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LUCRETIUS AND HIS READER: A STUDY OF
BOOK II OF DE RERUM NATURA

DISSERTATION
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of the Ohio State University

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To My Parents
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PREFACE

The text of Lucretius used throughout is Cyril Bailey, ed., Titi Lucreti Carī De Rerum Natura Libri Sex (Oxford 1972), 3 vols.; Bailey's translations are used, unless otherwise noted. Abbreviations for journals conform to those of L'Année Philologique (1983); abbreviations for classical authors and works follow those of N. Hammond and H. Scullard, edd., The Oxford Classical Dictionary, 2nd ed. (Oxford 1970).
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: LUCRETIUS AND RECEPTION THEORY

Why Lucretius wrote a work on Epicureanism in the form in which he did has been an acute and long-standing concern in the scholarship. It is a concern of some special validity, for it is a subject which the author himself takes up. Lucretius shows an extreme consciousness of himself and awareness of his relation to his reader. What he is doing, how, and even for whom, is a concern in the DRN which never recedes far from the foreground. This feature of the DRN has too often been overlooked or underestimated. Even when recognized as a significant feature of the author's work, it is usually not grasped as a principle which should constantly be kept at the ready to aid in understanding this work. Here, it will be used in just such a central role.

As background, this chapter will note the two major problem areas in Lucretian criticism, poetic consistency and philosophical validity. Through much of the history of the question, each of these has usually been considered in relative isolation from the other, but it will be shown that they are related. This relationship can be used as an effective instrument for understanding the poem. In addition, the study of the poetry and
philosophy of the work has very often focused on Lucretius' sources, using them to explain both form and content in the poem. Yet such studies, while contributing important information, have generally been inadequate to the task of accounting for the relation of poetry and doctrine in the DRN. An approach which can be an important tool in analyzing this relationship is a look at the reader and his role in the DRN. This question of the reader in the DRN has been addressed in the past largely in terms of the historical figure of Memmius. This approach remains speculative and yields results of limited use for understanding the work itself. The figure of Memmius does, however, suggest a point of departure for a wider interpretation of Lucretius' need for and use of a reader as a rhetorical, dramatic and poetic fixture in his poem. Contemporary reception theory can be a useful framework for an investigation of the model of the reader which Lucretius establishes for himself. Features of this theory will be surveyed here in preparation for the study of Lucretius' view of his reader in chapter two.

The criticism of Lucretius has largely concerned itself with evaluations of the DRN as primarily either poetry or philosophy. The assumption has been that for the most part the two were mutually exclusive, and commentary upon Lucretius has revolved around the relative success which he achieved in either sphere. It appeared that the poet chose a very difficult poetic path for himself and forced himself to walk a literary tightrope between his long prosaic philosophical passages and his more
brilliant poetic purple patches scattered throughout. Whether he was deemed successful in his attempts or not, he was seen as having engaged himself in a difficult compromise.

Following this polarized approach to the DRN, considerations of the form of the poem have aligned themselves accordingly into two general critical problem areas. The first involves the problem of poetic consistency in a didactic poem, the second the problem of the validity of Epicurean information put forth in a poetic form.

Certain writers have recently taken a different approach to the problem of poetic consistency. They observe that, far from being an amalgam, the DRN represents the necessary harmony of poetry and philosophy needed for an exposition of the Epicurean system, even to the extent that the composition of the poem itself can be viewed as a microcosm of the natural world. This view suggests a level of integration and intent by the poet which transcends the dimensions of a simple exposition of a system, mingled with poetic imagery. Such a view implies a vision that is encompassing in scope, as well as acute in detail.

The second problem area has received less successful attention. The problem is more deeply entrenched in the philosophical system with which Lucretius is working. Because of the primacy of knowledge in the Epicurean system, Lucretius' poem was rightly didactic; and because that knowledge was grounded ultimately in sense perception, the poem would most
effectively open a path to knowledge by being a reflection of that sensory experience of the world. In order to communicate that experience, Lucretius' poem had to conform to the Epicurean guidelines for cognition. The Epicurean was told by the system of his philosophy that he was to look toward nature for knowledge. Although there was great respect for the words of the founder, Epicurus, the basic tenet of the philosophy was that knowledge was made manifest in the aspect of nature, not in the rhetoric of a persuasive speaker. This had important implications for one who would attempt to set out to teach this system of philosophy.

The issue of poetry and philosophy in the DRN has been dealt with mainly through genre and source study. This work sees the author as following the dictates of both form and content and developing them within the constraints available. Categorization according to genre considerations, for example, can be extensive and follow minute distinctions in generic types. Similarly, the poet's mixing of genres opens even more extended possibilities in genre study. But the most fundamental level of response to genre by Lucretius is, of course, to the heroic epic. In this regard, echoes of Homer are sought out. But the more kindred epic spirit for Lucretius was Empedocles, the admiration for whom is the counterpart of his contempt for Heraclitus in Bk. I. The style of the DRN, sometimes in a subtle way, receives an important influence from that of Empedocles.

The question of genre becomes more immediate and direct when
Lucretius' Roman predecessors are considered. Ennius, who provides a possible source for an epic phraseology, is the primary concern. Notable words and phrases offer Lucretius a solemnity and dignity with which he elevates the tone of the work.

The matter of sources, understood here primarily as content but also as an influence upon form, exerts its own inertial claim upon the poet. The idea of inertia seems appropriate because this influence is usually seen in terms of a resistance to change, as a constraint, a way in which Lucretius is tied to the source. Since Regenbogen's study, however, the principle of evaluation has been the success with which Lucretius combines his roles of poet and philosopher; one can emphasize one or the other in an investigation, but neither can be disregarded entirely. Probably more than anything else, this principle has been central to the way in which the form of Lucretius' poem has been understood. The form is seen either in terms of the way in which received philosophical content shapes the work through providing the raw material, or in terms of the way in which the principles and dictates of the philosophy shape Lucretius' own literary task, the limits of his own expression.

The history of the problem of philosophical sources has been dominated by the idea of Lucretius as a translator and then versifier of some work by Epicurus. There seemed to be good reason for this point of view. More than the other philosophical schools, the Epicureans relied upon the inculcation of
its principles by virtually rote memory. Cicero's Stoic in the De Natura Deorum gives us such a characterization. A close comparison of the DRN was made with the only writings of Epicurus preserved by the tradition, the prose letters preserved in Bk. 10 of Diogenes Laertius. Laminus' edition of the DRN (Paris 1570) made just such a use of Diogenes, observing what to him were direct translations of Epicurus by Lucretius. Later, publication of the fragments of Epicurus' On Nature, recovered from Herculaneum, offered additional material for such study.

The general correspondences suggested by this material were not close enough to satisfy scholars, however. The ordering of the argument in the DRN and the Letter to Herodotus, for example, was quite different. Giussani led the way and postulated a Greater Epitome (in distinction to the Letter to Herodotus, the so-called Mikra Epitome) as Lucretius' major working sourcebook. Bailey's acceptance of this is reflected in quite recent assessments. It is significant that there has been resort to hypothetical work as a source for Lucretius' poem. The need for the Greater Epitome in particular suggests even more the need for a source which could be a direct template for the form of the DRN, avoiding the vagaries in sequence in comparison of the DRN with the Letter to Herodotus. Again, scholars might be justified in such an attitude, given suggestions from the ancients, the remark by Epicurus on the need for a statement of principles to be preserved in the memory, and the existence of a collection
such as the *Kyriai Doxai*. Most recently, however, Diskin Clay has drawn attention to the set of hidden assumptions which have been at work in much of the source study, which he sees as having "obscured our understanding of Lucretius' role as philosophical poet". Clay's conception of Lucretius as a Roman, a poet, and an Epicurean contradicts the assumptions of source criticism; it views Lucretius as a Roman whose conception of his philosophy, worked out to a great extent personally, impelled him to philosophical poetry. This important point of view has significant implications for a view of Lucretius' poem which sees the author's particular strategies at work.

The second way in which source material has been studied in its use by Lucretius involves its close association with poetic concerns. It too affects how Lucretius was to write his poem, for the question is, can an Epicurean write poetry, and if so, in what form? Since we are in possession of a great poem on the subject of Epicureanism, the question of Lucretius becomes whether or not he did this within the doctrinal possibility of the school, how he used or transformed his sources in the particular form which he used. How this is answered is partially a matter of perspective: either to establish the principles and guidelines outside of DRN or to begin with the poem itself and pose the question primarily from that starting point. There is a parallel here with the previous discussion of the source investigation, a question of direction and emphasis.
The strong opposition of Epicurus to poetry is well known and well
documented. Diogenes reports a saying of Epicurus that the wise man could
not write poetry.\(^4\) The reason was epistemological and social/ethical..
Language arose by virtue of \textit{physis}, not \textit{thesis}, and might be relied upon to
give information and knowledge of natural phenomena. All language
symbols refer ultimately to empirical facts. The figurative language of
poetry rests upon the insecure basis of extended and transferred
similarities and differences of objects; poetry has, therefore, no cognitive
truth value. Yet a case could be made for poetry by the Epicurean, in the
way in which it might produce a meaningful expression through the combining
of natural and emotional values of words. The emotional value of language
has some sort of legitimate primitive, prepredicative value.\(^5\) Poetry
could be accepted as an end in itself, with no external reference. Poetry
was quite different from rhetoric, which was more objectionable and did aim
at a cognitive problem beyond itself and applied false emotional appeal
toward its end. The second, social reason for the rejection of poetry
related to the rejection of the system of \textit{paidela}, the foundation of society's
values; this education was represented by the false and elite persuasions of
poets and rhetoricians.\(^6\)

But Lucretius did wish to refer to something beyond his poem; to him, his
work was capable of relaying truth.\(^7\) This need to present something true
and valid in the poem is the problem in Lucretius; it is seen both as a
philosophical and aesthetic problem in which Lucretius was ultimately not successful. Lucretius is also seen as making a deliberate compromise, or even as being inconsistent with the principles of his philosophy.

All of this seems to bring the debate full circle. The extensive debate on Lucretius' fidelity to Epicurean principles is a valid concern, and much of the scholarship resulting from it has been of value. If, however, one is concerned with the DRN as a poem, if one subscribes to the idea that philosophy and poetry in Lucretius are necessarily tied together, then most of the debate has done little to clarify the poetic nature of the work itself. Rather, the work in the various forms of source study has often helped lead the debate back once again to the view of the poem as a dichotomy of concerns, the attempt to establish whether there is at work a priority of pedagogical necessity or poetic concern.

This debate cannot and should not be wished away; its importance in many ways cannot be diminished. There is a need, however, for a view of the work from a different perspective. The traditional perspective views the form of Lucretius' work as the result of the requirements of form and subject matter, running the range from the requirements of genre to the epistemological restraints of the philosophy. A use of the another potential concern for the writer, namely the needs of the reader, can provide a useful additional perspective, a point somewhat removed from the tradition of the debate and, as such, possibly better able to avoid the inevitable
circular turn.

To speak of two opposite poles in viewing the work, the requirements of the subject matter and the needs of the reader, is a useful generalized concept but is not entirely accurate. It is indeed impossible to speak of the two as diametrically opposed and unconnected. Each must in fact exist within the other. But there is a very real and valid case to make for taking one or the other singly as a matter of emphasis and perspective. This change of perspective can be valuable, for it opens the possibility of asking different questions of the text. We might look at this mode of questioning.

If one is to speak of a reader in the DRN, there is an obvious starting place, a reader ready at hand. Lucretius dedicates his work to a certain Memmius and invokes his name in the vocative case ten times throughout the work. Generally, it is accepted that he is C. Memmius, son of Lucius, praetor of 58 B.C. But this leads to a problem and a question of just what Memmius is doing there and the question of when he got there. These have been the main concerns of the past scholarship in this regard.

Memmius seems an unlikely patron for Lucretius, given the evidence which we have for his life. The judgement of his contemporaries is that he represented well the corruption of his times — witnessed in the election scandal of 54 and his exile for conviction de ambitu in 52. Although he was a literary patron (or potential patron) of Catullus and Cinna, and a poet himself, his own talents were of questionable merit. It seems unlikely
that he was a noted patron of the arts, worthy of the dedication of an epic poem. And the matter of Epicureanism brings a further problem, for his intention to build over the preserved house of Epicurus outside of Athens is notorious.\(^2\)

Why would Lucretius dedicate a poem to him? It is possible to assume a general material need for a potential patron, but it was a dedication which Lucretius would have given up on and changed had he lived.\(^2\) The name Memmius appears only in books 1, 2, and 5. It is assumed then by some that these books were the first written, and that the \textit{tu} of the other books is addressed to the general reader.\(^3\) It has been suggested that Lucretius saw Memmius as corrupt and that he was trying to "save his soul."\(^3\) Farrington takes up this view of Lucretius' relation to Memmius, as offering primarily ethical and, \textit{contra} Büchner, not academic instruction in Epicurean physics.\(^3\) His important observation is in casting Lucretius' attempt to win over Memmius in terms of the genre of philosophical protreptic writing.\(^3\)

The observation concerning the protreptic nature of the writing is important because such an exhortation is usually in the form of a promise of a certain benefit being available if one undertakes a proposed course of action, with emphasis upon the action of the recipient, the philosophical tyro. Such an exhortation is essentially rhetorical and is tied to the problem of the emergence of philosophy from ordinary language, of how the
philosophical dimension coherently becomes part of human speech and thought. The protreptic strives to be situationally persuasive. It is important, therefore, to view the relation of philosophical argument to the recipient who has to understand it in terms of his own world and interests.34

But these considerations of Memmius by and large do not fulfill the promise of what seemed appropriate to expect from the change in perspective toward the reader. This is because these studies have for the most part followed the same extrinsic approach which characterizes the scholarly work from the perspective of the subject matter. This approach essentially points to a problem outside the text and then looks into the text to see how it deals with it. Thus, the reader becomes another such problem which impinges upon the work from an objective context external to the work, and which the work is then asked to justify. Again, these concerns are real and important, especially if social, cultural information peripheral to the text is being sought; they might even make important contribution to the understanding of the work itself.35 But, if the concern is primarily the work itself, that is, the status of the work as a coherent, complete and self-referential work of art in its own right, these approaches do not seem to contribute in significant depth that way.

Another perspective, however, concerning Memmius and the reader in Lucretius offers a significant break from the tradition. In a sketch which he
acknowledges as paradigmatic rather than complete, Diskin Clay offers the
beginnings of a view of the reader in the DRN as an attempt to discover the
"character, physiognomy and functions of the implicit reader in the DRN." For the first time emphasis has been put upon a Memmius as a creation of
the author rather than as historical personage. The historical character is
in fact seen as a distraction in the poem. The relation between Lucretius
and Memmius can be reduced to the simple one of poet to reader, as each is
implied in the work. This finally is the true advantage of the change of
perspective to the reader, for it allows a focus upon the writer's actual
task, in that writing is at each moment set forth necessarily in terms of its
availability to a reader whom it implies. This offers a way to consider the
complexity of the communication going on. Clay sees the address to the
reader and Lucretius' extreme consciousness of his relation to the reader
as Lucretius' best strategy. He sees this strategy as useful in the
philosophical argument especially. This relation to the reader should be
able to be used in another sphere, however, that of the poetry itself.

An important contemporary approach to literary criticism offers a
suitable working model for such an approach. Indeed, it will be shown that
its affinities with Lucretius' presentation of his material are many. The
general area of reader-response criticism has focused attention on the
existence and activity of the reader. The field of reader-response theory is
wide and includes many various and disparate approaches. One category
of reader-response theory in particular offers an apt model. Reception theory, or *Rezeption*, unlike other reader-response theories, exists as a cohesive school of thought developed in West Germany in the late 1960's. Its suitability for the present task can be demonstrated best by a brief look at its pedigree in certain previous theoretical movements and concerns and in the main features of its formulation by one of its current major practitioners.

On the way to a theory of Reception, an important first step was the assertion of Russian Formalists that a poem was not only the cause of the reader's experience, but also a specific and highly organized control of that experience, such that the reader's experience could best be described as the experience of the poem itself. The fabric of the work of art was the sum of the devices used to make the reader aware of the special nature of the communication in the literary work of art. Form was an effort to make the reader conscious of the work *qua* art.

This concept of form included an account of aesthetic perception, and a great deal of attention was directed toward the process of interpretation itself. One of the central characteristics of the literary work was the way in which it could alter usual and expected patterns of communication. The Formalists saw that normally perception fell into a pattern of habituation, and that literary language was a way to break the expected pattern and bring about new perceptions. They called this a "defamiliarization" and
understood this as any attempt to change the pattern of normal or mundane communication, such that the text demanded of a reader a greater perceptual effort, both in terms of intensity and especially in length of attention. An example of this theoretical position can be suggested in ancient literary practice which strove for effect through demands upon the audience attention, especially in terms of extension over time; one could point to hyperbaton as an exaggerated separation of syntactically joined elements, as well as to the structure of the period, with the use of subordinating elements to delay the main verb and its closure for the sentence.

But the Formalists had an interest which looked into the literary device for a greater accounting of it. The ancient critics were quite adept at the process of observation and the cataloguing of literary figures and devices, but they were somewhat less successful in the fuller investigation of the nature and function of these. For Viktor Shklovskii, a principal figure of Russian Formalism, for example, a literary device is not an end in itself, but rather an invitation to investigate the underlying working principle of the device. For Shklovskii, something such as imagery, then, is one of many poetic devices used to create an effect, and is not in itself a constituent element of literature.42 Literary art of poetry, then, could not be explained simply by a definition that it is a writing in images, nor by an enumeration of those images; the task is to investigate the function behind
The importance of this for Reception theory is in the way in which Formalist thinking shifted the perception of the essence of the work of art. This shift is from an external to an internal essence of what the work of art is. There is at least a surface identity between Formalist and Aristotelian conceptions of art, based upon a common model of art as a product of a craft. But beyond this the difference is wide and important to note. For the Aristotelian, all of that which comprises the work exists for a purpose beyond itself, an emotion or an effect. The literary work is characterized and defined by this end effect, e.g., of tragedy, catharsis. The Formalists invert this to claim that everything which comprises the work exists in order for the work itself to exist in itself as a literary work of art. Unlike Aristotelian analysis which ends up outside of the work, the Formalist attempts to remain within the work itself.\textsuperscript{43} Formalism suspends the common sense Aristotelian view of the work of art as mimesis; it removes a presupposed content (the mimetic object) and looks at the text for its characteristics of literary function only. In this sense, the form of the work is suggestive of a set of functions only.\textsuperscript{44}

This shift to seeing content as a form which indicates function, opened up an important new dimension in which to consider the literary text. The Formalist definition of the literary device bridges the gap between text and the reader. On the one hand, it makes the work a genuine aesthetic object in
itself; on the other hand, the emphasis on functionality directs a potential focus on the efforts of the reader. Again, this is because the literary device is not an end in itself, but an instrument for effect and, as Shklovskii found, these effects, in turn, were properly understood through examination of the general laws of perception.45

Here, then, is the foundation for the development of the work of the Formalists into reception theory, which will be a more acute study of these processes of perception. This will also be a fundamental consideration in our look at Lucretius and his reader, for such an account of the perceptual process in the functioning of his text will offer the possibility of maintaining a causal relation between the physical entities of the text and the reader. This will be of no small significance for the whole problem of validity of a poetic text as a carrier of information, as far as Epicurean doctrine was concerned. But this moves ahead of matters here and is a problem which will be investigated fully in the following chapter. It remains to follow the development of the incipient principles of reception from Russian Formalism into the current fully-configured theories.

One of the most useful observations of the Formalists was that the literary device should not be considered as static, as something containing only a fixed and localized effect. On the contrary, a number of Formalists called for an understanding of the linking of individual devices, the importance of the device in terms of its dynamic function, both within the
individual work itself and in literary history in general. The literary device is fundamental in bringing the text into the foreground and constituting it as a literary work, but it is important also in offering a means to study the larger context within which the device works. An account of the fuller functioning of the text as a whole, beyond a focus centered upon the literary device, was the concern of Roman Ingarden.

In two major works, the Polish philosopher Ingarden discusses both the nature of the literary work itself and the process of perception or cognition of the work. They are highly detailed studies, essentially based upon the early phenomenology of Edmund Husserl. The concern throughout is theoretical rather than practical. His work The Literary Work of Art held appeal for the New Critics because of its concern for establishing norms for the intrinsic study of the text. But, because his main concern was the theoretical investigation of the issue of realism versus idealism, a central philosophical problem which phenomenology hoped to resolve, his later work, The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art, more clearly demonstrates this true purpose. The publication of its German edition in 1968 also was a vital source for information on the text-reader relationship, of great use for the future Reception theorists.

