.<sup>48</sup> Also, in accordance to the Hesiodic tradition, Lucretius warns his addressee Memmius similarly as Hesiod warns his brother Perses.<sup>49</sup> In the most recent intertextual approach between Lucretius and Hesiod Gale also refers to the main proem of the *DRN* and argues that references to Hesiod within the *DRN* create "a kind of anti-Hesiod within Hesiodic allusion, holding up an Epicurean mirror to the Hesiodic world view."<sup>50</sup> Gale, in an earlier study, has stressed that Lucretius' rejection to Hesiod's myth of the Five Ages must be seen in quite the same way and, while setting a passage of the proem of book 2 about the fear of death next to lines 252-255 of *Work and days* about wandering spirits on earth, claims again that "Lucretius seems to be issuing a polemical challenge to Hesiod: the unseen 'spirits' which wander about the earth are really fear of death and of the gods, and the sinner's fear of punishment – fear which Hesiod's warning exacerbates."<sup>51</sup>

This idea of alluding and rejecting is appealing, since we might wonder if we must not view the Empedoclean intertexts in the *DRN* in precisely the same way. This would be a useful tool for Lucretius considering the fact that he would allude to and remind the reader of authorities in literature whose ideas and philosophy he simultaneously dismantles. The question then would remain if Lucretius only plays a game of polemic and criticism, dismissing all the poetic and philosophical movements of these previous poets, or if he intentionally alludes to great literary authorities maintaining their poetic qualities, but transcending them by his unique combination of

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<sup>45</sup> See Sedley 1998, 26-29, who himself admits that Hesiod is an important model for Empedocles and Lucretius. See also Gale 2007, 61 ff.: "Most obviously, aspects of Lucretius' language and style are modelled on those of Homeric epic, both directly and as filtered through the poetry of Empedocles and Ennius."

<sup>46</sup> Gale 2007, 64 is quite to the point: "Empedocles, then, is treated by Lucretius not just as an important philosophical predecessor (and rival) but also as a representative of the didactic tradition, and the *DRN* is very much aware of its dual heritage from the Homeric and Hesiodic traditions of hexameter poetry. Intertextual engagement on both fronts is suggested not only by direct echoes of Hesiod's didactic poem on farming, the *Works and Days*, alongside the Homeric and Ennian allusions discussed above but also – more pervasively – by patterns of imagery employed extensively throughout the poem."

<sup>47</sup> See Clay 1983, 213-314, who connects the address to Memmius to the Hesiod's address to Perses.

<sup>48</sup> Hes. *WD*. 1.1-10. See Race 1992, 32, who calls this "anaphoric listing of Zeus' power" typical for cultic hymns.

<sup>49</sup> Hes. *WD*. 1.25-29; Lucr. *DRN* 1.41-43. See Bailey 1947, 597-599, who briefly discusses possible identifications of this Memmius. Lucretius addresses Memmius the first time in *DRN* 1.25-26 and Memmius possibly is Lucretius' Maecenas.

<sup>50</sup> Clay 1983, 213-214; Gale 2013; cf. Gale 2007, 64-67.

<sup>51</sup> See Gale 1994(a), 161-174, 189-190, where she respectively discusses the myth of the Five ages and the wandering guardian spirits along with Pandora's box.

great poetry and great philosophy. Therefore, it is useful to look at the epic heroic tradition, which in antiquity was very closely linked to the didactic and Hesiodic tradition.<sup>52</sup>

### The 'great' epic authors and the proems of Lucretius

an pecudes alias divinitus insinuet se  
Ennius ut noster cecinit, qui **primus** amoeno  
detulit ex Helicone perenni fronde coronam,  
per gentis Italas hominum quae clara clueret;  
**etsi praeterea tamen** esse Acherusia templa  
Ennius aeternis exponit versibus edens,  
quo neque permaneant animae neque corpora nostra,  
sed quaedam simulacra modis pallentia miris;  
unde sibi exortam semper florentis Homeri  
commemoratur speciem lacrimas effundere salsas  
coepisse et rerum naturam expandere dictis.

*Or if something by divine influence pushes it [i.e. anima] at another time in the herds, as our Ennius sang, who first brought down the crown with everlasting leaf from pleasant Helicon, which was renowned by the Italian folks of men. Nevertheless though, Ennius, while proclaiming, puts out in his eternal verses that the vaults of Acheron exist, wherein not our bodies nor souls remain, but certain pale images in marvelous ways; And he commemorates that from there the figure of the always blossoming Homer, having appeared before him, begun to shed salt tears and to unfold the course of nature.*<sup>53</sup>

So far we have primarily discussed the connection of Lucretius with two authors in the didactic tradition. This practice follows naturally from the fact that the *DRN* is a didactic poem. However, the first and direct references to previous literature in the *DRN* are to epic heroic poets. As mentioned before, the heroic epic tradition is closely related to the didactic epic tradition and in antiquity these two genres were not always separated. Lucretius seems to be aware of the importance of his heritage to poets of epic heroic poetry when he mentions Homer and Ennius shortly after the first hundred verses of his work. This passage, which counts as part of the proem of book 1, has often been discussed in recent studies.<sup>54</sup> In the verses just preceding this passage, Lucretius proposes that religion causes crimes like the sacrifice of Iphigenia (*DRN* 1.80-101) and that Memmius, the addressee of the first proem, should not be led astray from philosophy by the terrifying words of the *vates* (soothsayers), who induce the populace with fear of death because of punishment in the afterlife. Since the people are ignorant of the nature of the *anima*, they do not know how the soul comes into being, whether it is born at birth or enters after birth (*DRN* 1.113). Moreover, they do not know if the soul dies at death or enters the lower worlds (*DRN* 1.114-115). It seems undeniable that the placement of this passage, just after the praise of Venus and appeal to

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<sup>52</sup> Gale 1994(a), 99-106.

<sup>53</sup> Lucr. *DRN* 1.116-126.

<sup>54</sup> See Kenney 1970, 373-380; Clay 1983, 99 ff.; Gale 1994 (a), 106-110; Sedley 1998, 31-32. Most studies in fact discuss Lucr. *DRN* 1.112-135.

Memmius and just before the beginning of the main topics of book 1, is prominent.<sup>55</sup> This passage draws the reader away from the un-Epicurean praise of Venus and brings the poem back to the fundamental Epicurean disapproval of *religio*. Lucretius interestingly establishes this by alluding to two literary predecessors of epic heroic poetry. He does not only acknowledge his predecessor Ennius as a pioneer (*primus*) in Latin literature, but he delivers criticism at him and implicitly at Ennius' Greek example Homer as well. The words *etsi praeterea tamen* mark the transition. Lucretius seems to tell us in this passage, which presumably refers to Ennius' dream about Homer in the proem of the *Annales*, that Ennius is precisely the one who has helped to spread these ideas, albeit it through the ghost of blossoming Homer.<sup>56</sup> Poetically Lucretius is aware of his debt to them and does not want to deny this as the first lines of this passage tell, but at the same time he also does not want the reader to forget their false ideas in terms of philosophy. The reference seems to extend to Empedocles by an etymological pun: Gale argues that "Ennius' corona-the mark of his poetic distinction- is both 'everlasting' (*perenni fronde*) and destined to bring him 'bright fame' (*quae clueret*). The two phrases taken together suggest the name of Empedocles, 'eternally renowned'."<sup>57</sup> Lucretius might suggest a tradition from Homer-Empedocles-Ennius to himself. This is significant if we consider the place of this passage just after the Empedoclean praise of Venus and the criticism just mentioned.

The general style of Lucretius, particularly his meter, alliterations and archaic language, is often seen as a reminiscence of the Ennius' poetry. Adaptations of Ennian passages, moreover, are often seen as polemical.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, as the reference to the ghost of Homer could be explained as criticism, adaptations of Homeric passages in the proems seem polemical as well. A good example is the passage about a certain space which houses the Epicurean gods in the proem of book 3. Here we notice a strong resemblance with Homer's description of the Olympus in *Od.* 6.42-45:<sup>60</sup>

ὅθι φασὶ θεῶν ἔδος ἀσφαλὲς αἰεὶ  
ἔμμεναι. οὐτ' ἀνέμοισι τινάσσεται οὔτε ποτ' ὄμβρω  
δεύεται οὔτε χιῶν ἐπιπίλναται, ἀλλὰ μάλ' αἴθρη  
πέπταται ἀνέφελος, λευκὴ δ' ἐπιδέδρομεν αἴγλη·

[...] where they say that the steadfast dwelling place of the gods exists. And it [Olympus] shakes not by winds nor once needs rain nor snow comes near, but cloudless sky flies, bright sunlight runs:<sup>61</sup>

apparet divum numen sedesque quietae  
quas neque concutiunt venti nec nubila nimbis  
aspergunt neque nix acri concreta pruina

<sup>55</sup> Most studies consider the proem of book 1 to be verse 1-145, but divide the proem in different parts. The hymn to Venus (1-45) and the appeal to Memmius (50-61) are for instance considered as separate parts. See Farrell 2007, 81. *cf.* Lienhard 1969, 350.

<sup>56</sup> Gale 1994 (a), 107-109; Sedley 1998, 31; Clay 1983, 99; Skutsch 1985, 12, 154-157. See Segal 1990, who discusses how Lucretius especially uses dream passages to convince the reader of the lies of previous poets.

<sup>57</sup> Gale 2001, 168 *ff.* Critics have also observed the word *perenni* as a pun on the name Ennius. Gale mentions other possible etymological puns on names, for example in *DRN* 1.24 where Lucretius calls for Venus as his *sociam*, which translates into the Greek as Ἐπίκουρος (Epicurus).

<sup>59</sup> West 1969, 30 *ff.*; Gale 1994 (a), 106-110; Sedley 1998, 31-32; Gale 2007, 61; Kenney 2007, 96. For Lucretius' style and meter in general see Kenney 2007, 92-110 and Bailey 1947, 51-171.

<sup>60</sup> West 1969, 31.

<sup>61</sup> Hom. *Od.* 6.42-45.

cana cadens violat semper<que> innubilis aether  
integit, et large diffuso lumine ridet.

*The power of the gods is visible and their seats of rest, which neither winds could shake nor clouds with showers can scatter nor snow with sharp frost, while falling white, could harm and cloudless sky covers up, and laughs far with diffuse light.*<sup>62</sup>

The resemblance between the home of the traditional gods in Homer and the Epicurean gods in the *DRN* is ironic: in Epicurus' doctrine, the gods are calm and in rest and *de facto* non-existent for humans, while in Homer the gods perform all kind of actions that effect human life. The line that follows this passage makes the criticism of the Homeric religious view of intermingling gods more explicit by stating that nothing affects the tranquility of these Epicurean gods.<sup>63</sup> A similar adaptation and implicit form of criticism on Homer is found in the proem of book 2 (*DRN* 2.24-26) where a banquet scene in a palace from the *Odyssey* (*Od.* 9.5-11) comes to mind. However, in the proem of Lucretius, this kind of luxury is contrasted with a sober day outside. Other allusions to Homer in the *DRN* seem to carry a similar function.<sup>64</sup>

We notice that Lucretius consciously borrows formulations and vocabulary or refers to passages of other poets. He simultaneously criticizes the poets that the reader has in mind. We could explain this by the fact that Ennius, Homer, Hesiod and plausibly Empedocles were familiar authors to the contemporary reader. People grew up while reading the dactylic hexameters of these authors and this is used as a tool by Lucretius: he presents the reader with recognizable and beautiful verses which remind the reader of their literary heroes, but at the same time tries to convince the reader that their heroes had false beliefs. The message is: our great poets of the past do not write badly, they think badly. The allusions to Ennius, Hesiod and Homer are slightly ironical and often followed by corrections of their beliefs. In a similar way the proem that reminds us of Empedocles is followed by an Epicurean correction. Although Lucretius does not explicitly tell us his strategy, his ironic remarks with epic decorations point us towards the idea that Lucretius corrects his predecessors in their own words and expressions or with adaptations of their own texts.

