

THE DATE OF *DE RERUM NATURA*¹*In memory of Don Fowler*

It is generally supposed that the date of *De Rerum Natura* is in some way fixed by a reference to *Lucreti poemata* in Cic. *Q.F.* 2.10.3 (February 54 B.C.) and by an attested year for the poet's death, whether 55 B.C. (Donatus, *Vit. Verg.* 6) or 51/50 (Jerome, *Chron.* Ol. 171. 3, p. 149 Helm). In my opinion, these indications are misleading. The poem was probably being written, it will be argued, in or after 49.

1. THE PROEM

effice ut interea fera moenera militai	
per maria ac terras omnis sopita quiescant.	30
nam tu sola potes tranquilla pace iuuare	
mortalis, quoniam belli fera moenera Mauors	
armipotens regit, in gremium qui saepe tuum se	
reicit . . .	
hunc tu, diua, tuo recubantem corpore sancto	38
circumfusa super, suavis ex ore loquelas	
funde, petens placidam Romanis, incluta, pacem.	40
nam neque nos agere hoc patriai tempore iniquo	
possumus aequo animo, nec Memmi clara propago	
talibus in rebus communi desse saluti.	(1.29–43) ²

The first point to be made about this not unfamiliar passage is that it implies a specific time. The *patriai tempore iniquo*, further denoted by *talibus in rebus*, can hardly refer to a purely imaginary situation, of which there is no likelihood. The situation is an extreme one, an emergency which (in accordance with Epicurean doctrine) means that the poet cannot maintain normal Epicurean attitudes and Memmius cannot adopt normal Epicurean behaviour. *talibus in rebus communi desse saluti* plainly implies something exceptional and momentous. Furthermore, the assertion of impossibility for Memmius in 42–3 appears to need some known situation to justify it. It is not intrinsically obvious why Memmius *non potest* (note the indicative *possumus*); quite what was going on here would not be apparent even to the original readers if no concrete set of circumstances were being evoked. Besides this, the urgency of the request, especially in 38–43, would seem inadequately motivated if the situation were not at least a strong possibility in the near future. We must note too that the situation in 41–3 has to be connected with the absence of peace, actual or feared: the *nam* in 41, after 40, makes that plain. It would also do violence to the passage to disconnect the

¹ Various friends have discussed the ideas of this piece with me, and encouraged me; I am especially grateful to Professor D. Feeney and Dr M. Deufert. *CQ*'s two readers, one literary, one historical, have substantially helped the presentation of the argument.

² It is supposed that 44–9 are rightly deleted: cf. M. Deufert, *Pseudo-Lucrezisches im Lucrez. Die unechten Verse in Lucrezens 'De Rerum Natura'*, Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte Bd. 48 (Berlin and New York, 1996), 32–40. There are more elaborate suggestions in T. Cole, 'Venus and Mars (*De Rerum Natura* 1.31–40)', in P. Knox and C. Foss (edd.), *Style and Tradition: Studies in Honor of Wendell Clausen*, Beiträge zur Altertumskunde Bd. 92 (Stuttgart, 1998), 11–14. 'The proem to the work', 'the proem', or the like, will refer especially to 1.1–43, for the sake of convenience; there is no wish to segregate the 'hymn' too absolutely from what follows (50 to roughly 146), or to deny the ways in which Book 1 in general serves to introduce the poem.

pacem in 40 from the preceding sequence of thought on war and peace. If they are connected, the relevance of peace from warfare, in all the world and for the Romans, is not tight enough without a specific situation: for it is only a war that directly threatens the *patriai* and the *communi* . . . *saluti* which would have these necessary consequences for the poet and for Memmius. We may add that if, as has now been made probable, a specific situation in fact lies in the background, and the situation involves war, it is hard to think that contemporary readers could take 29–33 as purely universal and undefined, and not relate them in some way to present or impending events.³

It is apparent that military action is being referred to, of a kind clearly alarming to the state and demanding Memmius' involvement. The reference should not be to mere turbulence in Rome: cf. *fera moenera militai / per maria ac terras omnis* (29–30), *quoniam belli fera moenera Mauors / armipotens regit* (32–3). And the whole passage makes little sense unless it is at least apparent that actual war is an imminent danger. A mere shrewd surmise of possible developments does not explain the present *possumus* in 42: a setting of crisis is required. Nor would the pressing request for the goddess's intercession be appropriate and intelligible. The Ciceronian correspondence (here much the most helpful source) makes it very clear that there was no general feeling of the imminence of civil war, for example, in 55–54 B.C., or at any time until the latter half of 50.⁴

