

Ennius and the prologue to Lucretius *DRN* 1 (1.1-148)¹

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ABSTRACT: This paper makes two interconnected claims about the prologue to the first book of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*. It is argued, first, that in this prologue Lucretius makes a more extensive and creative use of his great poetic predecessor Ennius than scholars have previously allowed; and, secondly, that this use of Ennius aids the reader in understanding the complex but logical structure of this extended opening to the *De Rerum Natura*.

1. Literary programme: emphasising Ennius

Recent scholarly work on the prologue to Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* 1 has placed considerable emphasis on the role of Empedocles.² There is no doubt that Empedocles, as a poet writing in hexameters on the subject of the fundamental nature of the universe, is an extremely important literary predecessor for Lucretius, and it is clear from the praise given to Empedocles later in Book 1 that the Roman poet wanted openly to acknowledge his debt to the philosopher of Acragas (1.716-33). However, I would like to argue for the additional importance of Ennius as a major model in the prologue to Book 1. Scholars sometimes talk as if this is an either-or situation, in which we must acknowledge either Empedocles or Ennius as Lucretius' primary model, but the two models need not be seen as in direct competition. In fact, they share a number of features.

Both Ennius and Empedocles provide a poetic model of form in epic hexameters, but both also provide ideas with which Lucretius could strongly disagree: although, as already mentioned, Lucretius praises Empedocles later in Book 1 (716-33), that praise is immediately followed by a substantive refutation of his chief physical theories (1.734-81). Though we do not think of Ennius as a scientific poet propounding theories with which Lucretius might disagree,³ that is in fact how Lucretius chooses to present him in the prologue to Book 1, where he clearly picks up the famous opening of the *Annales*, in which Ennius seems to have claimed that he was a reincarnation of Homer who appeared to him in a dream. This advocacy of Pythagorean metempsychosis and of the existence of ghosts is directly opposed to the teachings of Epicurus as propounded by Lucretius, which emphasise the dissolution of a person's identity after death and

¹ I am most grateful to attenders at the Leeds seminar and to audiences at the Universities of London and Thessaloniki, for helpful and fruitful discussion of earlier versions of this paper; it is much the poorer for the death of Harry Jocelyn, whose comments (always vigorous and readily given) I was about to solicit and looked forward to. I should also like to record my thanks to the late Don Fowler for a stimulating introduction to the problems of the proem to *DRN* 1 more than twenty years ago.

² Cf. Sedley (1998) 1-34.

³ Though, as Gale (1994) 77 points out, Ennius' work does show scientific interests (e.g. in euhemerism).

exclude any notion of a continued existence in any form, and there is no doubt that Lucretius is concerned to deny the truth of these ideas. However, this need not prevent Lucretius from expressing admiration for Ennius as a poet rather than a philosopher, and what we find is a mixture of poetic homage and ideological refutation. This is in fact very close to Lucretius' use of Empedocles as argued by David Sedley.⁴

With this in mind let us now look closely at the lines in which Lucretius recalls the lost opening of Ennius' *Annales* (1.117-26):

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

As our own Ennius sang, who first bore down from pleasant Helicon the wreath of deathless leaves, to win bright fame among the tribes of Italian peoples. And yet despite this, Ennius sets forth in the discourse of his immortal verse that there is besides a realm of Acheron, where neither our souls nor bodies endure, but as it were images pale in wondrous wise; and thence he tells that the form of Homer, ever green and fresh, rose to him and began to shed salt tears, and in converse to reveal the nature of things. [tr. Bailey (1947)]

Here there seems to be a clear distinction between admiration for Ennius as a literary figure (note that he is presented as *noster*, our great Roman poet) and refutation of his wrong ideas about the afterlife: the words of praise in 117-9 are followed in 120 by a unique series⁵ of three adverbs, *etsi praeterea tamen*, an extraordinary verbal feature which expresses in the clearest possible way Lucretius' strong objections to the old poet's ideas: 'and yet despite this', as Bailey renders it. The passage throughout is suffused with detailed linguistic echoes of Ennian style; these are naturally intensively used here in a context which specifically invokes a famous episode in Ennius' *Annales*, but it is also vital to realise that Ennius' role as stylistic model for the *De Rerum Natura* is much more extensive than being the basis for this single passage.

