

## RATIONALISM AND THE THEATRE IN LUCRETIUS\*

Lucretius' primary didactic aim in *De Rerum Natura* (*DRN*) is to teach his readers to interpret the world around them in such a way as to avoid the formation of false beliefs. The price of failure is extremely high. Someone who possesses false beliefs is liable to experience fear (of the gods, or of death, or both), and so will not be able to attain the state of tranquillity that, for Epicureans, constitutes the moral end.<sup>1</sup> Equipping readers with sufficient knowledge always to form true beliefs about the phenomena they encounter thus serves no less a purpose than the enabling of their future happiness.<sup>2</sup> This paper is concerned with how Lucretian intertextuality contributes to this primary didactic aim. For reasons to be explained below, I will focus on Lucretian engagement with the texts of Greek and Roman drama. I will show that allusions to drama in *DRN*, rather than functioning simply as 'honey on the rim of the cup',<sup>3</sup> make a direct contribution to Lucretius' ethical project, teaching readers how to respond rationally to the full variety of their cultural experience.

On several occasions in *DRN*, the theatre is identified as an important element of the prior sensory experience of the reader, who is assumed to be familiar with the visual (4.75–83, 982–3), auditory (6.109–10) and even olfactory (2.416–17) sensations experienced by theatre-goers. Theatrical masks are used as sources for Lucretian metaphor (3.58) and analogy (4.296–9), while daydreams are explained with reference to the lingering visions enjoyed by habitual spectators of public *ludi* (4.973–83).<sup>4</sup> At the same time, Lucretius regularly engages in allusion to Greek and Roman theatrical texts and traditions, either by direct verbal allusion to scenes from specific plays, or (as in the first case to be discussed below) by structural allusion, activated via programmatic theatrical terms, to typical scenes or plot-structures. It is a central tenet of this paper that the combination, in *DRN*, of (a) regular allusion to the content of dramatic texts and (b) a constructed reader who is familiar with the sensory experiences of theatre-going is not

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<sup>1</sup> For Epicurean tranquillity see Epicurus, *Pyth.* 85; *Men.* 128; Lucr. *DRN* 2.16–19; 5.10–12, 1203.

<sup>2</sup> Note that Lucretius' conception of the explanatory power of Epicurus' philosophical axioms is totalizing: they will explain everything (1.75–7, 408–9). Furthermore, the reader is expected to apply the lessons of the poem to the investigation of phenomena beyond those discussed in *DRN* (1.402–9, 1114–17; 4.572–4). Readers are thus equipped to respond rationally to any and every experience they may have.

<sup>3</sup> See 1.926–50 ~ 4.1–25.

<sup>4</sup> On the pervasive importance of theatrical imagery to Lucretian argumentation, see esp. D.A. West, *The Imagery and Poetry of Lucretius* (Edinburgh, 1969), 35–48; T.P. Wiseman, *Cinna the Poet and Other Roman Essays* (Leicester, 1974), 14–18; J. Godwin, *Lucretius* (Bristol, 2004), 91–117. For the potential relevance of that imagery to Lucretian intertextuality, see S.M. Goldberg, *Constructing Literature in the Roman Republic: Poetry and its Reception* (Cambridge, 2005), 134, with n. 56, and, more generally, id., 'Cicero and the work of tragedy', in G. Manuwald (ed.), *Identität und Alterität in der frühromischen Tragödie* (Würzburg, 2000), 49–59.

coincidental. Exposure to the content of drama is to be understood as an element of the reader's normal cultural experience. Lucretius' task here, as in the case of every other phenomenon of daily life, is to equip the reader with appropriate critical attitudes with which to interpret that experience in a manner consistent with Epicurean rationalism. The reader's Epicurean education, I will argue, thus comes to include training in a rationalist mode of literary criticism—learning to respond to dramatic texts in such a way as to avoid the formation of false and irrational beliefs.

DRN 4.1171–91: THE ERRORS OF COMEDY

At 4.1171–91 we find a satirical Epicurean take on the motif of the *exclusus amator*. While a male lover abases himself before her doors, the woman hides within, fumigating herself (1177–84).<sup>5</sup> In the lines that follow, the alleged tendency of women to hide themselves away in order to prevent their male lovers from recognizing their true natures is introduced with an explicitly theatrical metaphor:

nec Veneres nostras hoc fallit; quo magis ipsae      1185  
omnia summo opere hos uitae postsaenia celant,  
quo retinere uolunt adstrictosque esse in amore.

The term *postsaenia* at 1186 is hapax legomenon.<sup>6</sup> It has been suggested that it is a Lucretian coinage;<sup>7</sup> alternatively, it could provide evidence for a technical term from theatre architecture not attested elsewhere in Latin.<sup>8</sup> The phrase of which the term is a part (*uitae postsaenia*, 'things behind the scenes of life') is a metaphor for those areas of female life to which male lovers are not granted access. In the light of its strong theatrical connotations, however, we may also read it as a generic marker, pointing to the theatrical significance of the stock scene that has just been described.<sup>9</sup> The relevance of the Roman theatre to Lucretius' depiction of the *exclusus amator* is confirmed by a number of clear points of contact between Lucretius' scene and the *paraclausithyra* of Plautus and Terence:<sup>10</sup> the use of the verb *excludo* (1177);<sup>11</sup> the weeping lover (1177);<sup>12</sup>

<sup>5</sup> On the meaning of 1175 *et miseram taetris se suffit odoribus ipsa*, see R.D. Brown, *Lucretius on Love and Sex* (Leiden, 1987), 296–7.

<sup>6</sup> The commentators identify the term as a morphological calque on the Greek term ὑποσκήνιον, which, given that the meaning of each term is quite different (*postsaenia* = things behind the stage; ὑποσκήνιον = the area beneath the stage), appears unlikely.

<sup>7</sup> Brown (n. 5), 303.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Vitruvius 5.9.9, *post scaenam theatri*. For Lucretius' interest in the technical details of theatre architecture, see West (n. 4), 39.