Might Lucretius be exaggerating the condition of Rome, to help an Empedoclean antithesis of Love and Strife and the larger system of imagery within the work? Might he be presenting a time of commotion as one of war? The idea of exaggeration might seem at first to be recommended (if we are unkind) by the arguments on the fear of death at the beginning of Book 3. But the elaborate and subtle argumentation there

³ For the idea of the emergency, see D. P. Fowler, 'Lucretius and politics', in M. Griffin and J. Barnes (edd.), *Philosophia Togata I: Essays on Philosophy and Roman Society* (Oxford, 1989), 127–8. The crucial text, possibly affected by the wish for a neat parallelism, is Sen. *De Otio* 3.2 'Epicurus ait: "non accedet ad rem publicam sapiens, nisi si quid interuenerit"; Zenon ait: "accedet ad rem publicam, nisi si quid inpedierit"'; cf. Cic. *Rep.* 1.10.1 (not explicitly Epicureans) 'negat sapientem suscepturum ullam rei publicae partem, extra quam si eum tempus et necessitas coegerit' (cf. 11.1). At all events, the conflict with the basic doctrine of abstention from politics makes it apparent that the circumstances must be exceptional. Highly relevant to the question of actual war, and to the proem, is Philod. *Piet.* Part 1.929–32 Obbink = Epicur. 115 Arrighetti, whether or not a specific war is spoken of there: Epicurus writes in a letter *καὶν πόλ[ε]μ[ος] ἤν[η]*, | *δεῖνόν οὐκ ἂν ἔσειθαι* (Gomperz, for *ουκαθεσθαι*) *θεῶν ἰλεῶν ὄν[των]* (cf. D. Obbink, *Philodemus, On Piety, Part 1: Critical Text with Commentary* [Oxford, 1996], 445–6).

⁴ Early expectations of civil war: cf. esp. Cic. *Fam.* 8.14 (Caelius, Aug. 50; conditional), 14.5.1, *Att.* 7.1.2 (both Oct. 50), 7.4.2, 7.8.5 (*O.R.F.*⁴ 159 F 7) (both December 50). By contrast, even Cic. *Att.* 4.6.1 (Mar. 55) *ex eius* (i.e. *patriae*) *incendio ereptus* clearly does not refer to warfare (the *bellum* and *castra* of 2 are of course figurative, as is *πόλεμος* at *Q.F.* 2.14.4). Cicero's wild retrospective allegations about the circumstances of his exile (*Sest.* 45–8, *Leg.* 3.25–6, etc.) naturally do not prove any general expectation of civil war at the time. Nor is Varr. *R.R.* 1.69.3 talking of war. Munro on 1.41–3 does his best with 59; F. H. Sandbach, 'Lucreti poemata and the poet's death', *CR* 54 (1940), 77, is no more convincing on late 55/54 ('At home the Romans may have guessed . . .'). D. Sedley, *Lucretius and the Transformation of Greek Wisdom* (Cambridge, 1998), who supposes publication around 54, is led by the text to write of 'the current war-torn state of his own [Lucretius'] country' (27), a description by no means apt to the imagined time. For *tempore iniquo*, a phrase selected to oppose *aequo animo*, cf. Cic. *S. Rosc.* 81 'temporis illius acerbiter iniquitatemque', of Rome during and just after Sulla's proscriptions. After submitting this piece, I noticed that L. Hermann, 'Catulle et Lucrèce', *Latomus* 15 (1956), 465–80, at 474 relates 1.29–30 and 40–3 to the Civil War. However, his argument is peculiar (Memmius must have been in exile or he would have been forced to participate in the war); and he desires, not 49 or later, but a date between 52 and 50 B.C., perhaps 51–50 (see below). His grounds for dating the later books to the time of the war itself are far from cogent.