There can be no doubt that Ennius provides the clear stylistic model for the *De Rerum Natura*. The best confirmation of this is to look at other Roman poems of very similar date, for example Catullus' epyllion of Peleus and Thetis (Catullus 64). This poem, normally thought to have been written at much the same time as the *De Rerum Natura* in the 50s BC,⁶ has a very different style: emotional, ornate and strongly influenced by Hellenistic poets such as Callimachus and Apollonius. The *De Rerum Natura*, on the other hand, maintains throughout the old-fashioned,

⁴ *Loc. cit.*, n.2.

⁵ The conjunction is unique on the PHI CD-ROM (as indeed is the conjunction *etsi praeterea*).

⁶ Cf. e.g. Jenkyns (1982) 130-32.

direct and rough Ennian style,⁷ which must have seemed very archaic in the 50s when compared to Catullus and the other neoteric poets, who were plainly the height of literary fashion in this period. Though there is no doubt that Lucretius had considerable knowledge of the Hellenistic poets,⁸ he chose to conceal it in his style. This must be connected with the missionary nature of his project as well as with his own stylistic and poetic preferences. The *De Rerum Natura* sets out to show traditional Roman aristocrats such as Memmius the benefits of the philosophy of Epicureanism. Its style is one of the chief ways in which it conveys its message: the potentially abstruse and alienating subject-matter of Greek micro-physics is presented in a style with which every contemporary Roman reader of some education would be familiar, since it is clear from writers like Cicero that Ennius was a major school author in the first century BC.⁹ Thus Lucretius cleverly packages his potentially revolutionary subject-matter in the familiar and well-loved form of Ennian epic style.

In 1.117-26 encomiastic elements clearly predominate over criticisms: even after the famous triple adverb expressing intense ideological opposition, the verses of Ennius can still be described in the following line as ‘everlasting’ (*aeternis*). The compliments made to Ennius are also notably reflected in Lucretius’ description of his own poetic task later in this same book (1.926-30). If these lines are juxtaposed with the opening of the passage already quoted, the similarities become very clear:

Ennius ut noster cecinit qui primus amoeno
detulit ex Helicone perenni fronde coronam,
per gentis Italas hominum quae clara clueret.

As our own Ennius sang, who first bore down from pleasant Helicon the wreath of deathless leaves, to win bright fame among the tribes of Italian peoples. [tr. Bailey (1947)]

avia Pieridum peragro loca nullius ante
trita solo. Iuvat integros accedere fontis
atque haurire, iuvatque novos decerpere flores
insignemque meo capiti petere inde coronam
unde prius nulli velarunt tempora Musae.

I traverse the distant haunts of the Pierides, never trodden before by the foot of man. ’Tis my joy to approach those untasted springs and drink my fill, ’tis my joy to pluck new flowers and gather a glorious coronal for my head from spots whence before the muses have never wreathed the forehead of any man. [tr. Bailey (1947)]

Both poets are claimed to be pioneers, Ennius as the great innovator (*primus*) in adapting Greek verse (presumably a reference to the hexameter) to Italian use, Lucretius as the first to venture into the unexplored poetic territory of a verse-paraphrase of Epicurean physics (*nullius ante / trita solo, novos, unde prius nulli*). Both are connected with the Muses: Ennius is said to bring his poetic garland

⁷ Cf. Skutsch (1985) 155.

⁸ Cf. especially Kenney (1970).