<sup>9</sup> See Brown (n. 5), 135: 'The scene featuring the *exclusus amator* has the character of a small drama and appropriately contains the sole theatrical image of the diatribe (*uitae postsaenia*, 1186).'; J.C. McKeown, 'Augustan elegy and mime', *PCPhS* 25 (1979), 71–84, at 82 n. 27; Godwin (n. 4), 100. *Saepe* at 1177 may be read as an allusive reference to the fact that the *paraclausithyron* is a stock scene of the comic genre.

<sup>10</sup> On *paraclausithyra* in Roman comedy, see esp. F.O. Copley, *Exclusus Amator: A Study in Latin Love Poetry* (Monographs of the American Philological Association 17) (Oxford, 1956), 28–42. Specific parallels (listed below) between 4.1171–91 and Roman comic *paraclausithyra* are collected at Brown (n. 5), 297–303.

<sup>11</sup> Plaut. *Men.* 668–71, 698; *Truc.* 758; Ter. *An.* 386; *Ad.* 119; *Eu.* 49, 88, 98, 159, 481; Afran. 376 R<sup>3</sup>; see J. Barsby, *Terence Eunuchus* (Cambridge, 1999), 92.

<sup>12</sup> Plaut. *Curc.* 138.

the personification of the door/doorposts (1178);<sup>13</sup> the kissing of the door (1179);<sup>14</sup> the anointing of the door (1179);<sup>15</sup> the characterization of the beloved as *Venus* (1185).<sup>16</sup> The theatrical metaphor *uitae postsaenia* serves to activate the reader's recognition of these structural similarities, and in this way the reader is cast as a spectator of a comic scene, observing in Lucretius' *exclusus amator* a quasi-theatrical representation of a man in love.<sup>17</sup>

The *exclusus amator* of 4.1171–91 serves as an object lesson for the student of Epicurean rationalism. Erotic love, for Lucretius (see 4.1149–54), involves a dissonance between the lover's perceptions (which are, of course, true) and his mistaken interpretation of those perceptions—a dissonance which gives rise to false beliefs concerning the nature and attributes of the beloved. This model of the confusion resulting from erotic love is in full alignment with the Epicurean account of cognitive error,<sup>18</sup> according to which error is said to lie not in perceptions themselves but rather in the opinions that are added to them.<sup>19</sup> The error of a man in love with a woman who really is beautiful, such as the *exclusus amator* of 4.1171–91, consists in his failure to realize that she engages in the same deceptive practices as all other women (4.1171–6). If the true nature of her behind-the-scenes activity were revealed, he would at once recognize his error and depart in peace, seeing that he had attributed to her more than was warranted: *tribuisse quod illi | plus uideat quam mortali concedere par est* (4.1183–4). In Epicurean terms, he has formed beliefs concerning the nature of his beloved that were not warranted by his limited perceptual experience of her.

This account of the *exclusus amator*'s error neatly demonstrates a central principle of Epicurean rationalism: in cases where we do not have sufficient evidence to form an accurate opinion, we should not commit to a view until better-quality evidence becomes available, at which point our candidate opinions can be confirmed or denied.<sup>20</sup> This is the doctrine of τὸ προσμένον, 'the opinion awaiting confirmation'.<sup>21</sup> By depicting as an *exclusus amator* a deluded lover who has wrongly committed himself to opinions founded on incomplete evidence, Lucretius invites his readers to reconfigure, along Epicurean lines, their understanding of a stock scene of comic theatre: the suffering of the *exclusus amator* is rooted not in his being denied access to his beloved but rather in his being denied access to good evidence about her true nature—evidence on the basis of which he could have avoided forming false beliefs. As such, Lucretius at 4.1171–91 asks his readers both to recall and to reinterpret the *paraclausithyra* they

<sup>13</sup> Plaut. *Curc.* 16–18, 88–9, 145–55 with Copley (n. 10), 35–6.

<sup>14</sup> Plaut. *Curc.* 94.

<sup>15</sup> Compare Phaedromus' pouring of wine on the doors at Plaut. *Curc.* 88–9, and the response of Leana at 96–109, esp. 99: *nam omnium unguentum odor prae tuo nautea est*.

<sup>16</sup> Plaut. *Curc.* 192; fr. inc. 27.2.

<sup>17</sup> To this conception of the Lucretian reader as a disinterested spectator of the lives of others compare esp. 2.1–19, for whose relevance to Lucretian theatricality see Godwin (n. 4), 104–6, and esp. D.P. Fowler, *Lucretius on Atomic Motion* (Oxford, 2002), 37.

<sup>18</sup> See esp. Epicurus, *Hdt.* 50.

<sup>19</sup> The technical Epicurean term for the addition of opinion to perception is προσδοξάζειν, a term calqued by Lucretius earlier in Book 4 as *adopinor* (see 4.816–17, *deinde adopinamur de signis maxima paruis | ac nos in fraudem induimus frustraminis ipsi*, and compare 4.465, *propter opinatus animi quos addimus ipsi*).

<sup>20</sup> Via the test of ἐπιμαρτύρησις: see Sext. *Emp. Math.* 7.211–12; 215–16.

<sup>21</sup> Epicurus, *RS* 24; Diog. Laert. 10.34; Sext. *Emp. Math.* 7.211–12; 215–16. Examples given in the sources are: the supposition that a man seen from a distance is Plato is confirmed upon moving closer to him (Sextus); the supposition that a tower appearing round from a distance is round is rejected upon moving closer to the (actually square) tower (Diogenes).

have encountered on the Roman stage: not only is the reader's knowledge of theatrical intertexts called upon in order to help dramatize Lucretius' account of erotic love, but those intertexts are subsequently reinterpreted according to an Epicurean rationalist model of erotic suffering and error.