The two works are lengthy and intricate studies, and descriptions and summaries of the theory can be found easily elsewhere. The focus here will be on Ingarden's analysis of cognition and what this offers to a Reception
theory. His account of the process of cognition relies upon his description of the makeup of the work. He sees a hierarchy of four strata or levels through which the reader moves, rather than a fixed set of norms at work in the text. These are, briefly: the level of sounds which produce words (these are not only for carrying word meanings, but might also function for aesthetic effects in themselves, especially in poetry); the second stratum includes groups which form meaning, from words to multiple sentences (this level admits the element of time to the process of cognition, an essential part of a phenomenological explanation of this process); next is the level in which objects are represented (enough words come together to not only give a syntactically coherent meaning, but a meaning which then offers an image which represents an complete object of thought); and the final stratum offers a schematic outline through which the objects in the above stratum appear.

The last stratum is the most important to consider here. This is the level of the most important activity of the reader because here he faces an object represented only in skeletal structure, a schema. As such, the reader is given the task of completing this object, of filling in the outline before him. This principle is based upon the phenomenological concept of each object having theoretically an infinite number of determinants, as it offers itself to being constituted in consciousness, an intentional consciousness, that is a consciousness which not only accepts and
processes information, but at the same time actively seeks further information which will complete or determine the object more fully. Objects, then, are never fully or absolutely constituted; rather they are to varying degrees in various contexts adequately determined.

As a simple concrete example, such a schematic structure might be seen in the description of the color or size or texture of an object. "A small red rubber ball" offers a representation of an object, but it is also merely an outline or sketch. "Small" lacks specific measure or little more than the mere relative sense of size, "red" begs a closer idea of the many possible shades of the color, and included in "rubber" could be a wide range of texture and surface characteristics. Often the extent of completion of a schema by a reader may vary, depending upon both the various degree of indeterminacy and the different knowledge and experience of the reader. When, for example, Lucretius mentions colorful but unwieldy theater awnings (4.75-89; 6.109-110), or any other piece of topography, his Roman reader would have a wealth of detail which he might bring to this schema and thus carry through a very full determination of that potential object set up by the author.

The initiative taken by the reader to fill in these places of indeterminacy within the schematic forms of represented objects is called by Ingarden a process of "concretization." Moreover, Ingarden distinguishes two levels of such activity. One posits an aesthetic judgement upon the work; this
would be similar to a critical evaluation, e.g., a consideration of the success of a work in conforming to genre rules. The other level of concretizing activity is pre-aesthetic, or simply the act of making sense of the text; this is essentially the process involved in dealing with the four strata of the work, especially the joining of schemata such that a coherent meaning is realized.54 The idea of a pre-aesthetic concretization is important and will be taken up in the next chapter.

These influences can be seen as realized in the work of Wolfgang Iser who, along with Hans Jauss, is one of the founders and prime practitioners of Reception theory.55 Iser’s work presents a fully realized Reception theory and will be the basis of many working concepts for the present study. Iser’s main interest is in the conditions which underlie how a text has meaning for a reader. Like the Formalists and Ingarden, he understands the text in terms of the way its structure and function directs the experience of the reader. Like Ingarden, he shows his phenomenological orientation by his interest in the text as an object resulting from an act of intentional consciousness, as noted above.

But Iser goes beyond Ingarden by his special emphasis upon the interaction between text and reader, which form two opposite poles. Because of these two poles, the work itself cannot be identical wholly with either the text or with the concretizations of its schemata by the reader. A focus upon either pole will tell little about the actual work itself, which
exists between the two. The work then, is not a static entity, set in a fixed location, but is a dynamic process, a movement between the two poles which set it in motion.\textsuperscript{56}

To join these opposite poles, Iser uses the concept of an "implied reader," transferred from Wayne Booth's "implied author" concept.\textsuperscript{57} He uses this concept simply as a way to get at and explain the structural effects in literary texts. That is, the structural effects imply a reader so situated that he can assemble the meaning from the perspectives which the text has guided him to.\textsuperscript{58} Although this may seem obvious and close to the idea of the Formalists, it has a special importance. This is because of the problematical nature of the special object which a text presents. The object represented in a literary text is neither identical to external reality, nor can it be identified with being a copy of an intended reader's own world. A text, as a reality which has no existence of its own, comes into being only through ideation, that is, by being made into an idea by the mind of the reader; otherwise a text is simply marks on a page. The existence and reality of the text, then, are in an idea which resides in the consciousness of the reader.

This has important consequences for the processing of the text. In the first place, the reading process is described in dynamic terms because reading is not a simple and direct internalization by the reader. Iser uses the term "the wandering viewpoint" to describe a most important condition of
this dynamic process. Unlike a physical object, the object represented by the text is realized not instantaneously, but over a space of time. Because of limitations of eye span and memory, a text is put together by the reader only as a succession of segments. Thus the wandering viewpoint is the action by which the reader spans the text to account for these aspects. Rather than being a simple linear progression across the text, reading is a selective focus upon areas of the text which stop the attention and provide a point of focus and reference.

As implied in the term, in the wandering viewpoint focusing can be selective in the reading process. More importantly, there is a constant two-way process going on. First, there is an expectation and a looking forward, by the reader's intending consciousness which seeks to determine its object more fully. In addition, there is a memory of what has just passed, a looking back in such a way that the previous segment of text impinges upon what is to come. It is this two-way influence which is a basic structure for the reading process, for this is what determines the reader's position in the text.59

This temporal character of the reading process acts as a stimulus for the syntheses through which the meaning of the text forms itself in the reader's mind. Iser sets certain conditions for this interaction, based upon the inherent asymmetry of the text and reader. He takes his cue from Ingarden in seeing the main device for such interaction as those places in
indeterminacy within the schemata which are to be filled out by the reader. But he orients himself toward this in a way different from Ingarden. Iser complains that Ingarden saw these places of indeterminacy as a lack within the work, a deficiency to be rectified by the reader. To distance himself from Ingarden, he adopts another term for these indeterminate places, he calls them "blanks." Iser's main point is that such a phenomenon as the blank is not a deficiency in the nature of literature but a useful and vital device which stimulates communication. Blanks do this because they offer the possibility to guide the work of the reader to lesser or greater degrees of effort in constituting the text.

This blank, by definition, has no content of its own, but acts as a point within which the various segments of the reading process can be joined. This is important because the segments which occur successively in reading have no determinacy within themselves but rather rely upon their relation to other segments for their determination. As the reader's wandering viewpoint travels across these segments its movement brings them together and sets up various perspectives on the intended object. Around these blanks, a field of reference is set up, a concept which Iser borrows from phenomenological interpretations of gestalt theory. Such fields of reference can be quite various in scale, from that of an individual image to that of larger issues such as matters of plot or ethical or philosophical questions. Whatever is set up by the field becomes thematic or the point of
focus for the reader. But, because of the nature of the process, this theme is also a "horizon", as Iser calls it, for the next theme to form in its wake. This can sometimes be a problem for a reader; an example here will illustrate.

Lucretius begins his poem with a beautiful invocation to the goddess, but by line 62 the reader is given the terrible image of mankind lying foul and crushed by religio. Lucretius, following Epicurean theology, is not denying the existence of the gods, but is simply making the plea that they be put in proper perspective; he shows us the consequences of man's inability to keep such a proper perspective. And Lucretius somewhat lessens the edge of his remarks by choosing an example from mythology, removing it from a direct criticism of the state religion, for example. Yet, Lucretius still feels the need within several lines to address the reader's fears of possible impiety early in the poem (1.80ff.).

What has happened here is that Lucretius has set up a religious context at the outset and guided the reader to that theme. This is quite in conformity not only with the literary tradition but also with social and institutional norms. All of this relies upon and works with the reader's experience brought into the text; this is of particular importance here because we are at the beginning of the work and nothing has yet been established by the author which he might use to influence the reader's thought. But soon the warning of superstition is sounded, following
Immediately upon an outline of what is to be taught (1.50-61). It is the victory of Epicurus which leaves *religio* trampled underfoot (1.76). It is after this image that Lucretius now seeks to re-assure the reader, who has by this time been brought through several changes within very few lines, from invocation of the god to the triumphant end of religion.

The opening religious theme, as the first theme of the work, is especially important, because it relies upon no previous textual reference and so is dependent upon the norms and values, derived from contemporary institutions and the tradition, of the reader himself. If a reader is committed to a particular religious or ideological position he will be less inclined to accept the basic theme-horizon structure of the text which regulates the text-reader interaction. This is because if the norms become a theme, as such they are automatically open to critical review; an inherent part of each theme is a horizon which opens it to modification. And if the reader is induced into the text, only to find that he is offered the prospect of accepting a negative attitude toward values he holds and does not wish to question, then the result can be a rejection of the text and of the author.63 This is the situation to which Lucretius is responding.

A final important characteristic remains to be brought out in Iser's look at the reading process. As already noted, because the text offers something other than an embodied object, a real physically existing object, any attempt to derive meaning from a text involves not only the perception.
of the physical text but also the process of ideation. Such an ideation occurs as a sequence, in which each ideation is followed by a continuous series of images which reproduce the previous ones. This reproduction is carried out, however, in such a way that the element of time becomes important. The image which follows and reproduces the previous image is nevertheless recognized as different due to the awareness of the temporal element attached to it. Iser calls this process passive synthesis, denoting its character as being a pre-predicative activity. The temporal character of the reading process stimulates such passive syntheses; predicative syntheses, judgements, on the other hand, are independent of time. These two levels of activity (seen previously suggested in Ingarden) offer two areas of investigation of the reader's functioning. There is the more visible level of judgement, as seen in the example above. And there is the smaller-scale level of a passive pre-judgemental activity which concerns itself primarily with synthesis of the text's segments, in the process described above. Iser notes the significance of this activity:

"[through the passive synthesis] text and reader are linked together, one permeating the other. We place our synthetizing faculties at the disposal of an unfamiliar reality, produce the meaning of that reality, and in so doing enter into a situation which we could not have created out of ourselves. Thus the meaning of the literary text can only be fulfilled in the reading subject and does not exist independently of him; just as important, though, is that the reader himself, in constituting the meaning, is also constituted. And herein lies the full significance of the so-called passive syntheses." 64

This brief presentation of some major features of Reception theory
suggests the potential in this change of direction from which a text may be approached. Elements of this approach will provide a way to investigate in a new way the place of the reader in the CRN. This will be done in Chapter III. First, however, in Chapter II it will be necessary to set out the nature of Lucretius' relation to his reader from the traditional rhetorical point of view. In addition, it will be necessary to consider the functioning of this rhetoric in terms of Epicurean epistemology.
Some studies have emphasized Lucretius' poetic success over his philosophical shortcomings. M. Patin, "L' Anti-Lucrèce chez Lucrèce," in Études sur la poésie latine I (Paris 1868), who demonstrates places in which Lucretius' verses contradict his Epicurean principles. R.V. Schoder, "Lucretius' Poetic Problem," C.J., 45 (1945) 128-35, is representative of the point of view that Lucretius did write some fine poetry but, as a whole, wrote a faulty poem; he concludes that the task was just too much for the poet at that early stage of Latin literature; P. DeLacy, "Process and Value: An Epicurean Dilemma," TAPA, 88 (1957) 114-26, sees a contradiction of a projection of value into a valueless natural process by Lucretius, another case of poetry divorced from philosophic purpose. W. Anderson, "Discontinuity in Lucretian Symbolism," TAPA, 91 (1960) 1-29, corrects DeLacy's view by showing that Epicureanism transforms the negative images which are a product of humanity.

A middle ground is suggested by D.S. Parker, Epicurean Imagery in Lucretius' De Rerum Natura (diss. Princeton 1952), who sees an interplay of emotionally affective psychagogy and Epicurean argument, working together in the structure of the books. A somewhat similar approach is taken by C. Castner, Functions of Descriptive Poetry in Lucretius 6.96-422 (diss. Univ. of N. Carolina 1979).

Other studies have suggested a workable integration. M. McLeod, "Lucretius' carmen dianum," C.J., 58 (1963) 145-56, sees the poem as itself an embodiment of the birth-life-death cycle through which nature herself works. A. Amory, "Obscura de re lucida carmina: Science and Poetry in DRN," YCS, 21 (1969) 145-68, is a study of examples of "local" interaction of poetry and philosophy in selected contexts. R. Minadeo, The Lyre of Science (Detroit 1969), views the whole of the poem as structured through a leitmotif of creation and destruction. E. M. Thury, "Naturae Species Ratiocui: Poetic Image and Philosophical Perspective in the DRN of Lucretius" (diss. Univ. of Penn. 1976), is an argument that Lucretius holds a different standard for language than Epicurus, and that because he considers his poem a simulacrum, which is perceived as all other phenomana, this allows Lucretius to hold it up as a valid combination of species and ratio.

McLeod (1963), who provided the foundation for Minadeo's later study, sets the tone: "It must be remembered that Lucretius' way of thought depends on the merging of the physical, the emotional, the intellectual and the moral, and that his images cannot be limited by any one interpretation" (p. 148).

F. Cairns, Generic Composition in Greek and Roman Poetry (Edinburgh 1972) 283-86, where an index of genres and examples gives a suggestion of the possibilities.
E.g., as Cairns (1972) discusses such manipulations of genres as those he calls inversion, reaction, inclusion (127, 138, 158).

Praise of Empedocles, 1.716-33; refutation of Heraclitus, 1.635-704.

Bailey DRN vol. 1, 29.


W. Merrill, "Parallelism and Coincidences in Lucretius and Ennius", Univ. Cal. Publ. in Class. Philol. vol 3, #4 (1918)249-64; see Bailey DRN vol 1, 30 for suggestions. Beyond the Roman poetic models for Lucretius, the Greek tradition of the Alexandrians has been less obvious, but cannot be overlooked; for this see R. D. Brown, "Lucretius and Callimachus," JCS 7 (1982) 77-97; E. J. Kenney, "Doctus Lucretius," Mnemosyne 4, 23 (1970) 366-92, who agrees essentially with the earlier study, L. Ferrero, Poetica Nuova in Lucrezio (Florence 1949).


1.26.72: ista enim a vobis quasi dictata redduntur quae Epicurus oscilans halucinatus est; Diogenes notes this hostile tradition (D.L. 3-8), but he testifies to Epicurus' learning and prodigious literary output of about 300 volumes (D.L. 26-28).

D. Clay, Lucretius and Epicurus (Ithaca, NY 1983) 18; and the full scale later study by J. Woltzer, Lucreti philosophia cum fontibus comparata (diss. Groningen 1877).

A. Koenig, Lucreti de simulacris et de visu doctrina cum fontibus comparata (Greifswald 1914); but Clay (1983) 18 notes that the text of the papyri was corrupt and therefore of little use.

See Bailey DRN vol. 1, 23 for a comparative chart.
14 A "small" or "lesser" epitome suggested in D.L. 10. 85 (the text and translations of Diogenes Laertius used throughout are from R.D. Hicks, ed., Diogenes Laertius, Lives of Eminent Philosophers [Cambridge, MA 1970], vol. 2):

καλὸς δὴ αὐτὰ διάλογε, καὶ διὰ μνήμης ἕχων ὀξέως
αὐτὰ περιόδευσε μετὰ τῶν λοιπῶν δὲν ἐν τῇ μικρῇ
ἐπιτομῇ πρὸς Ἡρώδουτον ἀπεστείλαμεν.

So you will do well to take and learn them and get them up quickly along with the short epitome in my letter to Herodotus.


19 D.L. 10.121.

20 Further documentation for this can be found in P. DeLacy, "Epicurean Analysis of Language," AJP 60 (1939) 85-92; 106-8; P. Giuffrida, L'epicurismo nella letteratura latina nel I secolo a.C. (Turin 1940), vol.1, Esame e ricostruzione delle fonti Filodemo, 15-27; N. DeWitt, Epicurus and his Philosophy (Minneapolis 1954); P. Boyancé, Lucrèce et l'épicurisme (Paris 1983) 57-59.

21 DeLacy (1939) 88, drawing upon Philodemus' Peri Polematon.


23 E.g., A.P. Ware, "Didacticism and Lucretian Genius," CB (1956) 4-5.

25 RE 15.1, 609-16.

26 Suet. Jul. 23; Cic., OEfr. 3.2.3.

27 Cic., Brut. 247; Cat. 10, 28; extant line in Nonius 194, Morel EFL 91.


30 Bailey DRN vol. 2, 599; W. Merrill, "Lucretiana," (summary) TAPA 35 (1904) lxii, sees the poem as written for the general reader, with just a preface dedication to Memmius as an afterthought and a haphazard replacement of spondaic and trochaic words by "Memmi" here and there as a part of a recasting of it in Memmius' honor; but K. Buchner, "Die Proömen des Lukrez," Classica et Mediaevalia, 13 (1952) 159 agrees with Bailey and sees Lucretius as moving from being an Alexandrian poet of physics written for Memmius, in the early books, to being an ardent disciple preaching ethics for a rhetorical tu in the rest of the work; G. Townend, "The Fading of Memmius," CQ 72 (1978) 267-83, expands an earlier study by Bruns (1884), maintaining that Lucretius wrote for a general audience, by studying addresses to the reader, for possible change from Memmius to the general reader.


32 B. Farrington, "Form and Purpose in the DRN," in R. Dudley, ed., Lucretius (London 1965) 28, disagrees strongly with the theory of books written earlier in the DRN and the idea of different addressees in each half of the work, seeing that associations with Memmius' name carry over into the second persons addressed in those books which do not contain his name.

33 Farrington (1965) 30. It is important to note also the essentially pro forma element of dedication and address to a patron as a convention of the didactic genre, A. Dalzell (1983) 31-32.

34 This is done to an extent by C.J. Classen, "Poetry and Rhetoric in Lucretius," TAPA 99 (1968) 77-118.

35 E.g., as seen in Farrington and Classen.


38 The reader whom Lucretius creates "reveals the complexity of soul which he means to lead to an understanding and acceptance of his philosophy" 214.

39 For general survey and introduction: Susan Suleman and Inge Crosman, eds., The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation (Princeton 1980); Jane Tompkins, ed., Reader-Response Criticism, from Formalism to Post Structuralism (Baltimore 1980).


41 Cf. Lucretius' awareness of such a situation, when speaking of our perception of celestial phenomena: 

\[ \text{quam tibi iam nemo fessus satiata videndi, / suspicere in caeli dignitatur lucida templo (2.1038-39).} \]


43 Jameson (1972) 81-83.


45 Holub (1984) 16-171


48 The periods "early" and "late" usually refering especially to the work characterized by the Logical Investigations (1900), where meaning was a function of the perceiver's intentional act, and that beginning with Ideas,
General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology (1913), where meaning is found both in intentional act and in the object of that act.


52 See T.P. Wiseman, "The Two Worlds of Titus Lucretius," in Cinna the Poet and Other Roman Essays (Leicester 1974) for L's intimate knowledge of topography of Rome.

53 Ingarden (1973) 50-55.

54 See Ingarden (1973) 221-23; this seems related to Husserl's distinction between predicative and pre-predicative judgement, set out in his Experience and Judgement.


58 Iser (1978) 38.


60 Iser (1978) 170-79 for a critique of Ingarden.

61 Iser (1978) 195.

62 For this see e.g., Aron Gurwitsch, Studies in Phenomenology and Psychology (Evanston, Ill 1966) 175-286, "Gestalt Theory and Phenomenology."

64 Iser (1978) 150.
CHAPTER II

LUCRETIUS AND HIS EPICUREAN READER

Lucretius' stated interest is to banish fear and bring the reader to the Epicurean *aules*. It is essentially a moral purpose. We have seen that Lucretius appropriately forms a rhetorical relationship with the reader, putting forth his case in the form of a philosophical protreptic. In doing so, he uses all of the traditional tropes and arguments of this standard genre. But Lucretius does not confine himself to rhetorical means. Indeed, if he had, he would have put his whole enterprise into a very dubious state with respect to the principles of his school. Ultimately, Lucretius' task must be to point out what is already there in the world itself, not to fabricate a new reality. His subject matter makes this not always an easy thing to do. The obscurities of the Epicurean system hinder the attempt to demonstrate it through the familiar world of the reader. Yet it is this very point of difficulty which Lucretius handles so well, and this is largely because of his understanding of his reader.

Lucretius' poetry has sometimes been understood as the product and natural outcome of his rhetorical and philosophical efforts. When the reader is the point of focus, we can carry the above observation a step...
further. Not only does Lucretius' rhetoric and philosophy merge into his poetry, but they also provide many of the basic signals for the reader to synthesize in order to understand the poetic process in the DRN. The influence between poetry, on the one hand, and rhetoric and philosophy, on the other, is bidirectional. The reader requires the instruction and direction of the rhetoric and philosophy as the touchstone to the poetry; yet the poetry (as we shall demonstrate especially in the next chapter) is the vehicle which both enlivens many components of the protreptical intent of the rhetoric and also elucidates many of the otherwise opaque teachings of the philosophy. This apparent tautology is in fact an example and classic case of the hermeneutic circle, the dialectical necessity of knowing what is to be interpreted.