### Conclusion: a brief look upon Lucretius' 'second proem'

Avia Pieridum peragro loca nullius ante  
trita solo. iuvat integros accedere fontis  
atque haurire, iuvatque novos decerpere flores  
insignemque meo capiti petere inde coronam  
unde prius nulli velarint tempora musae;  
**primum** quod magnis doceo de rebus et artis  
religionum animum nodis exsolvere pergo,  
**deinde** quod obscura de re tam lucida pango  
carmina, musaeo contingens cuncta lepore.

*I wandered through the pathless places of the Pierides visited by the sole of no one before. It pleasures to come to the untouched springs and consume them, as well as it pleasures to pluck new*

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<sup>62</sup> Lucr. *DRN* 3.18-22.

<sup>63</sup> Lucr. *DRN* 3.23-24: [...] *neque ulla | res animi pacem delibat tempore in ullo.*

<sup>64</sup> See Gale 1994(a), 111-112. See also Aicher 1991, who discusses both passages and adds four other revision of Homer in the *DRN*.

*flowers and to seek thence a distinguished crown for my head, whence the Muses have engulfed the temples of no one before. First, because I teach about big things and go on to make the mind loose from the tight knots of religion, next, because I make songs so lucid about an obscure thing, while touching all with Muses charm.*<sup>65</sup>

This passage, which appears near the end of book 1 and again slightly revised as the proem of book 4, could be one of the most important passages in the *DRN* and a key passage.<sup>66</sup> Lucretius seems to tell us in this passage, which will reappear in the next chapter as we discuss Lucretius' connection to contemporary and Hellenistic poetry, that he does something new in literature which deserves praise. Lucretius gives two reasons (*primum, deinde*): he frees the reader from religious lies and at the same time produces clear, beautiful poetry on a difficult subject. Even this personal passage contains quite traditional vocabulary about the Pierian Muses that could remind the reader of Ennius and Hesiod.<sup>67</sup> Lucretius immediately makes clear why he is better or wiser than his predecessors of epic poetry: Lucretius tells the truth about religion and helps the reader to overcome the fears of religious belief with Epicurean antidote, but is enjoyable because of the poetic charm as well. Clay expresses it quite strongly: "It appears that in his representation of himself as a poet Lucretius has tacitly evoked a tradition stretching from Hesiod to Roman Ennius to make his claim that he and not Hesiod or Ennius was the first truly philosophical poet."<sup>68</sup> Although this may be somewhat extreme, the reason why Lucretius' first proem is so reminiscent of a similar philosopher poet, Empedocles, plausibly is that Lucretius is conscious of his resemblance to him and wants to be seen as his successor. We could conclude that allusions to epic heroic and epic didactic poets in Lucretius' proems are not meant to merely acknowledge their achievement, but also to distance from certain beliefs, especially those that conflict with Epicureanism as is the case with aspects of *religio*. Lucretius alludes to the authorities and heritage of his own genre like Hesiod, Homer, Ennius, but consciously moves away from them as he presents his own philosophical conviction. Imageries from Athenian tragedies plausibly have a similar function in the *DRN*.<sup>69</sup> The two reasons just mentioned seem to summarize this.

This practice seems incompatible with the idea that Lucretius strictly follows a structural and literary model of a predecessor like Sedley proposed with Empedocles. Although it is true that Lucretius rephrases and refers to lines of other authors by using similar formulaic expressions, we have noticed and will notice that passages from the proems can be discussed in relation to multiple authors and repeatedly function to deliver criticism at Lucretius' predecessors. Therefore skepticism arises about Sedley's proposed strict distinction of a poetic and philosophical debt of Lucretius to Empedocles.<sup>70</sup> As this is implausible in case of Homer, Hesiod and Ennius, we have seen that in the first proem a correction follows the allusions to Empedocles as well. Moreover, we might read a disapproval of his theory of the four elements in which Love/Aphrodite and Strife/Mars have their place as well. This seems comparable to Lucretius' intertexts with the poets just mentioned. In the

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<sup>65</sup> Lucr. *DRN* 1.926-934 = 4.1-9.

<sup>66</sup> See *fn.* 3 for a brief summary of the studies and debates around this passage. Page 17-18 also briefly discusses the repetition.

<sup>67</sup> See Clay 1983, 44-46, on the use of the Muses by Lucretius. See Lucr. *DRN* 1.116-119, where Lucretius tells how Ennius acquired a crown from mount Helicon. See Hes. *Th.* 63-100, where Hesiod describes how he gets a crown from the Muses while herding his flock near mount Helicon.

<sup>68</sup> Clay 1983, 44.

<sup>69</sup> Gale 2007, 67.

<sup>70</sup> Sedley 1998, 31-32.

passage of book 4 this practice seems explained. This proem could be considered a Hellenistic characteristic: he reflects on his own poetry in the poem itself. Such a programmatic and reflective statement on poetry could connect him to Lucretius' contemporaries, the *poetae novi* and Hellenistic poets like Callimachus. We will further look into these connections in the next chapter.

## Chapter two: An Alexandrian and contemporary obligation

### The Alexandrians and the contemporary literary climate in Rome

The publication date of the *DRN* is uncertain and the debate about this date has not reached a consensus.<sup>71</sup> However, it is fairly certain that the *DRN* was published between 55 and 45 BC. Classical sources indicate that at that time in Rome a group of poets was active, who consciously compared their poetic endeavors and literary beliefs to the Alexandrian poets, of which they seemed to have a particular interest in Callimachus. This movement, plausibly represented by Cinna, Calvus, Cato and Catullus, may or may not be seen as one separate movement, since our evidence is limited and further complicated by the different names that are used to refer to them.<sup>72</sup> This study conventionally refers to them as the *poetae novi* and treats them as a coherent group, since they seem to share a similar poetic approach. The Alexandrian poets, generally spoken, wanted to depart from obvious long mythological narrative as in Homer and consistently searched for new metrical and stylistic methods. They sometimes preferred shorter poems (*brevitas*) and longed their poetry to have finesse and to be clear (*claritas*). Some of these poets opposed to the continuing attempts of poetry to imitate or exceed Homer, which the Alexandrians deemed impossible, and looked for more originality and skill by treating obscure and unfamiliar versions of mythological subjects, experimenting and varying with meter and form or depicting myths as reference point for the expression of emotion. In order to succeed a poet strived to be *doctus* (learned, witty, skillful poet), a classification for which the *poetae novi* aimed as well and which was achieved by high fashioned stylistic methods (*doctrina*) that signified learned, clear and well-polished poetry.<sup>74</sup> Another important aspect of the poetry of this movement is that they seemed to have the conviction that poetry must be pleasing in the first place instead of educating about daily life.<sup>75</sup> Often the 'new' Alexandrian styled poetry is referred to as short (*brevitas*), clear (*claritas*), artistic and skillful (*doctus/ars*), while the traditional poetry of Homer and Archilochus is contrasted as inspired (*ingenium*), elevated and rough.<sup>76</sup>

The wish of Alexandrian poets to write 'new poetry' is often explained as the result of a shift in society. Conte summarizes that the Hellenistic age is the beginning of a new broadened political, cultural and literary era in which the audience of the poet is "ecumenical, but it is selected and

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<sup>71</sup> See Hutchinson, 2001, for a short summary of the debate. Hutchinson, however, objects to the commonly given date, based on a reference of Cicero to the *Lucreti poemata*, around 55-54 BC and proposes a date in or after 49 BC.

<sup>72</sup> We are not certain, for instance, if Cicero writes about the same group when he refers to the *neoterics*, *cantores Euphorionis* and *poetae novi*. The term *neoterics* is derived from the Greek νεώτεροι meaning 'the new ones' and comes directly from a reference in letter of Cicero, *Att.* 7.2.1. In *Tusc. disp.* 3.45, Cicero uses the words *cantores Euphorionis* (singers of Euphorion), to contrast the followers of Euphorion, an Alexandrian poet, with Ennius. *cf.* *Cic. Orat.* 161, where he speaks about the *poetae novi*, who avoid the archaistic suppression of the final *s*. See Kenney 1970, 368, who rightly mentions that our evidence on the *neoterics* or *poetae novi* as a coherent group of poets is indeed scarce and largely based on these references of Cicero. See also Crowther 1970, for a discussion on the terms *poetae novi*, *poetae docti* and *neoterics*. It seems necessary to make a distinction between a *poeta doctus* (learned and skillful poet who treats obscure subjects) and a Roman *neoteric* or *poeta novus* (poet of the 'new' style of poetry). While *poeta doctus* is a classification poets strive to, the other terms are used to refer to a literary movement, whether or not a coherent group, arising in middle of the first century BC in Rome.

<sup>74</sup> See Kenney 1970, 366-367; *cf.* Gale 2007, 70 *ff.* The term *doctrina* is often in place in the debate around the antithesis *ars* (artistry) and *ingenium* (inspiration), terms used to refer to respectively 'new' and 'old' poetry.

<sup>75</sup> Clausen 1982; Gale 1994(a), 12.

<sup>76</sup> Note that this paragraph contains a shortened and simplified version of literary history.

restricted; speaker and listener are the peaks of a mountain range which is immensely extended, but whose valleys are excluded from communication".<sup>77</sup> The influence of the Alexandrians on the *poetae novi* may be partially explained by the fact that Roman literature has been influenced by the Greeks from its root. This influence was not limited to certain genres or authors, since the Romans display general interest in almost all Greek literature. Ennius for instance, although he definitely set foot in the epic heroic tradition with his *Annales*, was certainly aware of the Alexandrian poets and seemed to have been influenced by Callimachus.<sup>78</sup> Since Ennius and other Roman and Greek authors continued to write traditional epics, the Alexandrians were not entirely successful in their attempt to turn the literary tide. However, in the last half of the second century BC the Romans imitated or (quasi)translated a considerable quantity of Alexandrian poetry into Latin meter. This might be the reason that at the time of Catullus and Lucretius Alexandrian poetry was not alien to Roman readers and that a selection of the readers, the *poetae novi*, longed for a similar approach to poetry.<sup>79</sup>

We could conclude that a part of contemporary Roman literature, represented by the *poetae novi*, was heavily influenced by the Alexandrians, especially Callimachus, and thus by the idea of departing from writing 'old' Homeric poems. The Alexandrians and the *poetae novi*, however, were interested in literary originality and they criticized contemporary poets for their lack of it. They were not compelled to dismiss the quality of Homer's poem or the truth of his beliefs. In contrast Lucretius did have Epicurean reasons to object to certain beliefs, but maintained traditional meter and vocabulary. Lucretius seems to have been influenced by the Alexandrian poetry in a different way than the *poetae novi*, for he might be less interested in a search for a new poetic forms, but does show awareness of techniques used by the Alexandrians to explain and convince. This suits Lucretius at given moments, since he tries to subtly change the content of the traditional dactylic hexameters from mythological and religious towards Epicurean. In the following, I will first show that Lucretius has intertextual relations with Alexandrian poetry by discussing the proem of book 4. Furthermore, I will argue that Lucretius displays knowledge of Alexandrian *doctrina* while also consciously applying them and to some extent could be called a *poeta doctus*. However, Lucretius is not a supporter of the Alexandrian poetic ideal nor a *poeta novus*, but refers to certain aspects of the Alexandrian literary debate while subtly also signifying his differences with the Alexandrian poets.