⁹ Cf. e.g. Bonner (1977) 213, 215, 223.

from Mount Helicon, the traditional home of the Muses, to Italy, while Lucretius presents himself as traversing the country of the Muses (*Pieridum ... loca*) and as crowned by the Muses with a poetic garland. The poetic garland itself is another shared element: Ennius brings his to Italy, and Lucretius has ambitions to obtain a garland such as none has gained before. This looks like an obvious piece of rivalry with Ennius; and perhaps there was a lost part of the opening scene of Ennius' *Annales* in which the poet was given a garland, perhaps by the ghost of Homer who appeared to him.¹⁰

What is really striking here is the suggestion that Ennius, through the ghost of Homer recounting its various transmigrations, produced an account of *rerum natura*, the nature of creation: 1.26 *rerum naturam expandere dictis*. This looks like nothing less than a claim that Ennius and Homer were poets who like Lucretius wrote *de rerum natura*. The claim that Homer gives a full account of the world in his poetry is a familiar one in antiquity,¹¹ but the claim that Ennius did the same is striking. The suggestion is that Lucretius' great poem and the great hexameter poem of Ennius are parallel in giving accounts of the universe. In a sense, this is a completely tendentious claim about the *Annales*, which was a partly mythographical, partly historical work about the history of Rome; but it is worth thinking for a moment about the analogy. Ennius' *Annales* was for Lucretius and his contemporaries *the* literary work which contained the story of the origin of the Roman people, just as Vergil's *Aeneid* fulfilled that function for later generations, going back to the origin of Aeneas in Troy and his descent from Venus. This aspect of the history of the Roman race is certainly echoed in the first line of Lucretius' poem, *Aeneadum genetrix* (1.1). This allusion could suggest that what Lucretius is giving the reader is an alternative, more scientific version of Roman history: Rome does indeed go back to Venus, but in the sense of the Venus of *De Rerum Natura* 1.1.40, Venus as the generative principle which runs through the universe. This idea of the *De Rerum Natura* as an alternative history of Roman origins I shall return to shortly.

2. The tragic touch: the Ennian *Iphigenia*?

Ennius was not only the first great Roman poet of hexameter epic. He was also a celebrated dramatist, writing at least twenty tragedies on Greek mythological subjects. One of the most famous of these was his *Iphigenia*, clearly an *Iphigenia at Aulis* from its few remaining fragments,¹² amongst which is the well-known 'Soldiers' Chorus' (fr.195-202 J.), in which some members of Agamemnon's army claim that their waiting at Aulis is neither peace nor war but drifting somewhere in between.¹³ I would like to argue that the *Iphigenia* material in the prologue to the first book of Lucretius alludes to this Ennian play. The lines in question are 1.80-101:

¹⁰ Also perhaps suggested by Propertius 4.1.61 *Ennius hirsuta cingat sua dicta corona*, in another context of poetic initiation.

¹¹ Cf. e.g. Hardie (1986) 6-32.

¹² This helps to some degree in pointing to Ennius as a model for Lucretius here, since the only other known Latin play with the title 'Iphigenia', by Naevius, was an *Iphigenia at Tauris*.

¹³ See the treatment in Skutsch (1968) 157-65.

illud in his rebus vereor, ne forte rearis
impia te rationis inire elementa viamque
indugredi sceleris. quod contra saepius illa
religio peperit scelerosa atque impia facta.
Aulide quo pacto Triviai virginis aram
Iphianassai turparunt sanguine foede
ductores Danaum delecti, prima virorum.
cui simul infula virgineos circumdata comptus
ex utraque pari malarum parte profusa est,
et maestum simul ante aras adstare parentem
sensit et hunc propter ferrum celare ministros
aspectuque suos lacrimas effundere civis,
muta metu terram genibus summissa petebat
nec miserae prodesse in tali tempore quibat
quod patri princeps donarat nomine regem.
nam sublata virum manibus tremibundaque ad aras
deductast, non ut sollemni more sacrorum
perfecto posset claro comitari Hymenaeo,
sed casta incestu nubendi tempore in ipso
hostia concideret mactatu maesta parentis,
exitus ut classi felix faustusque daretur.
tantum religio potuit suadere malorum.