In this chapter, in order to explain the way in which the philosophy, especially a theory of knowledge, inheres in the poetry, we shall look at some explicit directions which Lucretius offers to his reader. We shall see that these directions can be connected with particular Epicurean epistemological principles. It will be suggested further that there is an underlying direction offered in the poem and that this relies chiefly upon the reactions of the reader. The validity of these procedures followed by the reader and their ability to offer true information will be discussed. Finally, the principles followed by Lucretius' reader will be shown to contribute to a Reception reading of the DRN.
Lucretius' protreptic goes beyond promises; it becomes an inherent part of the very structure of the work itself. Further, this structure is partly a product of the successive responses of the reader to the work. It will be shown that Lucretius understands his protreptic to exist as much in the attention and response of the reader as in the written sequences of the poem. This means that the effect of the protreptic is as much epistemological as moral. Indeed, true to Epicurean principles, the epistemological is necessarily prior to the moral. Lucretius makes use of this principle, as he structures his work to bring the reader through an experience of each of these two levels.

First, Lucretius offers explicit guidance to his implicit reader. This goes beyond the "didactic" information proper and beyond the "rhetorical" persuasions of the traditional protreptic; such guidance involves also the dialogue which Lucretius maintains with his reader. He dramatizes himself, as an "implied author," for the reader, and he offers specific instructions as to how the reader is to perceive and interpret the text. Lucretius takes up this overt guidance of the reader as one of his most important functions and as a central aspect of the persona of the implied author which he presents.

Secondly, Lucretius provides an underlying guidance to the reader. The purpose of much of the explicit guidance is to allow this underlying guidance to take effect. The underlying guidance is the structuring of the text which
occurs as a result of what the reader does in response to the explicit guidance given to him. It is through the implicit guidance that Lucretius most realizes his success in bringing the reader to an Epicurean view of the world.

A large part of Lucretius's protreptic task is to capture and maintain the attention of his audience. From the very earliest stages of the poem he does not hesitate to admonish the reader to keep up his attention. At 1.50, following the opening prayer, a transition, in which Lucretius sets out a resume of the information he plans to impart, is begun by such a call to attention:

\[\text{quod superest, vacuas aurs animumque sagacem}
\text{semotum a curis adhibe veram ad rationem (1.50-51)}\]

For what remains, apply empty ears and a keen mind removed from all care to true inquiry.

The request that the reader bring empty ears and keen mind free from care is significant, for it introduces the two modes in which the reader must function, the passive and the active.

Lucretius renews such a call to attention at times which he thinks require a special or renewed effort by the reader. His favored expression for this purpose is \textit{nunc age.}\textsuperscript{7} The phrase is not unusual and certainly not technical, but, given the epistemological responsibilities faced by Lucretius, such a phrase can signal changes of status in the types of information which Lucretius offers to the reader. One must consider
whether there is another use for this device of a call to attention, one consistent with the ways in which Lucretius accepts and uses Epicurean epistemology and wedds it to his protreptic and poetic purpose.  

Lucretius uses the phrase *nunc age* a number of times throughout the poem at points at which he proceeds to introduce certain new ideas or explanations of previous statements. It is generally translated as a phrase of transition, carrying no more than a meaning of an exclamatory particle. However, when the instances of its appearance are examined, the context of its use suggests an important feature. Although there are places where the phrase is apparently used in merely an introductory way, the majority of uses occur in passages in which Lucretius is explaining things which either are not immediately apparent to the senses or, because they are not approachable through the senses, are only open to understanding through the inference of mind. In such instances the meaning of *age*, which suggests a call to action, is most applicable.

The first appearance of the phrase most clearly demonstrates Lucretius' exhortation to the reader to follow in the mind what cannot be revealed directly through the senses. Lucretius is concerned about his words being distrusted because what he has been explaining, the fact that things are not generated from mere nothing, is not immediately apparent to the senses:

\[ \text{Nunc age, res quoniam docui non posse creari de nilo neque item genitas ad nil revocari, nequa forte tamen coeptes diffidere dictis, quod nequeunt oculis rerum primordia cerni,} \]
Come now, since I have taught you that things cannot be created of nought nor likewise when begotten be called back to nothing, lest by any chance you should begin nevertheless to distrust my words, because the first-beginnings of things cannot be descried with the eyes, let me tell you besides of other bodies, which you must needs confess yourself are among things and yet cannot be seen.

He then proceeds with a list of other invisible things which only the mind infers, yet which we believe actually underlie the larger-scale phenomena: the action of the wind and water is seen to have various effects, yet there must be bodies in them to touch and effect objects. This is especially true of the wind, which cannot be seen at all but is only inferred from its effects; so too the tiny particles of moisture in the air which dampens clothes by the shore:

in parvas igitur partis dispergitur umor
quas oculi nulla possunt ratione videre (1.309-10)

Therefore the moisture is dispersed into tiny particles, which the eyes can in no way see.

Later, in Bk. 1 a similarly intended use of nunc age occurs: nunc age quod superest cognosce et clarius audi, "Pay attention here to learn what remains and listen more clearly" (1.921). Bailey translates clarius audi as "listen to clearer words," and maintains that the "adverb does not refer to the acuteness of the hearing, but rather to the thing heard." It is best, however, to keep the first interpretation, of clarius as adverb directed toward the action of the subject, which Bailey acknowledges as the literal
This places the emphasis upon the reader's need for attention rather than upon the writer's need to simplify and clarify. As a general principle, based upon both Epicurean doctrine and Lucretius' own poetic method, the language and images of the poem should be interpreted in the simplest and most concrete sense available. In the following lines Lucretius does go on to describe that the "honeyed cup" (1.936-42) of his verse is intended to make the obscure doctrine more delightful for the reader. But the passage that follows this digression (1.951-57, on the limit of the sum of things) draws a clear link with his initial call to attention back in 1.921.

In 1.922 Lucretius acknowledges that the things of which he is about to speak are hidden from the immediate view: *nec me animi fallit quam sint obscura*. After enunciating his ambitions as a poet (1.922-50), Lucretius attempts to set the argument for the infinity of matter, the concept of an unbounded universe (1.968ff.). This speculation is far removed from everyday sensory experience and the appeal necessarily has to be to the capacity of the mind to "see" the argument. Our senses show us land bounding sea, mountains bounding space (1.998-1001), and suggest one thing; but when we realize in our mind that nature ordains bodies to be bounded by void and vice versa, by this argument we understand a quite different picture, space and matter only defined through each other, and thus the conception of the unbounded universe as a whole. Lucretius shows
that the first suggestions and the testimony of the senses must be corrected by an act of mind which grasps the truth behind the merely apparent.

Other arguments that begin with the call *nunc aoe* deal with aspects of the world that are not immediately perceivable and require a special effort and faculty of the mind in order to be approached by the reader: the nature and forms of atomic movement (2.62), the different kinds and shapes of the atoms (2.333), the fact that atoms are colorless, the matter of secondary qualities (2.730), the mortality of mind and soul (3.417), the make-up of the thin images, the *simulacra* (4.176), the truths behind optical illusions (4.269), and the nature of the thought process itself (4.722). In most of the passages Lucretius provides ample material from the experiential world, which provides analogies to the imperceivables. Yet, if one is to feel that these analogies can be valid, they must have the force of direct access of the mind to phenomena. There is an important cognitive principle involved in these foregoing calls to attention, as we shall see. In particular, *nunc aoe* offers an opportunity for the functioning of the device known as the ἐπιβολή. Assessments of what this term meant for the Epicureans vary, but essentially it was a process of the mind which allowed a focusing and a close judgement as to the truth of phenomena.\(^{13}\)

There is a further indication that in certain of these arguments Lucretius believes that his words open up valid and sure concepts for the closely inquiring mind of the reader. When speaking of the speed and fine texture of
the simulacra (4.176ff), he forms the analogy between his verse and the song of the swan:

suavidicis potius quam multis versibus edam;
parvus ut est cynci melior canor, ille gruum quam clamon in aetheris dispersus nubibus austr.i (4.180-82)

I will display this in sweetly spoken rather than in many verses; as the slight song of the swan is better than that noise of cranes scattered in the heavenly clouds of the south. 14

Bailey translates parvus as brief, and so holds the comparison with multis. This translation, however, seems to be at the expense of the more direct comparison with clamor, which is more effective when parvus is given the meaning of fine, subtle or slight. 15 But the real importance lies in Lucretius' comparison of his verses to the parvus canor. The analogy is appropriate to this discussion of the texture of the swift images of the simulacra.

Epicurus tells us that fine images retain their speed and integrity more readily than do larger and more dense configurations of atoms; thus these fine images are more readily seen as being the real object in perception, when they are brought under the scrutiny of that faculty which is able to detect slight images. 16 Lucretius here wishes his verse to be parvus, not brief or small, but fine, delicate, and so likened to fine simulacra and thus able to be trusted as true and as valid as those images. At once Lucretius is reenforcing the status of his poem as nature through its form and function, and, moreover, is mindful of the necessity of addressing the
different forms of perception and cognition at the differing levels at which phenomena manifest themselves, thus assuring valid knowledge at each of those levels. It is the last level, that of what Epicurus calls the ἐνοχα; which Lucretius wishes his words to represent, images perceived only through man’s special faculties.

There are two reasons why Lucretius’ analogy is significant in terms of his use of the concept of ἐνοχα. If he wants his verses to be parvus, this is because the mind “sees” finer images than do the eyes:

scire licet mentem simili ratione moveri
per simulacra leonum et cetera quae videt aeque
nec minus atque oculi, nisi quod mage tenvia cernit. (4.754-56)

we may know that the mind is moved in like manner by means of the Idols of lions and of all else which it sees, neither more nor less than the eyes, except that it sees finer idols.

This class of simulacra is so fine that they penetrate the pores and go directly to stimulate the mind without the use of the senses first:

quippe etenim multo magis haec sunt tenvia textu
quam quae percipiunt oculos visumque laccassunt,
corporis haec quoniam penetran per rara ciantque
tenvam animi naturam intus sensumque laccassunt. (4.728-31).

For indeed these idols are far finer in their texture than those which fill the eyes and arouse sight, since these pierce through the pores of the body and awake the fine nature of the mind within, and arouse its sensation.

In this place, however, Lucretius cites these fine simulacra as the cause of imaginary figures such as centaurs (4.732ff.). But elsewhere the fine idols are credited with supplying true knowledge, as in the knowledge of
the gods.

In addition to the ability of the fine idols to penetrate directly to the mind, there is also the advantage for Lucretius of the fine idols' connection to their operation exclusively in the mind. If the fine idols bypass the senses, they also escape any of the errors to which the senses are susceptible. On the other hand, however, Lucretius tells us that nevertheless they are still capable of becoming confused into such a phantom as an image of a centaur. But these false images can be recognized as such within the mind. It is here that one must resort to the function of the ἐμβόλη, that faculty which the Epicureans held as capable of scrutinizing the fine image to arbitrate the truth. Central to the ideal of the ἐμβόλη is the image of a "casting forth" of the mind, a focusing of attention, a strained concentration. It is likely that Lucretius is summoning this principle through his exhortation, nunc adeo, in passages in which his argument rested, of necessity, in the obscure regions of experience. There remain a few further passages in which we may speculate that Lucretius' approximation to the Epicurean cognitive faculty is set out more literally.

Two passages in Bk. 2 refer directly to a projecting of the mind into phenomena. In the passage already cited, in which Lucretius argues against secondary qualities as a possession of the atom itself, he goes on to advise against thinking that the mind cannot approach such a concept, i.e., of conceiving a colorless atom:
And if by chance it seems to you that the mind cannot project itself into these bodies, you wander far astray.

And further in the same book, in a paragraph that prefaces his discussion of infinity of matter and space, he exhorts the reader to confidence in the capacity of the mind to understand the world:

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quaerit enim rationem animus, cum summa loci sit
inflinta foris haec extra moenia mundi,
quid sit ibi porro quo prospicere usque velit mens
atque animi iactus liber quo pervolet ipse (2.1044-47)
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For our mind seeks to reason, since the sum of space is boundless out beyond the walls of this world, what there is far out there, as far as the spirit desires to look forward, and whither the unfettered projection of our mind flies on unchecked.

The important idea in *injectum*, as in ἐμβολή, is that it is an active effort of the mind, not a passive accepting, but a deliberate casting of mind and a resultant grasping of phenomena. Thus, the mind's vital link with unperceived phenomena is also an important factor for the poet in his attempt to draw images of that part of the world at the fringes of experience. Lucretius could paint vivid vignettes of the sensible world through his verse, and he could boast of the infinity of his examples offered up for analogy, but at the same time he realizes that the success of his efforts does not solely reside in his own powers. Just as the world offers its secrets and reveals its nature at every moment only to one who would attend to it openly, so too a poem reveals itself only through the efforts of
its audience. Further, in the areas in which nature keeps itself hidden from view and from the mind's ready grasp, the effort and attention of the mind assume an even more important role. When Lucretius attempts to discuss this area of nature, he makes use of the very areas of the Canon, especially the ἐπιθλῆ, which Epicurus prescribed as appropriate, indeed as indispensible, to the possibility of knowledge. In each level of cognition, from the simple sensations to the higher rational capacities of the mind, Lucretius closely follows the epistemological track of the master.

It will be necessary here to take a closer look at further workings of this epistemology in order to evaluate how they function in Lucretius' reader.

In claiming that the sensations (αἰσθησίας) are a criterion of truth, Epicurus is quoted as saying that every sensation is devoid of reason and incapable of memory. Such is the character of sensation because it is not self-caused but rather externally caused and, as such, it can neither add to nor subtract from its content. If the sensation were wholly derived from the external world, then the state of affairs which it registered could be relied upon as being identical with its immediate reference in the external world. Although the sensation was an appearance which was registered within the perceiving subject, and in fact could be considered as being some form of response, because it was an immediate registering of the external state of affairs it could not properly be called an act of rational cognition.
which would admit the possibility of error through its process of mediation and combination. 20

The Epicureans conceived the external stimulus to be a stream of particles, *εἴδωλα*, emitted from objects in all directions. As this stream hit the eye, for example, it would by its pressure cause a tactile response which would excite the soul atoms which would then transmit the sensation to the mind. The progress of the sensation followed strictly a material causal chain. The integrity of this chain assured the truth quality of the sensation as received as it made its way through the cognitive process to further levels of development and use.

An important feature of this stream of *εἴδωλα* is the manner in which it is received by the sense organ. Because the *εἴδωλα* are so subtle in texture, they cannot be perceived individually, but rather are registered en masse in their quick succession. What we actually perceive is not the group of individual *εἴδωλα*, but the image (φαντασία) produced when they mass upon the sense organ such as the eye. 21 This φαντασία is, in turn, not merely one image but rather, as we are informed by both Epicurus and Lucretius, it is a succession of images. 22 Because the *εἴδωλα* flow in a swift stream, the succession of individual images could be likened to a cinemagraphic representation. This particular portrayal of the perceptual process might have been Epicurus’ response to the criticism that if all
sensations are true, then instances of contrary impressions of the same object would have to be true.

Epicurus maintained that each impression gives a different object image, the true perception of the object being a continuum of these pictures of it. An important operation, then, takes place early in the process of perception. This process of combination takes place well before the appearance of the operation of λόγος. The "pre-rational" nature of the appearance, the φαντασία, however, does not mean that the φαντασία is not a cognitive operation, not itself involving thinking. Rather, as David Olidden has shown in his close study of Epicurean epistemology, the φαντασίαι are, in fact, the end points of the immediate cognitive response to stimulation by the ἐνδόωλα. We see here, then, both the workings of a cognitive operation and, at the same time, the retention of the immediacy required for the truth quality of φαντασίαι, which have been characterized as "discriminating reflexes."

The first step in cognition, then, the αἴσθησις, is the result of a combining operation of thought, being registered only after sufficient idol images come together to cause a recognizable φαντασία. This threshold of perception is entered upon automatically as the ἐνδόωλα impinge upon the sensory organ. The mere sensation of an image, however, is not enough; it is necessary that there be a registration and recognition of that sensation in
Its appearance, i.e., as a φαντασία. This is accomplished through a logically immediate cognitive response to the stimulation, and it registers as an ἐπαξίσθησις, a perfected sensation which has reached a certain goal. The registration of the fantasia as an appearance (as different from mere ἀισθησις, the feeling of a sensation) only happens when there is a context which provides a content for the the φαντασία; it is the identification and recognition of a content which allows the perception of a thing to be conceived and identified as such. This is accomplished, as is everything else in the Epicurean cognitive scheme, by material combination. What the φαντασία combines with to register its content and identity and so be an ἐπαξίσθησις is the structure called πρόληψις.

It is important to note that there are indications that Lucretius sees the first level of the perceptual process, described above, as applicable to the perception of his poem. The clearest suggestion of this is found in one of his favorite analogies, where he illustrates the arrangement and function of primordia in a compound body in comparison with how words are formed from letters. Its first appearance (1.196-97) seems not to fit the context comfortably, where he is speaking of the fixed rate of growth in the natural world, but its next appearance (1.823) is set appropriately in a discussion of the primordia. It is of the greatest importance for the determination of substances that the primordia should be in particular positions and joined
with other primordia (1.817-19). And the same is true for his verse:

Quin etiam passim nostris in versibus ipsis
multa elementa vides multis communia verbis,
cum tamen inter se versus ac verba necessest
confiteare et re et sonitu distare sonanti.
Tantum elementa queunt permutato ordine solo(1.823-27).

Indeed scattered abroad in my verses you see many letters common to many words, and yet you must needs grant that verses and words are unlike both in sense and in the ring of their sound. So great is the power of letters by a mere change of order.

And when speaking of the seeds of heat that are stirred by the rubbing of trees in the forest which causes fires, he shows that the fire occurs through interaction, not through seeds of fire itself stored in the trees. The great difference which this interaction makes is also seen when words themselves have their letters changed. Elaborating the comparison, he notes how wood (ligna) and fire (ignis), though similar in letters, signify different things when pronounced distinctly (1.911-14). In Bk. 2 he mentions that objects, such as fruit, can be understood to contain several types of primordia co-existing in the same object forming its whole, for smell, taste, color of fruit find their ways to different senses and so indicate differently shaped primordia. So too, his words and verses are composed of different elements, all combining for a harmonious whole (2.688-94). And his last use of this metaphor claims that it is of great consequence what position each letter holds, for in his verse the same letters, when appearing in different orders in separate words, signify sky, sea, earth,
rivers, etc. (2.1013-18).

In another level of the perceptual process, the πρόληψις is of central importance to the Epicurean cognitive scheme, but it is one of the many elusive terms of the philosophy which has undergone many different interpretations.29 A commonly accepted translation, one defended by Bailey, is that it is an "anticipatio." While this term suggests many useful aspects of the πρόληψις, it should be used in a qualified way only, for it is liable to cause one to misunderstand the material and reactive character of cognition.

Contrary to the common conception of Epicurus' Canon, Epicurus himself does not list the πρόληψις as a criterion in any of his extant writings. Its use by the Epicureans, however, is mentioned by Diogenes, who gives a number of synonyms for it which help us draw some useful concepts about it: it is an apprehension (κατάληψις), a correct opinion (δόξα ἀρθή), a notion (ἔννοια), or a universal idea (καθολικὴ νόησις).30 Further, he tells us that we would not start an investigation unless we had an idea of what we were in search of, and would not have named anything without first having an idea of it through πρόληψις. He claims that the προλήψεις are clear and that they are the objects of judgment and themselves built of something previously clear.31 We should examine these statements.

It has been mentioned that a criterion of truth for the Epicureans had to
have the immediacy of the natural presentation and so be ἀλογος; error arose when something was added to or taken away from this. But it was also noted that the single idol image could not be used to achieve sensation until it combined in enough successive images to exert sufficient pressure to cause the complete sensation. In addition, once having caused sensation, the φαντασία had to undergo another operation to achieve appearance status and so be of any meaning and use in cognition. All of this would occur on the level of immediacy, of ἀλογος, yet a substantial degree of combination seems to have occurred already at this stage of the perceptual process.

The πρόληψις, upon which we set our judgements, must have a quality of truth, a basis in the actual state of affairs, and a certainty if any judgements can make a claim of truth. If we accept Diogenes’ identification of πρόληψις with δόξα ὅρθη, we can also then claim that a πρόληψις could have the possibility of being false. Although in this case it might have been judged ὅρθη, since a δόξα in itself always has the possibility of being either true or false, being a product of mediation, it holds no necessary connection with truth.