### Traditional Muses in an untraditional proem

**Avia Pieridum** peragro loca **nullius ante**  
**trita solo. iuvat** integros accedere fontis  
atque haurire, **iuvatque novos** decerpere flores  
insignemque meo capiti petere inde coronam  
unde **prius** nulli velarint tempora **musae**;  
primum quod magnis doceo de rebus et artis  
religionum animum nodis exsolvere pergo,  
deinde quod **obscura** de re tam **lucida** pango  
carmina, **musaeo contingens** cuncta **lepore**.

<sup>77</sup> Conte 1992, 147-149.

<sup>78</sup> Gratwick 1982, 60; Skutsch 1985, 128; Donohue 1990, 18-29.

<sup>79</sup> See the introduction of Thomson 1997, esp. 11-22, for a relatively recent and long outline, of which this paper borrows occasionally, about the background and literary connection between the *poetae novi* and the Alexandrian poets is found. See also Clausen 1982, whose chapter "the new direction in poetry" has been helpful as well.

id quoque enim non ab **nulla ratione** videtur.  
nam veluti pueris absinthia teatra medentes  
cum dare conantur, prius oras pocula circum  
**contingunt** mellis **dulci** flavoque liquore,  
ut puerorum aetas improvida ludificetur  
labrorum tenuis, interea perpotet amarum  
absinthii 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 percipis omnem  
naturam rerum ac persentis **utilitatem**.

*I wandered through the pathless places of the Pieria visited by the sole of no one before. It pleasures to come to the untouched springs and consume them, as well as it pleasures to pluck new flowers and to seek thence a distinguished crown for my head, whence the Muses have engulfed the temples of no one before. First, because I teach about big things and go on to make the mind loose from the tight knots of religion, next, because I make songs so lucid about an obscure thing, while touching all with Muses charm. This too seems not without any thought. Since as doctors, when they undertake to give the repulsive wormwood to boys, first touch the edges around the cup with the sweet and yellow liquid of the honey, so that the not anticipating age of the boys is deluded as for the cord of the lips, and meanwhile it keeps drinking the bitter fluid of the wormwood and, being deceived, is not harmed, but rather in such way, being revived, gains strength, so now I, since this doctrine often seems somewhat sorrowful to those by whom it is not used, and the public shrinks back from it in retreat, wanted to unfold for you our doctrine in sweet speaking Pierian song and to touch it as it were with the sweet honey of the muses, if perchance for you I could hold your mind with this doctrine upon our verses, while you perceive the entire nature of things and you deeply feel its benefit.<sup>80</sup>*

This proem, of which we discussed the first part, will appear useful to be read as a whole in terms of Alexandrian/Callimachean influence on the *DRN*.<sup>81</sup> A different debate revolves around the fact that this proem is almost an exact replica of a passage in book 1.<sup>82</sup> Therefore, there has been a suspicion that the proem of book 4 has been inserted by an interpolator or intermediate. We will be brief about this debate: although it might never be fully resolved, there is enough reason to assume that a repetition of such a long passage was the idea of Lucretius himself. Earlier studies that were in favor of interference by someone else have been rightly dismissed as subjective and, moreover, multiple other repetitions in the *DRN* are apparent. Both these passages specifically, while considering their places in the *DRN* and the lines they follow or precede them, also seem to fit

<sup>80</sup> See Lucr. *DRN* 4.1-25 (= *DRN*. 1.926-1.949).

<sup>81</sup> For a few examples of studies that argued for Alexandrian/Callimachean influence on this proem, see Kenney 1970, 369-370; Brown 1982, 80 ff.; Conte 1992, 158-159; Gale 2007, 69-74.

<sup>82</sup> See also *fn.* 3. The passage in book 1 is not a proem and preceded by other lines which change the context. The last line in book 4 also differs from the line in book 1.

perfectly in their place in the *DRN*.<sup>83</sup> Lastly, the content of this passage is important as it is personal and displays Lucretius as a poet. Therefore the passage is compatible with our earlier suggestion that Lucretius uses repetition, whether single words, *formulae* or longer passages, at essential sections of his poem. Thus we will consider the placement of the proem of book 4 as the intention of Lucretius and attempt to add arguments in favor of this view.

Very noticeable while reading this passage is the prominent appearance of the Muses or words that refer to the Muses. In the first five lines Lucretius boasts that he is the first poet who reaches the tracks, until this point pathless (*avia*), of the Pierian mountains, where he drains its springs and plucks the new/fresh flowers. Pieria is a region that is associated with the Muses and here the Muses reward Lucretius with a crown for his poetic achievement. Apart from *Pieridum* we count another three references to the muses in the proem (*musae, Pierio, musaeo*). In the next verses (*DRN* 4.6-17) Lucretius expresses why he is a *primus* in literature: the two reasons, already discussed, are that he teaches about great things (*magnis rebus*), by which presumably the Epicurean doctrine is meant, while dissolving the mind of religious knots and that he elucidates (*lucida*) Epicurus' heavy philosophical doctrine (*obscura re*) with his touch (*contingens*) that brings the charm of poetry (*musaeo lepore*).<sup>84</sup> Poetry and Epicurean philosophy seem to form a contrast, typically Lucretian, between dark (*obscura*) and light (*lucida*).<sup>85</sup> Lucretius probably refers to his poetic form when he states that it is not without reason (*nulla ratione*) that - as his doctrine requires reason and hard work which ends with result - his poetry merely sweetens it up. He demonstrates this by a simile about young boys who are sick and need to drink wormwood as a cure: the bitter taste of the wormwood (Epicureanism) is concealed by the sweet taste of the honey (poetry).<sup>86</sup> Although the boys, young as they are, are deceived, they are not harmed and regain their health. In the last verses of the proem (*DRN* 4.18-25) Lucretius reminds us how the people (*volgus*) shiver at the thought of Epicureanism finding it *tristis* and therefore need the poetic charm and pleasure (*suaviloquenti, dulci*) that the *DRN* contains. In the same way Lucretius wants to convince presumably Memmius (*tibi*) of the use (*utilitatem*) of Epicureanism.

The deployment of *quasi*-repetition with words associated with the Muses, in itself remarkable, is interesting, since Lucretius does not evoke the Muses in the first proem as many Classical authors have traditionally done. Moreover, Lucretius does not mention mount Helicon here, which is often dwelling place of the Muses from Hesiod onwards, but instead refers to the less common Pierian mountains. This reminds us of the Alexandrian poetry, because the derivation from the traditional Helicon in favor of the obscure Pierian Muses shares a resemblance with the learned treatment of untraditional mythological subjects of the Alexandrians and their followers (*doctus*). Mount Helicon, however, is mentioned in the passage discussed above (*DRN* 1.117-119) where Lucretius sings about Ennius who first brought the crown of leaf from mount Helicon to the Italian people, and again, possibly even more interestingly, in *DRN* 3.1037 when poets like Homer (and not

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<sup>83</sup> See Lenaghan 1967; Ingalls 1971; Gale 1994(b); Kyriakidis 2006. Especially the argument provided by Gale that the proem of book 4, just as the other proems in the *DRN*, shares logic ties with the rest of the book is convincing. Lenaghan adds that the lines seem equally in place in book 1 in a different context.

<sup>84</sup> One could see a parallel of Lucretius' elucidation and Epicurus' preference for precise and clear language with Alexandrian/Callimachean preference for clarity (*claritas*). See Call. *Ait. fr.* 1.29-30.

<sup>85</sup> For light/darkness imagery in Lucretius see Gale 1994(a), 58, 125, 144, 194, 203-204.

<sup>86</sup> Gale 1994(a), 48: "Poetry and myth are sharply demarcated from philosophy: it is the bitter wormwood, not the honey on the cup, which cures the children."

Lucretius himself) are referred to as the *comites Heliconiadum* (companions of the Muses of Helicon) in a negative sense.<sup>87</sup> Clay has proposed that Lucretius makes a distinction or even an opposition between Helicon, where the Muses of other poets are situated, and Pieria, where Lucretius' Muses are situated. It is appealing to see the parallels with our conclusions in the first chapter as Lucretius might distance himself from his literary predecessors plausibly for the reason that he is an Epicurean philosophical poet.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, such a depart from traditional poetry could be compared to the Alexandrians and the *poetae novi*, who explicitly distanced themselves from traditional poetry. The idea of mount Helicon as the place or source of inspiration where the Muses provide a laurel branch finds its origin in Hesiod's *Theogony*.<sup>89</sup> The Alexandrian poet Callimachus is thought to refer to this passage of Hesiod in the proem of his *Aitia* when he tells the reader about a dream in which he meets with the Muses at mount Helicon. Hesiod, with his shorter poems about non-heroic subjects and his personal explanation of inspiration by the Muses, suited Callimachus and his literary ideals.<sup>90</sup> Ennius, as we have seen above, writes in his proem of the *Annales* about a dream of mount Helicon where the ghost of Homer allegedly passes on his wisdom of the world to Ennius. This passage, which is transmitted fragmentarily, is often seen as an allusion to the dream of Callimachus, a passage transmitted equally fragmentarily.<sup>91</sup> Lucretius seems aware of these instances and subtly refers to them with the reference to Ennius' dream in book 1 and here, when he adds to the tradition of poetically explaining the source of inspiration, but personalizes it by referring to the Pierian Muses and not to the more frequented Muses of Helicon.

As Hesiod's personal note about the source of his inspiration, commonly the Muses, suited Callimachus' proem of the *Aitia*, the same seems true for Lucretius in the fourth proem. Ennius has added to the tradition probably by referring to Callimachus who referred to Hesiod. Lucretius reacts to the tradition and gives his own take on the matter: his poetic form is not entirely new and reminds us of multiple earlier authors, but the content is very personal and Epicurean. As Alexandrian and some contemporary Latin poetry declare a depart from traditional poetic form, Lucretius declares a depart from traditional content with Epicureanism. The two reasons for his poetic crown and the metaphor of the wormwood seem to highlight this aspect of the *DRN*, but more importantly they highlight how he does this. Although Lucretius does not do the same as the Alexandrians and there is

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<sup>87</sup> In *DRN* 3.1024-1044 Lucretius puts forth a hierarchy from poets like Homer to the philosophers Democritus and Epicurus. See also Gale 2001, 170-171.

<sup>88</sup> Clay 1983, 44-45: "In Lucretius' references to poetry there seems to be a distinction between Helicon and Pieria and possibly an opposition. [...] its explanation may lie in the fact that the association of Helicon are local and inextricably connected with the *Ascræum carmen* of Hesiod, while Pieria is associated with the more universal Olympus. Pieria is more on a level with the ἀπειρα of Epicurus' vision of the universe than the less lofty Helicon." cf. Gale 1994(a), 140, who again deems this context ironic towards Homer and Kenney 1970, 375-376, who, if I have interpreted it correctly, also sees the opposition.