Herein I have one fear, lest perchance you think that you are starting on the principles of some unholy reasoning, and setting foot upon the path of sin. Nay, but on the other hand, again and again our foe, religion, has given birth to deeds sinful and unholy. Even as at Aulis the chosen chieftains of the Danai, the first of all the host, foully stained with the blood of Iphianassa the altar of the Virgin of the Cross-Roads. For as soon as the band braided about her virgin locks streamed from her either cheek in equal lengths, as soon as she saw her sorrowing sire stand at the altar's side, and near him the attendants hiding their knives, and her countrymen shedding tears at the sight of her, tongue-tied with terror, sinking on her knees she fell to earth. Nor could it avail the luckless maid at such a time that she first had given the name of father to the king. For seized by men's hands, all trembling was she led to the altars, not that, when the ancient rite of sacrifice was fulfilled, she might be escorted by the clear cry of 'Hymen', but in the very moment of marriage, a pure victim she might foully fall beneath a father's slaughtering stroke in sorrow herself, that a happy and hallowed starting might be granted to the fleet. Such evils deeds could religion prompt. [tr. Bailey (1947)]

Only one scholar has so far suggested that this material might have come from Ennius' lost *Iphigenia*.¹⁴ Perhaps one reason for this is that the passage contains some evident verbal echoes of extant Greek tragedies (84-5 ~ Aesch. *Ag.* 209-11; 93-4 ~ Eur. *IA* 1220), and scholars have been content to imagine that, like us, Lucretius and his contemporaries would first think of Aeschylus and Euripides.

¹⁴ Rychlewska (1957) 75-6, in very general terms. Lucretius is not mentioned as alluding to Ennius' tragedies here by Jocelyn (1967); Prinzen (1998) 49-50 rejects the idea, and the idea that his *Iphigenia* is thematically relevant here is not found in the full lists of Ennian imitation in Lucretius by Pullig (1888), Wreschniok (1907) and Merrill (1918). See further Additional Note below.

But again we must put ourselves back into the position of an original reader in the 50s BC: for such readers the primary literary reference would be to Ennius' *Iphigenia* given the contemporary fame of that lost play, which is quoted by Lucretius' contemporaries Cicero and Varro and probably by the slightly earlier author of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*.¹⁵ Furthermore, echoes of Greek tragedies do not prevent allusions to Ennius here, given that the remaining fragments of Ennius' *Iphigenia* make it clear that the play was a loose adaptation of Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis* which translated or imitated a number of lines from that play.¹⁶

The language of Lucretius' lines gives us some strong indications of Ennian literary presence; though there are no exact verbal parallels between 1.80-101 and the few remaining fragments of Ennius' play, the language of these lines is highly and markedly Ennian, especially at its beginning which sets the (Ennian) context. 82 *indugredi* uses a typically archaic Ennian form (cf. *Ann.* 78 *induperator*; 173 *induvolo*); the archaic genitive of 84 *Triviai* and 85 *Iphianassai* is much used by Ennius, especially in proper names (Skutsch (1985) 61, 191); and the form *Iphianassa* transliterates the Homeric form of Iphigenia's name (*Iliad* 9.145), suitable for Ennius the *alter Homerus* (Horace *Ep.* 2.1.50), while *Trivia* (nom.) is found at *Trag.* 363 J. The theme and language of 84-5 *aram ... / turparunt sanguine foede* also recall *Trag.* 93 J. *Iovis aram sanguine turpari* (of the death of Priam), while 86 *ductores Danaum delecti* picks up *Ann.* 331 *duxit delectos* and *Trag.* 212 J *delecti viri*, and 87 *prima virorum* uses a construction which may be an Ennian innovation (compare *Ann.* 84 *infera noctis*, with Skutsch's commentary; *Ann.* 264 *caeli vasta*).

Taken together, these details make a strong case for a particularly pronounced use of Ennius in these lines; though it is admittedly difficult to identify stiles which are especially tragic rather than epic, allusion to Ennius' *Iphigenia* seems not unlikely here given the subject-matter. If accepted, this clearly adds unity to the proem by echoing the use of Ennius' *Annales* at 1.117-26, already discussed above. The issue of unity achieved through allusion to Ennius leads me to the second question I want to raise in this paper: the unity and structure of the whole prologue.

3. The structure of the proem

(i) Order from chaos?