only shows the difference: however exigent the wider literary scheme, it could not really account for the oblique and unsupported presentation of the current time in terms which do not obviously apply to it. It is not, we have seen, a question of magnifying real fears of future war; nor is it a question of making present warfare that was not really dangerous appear dangerous. And however excessively unrest in Rome were depicted, it would not explain the statement about Memmius. (The statement could hardly be made in 54, as if clearly justified, on the basis of a consulship in 53 for which the elections had not yet taken place.) The whole passage is given a far more natural context, and its mood and language are supported, by all the allegations of desire for peace and horror for war voiced before, during, and after the Civil War: not just by Cicero (note e.g. *Att.* 7.1.2 *tantam dimicationem . . . quanta numquam fuit*, 8.11.3 *tanta malorum impendet* ἰλιύς) but by Matrius (*summe studui*, *Fam.* 11.28.2), Pollio (*saepe defleui*, 10.31.2), Balbus (*me . . . torqueri, postquam rursus in spem pacis ueni . . . Att.* 9.13A.2), Varro (*belli horribilis*, *Vit. Pop. Rom.* fr. 120 Riposati), even Caesar (*B.C.* 3.90.1 *quanto studio pacem petisset*), not to mention the feelings of Cassius (*Fam.* 15.15.1), Cato (*Att.* 7.15.2), everyone 'here' (7.3.5; Cicero is writing from Samnium).⁵

Even 50 B.C. does not altogether satisfy. Future war does not fit so well with 1.29–30, where the war appears to be happening already. One could escape this implication by taking the passage as undefined; but that was seen to be dubious. It would be undesirable too to make the warfare in 29–30 a separate conflict or conflicts from the warfare of which an end is sought for the Romans (40), so that Venus would be asked to end all wars in the provinces in case they caused war in Rome. The connection of thought would become much less tight; the *tranquilla pace* of 31 ought to be directly taken up in the *placidam . . . pacem* of 40. Nor does future civil war fit so well, one might think, at 41–3. If we are in the region of, say, 50–48 B.C., *nec . . . communi desse saluti* most likely suggests participation in war rather than indispensable and all-consuming political activity: no Memmius is conspicuous in the political scene at that time. On the other hand, any part in a military campaign would make sense of the implied point that Memmius will not be able to give his attention to Lucretius' poem.⁶

The passage, then, should be set during the Civil War, and probably not during January and February 49, when the war was not thought of as fully begun, and the geographical range of military action was still limited. Possibly one should find most plausible an earlier rather than a later stage in the war. Fighting for the *communi . . . saluti* is most easily understood from a Senatorial (Pompeian) perspective. The earlier stages of the war perhaps best suit the conception that the distinguished Memmius must self-evidently participate (note Cic. *Att.* 7.26.2 *fin.*). The phrase *communi . . . saluti* might even be argued to make best sense when the Senatorial side still has a good chance, notably before Pharsalus (Aug. 48). If Memmius is the praetor of 58, the passage will have to precede the *Brutus* of 46 B.C., where Memmius is among the dead (247). In short, one should (in my opinion) feel reasonably confident that the Civil War

⁵ A speculative case for Aphrodite and Ares in Empedocles' proem: Sedley (n. 4), ch. 1. One could accept without accepting that case the idea that the proem hinted at an alternation of Love and Strife. Some of §6 below is relevant to the system of imagery. L. Canfora, *Vita di Lucrezio* (Palermo, 1993), 49–51, takes 1.41–3 as referring, from the first half of 54, to Memmius' future consulship.

⁶ The argument against future war tells also against fears of a Parthian War from late 51, or a Gallic War in 60: neither would in any case be adequate to 1.41–3. The alleged foreign threats in Virg. *Georg.* 1.509–14, 2.171–2, hardly furnish a suitable parallel: the wars could hardly be seen to impose an inescapable necessity on Memmius.

is being referred to; a date after 50 is probable; there is some temptation to place the poem in the earlier part of the war, especially between March 49 and August 48.⁷

2. CICERO

The poem itself, which should be the most decisive evidence, has been seen to offer a strong indication of its own date; this dating would surely seem hard to resist if there were no further evidence. We must now consider the impediments presented by various kinds of less instructive or less authoritative material. The letter of Cicero might be held to bear particularly weighty authority, since it is a contemporary document. He writes: 'Lucreti poemata ut scribis ita sunt, multis luminibus ingeni, multae tamen artis. sed cum ueneris. uirum te putabo si Sallusti Empedoclea legeris; hominem non putabo' (*Q.F.* 2.10.3 [SB 14]).⁸