Πρόληψις as ἐννομία also incurs difficulties. In 124 of the collection of forty of the most important articles of the Epicurean creed, an epitome of Epicurus’ writings that was famous in antiquity as the Κύριοι Δοξαι, Epicurus states that to avoid error one must confirm all ἐννομία before employing
them. 32 Although Glidden interprets this as suggesting that ἐννοια does equal πρόληψις, which would make πρόληψις a product of λόγος, in this case one must ask where one would turn for the confirmation of an ἐννοια. ἐννοια as equal to πρόληψις would mean that one would have to turn to the pure unregistered (yet composite) image of the φαντασία, that which exists before it reaches ἐπαίσθησις, which in turn, as suggested, occurred through the action of the πρόληψις.

It is again important to emphasize that Epicurus, as a realist, had to affirm the existence of the workings of an external world for the support of his doctrines. Knowledge of this world would have to be through an immediate perceptual link which carried only information of this world and nothing else. When we come to the level of the πρόληψις, it is tempting to view it as a structure combined subsequent to a process of abstraction, a separation of general features which then leads to a recombination of similars and gives rise to a defining structure. 33 But this would make it a process of λόγος, of mediation. It is apparent that Epicurus could not intend this. The πρόληψις cannot, indeed, be viewed as a composite photograph, 34 for then it would be something different or more than its constituent parts, and would lose the capacity for its composition to be traced to the external references. The causal material chain which can always serve to refer objects of thought back to objects of the world was
crucial.

Sensation, for the Epicurean, is always sensation of individual objects. The ἡπόμηνις, therefore, must be composed of individual parts which, while forming the identity and the essential character of the ἡπόμηνις, must still maintain its individual identification; this allows it to be traced back to the first point of particular sensation. Each ὁματοσία, while having an essential structure which allows its registration as a particular identity and its association with and assignment to a certain ἡπόμηνις, is also tagged with a series of characteristics which identifies it as a particular instance.

This tagging includes, among other particulars which identify the individual perception, a temporal awareness, i.e., a sense that the perception has a particular position vis-à-vis its neighboring perceptions, a certain placing in time. It also contains a host of other idiosyncratic details which make up its particularity. The ἡπόμηνις of horse, for example, contains an inner core of those essentials which have come together through their natural affinity to coalesce into the concept "horse." Each of the instances which reside in the essential core, however, would also be connected, as with a string, to the set of details which originally tagged that ὁματοσία in its particularity. By maintaining this tag, then, the ἡπόμηνις (as the set of essential characteristics of each ὁματοσία) would retain the possibility of its verification through recall and enumeration of the
particulars with which it was composed. The "tagging" of this detailed
particular identification of φαντασία is needed if the πρόληψις is able to be
identified and directly linked with immediate sensation and not be considered
a mere autonomous universal.

Thus, the πρόληψις could be considered a criterion of truth because of
(1) its formation from the coalescing of individual φαντασίαι which would
come together by the natural law of their affinity, (2) its immediate link
with particular sensations, and so its verifiability, from the tagging of
individuality onto the essential structures of the φαντασίαι which compose
its core. Throughout, it is important to keep in mind that the Epicurean
psychology, the cognitive functioning of the mind, had also to be understood
always as strictly material if the crucial link with the material outside
world was to be maintained so that the causal link of perception could carry
sure knowledge of the world. How does Lucretius stand in regard to this
level of perception?

Lucretius suggests that the process which began with the combination of
the letters into his words continues in the composition of his words into
verses. His verses, the way that he puts words together, can approximate
the way that the mind puts images together in the formation of a πρόληψις.
This occurs particularly when he is trying to put together a parade of many
individual instances in order to lead the reader to extract from them a
central idea. It is important to note that πρόληψις can be both of concrete objects and of abstract qualities; when they are of abstract ideas, however, the words of Epicurus must be heeded, such as when he admonishes us to realize that time is to be thought of as being derived from individual experiences of it, e.g., a day, an hour, etc.35

Although his direct references to the πρόληψις are few, it is clear from his instances of use of notities (commonly recognized as his translation for prohlciw) that Lucretius understands the Epicurean functioning of this structure and integrates it into the fabric of what he wishes to portray. He asks where the notities for use in knowledge of true and false come from (4.475) and he quickly answers that you will find that they come from the senses (4.478-79). He claims that, in the mythological scheme of creation, the notities would be needed to explain how the gods had an idea of the pattern for creating things, so that they might know and “see in their mind” what they wished to do (5.181-83).

The notities is also the explanation of the power by which knowledge of the primordia and their workings came to be understood. And in discussing the genesis of words, agreeing with Epicurus, Lucretius claims that it is foolish to think that words were discovered by individual persons and so were learned through them; for, in what way could that person come to know these words by himself, with others not having that understanding, and further, whence was the concept of the word’s use implanted in one person
(5.1046-49)? And in this instance too, the notities is a power to "see in the
mind":

utilitas et unde data est huic prima potestas,
quid vellet facere ut sciret animoque videret?(5.1048-49)

whence was he given the first power to know and see in his mind
what he wanted to do?

In trying to convince us that the primordia in themselves have no color,
but that color is a secondary quality only, Lucretius claims that the blind
nevertheless receive understanding of bodies without color, and in such a
way also the bodies are turned into notities in our mind:

scire licet nostrae quoque menti corpora posse
verti in notitiam nullo circumlita fuco (2.744-45)

you may know that for our mind too, bodies painted with no
tint may enter our comprehension.

And in striking visual analogies to the constant flow and tumult of atoms
in the void, he claims that these small things can give a picture of great
things and a trace of a concept (2.123-24). And in Bk. 4 he reinforces the
idea that things were firstborn of themselves and only later revealed
concepts of their utility (4.853-54). It is clear throughout that notities are
spoken of as things which are revealed by nature to man, they are things
manifest, not things deduced. Because they are what nature shows us,
notities are true and can only register similarities and differences in
immediate experience. Lucretius nowhere claims that they are conscious
operations of the mind, but rather speaks of them as given. In the process
of cognition up to the level of the πρόληψις, them, Lucretius wishes the reader to continue to follow his dictum not to spew out reason (exspuere) but to seek it (quaerere) (2.1040-47).

This, of course, is the essence of the task of the Epicurean adherent. Unlike the practice of other schools, a formal logic was not imposed on the world; rather, a "logic" was found in the workings — the ratio — of the world itself. Approached in this way, Lucretius' poem presents a "world" in which the reader can work and find that "logic." The added advantage for the reader here, though, is that, unlike the frequent lack of guidance in the natural world, Lucretius reminds his reader of the proper way of going about his observations. But propriety here is not a system of dialectic, but the physical workings of nature itself. And part of these physical workings is the process of cognition, the activity of the reader.

In the famous colorful paragraph 1.398-417, Lucretius states very clearly his view of how both he and his reader are to function in this enterprise. He will heap up the words; but far from being an abundance and a sufficiency, these words will only be light footprints, a track for the hound-like reader to follow. Lucretius is far from being self-effacing, though, for later he notes that he can pour out floods of words and proofs which could flow longer than the reader's lifetime. What he is saying is that the writer is certainly up to the task, but his efforts can only carry the process so far. In terms of the world, of all natural reality, the author
offers only an outline, a schematic form.

It is here that the reader enters. For him, the task is to follow the traces of the outline. This leads him, as the simile goes, to the hidden lair of the truth. In one sense, however, the reader can never see what is inside the lair, for ultimately it is the primordia which are there, by their nature ever roaming as fugitives from the immediate senses. The reader will never actually see or catch them, but will instead come to know them through the truths inferred from the natural world. And this applies to Lucretius' poem also, for he feels confident that the images of his poem are the natural reality also. His comparison of his poem to natural image is reinforced by the description of his message as vestigia. We may compare 4.87, where simulacra are described as vestigia: \( \text{[simulacra] sunt iigitur iam formarum vestigia certa} \). And the vestigia give knowledge when they are informed by ratio.\(^{36}\)

The equivalence of natural world and his literary text which Lucretius suggests is also a suggestion that the function of a reader should be similar to that of the observer in the natural world. We have seen that indeed Lucretius speaks of his reader's task in concepts taken from Epicurean epistemology. Although Lucretius is providing simply an outline for the reader, the fact that he is confident that the reader can assemble meaning from the text implies Lucretius' confidence in the workability of certain structured effects of the text. It is at this point that a method such as a
Reception theory is useful in elucidating such effects, since they are actualized by Lucretius’ reader.

Certain features of Lucretius’ method and use of Epicurean epistemology find rough equivalents in some reception principles.37 Most fundamental, of course, is Lucretius’ characterization of his text as a schematic form. This is the basis for the turn to the reader in the *DRN*, both in terms of what Lucretius does for his reader and in the way in which a critical reading of the *DRN* may proceed.

Further, the reader follows one thing after another, as the hound follows one print after the other in following a track. This implies a succession of segments, which in turn brings in the element of time. The reader’s experience unfolds gradually over a stretch of time.

Within this succession there are two important operations occurring. Within the apparently simple linear movement of the reader’s experience, there is at work expectation as well as memory, that is, both a forward and backward movement by the reader at certain moments. We have seen that two structures in which such movements occur are the ἐπιβολή and the πρόληψις, both essential to the cognitive process.

As a didactic poet, Lucretius is attempting to create a secure base of information for the reader. He therefore has an interest in limiting possible indeterminacies in his text to the extent that he can. But, because of the atomic reality of which he speaks, he admits that his writing can only create
approximate images at times. The indeterminate places or "blanks" in Lucretius' text, then, are imposed on him by his subject. But for that reason, they need not necessarily be detrimental to his work, even being the didactic work that it is. Indeed, it will be necessary to investigate whether such indeterminacies may be used by Lucretius to his poetic advantage and, further, whether they become, reflexively through the poetry and the reader's actions within the poetry, more secure information, after they have taken this circuitous path.


R. Keen, "Lucretius and His Reader," *Apeiron* 19 (1985) 1, shows the varying frequency of address to the reader (either in the form of a second person singular pronoun or any verb in that person) throughout the work, with a high frequency occurring in the rather difficult and technical Bk 2: Bk 1, 77 times; Bk 2, 105 times; Bk 3, 47 times; Bk 4, 84 times; Bk 5, 39 times; Bk 6, 59 times.

With a probable line or two of transition previous to this, Bailey, *DRN* vol 2, 604.

My translation; *animumque sagacem* supplied for the line incomplete in the MSS, suggested by the Verona scholiast on Verg. 3. 3, Bailey *DRN* vol 2, 605.

So Bailey, *DRN* vol 2, 644, characterizes it as the regular introductory formula which calls attention to a new point, cf. 1.921,953, 2.62, 333; used by Vergil, 4. 149, as he begins speaking of the qualities which Jupiter has given to bees.

S. Wiltshire, "Nunc Aoe — Lucretius as Teacher," *CB* 50 (1974) 33-37, for the use of this phrase as a pedagogical device.

In Bk. 6, when certain natural phenomena are explained, *nunc age* appears to be essentially a phrase of transition: 6.495, 535, 738; the other appearances of this phrase which do suggest a special act of attention are: 1.265, (invisibility of atoms), 953 (matter and space infinite); 2.62 (atomic motion), 333 (atomic shape), 730 (secondary qualities); 3. 417 (mind and spirit as mortal); 4. 110 (the fineness of certain images), 176 (speed of images), 269 (explanation of optical illusion), 673 (explanation of smell), 722 (special images which reach the mind).
10 Bailey, *DRN* vol 1, 223, and vol 2, 758-59.


12 It is an important metaphor for Lucretius to speak of mental process in terms of the sense, especially vision.


15 Cf. 6.130-31:

    nec mirum, cum plena animae vensicula parva
    saepe ita dat parvum sonitum displosa repente

    Nor is it strange, when a little bladder full of air often
    likewise gives forth a little noise, suddenly burst.

    See Bailey's note *ad loc.*, *DRN* vol 3, 1574, on his textual preference for
    *parvum sonitum* (contra *magnum*): in speaking of thunder in this context,
    Lucretius is comparing the small with the great (as in our context).


17 Bailey (1964) 574, notes a similar meaning of projection of mind in

    culus operam propecto non desideraret si inmensam et
    interminatam in omnis partis magnitudinem regionum
    videretis, in quam se inciens animus et intendens ita late
    longeque peregrinatur ut nuliam tamen oram ultimam videat
    in qua possit insister.

    [a god] whose intervention indeed you would not consider if
    you would see the measureless and boundless measure of space
    into every direction, into which the mind, projecting and
    directing itself, journeys so far and wide that it sees no final
    boundary in which it may stop.
Every sensation, he says, is devoid of reason and incapable of any memory.

For neither is it self-caused nor, regarded as having an external cause, can it add anything thereto or take anything therefrom.

Error would not have occurred, if we had not experienced some other movement in ourselves, conjoined with, but distinct from, the perception of what is presented.

They move with rapid motion; and this again explains why they present the appearance of the single continuous object illud in his rebus minime mirabile habendumst. cur, ea quae fertant oculos simulacra videri singula cum nequeant, res ipseae perspiciantur.
Herein by no means must we deem there is cause to wonder why, when the idols which strike the eyes cannot be seen one by one, the whole things are descried.

23 The only objection that then could be raised was whether or not the image survived its trip from object to eye totally intact: the sensation could be due to either the close coherence of the image or to the parts that are left behind and survive the various collisions and transformations along the way. In any event, the image would be a true and immediate picture of its state of affairs when it met the eye.


26 Norman Dewitt, *Epicurus and his Philosophy* (Minneapolis 1954) 204.

27 Bailey *DRN* vol 2, 633-36.


29 See Bailey (1964) appendix 2, 557f.

30 D.L. 10.33.

31 D.L. 10.33.

32 D.L. 10.147:

ελ δε βεβαιώσεις και το προσμένον άπαν έν τοις δοσκαλω κα έννοιας κα άτο μη την έπιμαρτύρησιν, συκ εκλείψεις το δεσμευμένον,

If in your ideas based upon opinion you hastily affirm as true all that awaits confirmation as well as that which does not, you will not escape error.

Therefore our age cannot look back to see what was done before, unless in any way reason points out traces.
CHAPTER III

LUcretius AND HIS READER IN BOOK 2 OF DE RERUM NATURA

The last chapter showed that Lucretius maintains a consistent overt rhetorical relationship with his reader. He sets up personae, through which he dramatizes both himself in his efforts on behalf of his reader, as well as the reader in his proper role as attentive pupil. Further, as we have seen, many of the devices and strategies which Lucretius uses to signal these functions and bring about their effects fit quite well with the epistemological methodology which his philosophy describes.

Lucretius' rhetorical relation with the reader, then, transcends its use for persuasion in local contexts. Most generally, Lucretius is concerned for the ethical welfare of his reader, whom he hopes to deliver from anxieties of religion and fear of death. This is a fairly diffuse formulation, however, and the realization of this ethical end can come about only through the chain of formulations which, coming out of the initial rhetorical catalyst, moves from the specific and clear to the complex and more diffuse. The clearly formulated purpose of his rhetoric must extend to the area of what Lucretius promises his reader, the promise of a look at a new type of world. This is clearly beyond the scope of rhetoric alone. It is at this point that the less specific purposes of poetry are of use to Lucretius.
In order to arrive at the new reality offered, the reader himself must move beyond the initial rhetorical character of the protreptic. The reader must actively participate in bringing out the meaning through which this world can be realized.

Rhetoric, then, is a guiding influence for the reader, but the participation of the reader in the text must go far beyond this. This further level of participation can be investigated through the use of the principles of Reception theory, outlined above in Chapter I. The model of Reception shows reading as a dynamic process, strongly influenced by its temporal character. Reading does not proceed as a constant process moving in one direction only; rather, pieces of text form into component parts, insofar as they carry particular pieces of syntax, information, and ideas, which together form the boundaries of images. The discontinuities left by these pieces provide the reader, who strives for a consistent whole, with the task of joining them together. This joining takes place as a process of continual modification as the reader moves through the text, reevaluating all that has come before in light of the present context. This cognitive process is an extremely close analogue to the basis of Epicurean epistemology itself, which describes reality and the knowledge of it as an additive process, a gradual combination toward a whole.

In addition to the process of accumulation, the reader's expectations are also important to comprehension. The points at which comprehension
takes place in reading are inseparable from the reader's expectations. As we have seen, this is the result of the need to fill out the mere outline which a text can offer. The unfamiliar world which the text offers would remain alien without the foundation of illusion which the reader builds and uses as the primary device which provides the consistency needed for comprehension. This fabrication or illusion is a heuristic tool which can later be refined or discarded, once more secure knowledge is established.

Bk. 2 of *De Rerum Natura* is a suitable place within the work to observe the various efforts required of the reader. First, it is instrumental in fixing a concrete image of the atom and its world. The establishment of such a concrete conception of this otherwise hidden world is essential for what Lucretius may hope to demonstrate in the remaining books. The idea of an unseen material form working in all things is introduced in Bk. 1, but there remains the need for a way by which the reader may build a heuristically useful model of this unfamiliar world. Lucretius offers a system of images which aid the reader in this regard (Chapter III, section 1).

In addition, Bk. 2 demonstrates well the juxtaposition of what has been perceived as the duality in Lucretius' verses, both technical and highly figurative writing. The discontinuities suggested in the transitions from one form of writing to the other offer places to study the reader's attempts to build consistency throughout, to consider the mutual influences of one form
upon the other (Chapter III, section 2). Bk. 2 provides, as well, insight into Lucretius' understanding of the nature of the thought process of his reader (Chapter III, section 3), and the position of his reader within the triad from which knowledge is derived, reader-instructor-natura (Chapter IV).

Each of these aspects of Bk. 2 will be emphasized in the discussions in the respective sections, as noted above. It will be helpful to set out here the plan of Bk. 2 in outline:

**Proem: The blessings of philosophy (1-61)**

A. The Motion of the Atoms (62-332)

B. The Shapes of the Atoms and Their Effects (333-729)

C. The Atoms are Without Secondary Features (730-1022)

D. The Infinite Worlds, Their Formation and Destruction (1023-1174)

This outline corresponds to my discussions in Chapter III, as follows: lines 1-332, motion of atoms (Chapter III, section 1); 333-729, shapes of atoms (Chapter III, section 2); 730-1022, status of secondary qualities of atoms (Chapter III, section 3); 1023-1174, the infinity of worlds (which will be discussed in Chapter IV). The several aspects under consideration, however, are not confined to only one of these four sections, but may be observed in varying degrees throughout Bk. 2, indeed, throughout the whole of the work. The discussions within each section will be exemplary, not definitive. While such an organization and selection of material for
exegesis is a practical necessity, there is a further benefit. The discussion of examples in each section will provide a representation of the whole of Bk. 2, in roughly chronological order. Such a treatment, which moves through Bk. 2 in order from beginning to end, is necessary if we are to keep in mind the reader as the focus of our concern. Succession and accumulation, retrospection and anticipation, are the fundamental constituents of the process which we are studying, and each derives its functional characteristic from the temporal nature of the reading process.

1. The Reader and the Paradox of Strife: Escape and Immersion

What type of a world does the reader step into in Bk. 2? He is immediately presented with a dual perspective, of calm and disturbance, with which the Epicurean views the world:

Suave, mari magno turbantibus aequora ventis,
e terra magnum alterius spectare laborem (2.1-2)

Sweet it is, when on the great sea the winds are buffeting the waters, to gaze from the land on another's struggles;

The first word is a promise of a dulcet state of affairs, in contrast to the tumult of the natural world. It is significant that the hyperbaton of the keynote word and its completion in its equivalent, the subjective infinitive spectare, constitute an anticipation, which must pass over the intervening three natural elements, water, wind, and earth. This temporal separation
of *suave* is reenforced by the visual display of the line, which places one word signifying the human, against the rest of the world, which constitutes the whole of the rest of the line. This suggests what is possible for both the small individual within the overarching forces of the world, as well as the Epicurean in particular in contrast to the troubled "other" in the next line.

As the introduction continues,

> non quia vexari quemquamst lucunda voluptas,
> sed quibus ipse malis careas quia cernere suave est. (2.3-4)

not because it is pleasure or joy that anyone should be distressed, but because it is sweet to perceive from what misfortune you yourself are free.

Here, the simple observation, *spectare*, now becomes a more active perceptual act, *cernere*, a discernment, a separating of oneself, who is safe, from the other caught in troubles. The contrast of this active perception with the passive force of *careas* represents the essence of the Epicurean method, a pursuit of knowledge which gives pleasure by the removal of pain. In the next lines there is a return to a passive regard of troubles and a separation (*sine parte tua*) from activities (*tueri*) below -- in this case, wrong activities which cause pain:

> suave etiam belli certamina magna tueri
> per campos instructa tua sine parte periclli (2.5-6)

Sweet it is too to behold great contests of war in full array over the plains, when you have no part in the danger.