### THE PROBLEM OF TRAGEDY

The genre of tragedy represents a more difficult domain of cultural experience for the rationalist to negotiate. Although tragic plots are by no means limited to the world of myth, it is, none the less, the case that a large number of texts belonging to that genre include mythical stories, the contents of which are antithetical to Epicurean rationalism about how the world works. At the same time, the canonical status of many such texts means that Lucretius' readers are likely to be familiar with their content, and so must be taught to interpret them appropriately. The result is a peculiarly ambivalent allusive strategy (sometimes called 'demythologization'),<sup>22</sup> according to which Lucretius both alludes to such texts—together with the mythical stories they contain—and rejects their literal truth, either by baldly asserting a rationalized alternative or by transforming their contents into allegory.<sup>23</sup> In the rest of this paper I discuss, in turn, several tragic allusions in *DRN*, in order to make clear the variety of different responses to tragedy that were available to the Epicurean rationalist. While I will not question the central importance of demythologization to Lucretian tragic intertextuality, I will seek to demonstrate that it does not follow from the presence of irrational mythic elements in a text (or group of texts) that the same text (or group of texts) as a whole should be thought antithetical to Lucretian rationalism. As a result, any model of the relationship between Lucretian rationalism and Lucretian intertextuality must be sufficiently fine-grained as to distinguish between rational and irrational elements within a single text, or within a single genre.

In a recent paper on tragic intertextuality in *DRN*, Robert Cowan reads Lucretian allusions to tragic texts chiefly at the level of genre.<sup>24</sup> After identifying Lucretius' phrase *odere timentque* (3.73) as an 'anti-allusion' to the phrase *oderint dum metuant* from Accius' *Atreus* (*Trag.* 203–4 R<sup>3</sup> = fr. 10 Dangel), Cowan draws a conclusion about Lucretius' attitude to the relevance of that play's genre to the interpretation of 3.73: 'By asserting the "reality" of *ueneficium* in contemporary Rome, Lucretius implicitly denies that of Thyestean cannibalism and in so doing rejects the explanatory power and relevance of the tragic genre.' (116). Cowan likewise identifies Lucretius' depiction of the sacrifice of Iphianassa as an 'appropriation' not merely of a particular play, or group of plays, but of tragedy as a genre (117). While I suspect that the idea of 'anti-allusion' at 3.73 is itself problematic,<sup>25</sup> in this paper I am chiefly concerned with

<sup>22</sup> On demythologization in *DRN*, see esp. P.R. Hardie, *Virgil's Aeneid: Cosmos and Imperium* (Oxford, 1986), 177–80, 185–7; M. Gale, *Myth and Poetry in Lucretius* (Cambridge, 1994), 164–8, 172–3, 185–9.

<sup>23</sup> See E. Ackermann, *Lukrez und der Mythos* (Wiesbaden, 1979), 57–103; B.P. Wallach, *Lucretius and the Diatribe Against the Fear of Death: De Rerum Natura III.830–1094* (Leiden, 1976), 83–91.

<sup>24</sup> R. Cowan, 'Fear and loathing in Lucretius: latent tragedy and anti-allusion in *DRN* 3', in Th.D. Papanghelis, S.J. Harrison and S. Frangoulidis (edd.), *Generic Interfaces in Latin Literature: Encounters, Interactions and Transformations* (Berlin and New York, 2013), 113–33.

<sup>25</sup> Cowan's argument relies heavily on the notion that two possible interpretations of 3.73—as referring either to poisoning or to cannibalism—are 'mutually exclusive'. While this is no doubt

questioning the notion that a Lucretian rejection of a text, or of part of a text, may entail a concomitant rejection of the genre of which that text is a member. Instead, I will argue, *pace* Cowan, that tragic intertextuality in Lucretius tends to resist analysis at the level of genre. This resistance follows directly from Lucretius' primary didactic aim.

In what follows, I begin with a simple example of Lucretian demythologization of a dramatic text (Accius' *Clutemestra*), showing how the process of demythologization can emerge from the structure of Lucretius' arguments. This is a case in which the contents of a given dramatic text are straightforwardly antithetical to the rationalist stance of *DRN* and, as such, may be rejected outright. The following examples (Pacuvius' *Chryses*, Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Euripides' *Iphigenia Aulidensis*, Ennius' *Andromache*) are more complex. In these cases I discuss texts or groups of texts in which both sides of a rational/irrational dichotomy are explored. Lucretian engagement with such texts must go further than simple demythologization. As I will argue, these Lucretian allusions encourage readers to adopt a kind of selective ambivalence to the contents of tragedies—a critical attitude which involves the acceptance of those elements of tragic texts which can be aligned with Epicurean rationalism together with a rejection of any irrational elements also encountered there.

*DRN 6.387–95: ACCIUS' CLVTEMESTRA*

A straightforward example of Lucretian demythologization of a tragic text is found at 6.387–95:

quod si Iuppiter atque alii fulgentia diui	
terrifico quatiunt sonitu caelestia templa	
et iaciunt ignem quo cuiquest cumque uoluntas,	
cur quibus incautum scelus auersabile cumquest	390
non faciunt icti flammam ut fulguris halent	
pectore prefixo, documen mortalibus acre,	
et potius nulla sibi turpi conscius in re	
uoluitur in flammis innoxius inque peditur	
turbine caelesti subito correptus et igni?	395

This is the first of a series of arguments (6.379–422) against the notion that the gods control thunderbolts and use them in order to intervene punitively in mortal affairs.<sup>26</sup> The argument is *modus tollens*, with the major premiss and conclusion both implicit in the rhetorical question (this is typically Lucretian): if the gods sent thunderbolts at will, they would send them only upon the guilty; they do not send them only upon the guilty; therefore, the gods do not send thunderbolts at will. The negated lines

true in terms of denotation, it is not obviously true in terms of connotation. Even if Cowan is right that we should understand 3.73 as referring to the contemporary historical threat of poisoning, that does not render the cannibalistic feast hinted at by the Accian intertext irrelevant to the interpretation of the passage. The Accian allusion provides a neatly hyperbolic analogy for the kind of violent extremes that civil strife may reach, and so is well suited to the argumentative context. It is quite possible for a reader both to accept poisoning as the literal referent of 3.73 and to appreciate the connotative relevance of a concomitant mythical *exemplum* of a different kind of violence.