The structure of the prologue of Book 1 of the *De Rerum Natura* was a celebrated topic of Lucretian scholarship in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹⁷ A key issue was how coherent and sequential the prologue was; many critics viewed it as rambling and relatively formless, and many of the suggestions made for achieving order and a clear sequence of thought involved transposition of lines on a large scale or other radical ideas. The proposal which I wish to adopt

¹⁵ Cf. Jocelyn (1967) 318-24.

¹⁶ See Jocelyn's discussions (Jocelyn (1967) 320-42) and Brooks (1981) 203-33.

¹⁷ Bailey provides a good guide to the various proposals and arguments made (Bailey (1947) 2.585-8).

is that of Jacoby.¹⁸ This avoids transposition and argues for an elaborate ‘Chinese box’ structure, in which elements which mirror each other are grouped concentrically around a central passage. Though Bailey criticised Jacoby’s proposal as being ‘an extremely artificial notion quite unlike Lucr.’s straightforward style’,¹⁹ it seems to me both typical of Lucretius and confirmed by contemporary evidence. Just as Lucretius’ text makes subtle allusions to Hellenistic poets but carefully disguises them, so it also presents complex and artificial structures which look rough and haphazard on the surface. As for contemporary evidence, we can look again to the work of Catullus. Catullus 68 seems to offer a parallel structure in contemporary Latin poetry: chiasmic/ring-compositional architecture after an introduction,²⁰ beginning and ending with a turn to the addressee, centering on a key theme of the poem. A comparison with Jacoby’s scheme for Lucretius *DRN* 1.1-148 indeed shows some detailed correspondences:

Lucretius 1 proem (1-148)²¹

1-40	A: Hymn to Venus
41-53	B: Address to, and link with, Memmius
54-61	C: Summary 1: atoms (Books 1 and 2)
62-79	D: Praise of Epicurus [using Ennius]
80-102	E: Attack on <i>religio</i> (Ennius, Iphigenia)
103-26	D’: Attack on <i>dicta vatium</i> / praise of Ennius
127-135	C’: Summary 2: astronomy, history of earth, soul, dreams/perception (Books 3-6)
136-48	B’: Address to, and link with, Memmius

Catullus 68 (OCT text)²²

1-40	A: Letter to Manius
41-50	B: Introduction to Allius
51-72	C: Catullus’ ‘marriage’ to Lesbia
73-86	D: Laodamia’s marriage to Protesilaus
87-90	E: Troy
91-100	F: Death of Brother
101-104	E’: Troy
105-130	D’: Laodamia’s marriage
131-140	C’: Catullus’ ‘marriage’
141-48	B’: Conclusion to Allius

¹⁸ Jacoby (1921).

¹⁹ Bailey (1947) 2.587.

²⁰ For the structure of Catullus 68 cf. e.g. Kroll (1980) 219.

²¹ I assume here that lines 44-9 are to be retained in their transmitted location, and that there is a short lacuna in which an address of Memmius occurred: for a clear summary of the textual problems see Gale (1994) 215-7.

²² I assume here that Catullus 68.1-40 are part of the same poem as 41-148: for this vexed issue see e.g. Woodman (1983) and the bibliography gathered by Thomson (1997).

The parallels are striking, even down to general length and the length of individual sections. I am not suggesting a direct allusion by one passage to another, but rather a common technique of elaborate concentric composition.

(ii) Programmatic effects: Epicurus outdoes Ennius?

If we adopt this proposed structure, the section which I wish to connect with Ennius' *Iphigenia* becomes the centre of the prologue to *De Rerum Natura* 1. This is highly appropriate; the poem emphasises time and again the importance of correct belief about the gods and religion, and the key Epicurean view that the gods do not in any way intervene in this world of ours (cf. e.g. 1.44-9 = 2.646-51); for Epicureans like Lucretius the story of Iphigenia constitutes a powerful example of evil committed as a result of a false belief in the truth of divination and access to divine will. The Iphigenia section E is then flanked at the centre of the prologue by the praise of Epicurus at D and the attack on the *dicta vatium* at D'. This too is appropriate: the praise of Epicurus and the attack on *dicta vatium* balance each other as encomium and invective, though as we have already seen the attack on *vates* and their false view of the world is tempered with praise of Ennius as Lucretius' great poetic predecessor. This introduces another balance: the praise of Ennius the poetic predecessor in D' can then be seen to balance the praise of Epicurus the ideological predecessor in D. This balance is further confirmed by elements in the praise of Epicurus which link up with Ennius' *Annales*: thus all three central sections of the prologue can be said to have an Ennian link. Let us take a closer look at section D, the praise of Epicurus (62-79):