And the location is now changed to the perspective of the onlooker; again there is a separation here between the troubled and the secure:
sed nil dulcius est, bene quam munita tenere
edita doctrina sapientum templa serena (2.7-8)

But nothing is more gladdening than to dwell in the calm regions,
firmly embattled on the heights by the teaching of the wise

Finally, the lines which follow are important both in continuing the visual
emphasis which we have seen from the beginning as well as the passive
removal (despicere, videre) from mistaken activities (errare, quaerere),
and in inserting several images important for Bk. 2:

despicere unde queas alios passimque videre
errare atque viam palantis quaerere vitae,
certare ingenio, contendere nobilitate (2.9-11)

whence you can look down on others, and see them wandering
hither and thither, going astray as they seek the way of life, in
strife matching their wits or rival claims of birth

The ultimate ethical aim is well put in this situation. The topos of the
man of wisdom as removed from his fellow men is common and is
appropriately placed in the heavily protreptical proem here. Lucretius
uses the repetition of pleasure mixed with images of strife to bring out the
contrast between the peace of the philosophical adherent and the confusion
of the uninitiated. Two themes suggested in these lines, however, will be
used to establish the basis for the physical information, atomic reality,
which Lucretius requires for the realization of his final purpose. For when
Lucretius attempts to place information about atomic reality before the
reader, the theme of the visual will once again be associated with images of
strife. This "prolepsis" of the opening two lines, then, the image of
pleasure (*suave*) given before the act of seeing (*spectare*) which allows the pleasure, suggests the larger proleptic nature of the whole of the proem of Bk. 2, i.e., as the ethical statement of the results which can be expected to be derived from the information which has yet to be established. It is significant that these images, of removed and passive pleasure and of active strife, will be carried forth for use in establishing that needed information; they establish for the reader the ethical promise of the beginning, and they will also be useful in bringing forward into later contexts features which will provide the basis for making a concrete reality for what must, paradoxically, otherwise be an unseen article of faith.

Thus, an open-ended trust on the part of the reader must be maintained on two levels: if he is to commit himself to following Lucretius through his program, he must have at least some faith that Lucretius' promises of freedom and peace can be realized; in addition, confidence in the achievement of this goal is itself based upon acceptance of an explanation of an unseen reality. There thus must be strategies for dealing with the interaction of these two forces in an intermediate way. For this purpose, Lucretius has devised a rhetorical or persuasive instrument for the first level, the moral promise of the good life, and a poetic or descriptive instrument for the second, the epistemological account of physical atomic reality. Yet, these separate tools also interact and exert influences upon each other.
The first approach to the nature of the atomic reality is through the discussion of atomic motion, which begins in earnest at 80 ff. Before we look at this section, however, a brief examination of the paragraph which precedes it, the introductory section 2.61–70, will be instructive. This is the bridge over which the thematic images of the proem, which are instrumental to the reader's concrete conception of the atomic world, are carried to the argument proper. The use of these images is closely tied to Lucretius' careful shaping of his reader.

In the space of one line, Lucretius states simply his pact with the reader:

expediam: tu te dictis praebere memento (2.66)

I will unfold... do you remember to give your mind to my words.

The future imperative provides a legalistic sound and a distancing of Lucretius and reader. Bailey rightly sees that the apparently harsh tone is simply the necessary directions of teacher to student.6 It is also, however, an important statement of methodology, and this is reenforced by the structure of 61–66:

Nunc age, quo motu genitalia material
corpora res varias gignant genitasque resolvant
et qua vi facere id cogantur quaeque sit ollis
reddita mobilitas magnum per inane meandi,
expediam: tu te dictis praebere memento.

Come now, I will unfold by what movement the creative bodies of matter beget diverse things, and break up those that are begotten, by what force they are constrained to do this, and what velocity is appointed them for moving through the mighty void...
The initial exhortation to attention leads into a series of indirect questions which suggest types of inquiries that are needed; these are finally found to be governed by the promise expediam. This word has a well-established transferred meaning of "to explain, recount, narrate," all of which are suitable to this didactic context. The primary meaning, however, "to set free, liberate, disentangle," is particularly apt as an endpoint to the tricolon of movement which proceeds: quo motu, qua vi, quaeque mobilitas. In this primary sense, Lucretius makes good on his promise of expediam in the next line, in his assertion:

nam certe non inter se stipata cohaeret materies ... (2.67-8)

For in very truth matter does not cleave close-packed to itself ... This primary implication of expediam is very much in line with the workings of the atomic level of things, in that both loosening and binding are the primary activities.7

What is it that Lucretius is "loosening or setting free?" The second half of line 66 finds the answer, in the task of the reader. What Lucretius is letting loose, arranging, narrating, are words; the reader is to offer himself to the words, te dictis praebere. Lucretius is both "setting out" a philosophical argument, and by it is "setting free" the world of physical objects which appears to be motionless. Matter, which is commonly thought of as pressed in and static, stipata, is shown to be in constant unperceived motion. Both of these meanings reside in dictis. By following
the words, the reader receives the argument and, through it, is brought to 
the world of the atom. This is the necessary connection for Epicurean 
knowledge, for the words of philosophical exposition are valid and useful 
only if they can be linked directly to the phenomena of the world.

The process which leads these words to the phenomena is now the 
important question. One of the primary features of Epicureanism, as of 
Hellenistic philosophy in general, is the careful regard for an accounting of 
the process of its epistemology. Lucretius acknowledges this concern, 
and suggests it in 2.66, esp. in the direction, te ... praebere. Lucretius 
does not simply ask his reader to listen (as could be done in aures 
praebere, e.g., Liv. 38. 52), but to offer forth himself, quite literally, 
te. The phrase te dictis praebere can, of course, be taken simply as a 
circumlocutiveread.” As mentioned before, however, one should use 
caution in reducing such phrases in Lucretius to regular formulae. If one 
avoids such temptation toward the formulaic, then, what does the te imply?

On the one hand, it is all too obvious that if Lucretius claims for himself 
expediam, he is aware of his need for an audience to view what he proposes 
to let loose or to show. Lucretius, however, chooses not to focus upon the 
proper sense which might be applicable, ears, eyes; rather, he asks for the 
whole reader to be offered to his words. The implication is that there is a 
mutual effort at work here, Lucretius offering, and the reader giving 
himself over to that which is offered. But there is a disproportion in the
mutual effort; this is suggested by the *te dictis praebere*. The implication is that that which is to be offered to the words is all of which constitutes *te* — senses, mind, memory, physical presence in general. This is the nature of the disproportion: on the one hand are the words, on the other is a total person — a representation versus an actualization.

It is true that the Epicureans placed language on a tenuous basis, considering it as an epiphenomenon with respect to the rest of the world. Lucretius is fairly confident, however, in the secure status and efficacy of his words. Still, there is an awareness by him that words themselves cannot bring knowledge; they must be directed toward actual phenomena for this. And for this a recipient of the word is the most important thing. The word only has validity and use if it is assumed by a person who can make it live through his experience of the world. The full resources of the receptor are needed to give the word reality. In this sense, *te*, if taken literally as the whole person, is a good Epicurean interpretation of Lucretius’ intent. What are the implications of the *te* for the actual processing of the text by the reader? What Reception principles does it imply?

The important implication in the *te* is the idea of a meeting of the author, through his words, and the reader, through his act of reading. Further, the action of the verb, *praebere*, suggests an important truth about how the text is to be processed. The idea that the text imprints itself upon a percipient, just as do other external phenomena, is a concept well-suited to
Epicurean theory. But such an imprint is clearly not the entire case; the philosophical tradition had already spoken of mind as active as well as simply passive. The direction is not that of text to reader, but reader to text. There is at least an interaction; at most, the reader dominates as the actualizing force.

But what is the text, the dicta, in fact doing? We have a purportedly poetic text, and if a text is to be poetic, it cannot be simply denotative; it cannot only point to objects in a simple one-to-one correspondence. This is also true of the philosophical context here and the epistemological problem it offers. The atomic reality cannot be accessed immediately, cannot be simply pointed to; it must be arrived at indirectly. This is a gradual process, since only various discrete aspects of such an object removed from immediate perception can be achieved, and then synthesized to a whole.

When Lucretius makes his first appeal to experience from our sense that there is underlying movement in things, he confidently asserts that we see each thing become smaller:

... quoniam minul rem quamque videmus (2.68)

Since we see each thing grow less

and then pushes this further by offering a metaphor for the process of movement:

et quasi longinquo fluere omnia cernimus aevo
ex oculisque vetustatem subducere nostris. (2.69-70)
and we perceive all things flow away, as if it were, in the long lapse of time, as age draws them from our sight.

This suggests the difficulty of the observation. For in a true flow (fluere) we do not separate and distinguish separate moments of movement and change; Lucretius' explicit notice of his metaphor (quasi) suggests his recognition of the indirection required in speaking of phenomena at this level.14

But within this needed indirection, Lucretius directs the reader toward the needed building of images. One can observe such a progression in the section 62-79. The opening vocabulary is fairly technical in its description of the atomic world: genitalia corpora, materies. But with the hint of metaphor in 2.69 comes a gradual progression of a developing image. The human action of the observing subject is introduced (videmus, cernimus), a point of contact between human and atomic "culture." Aging, the passing of time (vetustatem), a preoccupation of human culture, is then attached to matter as a function of its change. Because a body replenishes what is lost in the sum of things, it appears to us incolumis, intact.15 Further, more explicitly now, matter grows old (senescere) and then other matter flourishes (florescere). In 75-76, the move is made directly from the world of matter (rerum summa) to the animate world (mortales . . . vivunt) — and so on to gentes, and saecla animantum. Finally, all of this leads up to another self-conscious metaphor, where we are finally in the world of human culture — runners in a race:
et quasi cursores vitae lampada tradunt (2.79).

and like runners hand on the torch of life.

The overall effect and direction of this introductory paragraph, then, has been not only to introduce the concept of atomic movement, but also to suggest a direction for accumulated images which introduce the atomic world into the conceptions of human culture. This becomes essential in what follows.

The discussion of atomic movement, begun in 2.62ff, is undertaken in earnest in 2.80ff, where Lucretius poses a direct challenge to the reader, which places accepted notions in contrast to true philosophical judgement:

Si cessare putas rerum primordia posse cessandoque novos rerum progignere motus, avius a vera longe ratione vagaris. nam quoniam per Inane vagantur, cuncta necessest aut gravitate sua ferri primordia rerum aut ictu forte alterius... (2.80-85)

If you think that the first beginnings of things can stay still, and by staying still beget new movements in things, you stray very far away from true reasoning. For since they wander through the void, it must needs be that all the first-beginnings of things move on either by their own weight or sometimes by the blow of another...

Vagaris is the first point of contact with the opening lines of the proem, where the reader is told that, similar to the person wandering in the proem (errare, 2.10), the tempia serena will not be his if he does not accept this idea of atomic movement. Lucretius, using the same word, brings us back into the more literal sense of wander in vagantur in the next line. This
brings about an equivalence of action between the reader and the world of the primordia, which are an abstraction at this point, as the discussion has been presented thus far in Bk. 1. This is the first sign of an opening to the reader for a way to gain access to the atomic world.

The cause of the wandering of the primordia in either their own weight, gravitate sua, or a chance blow from another, ictu forte alterius. These two features of invisible objects, weight and violent movement, must be related to things which cannot be experienced. The reader here faces a blank area where much more is needed than the text has provided heretofore; but it is here also that Lucretius begins to offer the reader a schematic which can be used to build up particular images of atomic reality. Lucretius cannot completely control and determine the image-making activity since that is the role for the reader ultimately, but he can and does channel it in certain directions. The clear signal that Lucretius wishes the reader to make an equivalence between himself and the primordia is the association of vagaria and vagantur. But it is a negative association, suggesting essentially that if the reader makes the wrong supposition, he will be, intellectually, in the state of disarray which characterizes the atomic world, the same state as the one caught in troubles in the proem. There is great incentive, then, for the reader to take up Lucretius’ assertion that there is no cessation to atomic movement. The reader will agree to put himself into this violent world of movement, for the sake of the
peace and rest which is promised for himself by virtue of the understanding he will have attained. The word ictu suggests the nature of this atomic world as violent, and perpetuates the paired themes of calm and violence introduced in the proem.

It is the language of violent movement which allows the reader to build his images. For the Roman reader, much of this vocabulary could most naturally be related to military activity. Again, the proem reveals this possibility. And Lucretius keeps this possibility alive through the following lines later in the proem:

si non forte tuas legiones per loca campi
fervere cum videas belli simulacra cientis (2. 40–41).

Unless perchance, when you see your legions swarming over the spaces of the Campus and provoking a mimic war

The lines which follow these (42–43) are vexed and problematical, but clearly reintroduce the images and themes of military strife of 2.5–6 and 2.11. Further, the context is an imaginary situation, on two levels: the reader is to suppose a hypothetical situation of his having a command of troops on the field, and further, he is to imagine that it is a mock exercise, belli simulacra. Although appearing three times before in the text in varying uses, the word simulacra, especially in Bk. 4, becomes a technical term for the formation of primordia into a coherent form. This image will in fact be offered later (2.324) as an explicitly proper analogy for the
movement of the primordia.

It remains to go back to 2.80ff. and follow the course of the image-building within the themes of violence and the military, the theme of the reader as spectator — and possible participant if he is not removed from that violence by his philosophical knowledge.

The famous analogy of 122ff., where Lucretius compares the unseen movement of the atoms to the clash of motes seen in a shaft of light, is the centerpiece of the military image used to characterize atomic reality in Bk 2:

*contemplator anim, cum solis lumina cumque inserti fundunt radii per opaca domorum multa minuta modis multis per inane videbis corpora misceri radiorum lumine in ipso et velut aeterno certamine proelia pugnas edere turmatim certantia nec dare pausam, conciliiis et discidlis exercita crebris*; (114-120)

For look closely whenever rays are let in and pour the sun's light through the dark places in houses: for you will see many tiny bodies mingle in many ways all through the empty space right in the light of the rays, and as though in some everlasting strife wage war and battle, struggling troop against troop, never crying a halt, harried with constant meetings and partings.

This has long been appreciated as a prime example of Lucretius' ingenuity in argument by analogy and in his powers of observation. His use of such faculties in arguments such as this is an important service to the reader, since it provides a clear image which can be immediately identified as part of the reader's experience. In his introductory statement, Lucretius states clearly this mutual experience and the status of his analogy:
cuius, uti memoror, rei simulacrum et imago
ante oculos semper nobis versatur et instat. (112-113)

And of this truth, as I recall, a likeness and image is always active and at hand before our eyes. 18

All of the elements which are needed to shape the reader's expectations of the analogy are here: Lucretius' testimony of his own experience (uti memoror), which is suggested as mutual (ante oculos semper nobis), and the status of the analogy as straightforward appearance (simulacrum et imago). By unambiguously joining the reader's experience with his own, Lucretius establishes a sense of familiarity which can then be translated to the second half of the analogy, conicere ut possis ex hoc (121).

As we have seen, however, Lucretius is making use of another, less overt, means of establishing a sense of familiarity between reader and the atomic world. He does this in his characterization of the atomic world by associating with it certain attributes of human culture. Lucretius sets up what we do see in terms of military movement: aeterno certamine, poelia, puqnas, turmatim, certantia (118-19), and then uses this same imagery when turning to analogy to the unseen in 125-141: turbare (126), turbae (127), plagis ibi percita (129), conciliatu (134), ictibus (136), lacesunt (137).

Expectations for this treatment have been established previously in Bk. 2, as we have seen. This is especially true of the section 80 ff., which just precedes the passage on the motes in the sunbeam. Lucretius promises a
clearer image of atomic motion (pervideae, 90) and asks the reader to bring to the present context (reminiscere, 90) an argument for the infinity of space which he had made earlier (1.958-1107). This was a relatively abstract bit of reasoning, arrived at through a secure logic, as Lucretius claims (certe ratione, 94).

That argument summoned into the present context offers the expectation of similarly abstracted logic in the argument which follows. After all, Lucretius begins the paragraph by a condition which dramatizes the reader as already making a false assumption, emphasizing the difficulty of this particular insight and the need for special corrective action on Lucretius' part. Indeed, the argument which follows (to 111) seems to be of a similarly abstracted tone, largely lacking in vivid analogy or notable figures.

True to his method, however, Lucretius does offer here more than simply a logical argument, based on certa ratio. He gives a characterization of the "culture" of the primordia; the actions of the atoms are described in such a way that their world is easily assimilated into some continuity with the reader's familiar human culture. In their movements, they "leap" or "run" (dissillant, 87, dissillunt, 106; resultant, 98, 101; recursant, 106 -- a link with higher forms of matter in cursores, 79), and they congregate (conciliatu, 100; consociare, 111). The human-atom association is suggested by the play of vagaris / vagantur (62, 83), which is
reenforced by its later appearance (vagantur, 105, 109) which brackets the paragraph. Finally, we see the action of battle in these movements. Atoms are struck by blows, (vexantur ab ictu, 99), and they can be captured and bound, (indupedita, 102); the result of this conglomeration is the formation of materials such as stone and iron, the material of warfare, of weapons and shackles:

haec validas saxi radices et fera ferri
  corpora constituunt et cetera <de> genere horum.(103-4)

these make the strong roots of rock and the brute bulk of iron and all other things of their kind.

In addition to adding to the assimilation of the human-atom cultures here, the military images carry forward those which have already been established, and they set up those images for their use in the outstanding analogy of the motes in the sunbeam which immediately follows.

To summarize, the opening arguments in Bk. 2 expand the notion of the goals and promises of Epicureanism and begin the detailed information directed to those ends. The reader learns that in order to achieve the promised life of calm he must first come to know the world of the atom through images of violence. These images bring the unseen world of the atom into the familiar concepts of human culture. The reader finds that it is necessary to mediate a tension within the paradox of finding human calm within a world which begins with purposeless strife.
2. **Consistency through Discontinuity**

At 2.333 Lucretius introduces the fact that atoms have various shapes:

\[
\text{Nunc age iam deinceps cunctarum exordia rerum qualia sint et quam longe distantia formis percipe, multigenis quam sint variata figuris (2.333-35)}
\]

Come now, next in order learn of what kind are the beginnings of all things and how far differing in form, and how they are made diverse with many kinds of shapes;

Lucretius begins with the usual call to attention for an important point, *nunc age*, and a succinct statement concerning the unseen atomic reality, something that must be accepted on trust at this point. There is also the less common *percipe* in the last line. This command can be taken in the sense of "understand this statement I am making right now." It may also suggest the perceptual aspect more literally, that is, "observe, hand over your senses to, acquire for yourself through observation." Each should be a proper interpretation of the word because Lucretius is doing two things here at once. The statement which he is making (that the *primordia* have manifold shapes) must be accepted by his as yet passive reader; but he is also preparing the reader to use his own experience to validate for himself that statement. Hence his statement of doctrine is followed by very concrete examples of variety within the apparent similarity of a species: animal, vegetable, and mineral, in the sense that the shell is the mineral
manifestation of the animal.

Within this main section of argument (2.333-729) there are two of the traditionally favored poetic moments in *De Rerum Natura*, the excursus on the lost calf (352-370) and on the Great Mother (600-643). Each appears to present a moment in which the technical argument is taken over by more concentrated poetic writing. In the section on the lost calf, the pathos and the descriptive power pass far beyond the rather simple observation these lines are intended to make for the argument at hand. This is especially noticeable if we compare this passage with that on the grains and shells which follows it to illustrate further the same point, all requiring the space of only six lines. Similarly, the excursus on the Great Mother (2.600ff) is often viewed as detached from the rest of the argument, as a set piece, or even a dedicatory hymn of sorts.20 Although such writing may be pointed to as an example of Lucretius breaking loose and giving way to the poetic impulse, its function in the text remains the more important question.

Following the opening statement (2.333-35), reference is made (uti docui, 339) to his earlier proof of the infinity of matter (1.951-1051); Lucretius wishes the reader to recognize that this infinity also implies a great diversity. This statement is fairly unsubstantiated at this point, and it pushes even further the abstraction of the present argument. However, Lucretius seems to be aware of the limitations of such argument, which requires the reader both to accept and to follow the abstraction.
To accommodate the reader, then, a transition is made at 342. The argument is made concrete, but not immediately. The reader is first given a context through which the adjustment might be made. Lucretius brings the reader out of the abstraction and into the world; the paragraph begins with a long list of creatures which populate the world, ending with a description of their haunts. Significantly, the reader finds himself represented generically, genus hominum; but this rather flat generic appearance of man is in noticeable contrast to the more vivid descriptions of the animals:

Praeterea genus humanum mutaeque natantes squamigerum pecudes et laeta armenta feraeque et variae volucres, laetantia quae loca aquarum concelebrant circum ripas fontisque lacusque, et quae pervulgant nemora avia pervolitantes (2.342-46)

Moreover, the race of men, and the dumb shoals of scaly creatures which swim the seas, and the glad herds and wild beasts, and the diverse birds, which throng the gladdening watering-places all around the riverbanks and springs and pools, and those which flit about and people the distant forests;

This all leads, proleptically, up to his next instruction, and the result that can be expected:

quorum unum quidvis generatim sumere perge, invenies tamen inter se differe figuris. (2.347-8)

of these go and take any single one you will from among its kind, yet you will find that they are different in shape one from another.