<sup>26</sup> For demythologization elsewhere in the Lucretian account of thunder and lightning, see P.H. Schrijvers, *Horror ac divina voluptas: études sur la poétique et la poésie de Lucrèce* (Amsterdam, 1970), 247; Hardie (n. 22), 185–7; Gale (n. 22), 185–7; M. Garani, *Empedocles Redivivus: Poetry and Analogy in Lucretius* (London, 2007), 125–6.

391–2 are closely imitated (minus the negation) by Virgil at *Aeneid* 1.44, whereon Servius Auctus preserves a line of Accius' *Clutemestra* (*Trag.* 34–5 R<sup>3</sup> = fr. 3 Dangel):

pectore incohatum fulmen flammam ostentabat Iouis.

The unusual anatomical specificity of *pectore* at 6.392, coupled with the close proximity of *flammas* at 391 and the mention of both Jupiter and *alii diui* at 387 (surely hinting at Athena—by far the most conspicuous example of ‘another god’ who uses Jupiter’s thunderbolt),<sup>27</sup> confirms this passage of Accius’ *Clutemestra* as a ‘latent’ tragic intertext for *DRN* 6.387–95.<sup>28</sup> The Accian line describes Athena’s punishment of Locrian Ajax for the rape of Cassandra. Unlike the Homeric tradition, where Ajax is drowned by Poseidon (*Od.* 4.499–511), Accius follows the story encountered in Athenian tragedy (*Eur. Tro.* 77–86), where Athena obtains the use of her father’s thunderbolt (cf. *Aesch. Eum.* 827–8) and uses it to destroy Ajax herself.<sup>29</sup>

The demythologization of the Accian account emerges from the structure of Lucretius’ argument: the myth of the destruction of Locrian Ajax by Athena asserts that the gods use the thunderbolt to punish the guilty (the consequent of the major premiss). By simultaneously invoking and negating the content of Accius’ text (391–2: *non faciunt ut ...*), Lucretius asserts the minor premiss (that is, the guilty are not in fact singled out) and in so doing denies the consequent of the major premiss. The (tacit) conclusion follows. So, the denial of the consequent involves the rejection of part of the mythical tradition as it is recorded in Roman tragedy. The didactic potential of an allusion to this play is clear: a lavish production of *Clutemestra* was staged for the opening of the theatre of Pompey in 55 B.C. (*Cic. Fam.* 7.1.2), making it a particularly salient cultural touchstone for both poets and readers in the mid to late fifties B.C. Given that the theatre is an important element of the constructed reader’s everyday sensory experience in *DRN*, it makes sense that Lucretius should call on familiar dramatic texts in order to reconfigure the readers’ knowledge of natural phenomena. At the same time, the reader is warned against accepting uncritically the mythical content of tragic texts. This passage, then, in implicitly rejecting the Accian account of the death of Locrian Ajax, constitutes a classic case of Lucretian demythologization.

*DRN* 1.84–100: AESCHYLUS’ *AGAMEMNON*, EURIPIDES’ *IPHIGENIA  
AULIDENSIS*, ENNIUS’ *ANDROMACHA*

While Lucretius has a clear rationalist motivation implicitly to reject as false the story of Athena’s revenge on Locrian Ajax, it would be wrong to say that he rejects the literal truth of all myths. Some mythical stories are presented in *DRN* as though they contain historical facts: the Trojan War (1.464–77; 5.326) and the Theban War (5.326) are clear

<sup>27</sup> C. Bailey, *Titi Lucreti Cari de rerum natura libri sex* (Oxford, 1947), 1613 cites Plin. *HN* 2.138, according to which ‘the Tuscan books assigned this power to the “nine gods”’; Servius Auctus on Verg. *Aen.* 1.42 (also cited by Bailey) confirms the central importance of Minerva in this context.

<sup>28</sup> On ‘latency’ in Lucretian myth, see Gale (n. 22), 156–207 (esp. 185–9 on latent myth and demythologization); Cowan (n. 24), 121–2.

<sup>29</sup> The same story would later be recounted at length by Seneca (*Agamemnon*, 528–56). Despite apparent similarities in plot, there is little positive evidence that Seneca based his own version on that of Accius; see R. Tarrant, *Seneca Agamemnon* (Cambridge, 1976), 14.

examples.<sup>30</sup> It does not follow from the supposed historicity of these myths, however, that texts featuring them are fully immune to Lucretian demythologization. This is because even those myths whose ‘basic historicity’<sup>31</sup> is never in question tend to feature a high degree of supernatural content in their canonical literary retellings. As a result, demythologization will often be required even of those texts that narrate stories that are thought basically true. A particularly complex example of such demythologization is provided by the sacrifice of Iphigenia at Aulis, cited by Lucretius (1.84–100, using the alternative name ‘Iphianassa’), as an infamous historical example (1.80–3, 101) of the evils caused by *religio*:

Aulide quo pacto Triuia uirginis aram Iphianassai turparunt sanguine foede	85
ductores Danaum delecti, prima uirorum. cui simul infula uirgineos circumdata comptus ex utraque pari malarum parte profusast, et maestum simul ante aras adstare parentem sensit et hunc propter ferrum celare ministros	90
aspectuque suo lacrimas effundere cuius, muta metu terram genibus summissa petebat. nec miserae prodesse in tali tempore quibat, quod patrio princeps donarat nomine regem; nam sublata uirum manibus tremibundaque ad aras	95
deductast, non ut sollemni more sacrorum perfecto posset claro comitari Hymenaeo, sed casta inceste nubendi tempore in ipso hostia concideret mactatu maesta parentis, exitus ut classi felix faustusque daretur.	100

The contents of the mythic story of the sacrifice of Iphigenia are highly unstable. While Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides (in *Electra*) all state that she died at Aulis, an alternative tradition—that she was rescued by Artemis at the last minute and replaced by a proxy—is attested as early as the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* (fr. 23[a] M-W) and was likely present in the *Cypria*.<sup>32</sup> A version of this tradition according to which a deer was substituted for the girl is used in Euripides’ *Iphigenia in Tauris* as an explanation of how Iphigenia escaped from Aulis (28–9; 783–6).<sup>33</sup> Within the dramatic tradition, therefore, there existed (in Epicurean terms) both rational and irrational variants of the same myth: some variants included divine intervention on the part of Artemis, which naturally could never be integrated into an Epicurean world view; some variants included no such intervention, and could easily have formed part of a rationalized Epicurean account of mythic history. Roman readers would have been aware of both traditions: the tradition that Iphigenia herself was sacrificed is well represented in both literary and visual art,<sup>34</sup> while Pacuvius’ *Chryses*—a staple of the Roman theatrical

<sup>30</sup> Ackermann (n. 23), 43–53.