humana ante oculos foede cum vita iaceret
in terris oppressa gravi sub religione
quae caput a caeli regionibus ostendebat
horribili super aspectu mortalibus instans,
primum Graius homo mortalis tollere contra
est oculos ausus primusque obsistere contra,
quem neque fama deum nec fulmina nec minitanti
murmure compressit caelum, sed eo magis acrem
irritat animi virtutem, effringere ut arta
naturae primus portarum claustra cupiret.
ergo vivida vis animi pervicit, et extra
processit longe flammantia moenia mundi
atque omne immensum peragravit mente animoque,
unde refert nobis victor quid possit oriri,
quid nequeat, finita potestas denique cuique
quanam sit ratione atque alte terminus haerens.
quare religio pedibus subjecta vicissim
obteritur, nos exaequat victoria caelo.

When the life of man lay foul to see and grovelling upon the earth, crushed by the weight of religion, which showed her face from the realms of heaven, lowering upon mortals with dreadful mien, 'twas a man of Greece who first dared to raise his mortal eyes to meet her, and first to stand forth to meet her: him neither the stories of the gods nor thunderbolts checked, nor the sky with its revengeful roar, but all the more spurred the eager daring of his mind to yearn to be the first to break through the close-set bolts upon the doors of nature. And so

it was that the lively force of his mind won its way, and he passed on far beyond the fiery walls of the world, and in mind and spirit traversed the boundless whole: whence in victory he brings us tidings what can come to be and what cannot, yea and in what way each thing has its power limited, and its deep-set boundary-stone. And so religion in revenge is cast beneath men's feet and trampled, and victory raises us to heaven. [tr. Bailey (1947)]

The description of Epicurus himself as the *Graius homo*, 'the man from Greece' (1.66), is famously so vague that it has even been doubted whether Epicurus is unambiguously indicated,²³ but that seems implausible. Not only is the praise of the anonymous Greek wholly suited to Epicurus and wholly consistent with Lucretius' other encomia of his master; but, as Bailey points out in his commentary, the lack of naming is consistent with general Lucretian practice since Epicurus is directly named only once in the *De Rerum Natura* (3.1042). One might also speculate that naming Epicurus so openly early in the poem might actually put off those Roman readers who were acquainted with the image of Epicurus as an atheistic hedonist which was already common in the Hellenistic period. Another advantage conferred by the phrase *Graius homo* is that it is sanctioned by Ennian precedent: *Graius homo* is famously used of Pyrrhus at Ennius *Annales* 165 Sk., a passage which uses the archaic long final syllable *homo*, found for certain only here in Lucretius.²⁴

The parallels which this allusion suggests between Epicurus and Pyrrhus of Epirus merit consideration. The two are in fact contemporaries: Epicurus lived from 341-270 BC, Pyrrhus from 319-272. Both can be represented as Greek invaders of Italy. This is literally true of Pyrrhus, who spent long periods occupying parts of the Italian peninsula in the 270s BC; it was said metaphorically of Epicurus, who could be said by Cicero to have invaded and (paradoxically given his views) disturbed the whole of Italy with his doctrines. At *Fin.* 2.49 Cicero refers to *philosophus nobilis, a quo non solum Graecia et Italia, sed etiam omnis barbaria commota est*, 'that well-known philosopher, by whom not only Greece and Italy, but the whole barbarian world has been disturbed'; as in Lucretius, Epicurus is not named but is evidently meant. A more firmly military image is used at *Tusc.* 4.7 of the Epicurean popularisers of Cicero's time whose writings have spread throughout Italy: *Italiam totam occupaverunt*, 'they have seized the whole of Italy'. The idea of a cultural invasion from Greece was of course common in Roman thought; the most famous example is Horace *Ep.* 2.1.156: *Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit*, 'Greece once captured in turn captured the fierce victor'. There is no doubt that the two invasions are to be regarded very differently: that of Pyrrhus constituted one of the greatest risks to the Roman Republic, while that of Epicurus paradoxically brought true peace and enlightenment to a previously crude and benighted culture. As scholars have pointed out,²⁵ Lucretius' account of Epicurus' philosophical victory incorporates the imagery of triumph and conquest so dear to Roman culture and provides an alternative model of victory, psychological rather than imperial. It is also very

²³ Furley (1970) 64 sees Empedocles as equally possible here.