<sup>89</sup> Hes. *Th.* 63-100.

<sup>90</sup> See Call. *Ait.* fr. 2. Clausen, 1982, 183: "Hesiod's poems were relatively short, as, in Callimachus' judgement, poems should be, and told no long tales of kings and heroes. The *Theogony* interested Callimachus especially. It dealt with the true causes or wherefores of things (αμοσ); it was learned, if naively so — but its very naivety would appeal to Callimachus' sophistication; above all, Hesiod's was a personal voice. Hesiod provided Callimachus with the means of describing his own source of inspiration, a matter of deep concern to a late and self-conscious poet."

<sup>91</sup> Clausen 1982, 183; Brown 1982, 80; Skutch 1985, 12, 154-157; Gale 1994(a), 107-109; Sedley 1998, 31. Note that Ennius may consciously use Callimachus' dream to indicate his depart from Callimachus' ideas on poetry (cf. Lucretius): Callimachus subtly mirrors himself to the didactic, personal voice of Hesiod, Ennius does not and follows the epic-heroic Homer.

a distinction between form and content, I believe he seems aware of their poetic differentiation and their manners to accomplish it. Lucretius, as we will see, uses this for his own Epicurean poetic program.

### Alexandrian intertexts and characteristics: *topoi* and the programmatic proem

The indirect reference to the dream of Callimachus at mount Helicon and the evocation of specifically the Pierian Muses are not the most obvious intertexts with Alexandrian poetry: In the proem of book 4 Lucretius applies *topoi* of untouched places in literature and the poet as a *primus* (the first one in literary history to do this or that) to describe his achievement (*avia, nullius ante trita solo, novos, prius*).<sup>92</sup> These *topoi* are often used in Alexandrian poetry and ultimately draw the reader towards the proem of the *Aitia* of Callimachus and plausibly other Alexandrian poets.<sup>93</sup> Moreover, we might observe a reminiscence of the work of Callimachus' friend Aratus.<sup>94</sup> In *DRN* 1.142 some have also noticed an etymological and indirect allusion to Callimachus and his praise of Aratus.<sup>95</sup> The subtleness and wittiness of these etymological plays of words, of which we have seen examples in the first chapter, could be called Alexandrian.<sup>96</sup>

We could see another Alexandrian feature in this proem of book 4 in the programmatic statements about his poem. Most Greek poems before the fourth century BC were compatible with Aristotle's definition in his *Rhetorica* that a proem is a sample of the subject which informs the reader of the subject in advance. The Alexandrian poets, however, introduced a new way of approaching the reader.<sup>100</sup> According to Conte the changes in the Hellenistic world after Alexander's conquest resulted in a literary climate "where literature is no longer something obvious: whoever practices it must say what he is doing, because everyone does it differently."<sup>101</sup> Thus there was need for the poet to say not only what he does, but also how he does it (i.e. his artistic characteristics). The result were *Programmgedichte* of which we find examples in Theocritus and Callimachus.<sup>102</sup> The structure of the proem, in essence a preluding part of a poem, was useful for this function and we often find a thematic proem interwoven with a programmatic proem in Hellenistic poetry. Lucretius' reasons for his crown and his metaphor of boys who bear the bitter healing wormwood because of

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<sup>92</sup> Note that *primus* or *primum* is also used in the proem of book 1 to refer to Ennius (*DRN* 1.117) and to Epicurus in two proems (*DRN* 1.66, 3.2).

<sup>93</sup> Kenney 1970, 369-371; Brown 1982, 80-81; Conte 1992, 158-159; Donohue 1990. The *topos* of the untouched springs and poetic newness probably are a reminiscence of Call. *Ait.* fr. 1.25-28 and Call. *hym.* 2.111-112. Brown mentions that the *topos* of the 'unworn path' appears in "an epigram of Antipater [...] which Lucretius is likely to have known on the basis of other parallels." cf. Donohue 1990, 1-57, on Antipater as a link between Lucretius and Callimachus. The *topos* of untrodden paths is, however, not completely uncommon in earlier Classical literature: Kenney 1970, 370, fn. 5.

<sup>94</sup> Brown 1982, 82; Donohue 1990, 87; Wang 2002, 25; Kyriakidis 2006, 608-609. Significant might be the notion of Kyriakidis that the word *utilitatem* in *DRN* 4.25, interestingly the verse that differs in book 4 from the passage in book 1, underlines the didactic nature of the *DRN*, since it may correspond with the Greek ὀφελία used Hesiod's *Works and Days* and found in Aratus' *Phaenomena*, and the advantage of (Epicurean) philosophy over poetry.

<sup>95</sup> Gale 1994(a), 107, fn. 41. See Call. *Epigr.* 27.3-4.

<sup>96</sup> Gale 2001, 171-172.

<sup>100</sup> Aristot. *Rh.* 3.1415, a12f.

<sup>101</sup> Conte 1992, 149.

<sup>102</sup> Conte mentions Theocritus' *Thalysia*, Herodas' *Mimiamb* 8, Callimachus' *Epigram* 28 and his prologue of the *Aitia*.

the honey on the cup comply with the definition of a programmatic proem.<sup>103</sup> In fact, the proem of book 4 does not seem to be thematic at all. Consequently, one might wonder why Lucretius uses his fourth proem and not the first proem for such a programmatic statement. The answer to this question might be given by the study of Conte, since his thesis is that some Roman authors have inserted these programmatic proems in Alexandrian fashion not at the beginning of their poem, but somewhere in the middle, which seems to be a Roman invention. Conte gives compelling arguments by pointing to Virgil's poems and cautiously identifies Ennius' *Annales* as the original source.<sup>104</sup> The fourth proem would be the middle proem, since the *DRN* consists of six books. Thus, the programmatic proem of book 4 is reminding of Alexandrian poetry and Lucretius' fourth proem has intertexts with Alexandrian poets.<sup>105</sup>

The middle proem is structural and on this topic we must also discuss the suggestions of Farrell that the much debated structure of the *DRN* may have been modeled on Callimachus via Ennius.<sup>106</sup> The *DRN* can be divided in different ways and these divisions could be used to look at different aspects of the poem.<sup>107</sup> One of these division is to cut the poem in thirds by counting every two subsequent books as a third of the whole, which Sedley determines as Atom (book 1-2), Man (book 3-4) and World (book 5-6) and Farrell respectively as Atoms and Void, Psychology and Natural History. Farrell has tried to proof a structural tradition from Ennius' *Annales* and Callimachus' *Hymns* via the *DRN* to Ovid's *Fasti*.<sup>108</sup> Callimachus made a single book with six hymns and Farrell, by leaning on studies of Pfeiffer and Hopkinson, suggest a possibility that Lucretius was partly inspired by Callimachus in writing six books.<sup>109</sup> He also suggests that Lucretius was influenced by Ennius in starting each book with a proem and constructing thematic divisions that consists of multiple separate books.<sup>110</sup> The structure of the *DRN*, however, seems very reliant on the Epicurean content and similarities with Ennius and Callimachus are largely restricted to numbers. If we would accept

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<sup>103</sup> Conte 1992, 159.

<sup>104</sup> Conte 1992, 150-156. The problem with the *Annales* is, again, its fragmentary state.

<sup>105</sup> There might thus be a tradition Ennius-Lucretius-Virgil, which connects these authors with the Alexandrians.

<sup>106</sup> Sedley 1998, 144-145; Gale 2000, 19-23; Farrell 2007, 76-91; Farrell 2008. The structure of the *DRN* is clearly visible in the beginnings and endings of the six books, which are interwoven with the themes of the individual books. Gale also draws many interesting parallels with the *Georgics* of Virgil and mentions that Lucretius' careful structure, which includes the beginning of each book with a proem, could be one of the influences of Lucretius on later Augustan poets. cf. Farrell 2007, 79-85, who also argues in favor of a clear connection between the proems and the content the book that follows.

<sup>107</sup> Farrell 2007, 78-81; Farrell 2008, 1-3; cf. Sedley 1998, 145.

<sup>108</sup> Farrell 2008, 1-9. Ovid's *Fasti* also contains six books.

<sup>109</sup> Farrell 2008, 2-3; cf. Pfeiffer 1953, liii; Hopkinson 1984, 13-17; Farrell 2007, 82-82. Other arguments, apart from the number six, are that the six hymns could also be divided in three pairs of two and that the middle two hymns are emphasized by length and their narrative character as opposed to mimetic while the proems of book 3 and 4 of the *DRN* are part of the crucial books that treat the essential part of Epicurus' belief, namely the soul. The hymnic beginnings of the *DRN* as opposed to Lucretius' disapproval of traditional beliefs are often debated along with the alleged condemnation of poetry of Epicurus. This debate will be treated in the third chapter.

<sup>110</sup> See Farrell 2008, 3 ff. and fn. 11-12; cf. Skutsch 1985, 5; Gratwick 1982, 60. See also Bailey 1947, 615-622; Skutsch 1985, 147-159. The resemblances could be that the openings of book 1 and 7 of the *Annales* had similar long proems and that Ennius was possibly the first Roman author to incorporate sequencing books as unit the whole poem seeing that a division of the *Annales* in groups of three books is almost certain. Problems like the later addition of books (originally 15 and later 18), whether Ennius' intention or interpolator's, and the fragmentary state of the *Annales* have to be taken into consideration. Farrell has even raised the possibility of a ternary structure of six books, if a similar long proem existed in book 13. The beginning of book 13 is, however, lost. See Farrell 2007, 79-81.

that Lucretius' idea of hymnic openings and his structure remind us of Ennius and Callimachus, I believe this would only function again to subtly allude to them as Lucretius' content is drastically different. As with his main proem it seems implausible that Lucretius' structure is based upon a model of another author, but the carefully planned idea reminds us of the Alexandrian attention for form, clarity and preciseness (*claritas/doctus*). The *DRN*, like the poems of the *poetae novi*, may have been an important bridge between the Alexandrian preference for well-polished, learned poetry and the equally skilful Augustans poets, who seemed obsessive with structure.<sup>111</sup>

### *Doctus* Lucretius: Alexandrian *doctrina* and adding to Alexandrian debate

We must also consider the perhaps most convincing point of Alexandrian influence and return to the earlier discussed passage in book 1 (*DRN* 1.116-126), which, in terms of the Muses, could be connected to the fourth proem. Kenney, in his influential study on Hellenistic influence on the *DRN*, states that "fundamentally [...] Ferrero is right, in suggesting that Lucretius here engages in a style of polemic that is characteristic of Alexandrian poetry he has hit the nail on the head" and that "in his preference for the oblique and ironical allusion Lucretius may perhaps be seen a more Alexandrian than Catullus or, in the next generation, Horace". Lucretius thus finds an important precedent of his polemical rejection in Hellenistic poetry. We could see Lucretius' allusions and rejections of Homer, Ennius and perhaps Empedocles as an Alexandrian *doctrina*.<sup>112</sup> Along with Lucretius' impressive and thorough structure the references to poetic themes and other poets with the skill and literary knowledge that they display are learned and witty and reminding of the learned, polished poetry of the Alexandrians (*doctus*). The manner in which Lucretius convinces his reader of Epicurean philosophy is also significant: it is plausible that the traditional dactylic hexameters of didactic poetry in combination with the Epicurean doctrine were considered odd by the Roman readers, especially as Epicureanism presumably was not the philosophy of the majority in Rome and Lucretius did not invent a new philosophy as Empedocles, but copied an existing one. The last verses of the fourth proem seem to be a clear signal (*volgus abhorret*). The programmatic proem provided Lucretius with a good and, at the time of the *poetae novi*, recognizable way to explain his poetic program and also seems to proof Lucretius' literary knowledge. This poetic program is probably best explained in the proem of book 4 as Lucretius here seems to subtly acknowledge the strangeness of his decision to write philosophical poetry. However, he defends his choice by pointing towards the pleasing (*iuvat, suaviloquenti, lepore, dulci*) and consequently persuasive qualities of poetry. This seems to allude to the Alexandrian preference for pleasuring poetry, but Lucretius is also very clear about the fact that it is the Epicurean philosophy that does the healing.