<sup>31</sup> Gale (n. 22), 95.

<sup>32</sup> See M.J. Cropp, *Euripides Iphigenia in Tauris* (Warminster, 2000), 44–5 n. 48.

<sup>33</sup> For overviews of these competing traditions, see Cropp (n. 32), 43–6; M. Wright, *Euripides’ Escape-Tragedies: A Study of Helen, Andromeda, and Iphigenia among the Taurians* (Oxford, 2005), 113–20. The comment of S. Reinach on the *Iphigenia in Tauris* (‘Homère et Sophocle’, *CRAI* 15 [1915], 6–18, at 6, quoted by Wright [this note], 71) is apt: ‘il faudrait dire les légendes, et non la légende’.

<sup>34</sup> See J.-M. Croisille, ‘Le sacrifice d’Iphigénie dans l’art romain et la littérature latine’, *Latomus* 22 (1963), 209–20.

repertoire in the mid first century B.C.,<sup>35</sup> with which Lucretius directly engages in Book 5 (see below)—relied for its plot on the idea that Iphigenia did not die at Aulis, and seems even to have included a recognition scene between Iphigenia and Orestes.<sup>36</sup> The Lucretian account at 1.84–100, which foregrounds the death of Iphigenia/Iphianassa as a historical fact at 84–5, asserts the truth of the rational variant and so implicitly rejects the truth of the ‘irrational’ rescue-story.<sup>37</sup> That readers of *DRN* should be in no doubt that Iphigenia died at Aulis is, of course, of central importance to Lucretius’ argument: this is his first, and most strident, condemnation of the evils wrought by superstition. In asserting the rational variant of the myth (and implicitly rejecting the irrational variant), he teaches his readers how correctly to respond to mythic variation. We should not be surprised, therefore, to detect in Lucretius’ version of the story affinities with the account offered in Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* (a play featuring the rational variant of the myth):<sup>38</sup> in both the Lucretian (95–6) and the Aeschylean (234–5) accounts, the unwilling girl has to be carried to the altar (contrast the willingness of Iphigenia in Euripides’ *IA* and Ennius’ *Iphigenia*);<sup>39</sup> in both accounts she goes to the altar in silence, in Aeschylus (235–8) because she is gagged, in Lucretius (92) because she is *muta metu*; Lucretius’ phrase *prima uirorum* (86) echoes Aeschylus’ ἄνθος Ἀργείων (197).<sup>40</sup> These affinities with Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* support Lucretius’ assertion at 84–5 of the rational variant of the myth. This passage, therefore, speaks against any notion that the tragic genre is, generally speaking, at odds with Lucretius’ rationalizing project. Far from demythologizing the contents of Aeschylus’ play, here Lucretius enlists the *Agamemnon* as an aid in the implicit rejection of alternative variants of the myth.

*Agamemnon*, however, is not the only tragic version of the Iphigenia myth to which allusive reference is made in this passage. *DRN* 1.94 was recognized by Lambinus as a Lucretian rendering of Euripides, *IA* 1220: πρώτη σ’ ἐκάλεσα πατέρρα καὶ σὺ παῖδ’

<sup>35</sup> G. Manuwald, *Roman Republican Theatre* (Cambridge, 2011), 113. See esp. Cic. *Fin.* 5.63 (composed: 45 B.C.; dramatic date: 79 B.C.) *quotiens hoc agitur*, with P. Schierl, *Die Tragödien des Pacuvius: ein Kommentar zu den Fragmenten mit Einleitung, Text und Übersetzung* (Berlin, 2006), 195–6.

<sup>36</sup> Schierl (n. 35), 196–7. For the importance of the story of Euripides’ *Iphigenia in Tauris*—as mediated by Pacuvius—to Roman Republican culture, see E. Hall, *Adventures with Iphigenia in Tauris: A Cultural History of Euripides’ Black Sea Tragedy* (Oxford, 2013), 92–110.

<sup>37</sup> As such, J.D. Minyard, *Lucretius and the Late Republic: An Essay in Roman Intellectual History* (Leiden, 1985), 39 oversimplifies, when he claims that, for Lucretius, ‘literature does not here tell a false tale but a true one about what happens when people have a false view of the world.’ See also Cowan (n. 24), 117 on the same passage: ‘The tragic genre is not rejected, only appropriated.’ Neither literature nor tragedy can be treated monolithically in this case, because Lucretius both rejects and accepts tragic versions of the Iphigenia myth—such a thing is possible because different tragedies tell different stories.

<sup>38</sup> For the Aeschylean intertexts, see A. Perutelli, ‘Iphigenia in Lucrezio’, *SCO* 46 (1996), 193–207, at 196–200.

<sup>39</sup> For Euripides, see e.g. *IA* 1375 καθανεῖν μὲν μοι δέδοκται; for Ennius, see 192 Jocelyn *Acherontem obibo*. On the unwillingness of Iphigenia/Iphianassa in Lucretius, see Croisille (n. 34), 220; Ackermann (n. 23), 155–6; Perutelli (n. 38), 196.