The syntax of 2.342-348 is peculiar. The anacoluthon which the initial adverb suggests is appropriate to what follows, a catalogue of several lines which sets a theme of the animal world. Somewhat weakly appended to
this is a conditional situation offered to the reader, in the form of an imperative protasis, perge, and its apodosis, invenies. The catalogue of animals prefigures the look at the actions of a specific animal, which follows; further, the rapid immersion of the genus humanum into the catalogue of non-human life anticipates the loss of touch (lack of personal reference) between Lucretius and reader through the narrative of the tableau.

Lucretius initially offers the reader the whole world from which to make his observation, with the assurance that wherever one looks, one will find the same thing. But, having given the reader that freedom, Lucretius then assumes the direction once again. He does this by building a world for the reader again, as he had done a few lines before; he creates both a visual and emotional landscape. Moreover, he follows his own advice to the reader (quorum unum quidvis generatim sumere perge) and focuses on a particular example. In effect, he offers his description as an example of the active role he has just requested of the reader. From the diversity of creatures just suggested, and the active role required there to determine the common ratio in the various species, Lucretius now offers this association:

\[
\begin{align*}
& \text{nec ratione alia proles cognoscere matrem} \\
& \text{nec mater posset prolem; quod posse videmus} \\
& \text{nec minus atque homines inter se nota cluere. (2.349-51)} \\
\end{align*}
\]

Nor in any other way could the offspring know its mother, or the mother her offspring; yet we see that they can, and that they are clearly not less known to one another than men.
The common experience of this world by both Lucretius and reader suggested in *videmus*, and the equation of men with the rest of the animals (as in the beginning, in 2.342), establishes what we may call the "reader-nature-Lucretius triad" at the very beginning of this new section which must argue for the mechanism of variety in the world. As with the earlier argument for the necessity of movement in the world, this argument also must be based fundamentally on a concrete image at the atomic level. Again, the elements which are required for the construction of such images are: a thesis from Lucretius, a suggestion of shared experience (of reader and of Lucretius), and a context in which that shared experience can be expanded. This is the context in which the lost-calf excursus should be understood.

The emotion and the beauty of sentiment of this section cannot be denied. It was considered by ancient writers as a rhetorically valid procedure for a writer to inject emotionally affective or diversionary writing within a discursive narrative, for the sake of providing a respite for the reader. Accepting such a moment in the text as a form of entertainment, however, does not free us from the need to consider how that moment functions within the text, in terms of its context, and its effect on that context, as the sequence of that context is assimilated and processed by the reader.

The lost-calf excursus is ultimately a device for bringing the reader
into the argument in an intimate way. It achieves its purpose not through a concentration of direction to the reader, but, paradoxically, by an apparent lack of direction. It is a space of text in which Lucretius suspends his direct dialogue with the reader (from the statement of mutual experience in *videmus*, 350, to a resumed personal address in the promise *videbis*, 372) and offers a third-person narrative tableau. Yet, there is activity required of the reader in this narrative "opening" in the text, for it is a bridge over which an important transformation must be made, in which the unseen world is viewed in part of the world which is still removed from (although inevitably appropriated by) human culture.

There is a paradox here, though. Although the natural animal world is painted large and both reader in particular and humans in general cede the foreground to the animals, it is human culture which nevertheless is the controlling factor. This is hinted in the description of the first animals, the fish, *mutaeque natantes* / *squamigerum pecudes*; they are *mutae* particularly in contrast to the loquacious *genus humanum*. The *mater* (349, 350) and *hominum* (351) suggest the appropriation of the animal into human culture. This appropriation is what happens throughout the excursus, where the line between animal and human culture almost disappears. The evils of religion are on display again, as in Bk. 1; and within this context, a calf assumes the mythic stature of an Iphigenia. The cow "mother" (355) vocalizes grief (*completque querellis* / *frondiferum nemus* 358-9) and
cannot alleviate her grief by watching other calves (364-5).

But is the atomic world left aside in all of this, for the sake of giving a free reign to the poetry? Just as human culture slowly made its way into the catalogue of the animal world, so, too, the atomic world is suggested in the picture of the anthropomorphosed animal culture. This transformation is accomplished by the appearance of one word in particular, vestigia (356). The cow starts searching for her calf, searching for the traces of the cloven hooves marked on the ground. It is significant that she is looking for something that is part of her, of the utmost importance, and is searching for what is not visibly there through the use of smaller traces.

At this point, the reader will have seen the word vestigia only three times before, in Bk. 1 and Bk. 2, and in each appearance the context has been that of a small trace giving the ability to see a larger concept. A "smaller" concept would be more accurate, in fact, since what has to be "seen" is atomic reality, through its analogy to the larger visible world. Closely associated with the cow's wandering is concentrated visual activity:

\[ \text{omnia convisens oculis loca si quest usquam conspicere amissum fetum ... (2.357-8)} \]

scanning every spot with her eyes, if only she might anywhere catch sight of her lost young

The concentration of this visual image reenforces what was set in anticipation by the mention of vestigia (from its recall of the past occurrences) but also appropriates the vestigia into this altered context;
the previously established image of vestigia associated with mental processes is brought forward to this more literal context. This is, in fact, an important function of the excursus, to hold the calf as paradigm of one of the primordia. Far from being totally lost in the pathetic fallacy of the excursus, the point of the argument is acutely made by subtle reminders which allow the reader to combine successive perspectives, each of which has the ability both to anticipate and to recall information within the process of constructing the image. The role of cow as atomic philosopher is further suggested, for example by the characterization of her as peraqrane (355). This word, forms of which appear only 5 times, is used in every other context by Lucretius in connection with mental, philosophical activity.25

The activity of the cow, then, is one engaged in also by Epicurus, the reader, and Lucretius, and has the same method and object; the essential words used here could apply to anyone seeking Epicurean knowledge: convisens oculis si quaeat conspicere vestigia.

As the reader comes out of the tableau, he is met again by Lucretius, and the "triad" involving natura, the reader, and Lucretius is made explicit: natura is personified (natura reposcit, 369), the reader is addressed in the second person (videbis, 372), and attention is called to the common experience of Lucretius and reader (videmus, 374). The videmus, as the same word in 350 which just preceded the excursus, introduces a mix of human and natural culture:
concharumque genus parili ratione videmus
pingere telluris gremium, qua mollibus undis
litoris incurvi bibulam pavit aequor harenam. (374-76)

And in like manner we see the race of shells painting the
lap of earth, where with its gentle waves the sea beats
on the thirsty sand of the winding shore.

Pingere, gremium, and bibulam all suggest human or animal culture,
attached here to the inanimate world; objects here (also kernels of grain in
371) are somewhat closer in conception, certainly in size, to the atomic
world than was the example of the calf. But the distancing of human culture
from nature is made forcefully as the section is brought to a close:

natura quoniam constant neque facta manu sunt
unius ad certam formam primordia rerum (378-79)

since the first beginnings of things are made by nature and
not fashioned by hand to the fixed form of one pattern

Natura and manu oppose each other at each end of the verse; the primordia
are abstracted away from human culture here; they are unlike something
which might be duplicated by human craft. But, is the reader now prepared
to conceive of pure abstracted atomic reality? The next line suggests the
answer:

dissimili inter se quaedam volitare figura. (380)

that some of them fly about with shapes unlike one another

No, the atoms are now bird-like, just as the last creatures mentioned in the
catalogue before the excursus, pervolitantes (346). A transformation has
been achieved, of birds as atoms to atoms as birds, the pivot for which
were the searchings of the cow.
The important lesson which this section — the calf excursus and its context — suggests, in Lucretius' relation to and guiding of his reader, is that of proportion. To achieve Epicurean knowledge, it is essential to clear the mind of much of the accepted and common aspects of human culture. A certain removal of oneself from human culture is required in order to be open to strange, unseen truths. Paradoxically, the hidden nature of these truths is what requires the hand of human culture to be placed on them. It is a volatile equation, a balance of rejection and projection of human culture. This is the task which faces Lucretius and this is the back-and-forth movement which the reader negotiates at each moment throughout the text.

Another opportunity for the reader to exercise these principles of both integration and proportion is in the second famous tableau which Lucretius offers in Bk. 2, the description of the Magna Mater. As with the tableau on the lost calf, this is a moment in which a third-person narrative form temporarily removes the immediate personal contact between Lucretius as teacher and reader as student; for a stretch of almost fifty lines (nostri, 599; nostris, 648), there is an unusual hiatus in direct personal reference. And, again, the important question which we should pose of this apparent literary diversion should be in functional terms, especially with regard to the efforts of the reader to synthesize and process the text.

After establishing that within species there is diversity, Lucretius next
establishes a limit and proportion for the idea of atomic shape. This he does most appropriately through the series of ad absurdum arguments (478-521). The final point to be made about atomic shape is that bodies are made up of a mixture of different shapes of atoms (and this, too, receives its limiting corollary, 700-729). This final point and the condition which precedes it, that the number of each shape of atom must be of unlimited supply, form the context into which the Magna Mater tableau is placed.

By this point, an image for the primordia is available, in schematic form: the first section of argument (62-332) secures a notion of violent, incessant and random movement; the second section thus far, especially 381-477, provides an image of rough, smooth, hooked and angled shapes. This is what is available to the reader approaching the Magna Mater tableau. It is important to determine whether this interposed descriptive passage relates to the previous text in such a way that it provides the reader an opportunity to develop its potential more fully, and whether it also anticipates what will follow (as is suggested in memori mandatum mente tenere, 582), as an opportunity for the reader to begin the schematic foundations of what will be supplemented and more fully realized later.

There is a difficulty to be considered first. After the lengthy expenditure of his own poetic resources and of the reader's time in explaining diversity in the world through a mythological story, Lucretius apparently subverts all of this with what follows:
Yet this, albeit well and nobly set forth and told, is nevertheless far removed from true reasoning.

He then goes on to "demythologize" the Magna Mater, through a simple and prosaic assessment of the function attributed to her:

*tetra quidem vero caret omni tempore sensu, et quia multarum potitur primordia rerum, multa modis multis effert in lumina solis.* (652-4)

Verily, the earth is without feeling throughout all time, and 'tis because it has possession of the first-beginnings of many things, that it brings forth many in many ways into the light of the sun.

Has the foregoing, then, been simply a rather lengthy negative exemplum, which leads up to this admonition? If so, the passage would be quite out of place as either a dedicatory hymn or as poetic diversion to delight the reader.

The tableau certainly bears a close connection with the admonitory statement which ends the section which follows it. The connection, indeed, is reenforced by the differences of style and texture of the two paragraphs which are juxtaposed here; vivid and image-laden vocabulary, which carries the tableau along apace, is carried by its momentum into the philosophical description (*vera ratione*, 645) which strips the verses of all but the barest functional vocabulary which invokes (as does *certa ratio*, e.g., 2.94) the idea of proper philosophical reasoning. In terms of the reader, this discontinuity is actually a factor which strengthens the bond between the two
passages, for it provides an area in which a heightened activity is required on the reader's part to reconcile and bridge that discontinuity.

The passage is, however, more than just a negative exemplum. First, in fairness to Lucretius, it must be admitted that he begins the tableau by clearly stating that his description is derived from the Greek poets of old (600). As he begins the description, he is careful to keep it within that context, removed from himself, as a derived source. He achieves this tone through the consistent use of third person past tense forms (cecinere, 600; adiunxere, 604; cinxere, 606). The account of the poets is then given over to an anthropology, hanc variae gentes antiquo more sacrorum (610); this allows the account to be more immediate in its reference — though still removed from Lucretius — and the third person forms are now present tense (this change anticipated by fertur, 609; then vocitant, 611; dant, edunt, 612; attribuunt, 614; significare volunt, 616). At 618, however, the indirect narration of the thoughts of others becomes Lucretius' own narrative, beginning with a forceful aural image, reenforced through alliteration, tympana tenta tonant. Lucretius' true tableau begins here, and continues in this vivid present tense until the end. Although personal address begins at 644, it is only at 658-9 that Lucretius returns to the distanced point from which he had begun in 600:

concedamus ut hic terrarum dictitet orbem esse deum Matrem ...

let us grant that he may proclaim that the world is the Mother
of the gods.

The gradual transition from past narrative, to present practice, to present narrative suggests also a gradation of response in the reader. By the time Lucretius' tableau proper begins at 618, the reader is in possession of an image of what might have been expressed by the Greek poets of old. Rather than simply recounting the practices of the past, and temper that with an admonition for the present, Lucretius interposes between those two a model of the activity of which he is speaking. This is Lucretius' intent throughout the poem, not only to present the ratio, but also the species of which he speaks. These species, objects of the world around us, Lucretius can usually only make available to the reader in outline; here, however, the species is that of poetry, an object which can be fully determined by Lucretius. It is significant that the poetry, a problematical activity for the Epicureans, offered here as species, as a representative object, is placed in a context in which it is clearly subverted.

The argument for the tableau as image is not sufficient in itself, however, as noted above. It is rather a beginning point from which to consider what Lucretius accomplishes by placing his reader in this environment.

First, the tableau is an important part of the argument which follows it at 650. There, a series of exempla are set up to reenforce the assertion that objects consist of a mix of different elements, all within the same body, as has been established back at the beginning of the argument.
(583–85), to which Lucretius returns after the excursus of the Magna Mater. These occur in a progression of increasingly small scale: different herd animals occupy the same field; different organs make up the body of each of those animals; when things are burned, sparks are generated by those proper elements within. Finally, appeal is made to the level of the semina rerum, through similar logic, with Lucretius' assurance of the outcome (ingenies, 678).

The first element in this progression is found back in 589, when the earth is held up as the largest-scale example of the thesis just stated:

et quodcumque magis vis multas possidet in se atque potestates, ita plurima principiorum in sese genera ac varias docet esse figuras. principio tellus habet in se corpora prima (586–89)

and whatever possesses within it more forces and powers, it thus shows that there are in it most kinds of first-beginnings and diverse shapes. First of all the earth holds within it the first bodies...

This thesis is also the premise for the power of Magna Mater, and her description is an extension of the largest-scale example. In addition, the tableau also provides an important theme throughout, that of children, and mothers and their nurture: the Great Mother is the mother of wild beasts and the maker of our bodies (599); wild beasts can be softened by the kind acts of parents (604–5); eunuchs are used as a symbol of parents who are unworthy of bringing offspring into the world (614–5); the Curetes provide nurture and care for the infant Jupiter (633ff); and finally, the Curetes are
offered as symbol of protection and pride of their parents (641-2). This consistent theme is anticipated in the preceding paragraph (522-80):

... miscetur funere vagor
quem pueri tollunt visentes luminis oras (576-7)

... With the funeral mingles the wailing which babies raise as they come to look upon the coasts of light.

The theme also becomes instrumental in the progression which follows from the tableau.

The progression of 661ff. offers first the level of the whole herd and then the diversity within the body of the single animal. A leap has been made, omitting the diversity of individuals within the herd. But this connection can be provided, because it has already been discussed in the lost-calf tableau earlier. The strong parental theme within the Magna Mater tableau provides the environment in which the parental theme of the previous lost calf tableau may be summoned, in an effort to move in a more gradual transition from lines 668-669, diversity of herd species to diversity within the parts which make up the individual animal; this activity is cued in the immediate context by lines 665-6:

... retinentque parentum
naturam et mores generatim quaeque imitantur.

... and keep the nature of their parents and imitate their ways each after his own kind.

Further, the recall of this past tableau can be instrumental in the succeeding phases of what follows. Animal viscera and sparks from
burning substances easily recall the pathetic opening of the first tableau, the calf slain at the incense-burning altar. The following line, moreover, suggests a similarity of activity in both reader and mother cow, in peragrana (677, cf. 355), each moving through the appropriate vestigia to find what they seek.

This similarity drawn between mental action and the wandering of the cow points up an important function of the excursus, to join unseen atomic reality to the conceptual powers of the reader. Those conceptual powers are the sine qua non of Lucretius' attempt to explain the system of his philosophy. Yet, it is important for Lucretius to define the boundaries of this activity of the reader. The similarities drawn by the reader are the vital starting points, yet this activity must find its limit within vera ratio. These two opposite ends of conceptual activity are clearly seen in Lucretius' use of the word contingo, at the end of the Magna Mater excursus:

concedamus ut hic terrarum dictitet orbem esse deum matrem, dum vera re tamen ipse religione animum turpi contingere parcat. (658-60)

let us grant that he may proclaim that the world is the Mother of the gods, if only in very truth he forbear to stain his mind with shameful religious awe.

The sense of contingo here is negative, as Lucretius admonishes one to not confuse useful metaphor with reality; to do so would be to stain, infect, or corrupt the mind. But Lucretius has already appropriated contingo as a description of his poetic activity, one, indeed, designed to free the mind
from the knots of superstition:

primum quod magnis doceo de rebus et artis
religionum animum nodis exsolvere pergo,
delinde quod obscura de re tam lucida pango
carmina, musaeo contingens cuncta lepore (1.931-34)

Fist because I teach about great things, and hasten to free the mind from the close bondage of religion, then because on a dark theme I trace verses so full of light, touching all with the muses' charm.

Thus, contingo carries both hortatory and admonitory connotations; it is a matter of both degree and perspective on the part of Lucretius' reader. The reader should accept Lucretius' suffusion of obscure teaching into a more easily conceptualized form, but he should also beware of staining true reality through the embrace and acceptance of traditional explanation.

This claim by Lucretius of his activity and this admonition to his reader offer us an important insight into how Lucretius perceives both poetic and cognitive processes. For his present purpose, they are one. The example of contingo suggests that Lucretius is aware of the heuristic necessity of paradigms which offer a way to conceptualize portions of reality not immediately available to experience. His musaeo contingens cuncta lepore is certainly the honeyed touch to the cup of the bitter medicine of Lucretius' philosophy, as he himself describes (1. 939ff). And this is most easily understood as the mollifying of the harsh tone of the lesson in non-teleology which Lucretius sets out, ending in the grim scenes of the plague at the end of the work. But the honeyed cup is more than emotional balm. More importantly, it is a tool necessary to stimulate the cognitive activity of his
reader. In essence, then, Lucretius is aware of the fact that the picture of atomic reality must come from within the reader; it is the result of a process which Lucretius can only help set in motion.

An additional feature of the Magna Mater tableau can further illustrate the above discussion. Near the beginning of the Magna Mater tableau, there is a suggestion of martial activity in Lucretius' explanations for her accompanying symbols: her harnessed lions suggest wild offspring vanquished by guidance of parents (*victa*, 605); the mural crown shows her, strongly fortified (*munita*, 607), as protector of cities. In a few lines we are introduced to her Phrygian guards (*Phrygiasque catervas*, 611).

When Lucretius begins his own direct narration at 618 (from relating the words of the poets, *edant*, to describing the action directly, *tonant*), however, the military images, along with the rest of the action, pick up in vividness and immediacy. Among the spectacle of the procession, arms are an important part of the display, *telaque praeportant violenti signa furoris* (621). Here they are not attributed to any particular agents, but are simply a part of the wild display which Lucretius pictures through the cacophony of threatening sounds (618-20). But the display of the arms must belong to the *Phrygias catervas*, which were introduced earlier (the mention of *Phrygio ... numere* in the line before [620] will suggest that previous context). This reminder of the troops (621, in fact, stands roughly equidistant from first mention of the *catervas* (611-12) and the
fuller picture which follows (628ff.). What the context at 621 does is to add to the military image the picture of menace and confusion; this is picked up in the closer look at these troops, the Curetes.

Here (628ff), the martial images (e.g., armata manus (629), catervas (630), sanguine laeti (631), terrificas ... cristas (632), armati (637), sub pectore volnus (639), armati (640), armis / ac virtute (541-2), defendere (642), praesidioque (643) are combined with a picture of accompanying movement (ludunt, exultant [631], quatientes [632], pulsarent [637]). This is the combination of images which was seen in Lucretius' case for atomic movement (discussed in section 1 of this chapter). Military imagery is the central vehicle through which Lucretius brings the reader to conceptualize the activity which brings about combination in the unseen atomic world. This imagery is used quite consistently, having been firmly established in the proem of Bk. 2. The utility of this imagery, then, is that it not only works within the context of the argument to which it properly belongs (motion), but also is available later as a way to inject that dimension of the atomic world (movement) into situations where other characteristics are being discussed. It performs just such a function in the Magna Mater tableau, keeping alive the idea of movement in the context of a discussion of atomic shape; and, in turn, through the recall of such imagery, the Magna Mater tableau is a vehicle for this imagery, in the service of the larger context around the tableau.
In terms of this larger context, notice should be made of the function of section 541-580. Lucretius offers this passage as a proviso for the previous demonstration that the number of shapes of atoms must be limited: the number of atoms for any given shape, however, must be of infinite supply. We have already seen that this section anticipates the theme of children and parents in the Magna Mater tableau. This passage provides much the same introduction for the martial images, and it anticipates the close association of the two images, martial and maternal.