²⁴ Cf. Skutsch's note *ad loc.*

²⁵ E.g. West (1969) 57-63, Kenney (1974).

likely that the military language here may owe something further to the great Ennian poem in which Pyrrhus appeared, since the *Annales* with its concentration on Rome's victories naturally contained much detail about battles and triumphs.

It is worth pursuing a little further the idea that in this praise of Epicurus and its echoes of Ennius, Lucretius is presenting an Epicurean version or even perversion of Roman history as so famously told in the *Annales*. It could be maintained that, just as later in the prologue at 117-26 Lucretius argues that Ennius was wrong about the afterlife, so here at 62-79 Lucretius may be arguing that Ennius was wrong about history: the truly important facts about Roman culture are not the wars and triumphs recounted in the *Annales*, but the greater triumph over the fear of death and the consequent attainment of mental peace represented in the philosophical achievements of Epicurus, a message which Lucretius himself is now seeking to spread amongst the Romans in his poem.

There are some detailed echoes of Ennius in this passage which point the same way. At 1.70-71 Lucretius talks of the revolutionary effect of Epicurus' throwing off of the fear of the gods, comparing it in a famous image to the throwing open of the gates of the universe, *effringere ut arta / naturae primus portarum claustra cupiret*, 'to yearn to be the first to break through the close-set bolts upon the doors of nature'. This looks very like a philosophical version of the famous breaking open of the Gates of War in the First Punic War in Ennius *Annales* 7: cf. *Annales* 225-6 *postquam Discordia taetra / Belli ferratos postes portasque refregit*, 'after foul Discord shattered the iron-bound door-posts of war and its gates'. The implication is that the bound-breaking achievement of Epicurus is far greater than that of the Punic Wars, since it led to peace of mind and not to the mindless destruction of war: bursting the bounds of the universe in order to provide peace of mind for all mankind is undoubtedly superior to bursting open the gates of war to inflict violence on the nations of the earth, even if the war in question settled big questions about the imperial future of Rome. It is worth noting that that Ennius' Discordia and Epicurus are both boundary-bursting deities of a sort; Discordia is a minor deity like Euripides' Lyssa or Vergil's Allecto,²⁶ while Epicurus is famously termed a god in the hyperbolic rhetoric of the proem to *De Rerum Natura* 5 (5.8, 19). The ultimate triumph achieved for Epicureans by Epicurus overcomes the ultimate triumph achieved for Romans as chronicled by Ennius.

This fits well with other elements in the first prologue already suggested as offering a new Epicurean version of Roman history. The emphasis in the opening address to Venus (1.1-40) on the goddess as the bringer of peace and procreation, and on her peaceful quieting of Mars' warlike instincts, looks again like a counter to the common claim that the Romans are a military people since descended from Mars through his son Romulus,²⁷ a claim bolstered by the evident prominence of Mars as ancestor in the account of early Roman history given in Ennius' *Annales*.²⁸ In Lucretius' picture of Venus and Mars (1.28-40), it is clear that the

²⁶ Vergil's Allecto famously imitates Ennius' Discordia: cf. Norden (1915) 18-33.

²⁷ Cf. e.g. Livy *praef.* 7, Ovid *Fasti* 3.85-6 and (by implication) Vergil *Aeneid* 1.273-9.