<sup>40</sup> Perutelli (n. 38), 199 n. 11. We may note that Lucretius renders the Aeschylean phrase not with a precise translation but with a phrase whose syntax is noticeably Greek in flavor; for *prima uirorum* as a syntactic Hellenism, see Bailey (n. 27), 614; R. Coleman, ‘Greek influence on Latin syntax’, *TPhS* 74 (1975), 101–56, at 126–7. The Hellenized syntax of 86 thus works together with that of 87 (*infula uirgineos circumdata comptus*) to hint at the presence of underlying Greek intertexts. On the ‘unmistakably Greek pattern’ of 87, see H.D. Jocelyn, ‘Code-switching in the *comoedia palliata*’, in G. Vogt-Spira and B. Rommel (edd.), *Rezeption und Identität: die kulturelle Auseinandersetzung Roms mit Griechenland als europäisches Paradigma* (Stuttgart, 1999), 169–95, at 181.



ἐμέ. To this we may add 1.100, where *exitus ut classi felix faustusque daretur* closely recalls Achilles' words as reported at *IA* 1575—καὶ δὸς γενέσθαι πλοῦν νεῶν ἀπήμονα—with the hendyadic formula *felix faustusque* rendering the tragic word ἀπήμονα, *exitus* ... *classi* standing in neatly for πλοῦν νεῶν, and the final clause with *daretur* replacing Achilles' imperative δὸς γενέσθαι.<sup>41</sup>

Determining which version of the myth Lucretius would have found at the end of Euripides' *IA* is not straightforward: while the text of that play, as it has come down to us, does feature the rescue-motif at its conclusion, this is not the text that would have been known to Lucretius. Our text of *IA* contains a large amount of interpolation, occurring on at least two, quite different levels. First, a number of lines, including the whole first half of the exodos (1532–77, classified by Diggle as *vix Euripidei*),<sup>42</sup> have been attributed to a fourth-century B.C. 'revival' of the play.<sup>43</sup> Second, the remainder of the exodos (1578–629, classified by Diggle as *non Euripidei*) has been dated much later, to between the fourth and seventh centuries A.D.<sup>44</sup> While it is impossible for Lucretius to have encountered the second, much later level of interpolation (1578–629), it is quite plausible that the first level of interpolation—dated to the fourth century B.C. and surviving in all extant manuscripts—would have been present in texts available to Lucretius. In fact, Lucretius' own account of the sacrifice strongly suggests that he was familiar with a text of the play that included the fourth-century B.C. interpolations: as we have seen, *exitus ut classi felix faustusque daretur* (1.100) closely recalls *IA* 1575, which is found in the first half of the exodos.

While all explicit references to the miraculous substitution of the deer in the extant text of *IA* are found in the much later interpolations of the second half of the exodos (which Lucretius could not have known), the words spoken by the messenger to Clytemnestra at 1537–8 (located in the first half of the exodos) make it quite clear that, in the fourth-century B.C. version probably known to Lucretius, the messenger did indeed go on to narrate the miraculous substitution: in response to Clytemnestra asking whether he has come to tell her news of disaster, the messenger responds with the adversative particle combination μὲν οὖν, saying that, on the contrary, he has come to deliver 'strange and wondrous news' about her daughter.<sup>45</sup> We can say with some confidence, therefore, (a) that Lucretius was familiar with a version of the Euripidean *IA* which included the interpolations traditionally dated to the fourth century B.C.,<sup>46</sup> and

<sup>41</sup> D.L. Page, *Actors' Interpolations in Greek Tragedy, Studied with Special Reference to Euripides' Iphigenia in Aulis* (Oxford, 1934), 201 (see n. 43 below) and Perutelli (n. 38), 199 both claim 1.100 as a reminiscence of Aesch. *Ag.* 227 καὶ προτέλεια ναῶν, a far less convincing parallel than Eur. *IA* 1575. While it is, of course, possible that allusions to Ennius' *Iphigenia* are also present here—see S.J. Harrison, 'Ennius and the prologue to Lucretius: *DRN* 1.1–148', *LICS* 1.4 (2002), 4–6; Goldberg (n. 4 [2005]), 134—there are no clear echoes of the surviving fragments of that play.

<sup>42</sup> J. Diggle (ed.), *Euripidis Fabulae Tomus III* (Oxford, 1994).

<sup>43</sup> Page (n. 41), 192–6, 199; M.L. West, 'Tragica V', *BICS* 28 (1981), 61–78, at 74, with 78 n. 27; D. Kovacs, 'Toward a reconstruction of *Iphigenia Aulidensis*', *JHS* 123 (2003), 77–103, at 78. On the end of the Euripidean *IA* and the endings of the myth, see esp. W. Stockert, *Euripides: Iphigenie in Aulis. Band 2: Detailkommentar* (Vienna, 1992), 61–2.

<sup>44</sup> See West (n. 43), 74–6.

<sup>45</sup> See Page (n. 41), 200; Stockert (n. 43), 623. Here we may note that yet another conclusion to the play that was extant in antiquity (fr. 857 N = fr. dub. i Diggle = Aelian, *NA* 7.39) featured words spoken by Artemis stating that she would substitute the girl for a deer without the knowledge of the Achaeans; see Cropp (n. 32), 45–6 n. 50; D. Kovacs, *Euripides Bacchae, Iphigenia at Aulis, Rhesus* (Cambridge, MA, 2002), 161.

<sup>46</sup> Pace Perutelli (n. 38), 195.

(b) that said edition featured the irrational variant of the myth, i.e. the miraculous substitution of the girl at the end of the play.<sup>47</sup>

How, then, given Lucretius' commitment to teach his readers to think rationally, should we explain the presence in 1.84–100 of allusions to a text (Euripides' *IA*) featuring the irrational variant of the Iphigenia myth? As has already been stated, there can be no room for doubt in Lucretius' account: convincing his readers that the gods do not intervene in human affairs is crucial to enabling their future happiness. We would be wrong, therefore, to identify in this passage any tension between the rational and the irrational variants—Lucretius, after all, states quite clearly that the girl was killed at Aulis. Rather, we should understand Lucretius here as enabling his readers, with the help of multiple intertexts, to enact a comparison between variant accounts of a single myth, while at the same time explicitly stating which elements should be considered true and implicitly rejecting those elements which are to be considered false. In didactic terms we may say that the purpose of the Euripidean intertexts at 1.84–100 is one of inoculation: by incorporating into his own rationalist account lines taken from a text known to feature the irrational variant, Lucretius demonstrates to his readers how to deal with the interpretative problems posed by mythic variation. The Euripidean lines are removed from their potentially problematic source and inserted into a univocal, fully rationalized discursive environment—*DRN*—where no room is left for the possibility of divine intervention. The irrational 'Euripidean' account is thus corrected in the mind of the reader.