In 576, Lucretius uses the rare Ennian word, \textit{vagor}, to speak of the wail of newborn children being mingled with funeral dirges; he reemphasizes the image in a few lines with the more common \textit{vagitus} (579). In the Magna Mater tableau, the main chore of the Curetes is to perform a martial display to drown out the cries of the infant Jupiter:

\begin{quote}
Dictaeos referunt Curetes qui lovis illum vagitum in Creta quondam occultasse feruntur (633-34)
\end{quote}

[they] recall the Curetes of Dicte, who are said once in Crete to have drowned the wailing of the infant Jove

Here, the juxtaposed images of child and war are matched by the earlier paragraph, not only by the association of birth and funerals (576-80), but by the explicit reference to atomic motion as warfare, just before this:

\begin{quote}
sic aequo geritur certamine principiorum
ex infinito contractum tempore bellum:
nunc hic nunc illic superant vitalia rerum
et superantur item. (574-76)
\end{quote}

So war waged from time everlasting is carried on by the balanced
strife of the first-beginnings. Now here, now there, the vital forces of things conquer and are conquered alike.

This pattern of recall and anticipation is also at work earlier in paragraph 541-80, in order to strengthen the martial image. This effect occurs through the central image of the section, that of a shipwreck. The argument is that without infinite supply of like-shaped atoms, things would not be able to combine, just as in the tumult of a shipwreck in violent seas, the finite number of pieces which once made up the ship have no way to recombine into a new ship. The image of distress at sea, at the beginning of Bk. 2, is easily recalled; Lucretius further insures this by attaching to the shipwreck image the moral admonition from the proem, which is quite out of place here in the argument proper:

\[
... \text{et indicium mortalibus edant,} \\
\text{infidi maris insidias virisque dolumque} \\
\text{ut vitare velint, neve ullo tempore credant,} \\
\text{subdola cum ridet placidi pellacia ponti (556-59)} \\
\]

... giving warning to mortals, to resolve to shun the snares of the sea and its might and guile, nor trust it at anytime, when the wiles of the windless waves smile treacherous.

In addition to offering its own images of motion throughout, this paragraph also draws heavily upon the images which have been established as a keynote for Bk. 2 in the proem. The section 541-80, then, acts as a bridge which once again enlivens these previous images and carries them over for use in the Magna Mater tableau which follows. There, the Curetes are the paradigm of atomic reality, protecting their parents by their threatening activity, just as the war-like tumult of the invisible atoms paradoxically
ensures the world which we see and know.

In summary, the tableaux which are offered in the discussion on atomic shape are a functional part of their local contexts. To perform their functions, they offer the reader a space which is free from explicit personal reference, which momentarily escapes from the fairly continuous hold which Lucretius imposes upon his reader. Within these spaces, the reader is ostensibly free to enjoy the poetic landscape. Yet it would be a mistake to interpret the role of the reader in such places as primarily passive. Indeed, there is not only ample opportunity for the reader’s actions, but also a greater necessity for them. Lucretius has not forgotten his reader or given him a respite, but instead offers him the momentary burden of self-direction within apparent freedom, the author’s true challenge to the reader.
3. Adjustment and Retrenchment

Having come to the midpoint of Bk. 2, it will be useful to assess what Lucretius has achieved for his reader so far and how this affects what is to come in the remainder of the book. The elaboration and building of a concrete image for the atom is essential, but the author cannot allow this process to proceed in an unrestrained way. Lucretius must also suggest the dimensions in which the reader should accept his poetic image.

In Bk. 1 Lucretius has already established the author's rationale of his efforts and their necessity and benefit to the reader. We learn of the role of the anima and animus in the mistaken notions of dreams and our possible deliverance from the superstitions which are generated in this way.

This rather limited rationale of Bk. 1, freedom from superstition, is expanded in Bk. 2 to a more general and fully developed promise which one expects as an essential component of the philosophical protreptic. The proem of Bk. 2 argues not only for freedom from the anxiety caused by mistaken eschatological notions, but rather for a full prescription for a life of calm away from worldly troubles. Accordingly, the role of the animus and anima must expand beyond their rather simple implication in dreams.

Bk. 2, then, stands in a problematical position, between the limited and undeveloped protreptical promise of Bk. 1 and the description in Bk. 3 of the
nature of the faculties involved in the expanded project of Bk. 2. There is thus a constant two-level concern which must be reckoned with by the Epicurean: acknowledgement of the individual who can come to know the atomic world, and the awareness of that world as being, at the same time, a constituent of the individual but at the same time qualitatively different from the individual. This is basically the tension which underlies much of the *De Rerum Natura*, but which is a most fundamental aspect of Bk. 2 in particular.

We have seen that Lucretius fosters an identification of the nature of the primordia with the world of human culture. In order to create a working concept through which the movement and the shape of the atom can be understood, the reader is encouraged to conceptualize the atom in terms of the characteristics of the visible world, especially that of human culture. The effect of this is to produce a familiarity and an equivalence of human and atomic existence.

The equivalence of nature and culture is an important issue in Epicurean philosophy, and the anthropology of Bk. 5 addresses this fully. As we shall see (in Chapter IV), Bk. 2 closes with this very idea. Yet, it is also of the utmost importance for Lucretius to steer his reader away from the pattern of thought, the building of images for the unseen through the projection of attributes of the known human world, which he has worked hard to encourage. It is essential, for both pedagogical and ethical reasons, to put
forward ideas which equate nature and culture; yet this thought process also leads to dangerous mistaken notions, such as superstition, and thus must be carefully controlled. The discussion of the problem of secondary qualities (731–1022) provides Lucretius an occasion to do exert such a control and voice a warning.

Just before Lucretius introduces his discussion of secondary qualities, he offers some significant verses which close the section on atomic motion. In arguing the idea that atoms exist in a finite variety of types, he goes on:

semina cum porro dient, dierre necessust
intervalla vias conexus pondera plagas
concursus motus, quae non animalia solum
corpora seilungunt, sed terras ac mare totum
secernunt cœlumque a terris omne retenant. (725-29)

Moreover, since the seeds are different, there must needs be a difference in their spaces, passages, fastenings, weights, blows, meetings, movements, which not only sunder living things, but part earth and the whole sea, and hold all the sky away from the earth.

Here Lucretius gives us a handy catalog of the characteristics which can be attributed to the workings of the atoms, all derived from the quality of motion or shape, and all discernible through the primary sense of touch. These qualities expressed here clearly anticipate the argument against secondary qualities in atoms.

There is another anticipation of the following argument which is suggested in these lines, the idea of separation. It is the set of characteristics of the workings of the atoms which allows them to be the underlying reason for the diversity in the world, the separation of the
different objects which constitute the world. The essence of the argument which Lucretius offers against secondary qualities is the idea of separation. This separation can be seen in two ways. First, Lucretius asks for his reader to summon a particular sense of mental discernment which must be brought to bear on this fairly abstract issue being discussed. He first assures his reader that he indeed does have the power to know and understand the fact that there is no color in the hidden and abstract world of the unseen atom:

in quae corpora si nullus tibi forte videtur posse animi iniectus fieri, procul avius erras. (739-40)

And if by chance it seems to you that the mind cannot project itself into these bodies, you wander far astray.

And he compares this capacity to that of the blind person, who can know objects by touch, without recourse to color and light; so too

scire licet nostrae quoque menti corpora posse verti in notitiam nullo circumlita fuco. (744-45)

you may know that for our mind too, bodies painted with no tint may enter our comprehension.

The reader need not accept this argument as an article of faith and Lucretius need not appeal to an argument by authority. Rather, Lucretius makes it clear to the reader that there are cognitive faculties within his own control which will make this difficult mental task possible, similar to the capacities of the blind person, whom we know from our own experience. The first person plural in the form of a reference dative (nostrae) suggests that this
is at least a shared experience, and the fact that animi injectus and notitia attain the status of technical terms in the De Rerum Natura helps raise the faculty beyond the mutual to the universal.27

Central to this faculty is the ability to separate, to discern. In this regard, the secernunt of 729 finds its counterpart in the frequency of the use of cerno which follows.28 Secerno is most often used in the De Rerum Natura in the sense of a physical separation, but one instance offers a wider meaning.29 When speaking of the phantasms which we experience in dreams and may mistake for reality, Lucretius advises:

nam nil aegrius est quam res secernere apertas
ab dubiis, animus quas ab se protinus addit. (4. 467-68)

For nothing is harder than to distinguish things manifest from things uncertain, which the mind straightway adds of itself.

Here clearly an operation of mind is added to the idea of physical separation; this provides a link to the meanings of cerno, the use of which, in both perception and judgement, retains the basic idea of separation. The difficulty of this section of argument, then, necessitates the close attention which can separate or discern one idea from another. This mental activity is the exact counterpart to physical atomic reality, where the identity of one thing from another is the result of minute distinguishing factors.

There is another, yet related, way in which separation is the essential idea of the section on secondary qualities. The idea is expressed clearly in the admonition which Lucretius gives near the beginning:
Therefore take care not to dye with color the seeds of things, lest you see all things altogether pass away to nought.

On the one hand, Lucretius advises that the reader should refrain from attributing extraneous qualities, such as color, to atoms. Yet, the language by which this is stated belies the admonition. In contrast to the very stark outline of characteristics recited in 726-27, here the atom is once again figuratively made into an object which can be dealt with as part of and in terms of human culture; an atom can be suffused or dyed with color. The function of Lucretius' present discussion is to argue qualities away from the atom. This is a reversal of Lucretius' efforts up to this point, which has been largely to use poetry to bring the worlds of reader and atom together. While this is necessary initially, such a treatment is not philosophically sufficient. The argument against secondary qualities represents not simply a mid-course correction for any excess or license which Lucretius might have taken, but is rather a statement of proportion added to the necessary elaborations given. Yet, even while divesting the atoms of many of those characteristics previously at work in their poetic portrayal, Lucretius will have to use many of those characterizations toward this very end. The result is that a certain tension is at work through much of this argument. This section confronts the reader with more than a simple negation; rather, it presents a necessity for a reconciliation of the poetic and the philosophical, for the reader to assimilate the abstract into the richly...
developed images; these are images which would thus be negated but which are required as instruments leading to their negation.

In addition to arguing that atoms have no color, Lucretius also advances the idea against secondary qualities by maintaining that atoms also possess no feeling. This is a significant addition to his argument because the idea of sensation or feeling has been an important part of the previous concrete images which have been built of the primordia. As Lucretius prepares to undercut these previous images, he interjects a sense of confidence and ease in the enterprise. Contrary to the caution and exhortation to recognize the difficulty earlier, Lucretius asserts of the lack of sensation in atoms:

... neque id manifesta refutant
nec contra pugnant, in promptu cognita quae sunt,
sed magis ipsa manu ducunt et credere cogunt
ex insensibilius, quod dico, animalia gigni. (867-70)

The clear facts, which are known for all to see, neither refute this nor fight against it, but rather themselves lead us by the hand and constrain us to believe that, as I say, living things are begotten of insensible things.

These lines bring the reader again into a secure relationship with natura on one side (manifesta) and Lucretius on the other (quod dico). In addition, the reader's position in relation to these two is lightly dramatized in that he sees himself led by the hand and forced, by natura with Lucretius' verification and assurance, to believe.

This small drama anticipates another just a few lines away. This one, however, is presented in reverse, as antagonist to the positive first
Next then, what is it, that strikes on the very mind, which stirs and constrains it to utter diverse thoughts, that you may not believe that the sensible is begotten of the insensible?

This statement can be interpreted in a number of ways. Most apparently, Lucretius is doing what he often does, anticipating an objection and addressing it in advance. But why is this needed directly after the confident *ipsa manu ducunt* above? In one respect, these lines perpetuate the same image of force (*cogunt*, 869 and *movet, cogit*, 887), but the forces are different. The earlier influences are *manufesta* and *in promptu cognita*, the visible phenomena of objects outside of us. The influences which follow, however, are not so conveniently placed from us; they are close to us, indeed effect our minds, *animum quod percutit ipsum*. Their association with the unseeable *animus* and the action of striking make these forces similar to the *primordia*, as they have been characterized earlier. Although the mind can be struck and motivated to the creation of poetry (*percussit*, 1.923, Lucretius of himself), the result here is negative, *ne credas*, where the intended effect of that poetry does not succeed. In a recent context, such an action was spoken of in terms of what changes a color to various shades and hues:

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[COLOR] lumine quin ipso mutatur propterea quod recta aut obliqua percussus luce refulget; (799-800)
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Nay even in the light it [color] changes according as it shines brightly, struck with a straight or slanting beam of light.

Appropriate to this argument, color, an epiphenomenon of the primordia, changes and responds to something unseen, the constituents of light.

This last example provides the appropriate paradigm for the action of 886ff. Just as color is the result of combination, and not an inherent attribute of primordia, the same is true of feeling, sensus. In 886ff. Lucretius is also using his dramatization of the reader for the purpose of illustration of this point. The reader is assumed to have varios sensus, contrary or differing feelings. The sensus themselves are a product of combination which produces the secondary effect of feeling, as Lucretius is trying to explain. The sensus which the reader has are affected by some force, and the result is that the reader is distracted from realizing the truth. The irony in this is in the cluster of feeling as it appears in 887-8, sensus, insensilibus, and sensile; something sensile, the sensus, are affected by something which strikes, moves and forces them. These influences are recalled most recently in the changes exerted upon color by light and in the action of the manufesta upon the reader's belief. If these are brought forward to this context, the same actions here lead to a denial of those forces since they are the very ones working upon the reader at the moment. All of this lies at a particular level which relies upon the reader carrying forward some of the previous context. Lucretius helps and encourages the reader to do this from the repeated vocabulary and similar
contexts. On the other hand, Lucretius is also interested in undercutting those expectations in the reader through the reversal in which those expectations lead to their own subversion. It is only by 889 that the *quid* in 886 can be seen as referring to a question based upon observation, that stones, wood, and earth just simply mixed together do not produce vital substance. This is found to be the thing which raises the reader’s objection in 886–88. Before the reader reaches these lines, however, he faces the other possibilities mentioned above.

This dramatization of the reader not only reaches back to earlier contexts, but it anticipates the further development of this section of argument. All of the arguments which follow are based upon the idea of sensation as derived from combination. This combination, however, must result in a whole and sufficient entity, since parts do not have independent sensation, but rather rely upon relation to other parts. This leads to the conclusion concerning the *primordia*:

\[
\text{linquitur ut totis animantibus assimulantur,}
\]
\[
sic itidem quae sentimus sentire necessit,
\]
\[
\text{vitali ut possint consentire undique sensu. (914–16)}
\]

It remains that they are made like whole living things. Thus it must needs be that they feel likewise what we feel, so that they may be able to share with us in every place in the vital sensations.

The *primordia* are pictured here, for the sake of the absurd, as sharing in our experiences as does the rest of the animate world. This is shown quickly to lead to the conclusion that they would also be mortal, as are all
other living things. Again, the reader is drawn away from any associations of primordia with images from animate culture. But reliance upon these images is still not totally abandoned, for in the next lines Lucretius makes use of them in the hypothetical case:

\[
\text{quod tamen ut possint, at coetu concilioque} \\
\text{nil facient praeter vulgum turbamque animantium,} \\
\text{scilicet ut nequeant homines armenta feraeque} \\
\text{inter se eum rem gignere conveniundo. (920-23)}
\]

Yet grant that they can, still by their meeting and union they will make nothing besides a crowd and mob of living things, even as, you may be sure, men, herds of cattle and wild beasts could not beget anything by coming together with one another.

The notion of the primordia as an animate assemblage, used elsewhere earlier to establish concrete images of atomic reality, is used here to summon the same image, but in a context in which it is subverted and made absurd.

It is important to note that the argumenta ad absurdum which are used in arguing against feeling as a secondary quality of atoms had their start back in Bk. 1 in the criticism of Anaxagoras and his homoeomeria (1.830-920), and that criticism is expanded in this later context. Indeed, Lucretius ends both arguments in the same fashion, by offering the extreme absurdity of a satirical characterization of the primordia as laughing or weeping creatures (1.915-20; 2.976-82).

The effect of such arguments, however, goes beyond simply a rebuttle to rival a philosophical school. The absurd climax of the argument against
feeling is intimately associated with both the image of the atom and the reader's proper relation to the reality behind that image, as it has been expressed and implied throughout the course of Bk. Z. The second use of the absurd extreme of the homeomeria goes quite beyond it first use in Bk. 1:

Denique uti possint sentire animalia quaeque, principis si iam est sensus tribuendus eorum, quid, genus humanum propriitum de quibus auctumst? scilicet et risu tremulo concussa cachinnant et lacrimis spargunt rorantibus ora genasque, multaque de rerum mixtura dicere callent, et sibi proporro quae sint primordia quaerunt; (2.973-79)

And again, if, in order that all living things may be able to feel, we must after all assign sensation to their first beginnings, what of those whereof the race of men has its peculiar increment? You must think that they are shaken with quivering mirth and laugh aloud and sprinkle face and cheeks with the dew of their tears. And they have the wit to say much about the mingling of things, and they go on to ask what are their first-beginnings;

Here the primordia are not only expressing human emotion but are engaged in the contemplation of themselves. This passages presents the final inversion of earlier images of the primordia, when these are developed to the absurd extreme of showing the atom as atomic philosopher. The point is made playfully, but not without force. Unlike many other instances in which false assumptions or mistakes are imputed to a third-person figure, the reader is made the direct focus here (nusquam consistere ut ausis, 982; quodcumque loqui ridereque dices / et sapere, 983-84); but he is soon brought into the truth of common experience (cernimus, 985; videmus,
The humor of the final absurd picture, however, does more than help in stripping the atoms of the accretion of previous images; it also looks toward the activity of reader and author. Their common enterprise (investigation de rerum mixtura and quae sint primordia) mentioned here is more than simply satire in service of the immediate context. The irony of the atom contemplating its own existence is not very far from the paradox which Bk. 2 has presented for the reader—namely, to conceive of a strange, unseen world apart from himself, but which also constitutes his own make-up and the basis of the possibility of his knowing that world; the only difference between the two is combination, rerum mixtura. The absurd primordia are a reminder that the reader can locate himself within those combinations. He can only do this, however, from within the relative position of his relation to natura and Lucretius, the teacher. His position in this triad of reader-natura-Lucretius is a continuous feature of Bk. 2, and it is significant that the final section of the argument against secondary qualities is a reintroduction personification, in the form of earth and sky as mother and father. It is clear that even within his admonition to the contrary, Lucretius cannot allow his reader to entirely separate human culture from natura; their link is a necessity of both the reader's coming to knowledge and the text which would lead the way.

2 See above, Chapter I, p. 20.

3 Bailey, *DNR* vol 2, 794-95.

4 The fundamental literal meaning for *cernere*, separation, is often found as the basis for the meanings of this word as used in the *De Rerum Natura*; e.g., 2.778-83, Lucretius notes that as we perceive (*cernimus*) unlike forms, so we perceive (*ita cernere*) color variations in surfaces of different brightness. Further, the occasion for this word is usually in contexts which suggest fine attention or acute discernment. This act of separation or discrimination in the perceptual — and consequent cognitive — act is an appropriate counterpart to the physical manifestation of objects, which exist as a result of combination. See A. Ernout and A. Meillet, *Dictionnaire Etymologique de la Langue Latine* (Paris 1967) 115.

5 Cf. the philosophical hopeful in Lucian's "Hermotimus," 5: "But all who endure to the end arrive at the top, and from then on are happy having a wonderful time for the rest of their lives, from their heights seeing the rest of mankind as ants." (K. Kilburn, trans., *Lucian* (Cambridge, MA 1969), vol 6, p. 269).

6 Bailey, *DNR* vol 2, 810.

7 Cf. 2.102, *indupeditita suis perplexis ipsa figuris*. See Ernout and Meillet (1967) 501.

8 See Strozier (1985), especially pp. 15-38, for background on how the Hellenistic philosophies differed from Plato and Aristotle, in concern for the workings of consciousness and the status of its knowledge, versus a prior acceptance of objective reality of phenomena, respectively.