Lucretius reminds us of the texts and traditions of widely read and believed poets while using the Alexandrian polemic of allusion and rejection. He ironically seems to add to the Alexandrian literary debate in a similar manner as the pleasure and sweetness of poetry (honey) is contrasted with the ultimately healing and satisfying bitterness of philosophy (wormwood). He uses this strategy on a small scale with verses or passages, but may also do this on a larger scale by writing poetry at all: he writes recognizable traditional poetry, but his content is new (*novos, primus*) and subtly polemical (*loca nullius ante trita solo, artis religionum animum nodis exsolvere*). In the way that Lucretius identifies the readers and persuades them and the manner in which Lucretius refers to all

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<sup>111</sup> Gale 2000, 19.

<sup>112</sup> Kenney 1970, 374-375, 390. cf. Ferrero 1949.

kind of poets and their traditions while simultaneously parting we see influence of the Alexandrian self-conscious and learned poet, but, however, we should not exaggerate and see Lucretius as a devoted Alexandrian or a companion of the *poetae novi*. Evidence of Alexandrian influence and intertexts in the fourth proem and other passages of the *DRN* is provided, but often functions primarily to oppose to the earlier assumed literary isolation of Lucretius' poem.<sup>113</sup> Lucretius writes a long poem in the traditional dactylic hexameters with Homeric/Ennian vocabulary and an archaizing Ennian style. Moreover, as we have shown, Lucretius departs from the poetic program of the Alexandrians and the *poetae novi* with his Epicurean program, which has little to do with Alexandrian ideals: the emphasis on words like *iuvat* and, as *suave* in the proem of book 2, may also underline the Epicurean ἀταραξία, which, just like the repeated use of words referring to rational (philosophical) thinking (*ratione, ratio, rationem*), delivers nuance and different context for our Epicurean poet.

The distinction between form and content is relevant on this point: the Alexandrian approach to poetry which is interwoven with the poetic attempts of the *poetae novi* does not depart from the religious beliefs of earlier traditional poetry in terms of their use of myth and religion. However, the Alexandrians and the *poetae novi* seem to have the opinion that poetry primarily functions to be pleasing in contrast to educating.<sup>114</sup> They seem to use imagery of *religio* like the smiting Dionysiac thyrsus of inspiration as a literary convention and not as a serious conviction.<sup>115</sup> Lucretius does the same in the proem of book 4 as he refers to several traditional poetic *topoi*, but explains and clarifies with the simile of the sweet honey (poetry/form) that conceals the bitter, but healing wormwood (Epicurean philosophy/content). Lucretius' wish to unfold his doctrine in a sweet-spoken (*suaviloquenti*) way simultaneously reminds of and departs from the Alexandrians, since for Lucretius the pleasing qualities of poetry are not the primary goal, but almost a convenience to deliver the true goal, which is to teach the reader about Epicureanism. Thus Lucretius' poetic form aims to please, his content to teach. His use of Alexandrian *doctrina* and *topoi* are a literary convention and not a conviction.

### Conclusion: Poetry and philosophy

Our conclusion is that, although the polemical style and deployment of *topoi* are examples of Lucretius' *doctrina* and *ars* and remind us of the Alexandrian poets, Lucretius does not conform himself to the aims of the Alexandrian poets and the *novi poetae* (*brevitas* and experimental meter). Instead he employs their artistry, which was useful to refer to and reject poets like Homer and Ennius.<sup>128</sup> He, like some of his contemporaries, is a *poeta doctus* in criticizing other poets with skill and subtleness and referring to themes and traditions in poetry as a learned poet. Consequently, we must conclude that Lucretius did not write in a literary vacuum and his work cannot be seen as an isolated piece of literature. The Alexandrians and Lucretius' contemporaries left their mark and Lucretius' apology in the proem of book 4 invites us to consider a broad spectrum of authors. The

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<sup>113</sup> Kenney 1970; Wang 2002. Brown 1982, 91 sums it up nicely: "Lucretius was not Callimachean in a sense of being an aggressive modernistic poet, but he was sensitive to invigorating winds of change which were affecting a transformation of the contemporary literary climate." See Donohue 1990, who is more positive towards a direct Callimachean inheritance of Lucretius, albeit on the ground that Callimachus took away the meaning of myth so that Lucretius could construct verses on Epicurean philosophy.

<sup>114</sup> Clausen 1982; Gale 1994(a), 12.

<sup>115</sup> Kenney 1970, 378.

<sup>128</sup> Kenney 1970, 369-371, 390-391. Note that later Roman authors like Statius and Ovid also seem to praise Lucretius' *ars* and thus seem to have counted Lucretius as a *poeta doctus*.

connections between Hesiod, Callimachus and Ennius appear to be part of a vast web in which other authors like Aratus and Antipater have their place as well. It is difficult to deny that the proem of book 4 complies with Gale's statement that "The range of literary genres evoked at different points in the *DRN* is striking and invites us to view the poem as a kind of compendium of earlier literature."<sup>129</sup> All this literary consciousness rightly earns Lucretius the title *doctus*.

The intertexts with Alexandrian/Callimachean *topoi*, the programmatic statements in Lucretius' fourth proem and the appearance of Alexandrian *doctrina* are examples of Alexandrian influence. From an Epicurean perspective, Lucretius may have been somewhat compelled to the Alexandrian ideal of learned, clear and skillful poetry (*ars/doctus/claritas*), which seems less dependable on a divine source than the rough, god-inspired poetry of Homer. Philosophically spoken, the poetic ideals of the Alexandrians are sometimes beneficial to Lucretius, since the Alexandrians were less inclined to claim that they provided wisdom or knowledge *qua* poetry. The Alexandrian polemic style is used by Lucretius to counter religious poetic claims of knowledge and the proem of book 4 shows us how Lucretius tried to convince his reader of his philosophy, namely with the pleasing qualities that a poetic form could provide. However, Lucretius uses these characteristics merely to defend his own poetic Epicurean content, and not the Alexandrian literary ideal. In the context of a poetic form around Epicurean content we might reach another issue, since some have suggested that the hunger to poetic fame that Lucretius expresses in the proem of book 4 and the dependence on pleasing poetry conflict with the Epicurean thought and the idea of ἀταραξία which seem to require a certain sobriety.<sup>137</sup> As we have already seen, there might be a similar tension between poetics and Epicurean philosophy in the problematic evocation of Venus in the first proem.<sup>138</sup> Our last chapter treats the presence of Lucretius' teacher Epicurus in the proems and looks into the possible problems that derive from treating the Epicurean philosophy in a poetic form, but also looks at possible appearances of intertexts with other philosophical schools.

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<sup>129</sup> Gale 2007, 70.

<sup>137</sup> See, for instance, Gale 2007, 70-71.

<sup>138</sup> This tension seems to be the main debate in Dalzell 1982.

## Chapter three: Lucretius' god and philosophical intertexts

### Epicurus about poetry: pleasurable knowledge or malicious lie?

In Classical philosophy we notice a debate about the educational use of poetry and the effect of its mythological character.<sup>139</sup> Plato made the famous remark in his *Republic* that “there is an old quarrel between philosophy and poetry”.<sup>140</sup> In the same work he criticizes those people who follow everything that Homer says and fill their lives with it.<sup>141</sup> Many philosophers have been suspicious about poetry and so we should take a look at Epicurus' thought on the matter. A problem arises, as many have pointed out, because there is reason to assume that Epicurus had objections to the language and content of poetry.<sup>142</sup> Poetry with its mythological subjects, unclear formulations and divine accolades may have been problematic in relation to Epicurus' opinion of *religio*. However, there is also reason to assume that Epicurus did not wholly object to poetry and could consider it enjoying.<sup>143</sup> It is relevant that Lucretius' contemporary Epicurean Philodemus, who had a school near Rome at modern Naples which may have been known to Lucretius, wrote poetry. However, Philodemus does not accept the authority of the poet in an educational or teachings sense or as a source of wisdom: his poetry mainly concerns unserious and non-philosophical matters and he repeatedly denies that poetry is useful in his *De Poematis*.<sup>144</sup>

It is unlikely that Lucretius was not aware of Plato's “quarrel between philosophy and poetry”, since Plato certainly was famous in antiquity, and, moreover, Epicurus himself debated with Plato in polemical terms.<sup>145</sup> The metaphor of poetry as sweet honey that is used in the proem of book 4 could be linked to a passage in Plato's *Ion*, where the frantic lyric poets draw sweet honey from certain glades of the Muses.<sup>146</sup> The content of the *Ion* plausibly indicates Lucretius' knowledge of Plato when we consider that Socrates questions Ion, a famous reciter of Homer, about his inspiration, which is suggested by Socrates to derive from divinities. These divinities accomplish that poets are out of their minds and thus should be compared to the Bacchic worshippers.<sup>147</sup> In Lucretius' poem we notice some peculiar contradictions that remind us of these passages in Plato's *Ion*: a striking passage is *DRN* 1.921-925 which is often included in the ‘second’ proem of book 1.<sup>148</sup> Lucretius here refers to the traditional Dionysiac thyrsus which smites (*incussit*) poetic inspiration in him while not much later he explains his achievements in a more rational way as established from

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<sup>139</sup> See Gale 1994(a), 7-18, for a more extensive treatment of these debates.

<sup>140</sup> Plat. *Rep.* 10.607b, 5–6.

<sup>141</sup> Plat. *Rep.* 10.606e, 1-5.

<sup>142</sup> This thought is to some extent based on his dismissive attitude towards myth. See Gale 1994(a), 14-18, 138: “[...] Epicurus seems to have objected to poetry for two reasons: its mythological character, and its exploitation of the ambiguities of language, which should rather be used with the maximum possible simplicity and clarity.” See Ep. *Ep. ad Pyth.* 87; cf. D.L. 10.26, 10.137, whose book about Epicurus contains citations that are often used as evidence.

<sup>143</sup> See D.L. 10.120, where it is suggested that a wise Epicurean could actually enjoy poetic events as drama more than an average person. See also Clay 1983, 78, who argues contra D.L. 10.26 that Epicurus did turn to the poetry of Solon by pointing to Ep. *Ep. ad Men.* 126 and Ep. *DK* 17.

<sup>144</sup> Gale 1994(a), 16-18; Sedley 1998, 65-68.

<sup>145</sup> Sedley 1976.

<sup>146</sup> Plat. *Ion*, 534a-b. cf. Lucr. *DRN* 4. 12-13 and Bailey 1947, *ad loc.* who besides Plato also mentions other literary connections.