Finally, the lines in which Iphigenia's/Iphianassa's historical death is asserted (84–5 *aram ... | turparunt sanguine*) are not themselves free of tragic allusion. They closely recall<sup>48</sup> Ennius 94 Jocelyn, from a speech in the tragedy *Andromacha*, spoken by the title character and recorded by Cicero at *Tusculanae disputationes* 3.45:

haec omnia uidi inflammari,  
Priamo ui uitam euitari,  
Iouis **aram sanguine turpari.**                      94 Jocelyn

That *DRN* 1.84–5 would recall these lines to an ancient reader is confirmed by Virgil, in whose account of the death of Priam (*Aen.* 2.499–505) elements of the Ennian and Lucretian passages appear to be combined.<sup>49</sup> Crucially for Lucretius' purposes, the Ennian lines are taken from the same mythic cycle as the story of Iphigenia/Iphianassa, but differ in so far as the death they describe (Priam's) may be called uncontroversial: there exist no mythic variants in which Priam survives the sack of Troy by divine intervention. Furthermore, Iphigenia's sacrifice and Priam's death at the altar are causally

<sup>47</sup> Page (n. 41), 199 asks, on the basis of the clear reminiscence of *IA* 1220 at *DRN* 1.94, whether *DRN* 1.84–100 'throws any light on *IA*'s conclusion'. In claiming (201) that it does not, he fails to notice the resemblance of *DRN* 1.100 to *IA* 1575, suggesting instead that 1.100 'reminds us' of Aesch. *Ag.* 227 καὶ προτέλεια ναῶν. On the contrary, the more detailed resemblance between *DRN* 1.100 and Eur. *IA* 1575 warrants the suggestion that the interpolated first half of the exodos up to 1577 was present in the text used by Lucretius in the middle of the first century B.C.

<sup>48</sup> Goldberg (n. 4 [2005]), 134: 'This Ennian echo suggests deliberate allusion rather than mere verbal borrowing.' See also Goldberg (n. 4 [2000]), 57.

<sup>49</sup> While the primary intertext in Virgil's account is the *Andromacha* (for *uidi* at *Aen.* 2.499 and 2.501, see Enn. 89 and 92 Jocelyn; for *aras sanguine* at 2.501–2, see Enn. 94 Jocelyn; for the *barbarico ... auro* of 2.504, see Enn. 89 and 91 Jocelyn; all with N. Horsfall, *Virgil, Aeneid 2 A Commentary* [Leiden, 2008], 383–9), the combination *sanguine foedantem* at 2.502 owes a debt to Lucretius' *sanguine foede* (1.85).

linked, Priam's death being the culmination of the series of events set in motion by the sacrifice at Aulis. Lucretius' motive for invoking Priam's death at 1.84–5 is thus clear: his rejection of irrational variants of the Iphigenia story is further underlined via allusive reference to the kind of uncontroversial death that is easily integrated into a rationalized Epicurean view of mythic history; what is more, the uncontroversial death in question is both causally related to and visually reminiscent of the death of Iphigenia at Aulis.<sup>50</sup>

Like Accius' *Clutemestra*, there is good reason to believe that Ennius' *Andromacha* would have been a familiar part of the dramatic repertoire in the fifties B.C.: it is among the fragments quoted by Cicero in the *pro Sestio* (121), reporting the performance of Aesopus at the *ludi Apollinares* of 57. It is possible that the play was performed in its entirety; it is likewise possible that quotations from it were inserted by Aesopus into a different play (probably Accius' *Eurysaces*).<sup>51</sup> Either way, it is reasonable to assume that a culturally competent Roman reader of the type anticipated in *DRN* would be familiar with this play (or at least with the famous scene in question).<sup>52</sup>

Lucretius' allusive strategy at 1.84–100 is significantly more complex than the straightforward demythologization of Accius' *Clutemestra* at 6.387–95. In the case of Iphigenia, the tragic genre offers a polyphonic tradition including both rational and irrational variants. Affinities with the story told in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (from the rational branch of the tradition) help Lucretius to demythologize the alternative account found in Euripides' *IA*. Different tragedies are thus played off against one another, with one contributing to the demythologization of the other. Lucretius' rationalizing assertions are further reinforced via the invocation of an uncontroversial death from another tragic text (Ennius' *Andromacha*), which would have been particularly salient for theatre-going readers in the mid first century B.C. As such, it is not possible in this instance to identify a single overarching Lucretian attitude to the explanatory value of tragedy as a genre. The mythic content of tragedies can be true or false, rational or irrational, with the result that the explanatory power of tragedies may vary from play to play. In such cases, therefore, the proper response to the mythic content of what we experience in the theatre is not outright rejection, nor outright acceptance, but rather selective ambivalence—careful and considered selection of those elements of the tradition that can be placed into alignment with the basic principles of Epicurean rationalism, with simultaneous rejection of other elements. Lucretius' implicit advice to the reader here is neither to reject nor to accept the lessons of tragedy outright, but rather to attend the theatre with open eyes.

#### *DRN* 5.318–23: PACUVIUS' *CHRYSES*

Among the extant fragments of *Chryses* we find evidence of a complex Pacuvian adaptation of Euripides, fr. 839 Nauck (from *Chrysippus*)—a text which would later be

<sup>50</sup> This allusive strategy is not without risk, since it requires the introduction into the Lucretian passage of the potentially un-Epicurean motif of sacrilegious pollution (compare 1.84–5 *aram ... turparunt sanguine* with the much less loaded 5.1201–2 *aras ... sanguine spargere*). The result is a mild paradox: *religio* should be rejected, because historically it has led to sacrilegious pollution (among other things).