²⁸ Cf. Skutsch (1985) 193-5.

mother of Aeneas, representing peace, overcomes the father of Romulus, representing war. This could be seen as making a startling claim: if Venus is the key divine ancestor of the Roman race as mother of its founder Aeneas, adherence to the peace which she represents must in some sense invoke an ancestral quality of the warlike Romans which they need to regain. The Romans are the children of peace-loving Venus, not of war-loving Mars. This is a brilliantly paradoxical use of a type of argument which appealed intensely to the Romans: the *argumentum a maioribus*, according to which Romans should always resemble their ancestors.²⁹ In the ideological choice between Venus and Mars as alternative divine parents, it is clear that Venus triumphs for Lucretius.

I conclude by considering a further element which links together the three central sections of the prologue as analysed in the diagram, D, E and D'. We have already seen how the later part of section D', the praise of Ennius, provides a connecting element with the Ennian material in D and E. But it may be possible to go further in seeing an Ennian connection in the attack on the terrifying predictions of *vates* which is found in lines 102-111:

tutemet a nobis iam quovis tempore vatū
terriquois victus dictis desciscere quaeres.
quippe etenim quam multa tibi iam fingere possunt
somnia quae vitae rationes vetere possint
fortunasque tuas omnis turbare timore !
et merito: nam si certam finem esse viderent
aerumnarum homines, aliqua ratione valerent
religionibus atque minis obsistere vatū.

You yourself sometime vanquished by the fearsome threats of the seer's sayings, will seek to desert from us. Nay indeed, how many a dream they even now conjure up before you, which might avail to overthrow your schemes of life, and confound in fear all your fortunes. And justly so: for if men could see that there is a fixed limit to their sorrows, then with some reason they might have the strength to stand against the scruples of religion, and the threats of seers. [tr. Bailey (1947)]

What are the *terriquoia dicta vatū*, the 'fearsome threats of the seer's sayings'? It is logical to look back to the previous Iphigenia section (80-102). Here if anywhere is a story where the terrifying pronouncements of prophets played a key role: Agamemnon was forced to sacrifice Iphigenia by the forceful and fearsome prophecies of Calchas, famously described at some length in the parodos to Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (123-59). It is true that the account of the sacrifice of Iphigenia given here by Lucretius does not involve a specific reference to prophecy, but there is no doubt for Lucretius that *religio* towards the commands of gods is to blame, and that those commands were communicated to Agamemnon by prophecy, i.e. the words of Calchas. The problem for Agamemnon is that he was in the position of most of mankind according to Lucretius—unable to stand up to the threats of prophets (*minis obsistere vatū*, 1.111). Thus this passage can be closely connected with the story of Iphigenia.

²⁹ Cf. e.g. Flower (1996) 220-1.

4. Conclusion

I hope in this paper to have shown two things: first, that the prologue to the first book of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* engages much more pointedly than previously thought with Ennius, his stylistic model and great predecessor as Latin hexameter poet; and, second, that these allusions to Ennius help to provide unity in this long and complex opening to Lucretius' remarkable poem.

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Additional note, July 2002

In the first version of this paper, posted in April 2002, I overlooked Rychlewska's suggestion (n.14). I also did not deal sufficiently with the standard objection to imitation of Ennius' *Iphigenia* in Lucretius 1.80-101, namely that it is clear that Ennius used the Euripidean *Iphigenia in Aulis*, closely imitated in several of the extant fragments, in which play Iphigenia is famously not sacrificed but escapes through the miraculous substitution of a hind by Artemis. This objection is considered decisive by many, most recently Perutelli (1996) 196 and Prinzen (1998) 49-50. But it is certain that Ennius' play diverged in some important respects from the Euripidean play: the well-known Soldiers' Chorus, the largest extant fragment of Ennius' version, presents us with a chorus different from the female chorus of the *IA* and with words not closely paralleled there. This has led scholars to suggest that Ennius' *Iphigenia* may have used more than one Greek tragedy in the kind of *contaminatio* familiar in Roman comedy (cf. Aretz (1999) 240-2; for the general likelihood of such *contaminatio* in Roman tragedy cf. Lennartz (1994) 116-26). Thus the likelihood that Lucretius 1.80-101 draws on Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (well argued by Perutelli 1996) need not militate against drawing on Ennius' *Iphigenia* as well, since Ennius may also have used the Aeschylean ending.