<sup>147</sup> Plat. *Ion*, 534a-e.

<sup>148</sup> *DRN* 1.926-949 = *DRN* 4.1-24.

out himself (*contingere*) and by his own skill and clarity.<sup>149</sup> The Dionysiac source of inspiration is not compatible with Epicurean philosophy, since it is associated, as in Plato, with a divine presence. Moreover, the wild rough and almost maniacal poet is far from the Epicurean ideal of ἀταραξία, which is better described as a calm, tranquil and relaxed state of the soul. These kind of paradoxical notions within the *DRN* were at one point seen as evidence that Lucretius had internal conflicts, known as the “*Antilucrèce chez Lucrèce*”, with regard to Epicureanism.<sup>150</sup> *DRN* 1.921-925 is often inserted in this debate. It is understandable why the idea of alleged internal conflicts was influential, because the paradox gets close to Epicurus’ problematic stance towards poetry. The tension between Epicurus and Lucretius in the light of poetry versus philosophy seems urgent, since Lucretius is a poet and does refer to mythological themes in his poem.

A large part of this alleged paradox is explained by Lucretius’ use of the Alexandrian poets, who gave Lucretius ample techniques to oppose poets who would not agree with the philosophical content of the *DRN*. In line with our conclusions in the previous chapter, I agree with Gale’s argument that Lucretius finds the themes of his predecessors trivial compared to the real truth of the Epicurean doctrine and thereby deconstructs the traditional hierarchy between the short, clear, artistic, *doctus* and skillful poetry of the *poetae novi* and the Alexandrians and the inspired, elevated and rough poetry of the epics of Ennius and Homer and the iambics of Archilochus, a division which was an important literary debate for the Alexandrians and the *poetae novi* and continued to be after Lucretius.<sup>151</sup> It is rightly mentioned that Lucretius is not as explicit as we might wish and this feels unsatisfying. As Clausen says that the Alexandrian poets wanted to shine for a select crowd and not to persuade, we have concluded that Lucretius with his Epicurean poem wanted both to shine and to persuade a large crowd, since the “doctrine often seems somewhat sorrowful to those by whom it is not used, and the public shrinks back from it in retreat.”<sup>152</sup> He does this despite the possible un-Epicurean touch to it, which, unfortunately, Lucretius does not explicitly seem to acknowledge or clarify.<sup>153</sup> Lucretius probably has the opinion that the pleasures of poetry which we all seek, will lead

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<sup>149</sup> Segal 1989, 194: “A related problem arises from the intensity drawn to another traditional poetic violence of the “sharp thyrsus” that smites love of the Muses into (his) breast” thyrsus alludes to the violence of poetic familiar from Democritus and Plato. Yet less than ten lines later Lucretius reiterates what he considers his main virtue and the principal reason why the Muses will wreath his head with the crown of victory. He wins his prize, as he sees the situation, not because of mysterious, irrational bursts of quasi-divine energy, but because of his clarity of expression.” See also Gale 2007, 70 ff.

<sup>150</sup> Dalzell 1982, 214-215; Clay 1983, 234-239; O’Hara 2007, 55-76.

<sup>151</sup> Gale 2007, 70-74. As Gale rightly argues, Lucretius abolishes these contrasts, since he seems to indicate in book 1 (*DRN* 1.921-927) that “one actually leads to the other: the poet’s wanderings in the ‘trackless places of the Muses’ are the result of his inspiration by the thyrsus wielded by ‘the hope of praise’.” Moreover, the literary contrast between pleasure and benefit/usefulness are thought to have been demolished and almost formed to equation by Lucretius as well: “Poetry is pleasurable (for the poet) because it is beneficial (to the reader), and beneficial to the reader because the pleasure he or she experiences in the process of reading enables the salubrious philosophical content to take its effect.” Gale also mentions the symbolic imagery of water-drinking and wine drinking for the division between respectively the learned Alexandrians and their artistic *doctrina* and the inspired rough epic authors and iambics of Archilochus. This imagery, which also has a connection with the *ars/ingenium* contrast, seems to derive from an epigram of Antipater of Thessalonica (Anth. *Pal.* 11.20) and is very apparent in the literature of Augustan Horace, who proposes an endeavour to mix the two in contrast to Lucretius, who actually destroys the opposition between them.

<sup>152</sup> See *Lucr. DRN* 1.943-945 (= *DRN* 4.18-20).

<sup>153</sup> Clausen 1982, 82: “Earlier Greek poets supposed a sizeable group of auditors; Callimachus and his like only had a few readers, learned or almost as learned as themselves. [...] They wished to shine, not to persuade.” See Donohue 1990, 95-101, where he discusses Lucretius’ stance towards in the old debate about the function of

us to ἀταραξία derived from the philosophical content of the *DRN* and I agree with Gale when she states that “the value of pleasurable form may be negated by detrimental content; and aesthetic pleasure in itself might be thought to have relatively little value in that it does not satisfy any real need in the reader, or contribute to the attainment of ἀταραξία and ἀπονία.” Consequently, we must also accept that “this is in fact the line that Lucretius’ contemporary Philodemus takes in *On Poems*: while accepting that poetry can give pleasure, he firmly denies that it can have any utility *qua* poetry.”<sup>154</sup> However, although this is not untrue, it must be seen in a broader light. By discussing the proems that contain references to Epicurus I will argue that Lucretius extends his ironical use of poetic traditional and religious vocabulary to his mentor Epicurus and that this is not a paradox, but a reassurance of his reliance and a conscious sneer about *religio* to other poets. Moreover, I will argue that our findings from the previous chapters are also applicable on intertexts with philosophers as well, although these intertexts are less common in the proems. In this light we will treat Empedocles and Cicero/Stoicism.

### Epicurus above all: father, inventor, god

E tenebris tantis tam clarum extollere lumen  
 qui **primus** potuisti inlustrans commoda vitae,  
 te sequor, **o Graiae gentis decus**, inque tuis nunc  
 ficta pedum pono pressis vestigia signis,  
 non ita certandi cupidus quam propter amorem  
 quod te **imitari** aveo; quid enim contendat **hirundo**  
**cycnis**, aut quidnam tremulis facere artubus haedi  
 consimile in cursu possint et fortis equi vis?  
 tu, **pater** es, **rerum inventor**, tu patria nobis  
 suppeditas praecepta, tuisque ex, include, chartis,  
**floriferis** ut apes in saltibus omnia libant,  
 omnia nos itidem depascimur **aurea dicta**,  
 aurea, **perpetua semper dignissima vita**.

*You who first were able to lift up from such dark places then a clear light in such a degree, while illuminating the conveniences of life, I follow you, glory of the Greek folk, and now I place my shaped footprints in your pressed marks, it is not such as the desire of contending but rather more by reason of love that I crave to imitate you; for how could a swallow contend against swans, or what comparison could the young kinds with trembling members and the strong power of the horse make in the race? you, you are the father, the inventor of things, you provide us with fatherly directions, and from your papers, glorious one, like bees drink all in flowery forests, we feed on all your golden sayings in the same way, golden, and the always most worthy of eternal life.*<sup>155</sup>

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poetry as giving pleasure and the function of poetry as educational, which two he takes together and calls *suavis/suadere*.

<sup>154</sup> Gale 2007, 73. This statement may be compatible with the words of Epicurus in D.L. 120 (= fr. 593 US.), which state that a wise Epicurean could enjoy the dramatic spectacles (= poetry) more than the next man.

<sup>155</sup> Lucr. *DRN* 3.1-13. See Sedley 1998, 68, who rightly mentions that the phrase *depascimur aurea dicta* seems to indicate Lucretius’ reliance on a text of Epicurus as a source text. The debate around Lucretius’ source is beyond the scope of this thesis, but Sedley argues against Clay, 1983, who argues that Lucretius lacked a source text: see *fn.* 13.

The suggested paradoxes circling around the pleasing qualities of poetry and its mythological content and Epicureanism have not been an issue for Lucretius. The proem of book 3, which is a clear praise of Epicurus, is an important passage that indicates this.<sup>156</sup> The first lines take up the reoccurring theme of darkness and light, for it is the Greek Epicurus who was able to lift up a clear light (*clarum lumen*) from the darkness (*tantis tenebris*), which lights up the good things of life (*inlustrans commoda vitae*). Lucretius' confession that he merely steps on the already laid out track of his philosophical example follows this statement. This could stand in contrast with the programmatic statements of the proem of book 4 where Lucretius states that he is the *primus*, the inventor and bringer of light. The difference is, however, that here Lucretius is not talking about poetry, but about philosophy. On this point Lucretius does not want to compete at all, since he is the swallow, not the swan, the young boy in the race, not the horse.<sup>157</sup> Imagery of swans and cranes is often found in Classical literature and interestingly also in Homer and Callimachus.<sup>158</sup> Epicurus is the father (*pater*), the inventor of things (*rerum inventor*) and from his written work we must feed ourselves (*de pascimur aurea dicta*).<sup>159</sup> Lucretius seems to make a distinctive classification between his own written work and that of Epicurus, of which the latter should be regarded as gold and most worthy of eternal life (*perpetua semper dignissima vita*). While both the proem of book 3 and book 4 take up the theme of light and dark and both celebrate their subject, the proem of book 3 is about Epicurus and the proem of book 4 about Lucretius. If we take both proems together, Lucretius almost seems to say that it is Epicurus who first accomplished the philosophical work and that Lucretius now, as the first one, competes against poets by transmitting Epicureanism in poetry. The proems indicate that Lucretius' poetic priority in the end relies on the wisdom of his example as he puts Epicurus on a pedestal and reassures the reader of his dependence.<sup>160</sup>

This third proem carries allusions to other poets and is, in some aspects, religious: we already mentioned the swan imagery, but could add that the part of the proem about the Epicurean gods that we already discussed (*DRN* 3.18-22) is a reminiscence of Homer's Olympian gods. The words *pater*, *inventor* and the *patria praecepta* could easily be identified by the Roman reader as referring to Jupiter. In literary terms the words may also remind the reader of Homer, especially after the vocative *Graiae gentis decus. Floriferis* may be compared to *florentis* Homer in *DRN* 1.124. *DRN* 3.11 contains imagery of bees as well. These poetic references, however, are all pointed towards Epicurus and the content of the proem is a confirmation of Lucretius' loyalty to Epicurus.<sup>161</sup> In the proem of book 1 we notice that the Empedoclean opening is followed by the famous passage of the Greek human (i.e. Epicurus) who first dared to raise his eyes towards religion.<sup>162</sup> Both these proems

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<sup>156</sup> We might state that the praise of Epicurus in this proem is logically placed, since the content of book 3 takes up the theme of fear of death, an important part of Epicurean thought.

<sup>157</sup> cf. Sedley 1998, 57-58, who sees the subtext "How can a Roman philosopher compete with a Greek philosopher?" and Fratantuono 2015, 162-163, who discusses the Greek/Roman connection as well.

<sup>158</sup> See Donohue 1990, 31-53, for a survey of swan imagery in Classical literature.

<sup>159</sup> The simile of the bees (*ut apes in saltibus omnia libant*) might again refer to Plat. *Ion*, 534a. See also Fratantuono 2015, 162, who cautiously compares this simile to the one of the honey on the rims of the cup.