<sup>51</sup> See M. Erasmo, 'Staging Brutus: Roman legend and the death of Caesar', in E.I. Tylawsky and C.G. Weiss (edd.), *Essays in Honor of Gordon Williams: Twenty-Five Years at Yale* (New Haven, 2001), 101–13, at 104.

<sup>52</sup> Cic. *Att.* 4.15.6 may attest to a further performance of the play at the *ludi Apollinares* of 54—see Manuwald (n. 35), 113.





referents of *quidam* at 320 to Stoics and Stoics alone.<sup>65</sup> Second, and more importantly, there is no need to invoke the Stoics as the implicit referents of *quidam*, because we already happen to know precisely who says the kind of things mentioned here, namely the *physicus* of Pacuvius' *Chryses*. Rather than thinking of the Pacuvian fragments as an oblique way for Lucretius to get at the Stoics, we should think of the contents of those fragments as philosophical in their own right—as an example of the kind of generic philosophizing which Roman readers would regularly have encountered in a variety of cultural domains (poetry, historiography or, as in this case, at the theatre). As such, 5.318–23 should not be understood as containing an indirect allusion to a particular philosophical doctrine or school (such an interpretation being born of too narrow a conception of how philosophical discourse was experienced in Republican Rome), but should rather be taken at face value, as a direct allusion to the theatrical text from which it is sourced—*Chryses*—with *quod quidam memorant* functioning as a programmatic marker alerting the reader to the presence of the Pacuvian intertext.

Gale (n. 22), 183–4 identifies this passage as an example of 'latent myth', stating that 'rather neatly, Lucretius uses the myth to prove that, far from being divine, the aether must in fact be perishable' (184). Thus Gale sets up an opposition between the content of the 'myth' underlying 5.318–23 (by which is meant the marriage of earth and sky in a *hieros gamos*) and Lucretius' rationalizing treatment of it: while the 'myth' asserts the divinity of aether, Lucretius' treatment of the 'myth' includes the rejection of said divinity. We should note, however, that it is by no means certain that the original context in which the natural-philosophical fragments of *Chryses* were found involved any commitment whatever to the actual divinity of earth and sky. As we have seen, in *Chryses* Pacuvius enacted a dialogic confrontation between traditional religion and naturalistic philosophy. It is unlikely, therefore, that the *physicus* who speaks these lines would have put forward a naïve or uncritical account of the mythical divinity of earth and sky. Which is to say, the imagery of the *hieros gamos* was most likely already a case of latent myth in its original philosophizing context in *Chryses*. Rather than seeing Lucretius at 5.318–23 as being engaged in demythologization of the kind envisaged by Gale, I suggest that we should understand these lines as appropriating an existing piece of well-known philosophical allegory, removing it from the dialogic context of Pacuvius' *Chryses* and relocating it to the fully rationalized univocal environment of *DRN*. While the content of the prothesis at 5.319–20 is, strictly speaking, not in alignment with claims made elsewhere in *DRN* (hence the phrase *quod quidam memorant* and the lack of any minor premiss to the argument), Lucretius is, none the less, keen to appropriate this small piece of familiar theatrical philosophizing in order to provide additional force in favour of his main argument (that the earth and all its constituent parts are mortal). Recall that this is only the last in a sequence of arguments to the same effect: the main point is already proved along Epicurean lines; the popular philosophizing of Roman tragedy is brought in only at the end of the sequence. Nevertheless, we can see once again that the kind of dramatic content to which readers were regularly exposed at the theatre is not uniformly antithetical to Lucretian rationalism. In Pacuvius' *Chryses*, the dialogic opportunities offered by the genre of tragedy were exploited in order to enact a confrontation between two basic modes of thought, the one religious,

<sup>65</sup> See D.J. Furley, 'Lucretius and the Stoics', *BICS* 13 (1966), 13–33, at 30–1: 'There is *nothing* in the Lucretius passage that is not in Pacuvius, and not much that is distinctly Stoic in Pacuvius. If Lucretius intended a serious attack on Stoic doctrine, it must be admitted that he chose a strangely oblique approach.' (Furley's italics)

the other philosophical. Lucretius, in his reception of that text, appropriates the content of just one half of the dichotomy and so implicitly rejects the other. Once again, the proper reaction to such a play among readers of *DRN* is neither outright rejection nor outright acceptance, but rather the careful selection of those aspects of the theatrical intertext that are most well suited to the Epicurean rationalist perspective.

## CONCLUSION

In *DRN* Lucretius appeals to a huge variety of forms of shared experience in order to convince his readers of the truth of Epicurean doctrine. An important element of this experience is intertextual: shared knowledge of other literary and philosophical texts provides valuable common ground between Lucretius and his readers, enabling those other texts to be brought in either as useful sources of information or as foils against which the truth of Epicureanism may be more clearly illuminated. In turn, allusive engagement with other texts can be understood as one aspect of Lucretius' broader didactic strategy of equipping his readers with appropriate critical attitudes with which to interpret the phenomena of everyday life (including, as I have suggested, cultural and literary phenomena like theatrical drama). As was emphasized at the outset, the purpose of this allusive strategy is not limited to narrow 'literary' concerns, but goes to the ethical core of Lucretius' project: teaching readers to avoid fear, and thus enabling their future tranquillity and happiness.

The foregoing arguments have demonstrated that any account of the roles played by intertextuality in Lucretian didactic must be sufficiently fine-grained as to distinguish between individual texts, and between different episodes within individual texts. In the case of tragedy, it is not possible to extrapolate general claims about a genre's explanatory value for Epicurean rationalism on the basis of individual allusions. We have looked closely at two clear cases in which the dramatic tradition (either within an individual text or across a selection of texts) may be called conflicted, in that it provides space to (in Epicurean terms) both rational and irrational perspectives on the world. An important function of Lucretian allusions to such texts, I have argued, is to help readers to distinguish between rational and irrational elements of their intertextual knowledge, and so to negotiate successfully (which is to say, rationally) a conflicted area of their cultural experience.

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