9 The usage is not unattested: H.A.J. Munro, ed., *T. Lucreti Cari De Rerum Natura Libri Sex* (Cambridge 1866), ad loc., offers for comparison, *ad Heren. 3.1*: *Nunc tu fac attentum te praebes; nos proficisci ad instituta pergimus.*

10 Following the advice of Davies and West; see *supra*, Chapter II, n.10.

11 It is important to remember that reading was primarily an aural
experience in the Roman world, both through personal reading and through
recitation; see J.F. D'Alton, Roman Literary Theory and Criticism, A Study

12 E.g., Aristotle, De Anima 430a.

13 The theory of effluences in Epicureanism still, of course pertains to
a text as physical phenomenon; yet this is not sufficient for its status qua
text, which it becomes only through the transformations and experience of
the reader.

14 Cf. the description of the value of the swerve motion of the atoms
which gives some freedom within necessity; the forces of the atoms,
therefore, do not "vanquish" the mind: at divincta quasi cogitur ferre
patique (2.291).

15 But also "safe, unharmed" — connotations of the word applicable to
human experience, or at least to animate things.

16 T.P. Wiseman, Cinna the Poet and Other Roman Essays (London 1974)
12-13 mentions that Nonnius notes as a line in Bk 2, fervere cum videre
classem iateque vagari, close to this line and including the word of two-fold
meaning, vagari; West disagrees with Bailey’s translation of "mimic war,"
since simulacra are not normally "imitations" in Lucretius’ usage but rather
signify the technical equivalent of the Epicurean ειχμαλα, the aggregate of
atoms which constitute images.

17 See Bailey, DRN vol 2, pp 805-7.

18 My translation.

19 This imperative appears 11 times.


21 Polybius 38, 5-6 sets out such a theory of the need for variety and
digression; also Cic. de Or 3. 97-103.


23 A. Amory, "Obscura de re lucida carmina: Science and Poetry in De

24 1.402, 406; 2.124; 23 appearances in all, most contexts suggesting
the same.

25 Twice before our passage, 1.74, of the power of Epicurus' mind, 1.929, of Lucretius' philosophical and literary efforts and originality; and twice after, 2.677, instruction to the reader to use similar analogical reasoning, and 4.1, of Lucretius traversing untrodden ground in his work.

26 See J.M. Snyder, "The Meaning of musaeo contingens cuncta lepore, De Rerum Natura 1.934," CW 66 (1973) 330-34, where the dual meanings of contingo is brought out from its association with both tingo and tango.

27 The term notitia is already established by earlier use in 2.124, exemplare dare et vestigia notitiae; animi injectus, will be reenforced in a later context in Bk 2.

28 cernere, 781, 827, 837; cernimus, 780, 928, 985; cernis, 732; only the discussion of perception in Bk 4 offers a greater density of the use of this term.

29 secernat, 3.637; secernendi, 2.473; secernere, 5.446; secernier, 3.263; secernunt 2.729.

30 Most recently, in 840, where it is made clear that there is need of animum sagacem -- a faculty already summoned five times before in Bk 1 -- in order to arrive at an idea of the primordia as allis rebus privata.
CHAPTER IV
CONCLUSION: THE NEXUS OF READER-NATURE-POET

The ending of Bk. 2 (1023ff.) highlights the role of a personified nature as the ultimate generative and destructive force and finally shows human reaction to the forces of decline. This ending caps an important theme throughout Bk. 2, the close relationship of the reader, nature and the poet. Examination of this relationship shows that this nexus is not only a thematic device, but also an important mechanism of instruction which suggests in general the proper and necessary method of inquiry for Lucretius' reader.

As Bk. 2 comes to a close, man's relation to nature is brought into focus once again. We have seen that one way in which Lucretius suggests this relation is by setting up images which project human culture onto nature. The first step in the appropriation of nature into human culture is the transformation of the world (worlds) into an organism, of which the rejuvenating supply of atoms are food:

\[ \text{omnia debet enim cibus integrare novando et fulcire cibus, <cibus> omnia sustenare, (2.1146-47)} \]

For it is food which must needs repair all things and renew them, food must support them, and food sustain all things;
But this food supply inevitably fails, and the world declines. Where once the crossing of the *moenia mundi* by Epicurus was a sign of hope and power of mind and spirit (1.73-73), now it is an indication of decay and ruin:¹

*Sic igitur magni quoque circum moenia mundi expugnata dabunt labem putrisque ruinas* (1144-45)

Thus therefore the besieged walls of the great world also will collapse and make crumbled ruins.²

The book ends, as does Bk. 6 and its description of the Athenian plague, with a profound pessimism. The earth now only grudgingly gives forth its fruits and the plowman is worn out with useless labor, as he envies the abundance of his father's age and the poverty of his own. But these two books also balance the dark closing pictures with hopeful beginnings and promises in their proems: the glories of Athens and the gift of its son, Epicurus in Bk. 6, and the promise of a life of calm and freedom from disturbance in Bk. 2.

The association of the ending with the proem in Bk. 2 is even closer if we accept the reading *ad scopulum* in the last line of the book:³

*nec tenet omnia paulatim tabescere et ire ad scopulum, spatio aetatis defessa vetusto* (2.1173-74)

Nor does he grasp that all things waste away little by little and go to the reef of destruction, foredone by age and the lapse of life.

*Ad scopulum*, in its literal sense, suggests a sea-cliff, and in its transferred sense is an image of destruction or change of fortune.⁴ In both books nature is shown in its harsh aspect; but in each book we are reminded that this harshness is an interpretation of nature from the perspective of
human culture.

The ending of Bk. 2 is a warning; it presents us with a picture of a once benign *alma tellus* which no longer feeds its children. This image has been anticipated already in the section which forms a bridge between the discussion of secondary qualities and the last section on the growth and decline of worlds. We have seen this paradox throughout Bk. 2. In the first section, we see that in order to achieve calm we must first be thrown into the world of strife of the atoms — and we come to know this world through images of human strife. In the second section, the sad search of the cow for its lost calf is a paradigm for the person's search for the true hidden nature of the world which alone can bring peace — a search which can bring distress; further, the image of the Magna Mater is that of both a nurturing mother and a dominating mistress. Section three warns that our attempt to understand the world of the *primordia* by clothing it in human garb is only a heuristic device — ultimately we must reconcile ourselves to the essential unseen nature which lies at the base of the proper ethical pattern of life.

These paradoxes, then, are one of the essential reasons for Lucretius' attention to his reader. Such attention is not only in the form of a rhetorical guidance through the rough terrain of the paradoxes which preexist. Rather, Lucretius makes his reader the necessary ingredient of the paradox; far from directing him around it, he works hard to place his
reader in the middle of paradox. This is not done from any malicious aim or even from an attempt to strengthen through adversity. The reader's involvement in paradox is a reflection of the discontinuities which separate human culture and the natural world and the implications of that for the philosophical adherent who must bridge that gap through human understanding.

For Lucretius, poetry both helps bring access to the world and is also part of the world itself. This is seen clearly in the verses in which Lucretius promises to tell of the speed of images through his sweet-voiced verses. Just as the swift physical images he explains, his verses are delicate and fine.

This equation of verses and the world which they explain, however, is possible only through the agency of a reader. Just as the reader actualizes a text to make it more than just its written form, so too he sees the world for more than its surface and looks into the hidden nature of things. The text of the De Rerum Natura, then, situates three elements in an essential connection, a reader who perceives, nature to which the reader is directed, and an instructor who brings these two together.

These three elements are the basis for the differences in style and texture which is observed throughout the work. Lucretius' use, for example, of an occasional conversational style in a grand epic form is motivated by an attempt to bring the reader into the very heart of the
work. This technique is a rhetorical aid to a reader who faces a learning task. Such a positioning of the reader is also, in turn, a device which is useful for the task facing the writer. The reader whom Lucretius creates is an armature around which he can construct his arguments. This implied reader brings both immediacy and human dimension to the instruction.

We have suggested, however, that the utility of the reader, the reason for Lucretius' extraordinary attention and effort in his construction of a reader, goes much beyond rhetorical considerations alone. Consideration of the use of his reader leads us to the question of why Lucretius wrote an Epicurean treatise in the form in which he did. The more familiar form of this question assumes that Lucretius' approach is the result of the desire of a poet to express his deep convictions. A related question, however, is why Lucretius presents physics primarily and ethics only intermittently. The answer to this must go beyond the suggestion that physics provided a more fitting and workable epic subject than ethics, or that Lucretius had no models of ethical treatment in epic, beyond the unsuitably primitive Hesiod. It is more likely that Lucretius is offering the "first course" in Epicureanism to a beginner; this was properly, as we are told by Epicurus, to be instruction in the physical foundation of the ethical goals.

Lucretius chose to undertake this instruction by constructing a literary form which would allow him to bring together the three elements involved, the learner, nature, and the instructor. In the work, this triad of
reader-nature—Lucretius is the mechanism which allows Lucretius to give expression to the first principles of his philosophy in poetic form. As we have seen, a key element in this expression is the association of the unseen and inanimate with the familiar and human.

The association of human and atomic culture is part of a larger interaction which is essential in Lucretius’ task and functions throughout the work, and in Bk. 2 in particular. Nature, of course, is the foundation of all knowledge. It is not, however, the simple and single overarching determinant of that knowledge, for human nature is sometimes at odds with the natural world, and nature itself does not always offer full revelation of its information. Nature often requires the activities of both the master and the philosophical tyro to extract its secrets. Thus, there are times in which each of the three elements becomes prominent in its own way in this process of acquiring knowledge.

Lucretius reflects this reality in his poem in a number of important ways. Most apparent are the clusters which Lucretius sets up which tie all three together in the space of very few lines. The proem to Bk. 2 reintroduces this tripartite association, which had been well established in Bk. 1. The proem opening Bk. 2 follows the rhetoric of the moral persuasion of a philosophical protreptic, and Lucretius builds, by line 14, to a persona with an admonishing,

o miserar hominum mentes, o pectora caeca!
qualibus in tenebris vitae quantisque periclis
Ah! miserable minds of men, blind hearts! in what darkness of life, in what great dangers ye spend this little span of years!

But then line 16 is completed by the activity required of one who would observe the truth of the world, *nonne videre*. The idiom is common enough; Bailey sees the subject of *videre* as a vague plural, referring to *hominum*. The suggestion here of second-person address, rather than third-person reference, however, should be seen in the personal reference which follows in line 20,

*Ergo corpoream ad naturam paucam videmus esse opus omnino ...*

And so we see that for the body's nature but few things at all are needful ...

The activity of the *videre* and the *videmus* are the same, seeing the minimal requirements of nature. The vague idiom in the rhetorical exclamation finds its clarification in the measured explanation which follows. This is the importance of carefully following personal reference in the *DRN*, for in a few lines here the distanced admonition of the master is transformed into a statement of mutual effort, where Lucretius and the reader are joined. Whether the *hominum mentes* of line 14 is directed immediately toward the reader or not, the first person plural reference in *videmus* of necessity must include the reader.

But the third element is accounted for in this cluster also. Nature receives equal treatment as a part of the moral argument. In fact, nature
is given two personae in the process. The first is the noted personification of nature as a barking hound,

*nil aliud sibi naturam latrare* (2.17)

nature barks out for nothing else for herself

This image of a barking nature is not repeated in the *DRN*, and appears nowhere else in Latin literature. It is an appropriate image here for at least two reasons: the moral principle of avoidance of pain is a simple common denominator which man shares with the rest of the animal world, and it also suggests the principle that the most fundamental truths of Epicureanism are demonstrated quite clearly by nature to one who would but listen, as to the clear bark of a dog.

Here the role of nature recalls the *canes* and *montivagae* in 1.404ff, but in reverse. There nature hides itself in its lair; it is quarry rather than hound. That context also puts forth the threefold elements of learner—nature—instructor, but toward a different point. In that place Lucretius is trying to bring out a realization of an imperceptible, the void, *inane*. There must be a shift in emphasis, then, among these three, and it is toward the reader/learner who resists,

*... quamvis causando multa moreris* (1.398)

however long you hang back with much objection

and must be helped into action by the master,

*multaque praetera tibi possum commemorando argumenta fidem dictis corradere nostris* (1.400-1).
And besides by telling you many an instance I can heap up proof for my words.

The three are intimately tied together in this section, but with changed priorities and roles: the reader/learner must do the work, Lucretius will facilitate this work, and nature will attempt to hide itself from these efforts.

These two clusters, then, suggest the two levels of availability of Epicurean knowledge, the hidden which must be sought out, and the apparent which can be easily seen and referred to.

In the cluster of 2.14ff, Lucretius offers another persona for his nature, which is held up as a model of simplicity, in distinction to a list of possible luxuries which follows, emphatically,

gratius interdum neque natura ipsa requirit (2.23)

nor does nature herself from time to time ask for anything more pleasing.

And, by the end of the section, an ideal bucolic Epicurean landscape described in third-person terms is followed by an adversative statement in the second person; it is this which again picks up the theme of useless luxury which had been introduced under the persona of nature,

nec calidae citius decedunt corpore febres,
textilibus si in picturis ostroque rubenti
facteris, quam si in plebela veste cubandum est (2.34-36).

Nor do fiery fevers more quickly quit the body if you toss on brodered pictures and blushing purple, than if you must lie on the poor man's plaid.
Probably the most outstanding personification of nature can be seen if we look ahead to Bk. 3, 3.93ff. It is a dramatization in which nature admonishes the man not content with his tenure of life:

\[ \text{quid tibi tanto operest, mortalis, quod nimis aegris luctibus indulges? quid mortem congemis ac fles? (3.933-34)} \]

Why is death so great a thing to thee, mortal, that thou dost give way overmuch to sickly lamentation? why groan and weep at death?

As *natura* goes on for many lines in this fashion, Lucretius, as narrator, steps in to give us the sense that this is a satirical courtroom drama:

\[ \text{quid respondemus, nisi iustam intendere litem naturam et veram verbis exponere causam? (3.950-51)} \]

What answer can we make, but that nature brings a just charge against us, and sets out in her pleading a true plaint?

And after nature even more caustically upbraids the old man who would complain of death, *iure, ut opinor, agat, iure increpet inciletque* (3.963).

In nature's rebuke, the force of the second person address can be kept, but in such a way that it is ostensibly removed from the reader directly through the use of this miniature drama. The cluster of the three elements is close here, and Lucretius makes the interrelations clear. After the initial rebuke, 933ff., Lucretius' comment at 950, *quid respondemus*, brings him into common cause with the reader, the master and the learner joined in their dependance upon nature; this helps reenforce the important principle of the universal sovereignty of nature. But, following nature's rebuke of the old man, an episode even further removed dramatically from
the reader, Lucretius again asserts the master’s role. For the sake of the reader who might at this point feel disengaged from the admonition, he asserts, lvere, ut opinor, agat. Again, the I/thou relation is set between the first person assertion in 963 and the second person in 968–9. This turn is completed by the directive in 972, respice. But, as this admonition starts to bring the section to an end, the separation fully realized now by the imperative is, before the sentence ends, moderated and brought back into an identity of Lucretius and reader, as he includes himself in the law of the human condition which he states,

respice item quam nil ad nos anteacta vetustas
temporis aeterni fuerit, quam nascimur ante (3.972–3)

Look back again to see how the past ages of everlasting time, before we were born, have been as nought to us.

And the closing rhetorical questions, often a device for a chiding sarcasm, ends in a mollifying and reassuring tone,

... non omni somno secures exstat? (3.977).

Is it not a calmer rest than any sleep?

This change of rhetorical mood, of tone, of voice, is especially appropriate in these clusters. They skillfully bring out the truths of both the separation and interrelation of the elements of reader–nature–Lucretius.

It has been noted that Lucretius and Epicurus have different priorities; Lucretius is interested in the objective physical world and Epicurus is
interested in the make-up of conscious processes, the status of the world in the individual’s cognition. This is offered as explanation for the different forms of expression by each. It may be, however, that Lucretius was performing his task in a more effective way and closer to Epicurus’ principles than we can claim for the Greek philosopher himself, to the extent that we can make such judgements based upon the limited sample of our extant remains. While Epicurus seems to have taken a technical and paternalistic approach to his adherents, Lucretius seems often to be content to let the reader, having been directed properly, learn the truths of nature for himself. The founder set down mnemonic devices for a quick acceptance of his system, but Lucretius wished to carry the reader through the processes which would impart this knowledge to him, relying upon the experience of the reader to bring his words to life and cause them to be recognized as a vital part of the world. As a poet he fashioned his words to touch the imagination; as an Epicurean he realized that both his words and the reader’s mind were part of the same world, yet separated in a certain way. Yet his words, products of human culture, have an advantage over other objects of the world which are oblivious to the particular world of man. The words of the poem reside on the border of two classes of objects, concrete objects of the world, and objects of the mind (which to the Epicurean understanding were one). Within the Epicurean view, the ontological status of words and, consequently, the thoughts they engender,
is no less valid than the concrete object and the phenomenal impression it makes upon the mind. The dimension of reality behind Lucretius' comparison of letters of words with atoms in a body is not merely metaphorical. Lucretius' reliance upon a reader is part of his awareness that the reader also has something to give to the author -- he can make the text part of the world. That his reader will do this, he can be sure, for he offers him part of his essential nature: *quaerit enim rationem animus*.

We have seen that a recent direction in the scholarship on Lucretius favors a view of the *DRN* as successful integration of poetry and philosophy. In order to advance to a closer study of the mechanics and principles involved in this relationship, I have proposed a focus upon the position of the reader in a continuous amount of representative text, namely Bk. 2. Certain principles of contemporary Reception theory, as we have seen, provide a way to understand how Lucretius constructs and situates his reader.

The rhetorical direction which Lucretius gives to his reader has implications as well for the philosophical content of the work. Our study of Bk. 2 shows that the imagery of human culture is an essential component in the description of the hidden nature of the atom. The reader is used as a device for mediating between these two worlds through the projection of his own experience according to the poet's suggestions. This interplay of influences is seen in the nexus of reader–nature–poet, a theme consciously
structured by Lucretius. This positioning of the reader is appropriate to the way in which Epicurean knowledge must be obtained, for understanding of the atomic world cannot be undertaken initially in atomic terms. Rather, a projection of the known onto the unknown must be the first step. This is one of the basic movements of reading, as described by Reception, and it is the motive for Lucretius' intense interest in his reader.
We have seen (Chapter 111, pp. 27 and 57, n. 23) that the use of peragravit in 1.74 assumes a positive connotation, but in the lost calf tableau (2.355), peragrans appears in a negative context, matching the duality inherent in the image of moenia mundi; see Gerald Else, “Moenia Mundi,” CW (1943) 136-37, for an positive interpretation of this term as suggesting a moment of insight and conversion.

My translation.

The reading of the Oblongus (Codex Leidensis 30), which is retained by Bailey in his Oxford Classical Text second edition (1922), but changed in Bailey DRN, “with considerable hesitation,” using Vossius’ emendation of ad capulum; see Bailey, DRN vol 2, 983.

For literal sense, e.g., Caes., BCiv 3.27, et ex magno remigum propugnatorumque numero pars ad scopulos allisa interficeretur, and for the figurative, Cic., Rosc, Am. 29.79, in scopulos vitae inciderit; Lambinus’ comment on ad scopulum, “ad interitum, translatum a navi, quae inflicting scopulo,” suggests the close association with the proem and the shipwreck there of the one who does not know the way of life, Dionysius Lambinus (Denys Lamblin), ed., Lucretii Cari De Rerum Natura, Libri VI (Lutatiae 1570) 205; note also the relation to the shipwreck image in 2.552ff., also a context of the scattering of atoms a destruction of the world.

2.991ff.: Denique caelesti sumus omnes semine oriundi; omnibus ille idem pater est, unde alma liquentis umoris guttas mater cum terra recepti,

And so, we are all sprung from heavenly seed; there is the one father of us all, from whom when life-giving earth, the mother, has taken within her the watery drops of moisture...

Cf. 1.250-51.

Repeated in 4.909-11.

See discussion of this in Chapter II, pp. 8f.; On Lucretius’ idea of his poem as an image of the world, E.M. Thury, Naturae Species Ratologia: Poetic Image and Philosophical Perspective in the De Rerum Natura of Lucretius (diss. Univ. of Penn.), 112ff.


10 On this see K. Kleve, "What kind of work did Lucretius write," SO 54 (1979) 81-85.


12 D.L. 10.35; Kleve (1979) 82.


15 See Bailey DRN vol 2, 1149, for precedent for such rhetorical personification of an abstract concept, esp. Epicurus On Nature, Fr. 67 of Bailey's Epicurus (1926), this close to DRN 2.16ff.

16 M.F. Smith, "New Fragments of Diogenes of Oenoanda," AJA 75 (1971) 382, a fragment from Diogenes of Oenoanda, New Fragment 14, col. 1, 10ff.: "How can we justly bring a complaint against nature, if someone who has lived for so many years and months and days [at last leaves the light of day]?

17 Strozier ix.
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