<sup>160</sup> See Whitlatch 2014, who recently concluded that philosophy in the *DRN* is superior. This argument derives from hunting metaphors throughout the *DRN*.

<sup>161</sup> Sedley 1998, 68.

<sup>162</sup> Lucr. *DRN* 1.66-67: *primum Graius homo mortalibus tollere contra | est oculos ausus primusque obsistere contra;*

contain passages which explicitly underline the importance of his philosophical example. The proem of book 5, however, takes it a step further:

**Quis potis est dignum pollenti pectore carmen  
condere pro rerum maiestate hisque repertis?**

quisve valet verbis tantum qui fingere laudes  
pro meritis eius possit qui talia nobis  
pectore parta suo quaesita<sup>que</sup> praemia liquit?

**nemo**, ut opinor, erit mortali corpore cretus.

nam **si**, ut ipsa petit maiestas cognita rerum,

**dicendum est, deus ille fuit, deus**, inclute Memmi,

qui princeps vitae rationem invenit eam quae

nunc appellatur sapientia, quique per artem

fluctibus e tantis vitam tantisque tenebris

in tam tranquillo et tam clara luce locavit.

*Who could be able to build a worthy song with powerful chest for the majesty of thing and these findings? Who is in such way strong with words that he could fashion the praises in proportion to the merits of him who left us such prizes found and searched by his chest? No one, as I think, will there be born from out mortal body. For if, as the known majesty of things aims for, one must be named, he was the god, a god, glorious Memmius, he who foremost found that doctrine of life which is now called philosophy, who through skill from out such waves and such dark places placed life in so much tranquility and so much clear light.*

The praise of Epicurus here is poetically and religiously decorated and therefore may conflict with Epicurus. Especially in Lucretius' proems we find that Epicurus is adorned with all kinds of poetic ornaments. In the proem of book 5 Lucretius dares to raise the bar when he climactically gets to the point to call Epicurus a god (*deus ille, fuit, deus*).<sup>163</sup> However, in the proem of book 5 we see a clear signal of the reason why Lucretius does not recognize a paradox between his poem and Epicurean philosophy. The question Lucretius asks the reader in these first lines is: *Who would be able to fit Epicurus' philosophy in poetry?* This question bears the print of the assumed opening of Ennius' sixth book of the *Annales*, which is about the war against Pyrrhus, and thus again might be an ironical allusion, since the answer that Lucretius gives is no one (*nemo*).<sup>164</sup> *Deus* is ironic as well: although Lucretius builds up to call Epicurus a god, he assures in the proem of book 6 that Epicurus is indeed dead, although his philosophy is alive and divine.<sup>165</sup> Moreover in the proem of book 5 we could point to the perfect (perfectum) *fuit*, the conditional *si decendum est*, and the importance of Epicurus' philosophy in the last verses to state that Lucretius does not have the conviction that Epicurus is indeed a god. In this way the divine and mythological content of poetry is replaced by Epicurus' philosophy.

Both before and after the slightly un-Epicurean proem of book 4, Lucretius reminds the reader that he is not better than Epicurus and does not want to surpass Epicurus (*aemulatio*). In the proem of book 3 Lucretius even excuses himself for imitating (*imitatio*). A proem always has a poetic

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<sup>163</sup> Once again we see dark/light contrast (*tantis tenebris/clara luce*).

<sup>164</sup> Ennius, *Ann. fr.* 164 in Skutsch, 1985: *quis potis ingentis oras evolvere belli?*

<sup>165</sup> See Fratantuono 2015, 410-412. *Lucr. DRN* 6.1-7.

nature in the first place and Lucretius praises Epicurus in a poetic manner, but the proems are not merely stylistic and purely poetic displays. Lucretius also establishes Epicurus' work as the core and Lucretius' work as the coating.<sup>166</sup> That is the new thing Lucretius does and it is profitable in its own way, since the *DRN* belongs to another literary tradition and automatically contends with poets whose poetry might oppose Epicurus' philosophy. In the proems, since they are so essentially poetic, it is understandable that Lucretius alludes to other poets (and less to other philosophers) and contends with them. There, his tradition is perhaps most clearly the poetic tradition and his job is to dismiss the mistakes of poetry.

Although Epicurus is not explicitly mentioned in the proems of book 2 and 4, we have seen that these proems do celebrate the philosophy of Epicureanism. In the proems of book 1, 3, 5 and 6 Lucretius repeatedly reminds the reader of his example and lets no doubt of his dependence. These proems also contain intertexts with other authors. Once again, Lucretius does not shun from alluding to earlier poets while his content consists of reoccurring and reassuring praises of Epicurus and therefore is rejecting those same poets insofar they are not compatible with the ideas of Epicurus. Lucretius applies praise in a religious and traditional manner, while ironically putting Epicurus in this context. In this way Lucretius has found a way to add to the poetic tradition without a rejection of Epicurus. The proems praising Epicurus, moreover, sometimes seem to indicate that Lucretius estimates the philosophical content of the *DRN* over its poetic value. Although Lucretius celebrates poetry by alluding to poets, he never loses sight of his main subject. Lucretius does not find his poetry problematic towards Epicureanism since a) he reassures the reader that in terms of philosophy his poem is reliant of and secondary to Epicurus' texts and b) poetic and religious decorations are often ironic and meant to replace *religio* with Epicurus and Epicureanism. Although Lucretius did not have the possibility to ask Epicurus' opinion and the modern reader of Epicurus has only fragment to look at, the fact that Lucretius' contemporary Philodemus also wrote poetry and the citation of Epicurus in Diogenes Laërtius 10.120 might be significant.

### An ambiguity: philosophical intertexts with Empedocles

It seems that in the proems of the *DRN* intertexts with poets are more ample than with philosophers, but we cannot deny the appearance of some allusions to non-Epicurean philosophy in the *DRN*. We started this chapter with a possible allusion to Plato and the knowledge that in Plato's *Ion* one of the main themes is the alleged wisdom that Ion derives from reciting Homer. In Plato's dialogue, Ion eventually chooses for the thesis that his knowledge derives from divine inspiration in the same way as Homer was inspired by the divine. Plato and Socrates obviously oppose to the possibility that poetry brings knowledge and wisdom and dismiss the claims of poets that they do bring true knowledge and wisdom.<sup>167</sup> If it is right to state that Lucretius consciously refers to Plato's *Ion*, he probably uses this reference slightly ironical as he does with Homer and Ennius. After all, the poets in Plato's time did not have Epicurus so they were not able to give a correct representation of their inspiration and beliefs, let alone give the reader true knowledge. Lucretius, however, was able to transfer true wisdom for the first time to the people in a poetic form because of Epicurus, who first and foremost was the bringer of true knowledge and wisdom. Therefore, Lucretius might apply a similar tactic with philosophers as he does with poets. There is, however, a notable lack of references to philosophers other than Epicurus in the proems. In book 1 Empedocles, Democritus, Anaxagoras

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<sup>166</sup> cf. Lucr. *DRN* 4.11-17.

<sup>167</sup> See for instance Plat. *Ion*, 542a; Plat. *Rep.* 10.598-600.

and Heraclitus are mentioned in quite a narrow scope, but, beside these references, open debate with directly mentioned philosophers, let alone contemporary philosophers, is almost nonexistent throughout the *DRN*. We might, for instance, be surprised that Lucretius does not explicitly challenge the Platonists, the Cynics or the Stoics.<sup>168</sup> In recent studies, however, it has been noted several times that we could detect polemical intertexts with other philosophers. Although these polemics do not typically occur in the proems of the *DRN*, it might be interesting to discuss a few passages, both in the proems and elsewhere, since these philosophical polemics sometimes bear resemblance with earlier findings in this paper.

We start with the author who played a big role in the first chapter: the philosopher poet Empedocles. There, we have lightly touched the point of a possible philosophical accolade of Lucretius in his main proem. Sedley argues against the proposition of Furley that Lucretius and Empedocles share certain views like the stationary state of physical elements and view towards divine intervention in human life that it was uncommon in the Ancient world to credit philosophical forerunners. Lucretius, aware of the fact that this was also uncommon in the Epicurean doctrine, is unlikely to disregard this unwritten law. Moreover, his praise nonetheless, Lucretius does not seem eager to credit Empedocles' philosophy of the elements in *DRN* 1.734-781 or his anti-teleology in *DRN* 5. He also point towards lines *DRN* 1.44-49, which mark a transition to an "Epicurean corrective" in the lines that follow and correct the non-Epicurean power Lucretius that seems to attest to the gods.<sup>169</sup> In these lines Lucretius declares that the gods are essentially in no danger or pain and thus have no need to interfere with mortals or respond to their favors as opposed to Empedocles' Love/Aphrodite and Strife/Mars, who look like interfering divinities. Gale seems not as hostile as Sedley to Furley's idea of a philosophical debt of Lucretius to Empedocles.<sup>170</sup> She emphasizes the praise of Empedocles by Lucretius in *DRN* 1.716-733 and sees a parallel between *DRN* 1.726-730 and *DRN* 6.1-6 where Epicurus is praised in similar vocabulary. Both passages treat the two philosophers as greatest of their *patria*. In *DRN* 1.733-741, moreover, Lucretius seems to suggest that Empedocles did have some truthful thoughts. We could find other similarities in the progression of philosophical subjects in book 1 of the *DRN* and the fragments of Empedocles' *Physics*. However, a lot of evidence that Gale provides is similar, although more extensive, to Sedley's literary evidence that we have already treated in chapter one.<sup>171</sup> It seems that the issue is a matter of interpretation: does Lucretius use Empedocles' terminology and vocabulary to compliment him on his philosophical achievement, literary achievement, both or none? Where Sedley chooses the second option, Gale chooses the third.

It is difficult to produce an unmistakable textual philosophical reference to Empedocles in the *DRN*. However, there has been an interesting contribution to the debate recently. Nethercut has argued that Lucretius consciously refers to Empedocles by using the word 'roots' (*radices, stirpes*). Some passages with these words are believed "to cite an Empedocles context".<sup>172</sup> It also noted that in some of these passages imagery of the four elements is present, which further convinces us of

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<sup>168</sup> See Sedley 1998, 82-85, for a discourse on contemporary stoicism.

<sup>169</sup> Furley 1970, 55-64; Sedley 1998, 26 ff. The lines 1.44-49 reoccur in *DRN* 2.646-651 and Sedley believes they perform a similar role there.

<sup>170</sup> See Gale 1994 (a), 59 ff. and fn. 228; See also Courtney, 2001.

<sup>171</sup> Gale 1994(a), 62-74.

<sup>172</sup> Nethercut 2017, 88: "Lucretius uses the word *radices* and its congeners eleven times [...] I will argue that six of these instances cite an Empedoclean context in the *DRN* (1.733; 2.103; 5.554; 5.808; 6.141; 6.695).

Empedoclean intertexts.<sup>173</sup> In Empedocles' texts the Greek word for roots (ρίζωματα) is used to refer to his four principle elements and the analysis of Nethercut comes to an interesting conclusion, where he argues that some of Lucretius' engagements with Empedocles are meant to correct the philosophical ideas of Empedocles, but also that some intertexts seem to highlight the Empedoclean 'roots' in Epicurean philosophy.<sup>174</sup> An interesting case in terms of a correction is *DRN* 5.546-564.<sup>175</sup> This passage is part of Lucretius' attempts to prove that the earth is in the middle of the world (*mundus*). In this specific passage, Lucretius argues that the earth has been born simultaneously with the universe and not brought up as *aliena* or from *alienis auris* (*DRN* 5.546-547). According to Lucretius, the earth is a fixed part of the universe as our limbs to our body. In case of thunder the earth shakes along with everything above (i.e. the sky). Thus the earth must bound together with the *partibus aëris mundi caeloque* (5.553). Then comes verse 5.554: *nam communibus inter se radicibus haerent* (because they stick to each other with common roots).<sup>176</sup> Lucretius compares this to the way our limbs and soul are connected.<sup>177</sup> *Aër* and *terris* (*DRN* 5.562-563) are connected in Lucretius and it seems that Lucretius uses the Latin word *aër* for Epicurus' Greek κόσμος. We know from other fragments that Empedocles thought that his four elements were separated in the cosmos (fr. 38) and that four elements within mortal beings still bear individual characteristics (fr. 22.2). In Empedocles the elements or roots mix, while in Lucretius the roots, which are actually atoms, mingle and connect.<sup>178</sup> We could argue that this is similar to the way that Lucretius treats poets: alluding and rejecting. The words *stirpes* and *radices* among imagery referring to the elements of Empedocles (in this case air and earth) would remind the reader of Empedocles after which he is corrected.

The ambiguity around Empedocles, however, remains. Lucretius seems to acknowledge Empedocles' 'roots' in Epicureanism, but also sees differences. Perhaps the parallels with Lucretius' treatment of Ennius and Homer (*DRN* 1.116-126) are important. Lucretius seems less opposing to, Empedocles' treatment of *religio*, since his Love and Strife are different from Homer's or Ennius' traditional gods, but Empedocles' four elements are dismissed by Lucretius. Sedley's distinction between philosophical and poetic debts seems unsustainable. However, we had to look for passages beyond the proems to give a good example.

### Competing with Cicero and Stoicism?

**confer** enim divina aliorum antiqua reperta.  
namque Ceres fertur fruges Liberque liquoris  
vitigeni laticem mortalibus instituisse;  
cum tamen his posset **sine rebus vita manere**,  
ut fama est aliquas etiam nunc vivere gentis.  
at bene non poterat sine puro pectore vivi;  
quo magis hic merito nobis deus esse videtur,  
ex quo nunc etiam per magnas didita gentis

<sup>173</sup> See Nethercut 2017, 91-96, where the presence of Empedocles is thus convincingly argued in two passages (*DRN* 5.805-802, 6.680-702).

<sup>174</sup> Nethercut 2017, 102-103. Most intertexts with Empedocles are convincingly argued by Nethercut to be interconnected, begin both poetic and philosophical.

<sup>175</sup> Nethercut 2017, 98-100.

<sup>176</sup> This line may specifically refer to fragment 54 of Empedocles.

<sup>177</sup> It is noted that Lucretius follows Epicurus here closely.

<sup>178</sup> *cf.* page 5-6.

dulcia **permulcent animos solacia vitae.**  
**Herculis** antistare autem si facta putabis,  
**longius a vera multo ratione** ferere.

*For compare those ancient divine findings of others: For they say that Ceres planted the grain and Bacchus the fluid of the vine-born liquid for the mortals, although life still might be able to remain without these things, as the story goes that other folks even now at this moment live, but one had not been able to have lived well without an unstained chest, wherefore he with right seems more a god to us, from whom even now the sweet comforts of life, distributed over populous folks, please our minds. If, however, you will think that the deeds of Hercules excel in a similar way, you will be carried much farther from true reason.<sup>179</sup>*

We must come back to a proem, since here in the proem of book 5 we find perhaps the closest attempt to debate with contemporary philosophy, namely stoicism. In this passage, the findings of Epicurus are considered godlike if compared to the achievements of mythological and religious characters. Lucretius first forces the reader to compare (*confer*) Epicurus with the mythological divinities Ceres and Bacchus. It is noted that these lines remind us of Callimachus' hymn to Demeter, but especially Euripides' *Bacchae*.<sup>180</sup> The message clearly is that gods Ceres and Bacchus merely gave us something we could do without (*his posset sine rebus vita manere*), while Epicurus gave us something truly valuable, comforts in life that please our soul (*permulcent animos solacia vitae*). Interestingly, in the philosophical texts of Cicero we see exactly these characters as public servants in public service and it seems that Stoic complaint with Epicureanism was that it was not bothered with the common good and quite secular from it.<sup>181</sup> In the proem of book 5 Lucretius argues, while reminding the reader of these Ciceronian stoic models of public service, that Epicurus' doctrine is better to the public as it teaches comfort and rest. It is often noted that the sneer towards those who think that Hercules' deeds are equal, is actually a message towards the stoics.<sup>182</sup> Thus, they are far from true philosophy (*longius a vera multo ratione*). The lines that follow, in which the deeds of Hercules are described, seem to contain a philosophical rejection of the Stoic ethical doctrine.<sup>183</sup> Hercules' deeds are conquering monsters with weapons and violence while Epicurus defeated the fear of these monsters with words.

Recently Gee has also argued that Lucretius has intertexts with Cicero's *Aratea* in the *DRN*, which are usually polemical against the belief in myths and stoic philosophy.<sup>184</sup> It seems that we could state that Lucretius' intertext with poetry are compatible with philosophical texts, since Lucretius uses passages from Cicero and consciously alludes to certain formulaic sentences to start a polemic against his philosophical standpoint: Lucretius' treatment of the fire breathing hybrid Chimaera in *DRN* 2.705 (*flammam taetro spirantis ore*) and *DRN* 5.906 (*ore foras acrem flaret de*

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<sup>179</sup> Lucr. *DRN* 5.13-21.

<sup>180</sup> Harrison 1990, 195-196.

<sup>181</sup> Packman 1976, 207-208: "In Cicero's philosophical writings, for example, one finds as examples of public service resulting in the apotheosis of the public servant the very figures adduced by Lucretius in the proem of his fifth book: Ceres and Liber (N.D. 2.60 and 62) Liber and Hercules (*Fin.* 3.66; *Leg.* 2.19), or Hercules alone (*Fin.* 2.117; *Tusc.* 1.32; cf. *Sest.* 143)."

<sup>182</sup> See Bailey 1947, *ad loc.*

<sup>183</sup> Packman 1976, 207 ff.; cf. Harrison 1990; Gee 2015, 133-141.

<sup>184</sup> Gee 2015. Gee seems to draw similar conclusion from Lucretius' intertexts with Cicero's *Arata* as I have done in the first chapter with poetic intertexts.

*corpora flammam*) seems an allusion to Cicero's description of the blazing Dog star (Sirius), specifically *Arat.* 110 (*spirans de corpora flammam*) and *Arat.* 112 (*ab ore micans*). Gee argues convincingly that Lucretius uses this passage from Cicero to allude to the stupidity of describing a star as a hybrid creature (both dog and star) and applies this to the impossibility of a Chimaera, on which point Cicero and Lucretius are opponents as well.<sup>185</sup> The most interesting example for this study comes again from the fifth proem in *DRN* 5.32-34 where the serpent of the Hesperides seems again reminiscence of the *Aratea*. The words in *DRN* 5.33-34 (*serpens corpora arboris amplexus stirpem*) resemble *Arat.* 116 (*quorum stirpes tellus amplexa prendit*) and *Arat.* 215 (*corpora serpens*). In *Arat.* 214-218, Cicero describes the snake star Hydra. Now mythological snakes are the subject instead of fire breathing creatures.<sup>186</sup> Interestingly in comparison with our previous findings, Gee goes on to show how these allusions are part of complex intertextual web which contains Hesiod's *Theogony* and his description of dogs, snakes and Hercules, which might again proof that it is difficult to see Lucretius poetic and philosophical intertexts apart.<sup>187</sup>

### Conclusion: Epicurus and other philosophical schools

Epicurus plays a significant part in the proems of the *DRN*. His stance towards poetry is difficult to define, but Lucretius does assure the reader that he is not ambiguous towards Epicureanism. Lucretius consciously refers to other poets while praising Epicurus and in this way he tries to highlight his problems with the prominent *religio* and myth in previous poetic works. Moreover, he deals with philosophers in a similar way as with poets. He alludes in an ironic manner which reminds the reader of Lucretius' opponents while the reader is directed to the Epicurean rejections at the same time. Empedocles' role in the *DRN* remains two sided and similar to the poets in the epic tradition. In one example we have seen that it is not Empedocles' *religio*, but his elements that should be criticized, which could be compared to Lucretius' opening proem. Other examples with Cicero are more clearly polemical. However, evidence in the proems is scarce.

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<sup>185</sup> Gee 2015, 110-117. See also *Ep. Ep. ad Hdt.* 76-77, where constellations are described in a different manner as in Cicero.

<sup>186</sup> Gee 2015, 117-119.

<sup>187</sup> Gee 2015, 119 *ff.* See especially *Hes. Th.* 295-324.

## Overall conclusions

Lucretius' proems are rich in their references, allusion and criticism towards earlier authors of the dactylic hexameter. Lucretius explicitly uses vocabulary and imagery that remind us of predecessors like Homer and Ennius. Lucretius may be partially paying respect, but he often combines this with polemical statements, especially with regard to *religio*. The same kind of intertextuality could be seen in his references to Empedocles at the start of the *DRN*. A convincing argument is the way the praise of Venus is followed by an Epicurean corrective in the first proem. Although Lucretius borrows literary techniques like repetition and consciously writes verses who remind us of previous authors, he never let the reader forget his objections to them. (Positive) allusions and criticism of epic and didactic poets walk jointly together in the proems of the *DRN*.

However, poets of epic and didactic poetry are not the only authors with whom Lucretius has intertexts in his proems. The *topoi* and *doctrina* of Alexandrian poets are detectible in the Lucretius' proems. In the fourth proem there are several allusions to Alexandrian poets. The proem of book 4 is also a programmatic statement which reminds of the *Programmgedichte*. Later Roman authors have a similar heritage of the Alexandrians. Moreover, the Alexandrian polemical techniques and learned references plausibly have given Lucretius the predicate *poeta doctus* in later times. The content of the *DRN*, off course, is not Alexandrian and it must be said that nowhere in the *DRN* the true Alexandrian literary ideals are found. This stands in contrast with Lucretius' contemporaries, the *poetae novi*. Although these poets stylistically left their imprint on Lucretius, he still goes his own separate way with his epic didactic poem on Epicureanism.

That Epicurus and his thought are the only convictions that Lucretius really supports, is backed by the explicit content of the praise in the proems. Although intertexts with Epicurus are logical considering Lucretius' subject, Lucretius emphasizes his reliance on Epicurus over and over and, moreover, he does this by alluding to other poets and using religious vocabulary. Lucretius praises Epicurus in a traditional poetic and even religious manner and thereby ironically dismisses *religio*, since it is Epicurus who has objected to it. When Lucretius turns to other philosophers, he sometimes does the same as with poets: the attention of the reader is drawn towards rivaling philosophers by the use of recognizable words or formulations of them and pushed back to the Epicurean counter argument. Although these intertexts have not been fully examined in the thesis, since the proems do not seem to have ample examples, we have seen a few instances in which Lucretius is polemical with philosophical texts in a similar manner as with poetic texts. These intertexts might sometimes even be entwined.

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