On scarcely any view, however, does this passage present a formidable argument against the date suggested. Even supposing that *Lucreti poemata* means 'the poem of Lucretius' and denotes *D.R.N.*, there is not much difficulty in imagining that Cicero and his brother have seen a version earlier than the one we now have, whether 'published' or not. It may be borne in mind that the extant version of the poem, if not itself 'published' by the author, could easily appear less complete than a version which he had published earlier. Second thoughts on the best position of passages, on further subjects, and so forth, would then have created perplexities in an unfinalized text (if the perplexities are not the result of later corruption). Such second thoughts after a first edition are readily paralleled from the textual history of related poems like Thomson's *The Seasons* and Parini's *Il giorno*; the circulation of a first version, then revised, is paralleled by the remarkable example of Cicero's *Academica Priora*, besides Ovid's *Amores*, etc. The plural, however, would not be altogether easy in the sense 'the poem': Cic. *N.D.* 2.104 *carminibus Arateis* may furnish a parallel, but the history and the two parts of the *Aratea* add uncertainties.⁹

poemata might mean 'lines': this would be an odd way of referring to the poem or Lucretius' poetry, but the word could, as the parallels suggest, denote the lines of a specific passage (cf. esp. Varr. *Epist. Lat. Min.* II 109 F 11b Cugusi). Yet *multis* seems something of an objection here. It seems an objection too to the meaning 'passages' (cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 2. 26, of passages cited in prose); and it seems a complicated hypothesis that Cicero and Quintus had both read a particular group of extracts, not further specified here. Neither of these renderings creates much obstacle to the dating of the version that we have.¹⁰

⁷ Cic. *Fam.* 15.15.1–2 are interesting on events after Pharsalus; note *saluti* in 2.

⁸ Sedley (n. 4), 1, interestingly returns to a comma after *ueneris*. This may be right; but one wonders if *cum ueneris* ought not then to have come later in the sentence. Cic. *Fam.* 9.25.2, *Att.* 13.22, 15.1a.2, *Q.F.* 2.7.1–2 may sufficiently justify the postponing of the discussion, despite §1 of the present letter; for the ellipse cf. *Att.* 12.5a.1, 13.28.1, 14.20.3. In what precedes, the change from ablative to genitive is somewhat awkward; the rhythm of *multae tamen artis*, in a sentence of this sort written to Quintus not Atticus, may possibly increase suspicion.

⁹ On the *Aratea*, see J. Soubiran, *Cicéron. Aratea: fragments poétiques* (Paris, 1972), 8–16, esp. 12. Cic. *Lael.* 24 *carminibus Graecis* probably denotes verses. More interesting, though much later and again with *carmen*, are Gell. 1.21.5 in *carminibus Lucreti* (not necessarily 'the poem'), and Diomedes, *G.L.K.* 1.482 *Lucreti carmina* (certainly 'the poem'). On the completeness of the poem see §6 below.

¹⁰ The poetic parallels offered by Sandbach (n. 3), 76 for *poemata* with the sense 'poetry' are dubious evidence for prose, and not even convincing in themselves. The specialized uses of the singular *ποίημα* or *poema* in Neoptolemus and others are probably best left on one side in this

Much the simplest understanding is that *Lucreti poemata* denotes Epicurean poems written by Lucretius before *D.R.N.* (Epicurean because of the parallel with *Sallusti Empedoclea*). We are in no position to assert that Lucretius is unlikely to have written poems before *D.R.N.*; surely, indeed, the reverse is true. It would be no surprise that shorter poems on the same subject-matter should be overshadowed by *D.R.N.* once it existed, and should not be preserved. Of course, it would be possible that such poems were later adapted to form parts of *D.R.N.* itself, and likely that they anticipated its phrases. The precise nature of such poems would of course be unknowable; Cleanthes' poems might provide an interesting parallel. If the words do mean 'the poems of Lucretius', the epic itself, one would reasonably infer, was not known to Cicero at that time. It would be strange so to group smaller poems with the monumental creation. In that case, the epic had not been generally circulated, even in an earlier version, by 54 B.C. But it must be reiterated that this understanding of the words is in no way essential to the argument.¹¹

3. DONATUS AND JEROME

From a source that would carry authority but indicates little, we turn to sources that are definite in their indications but of very questionable authority. Donatus writes, of Virgil (*Vit. Verg.* 6),

initia aetatis Cremonae egit usque ad uirilem togam, quam xvii anno natali suo (anno natalis sui M, natali suo A, aetatis suae anno E, anno aetatis suae G) accepit, isdem illis consulibus iterum quibus erat natus; euenitque ut eo ipso die Lucretius poeta decederet.

Jerome writes (*Chron.* p. 149 Helm),

Titus Lucretius poeta nascitur. qui postea amatorio poculo in furorem uersus, cum aliquot libros per interualla insaniae conscripsisset, quos postea Cicero emendauit, propria se manu interfecit, anno aetatis xliiii.

This is put under Ol. 171.3 in the best manuscript tradition (under 171.1 in A).¹²

Some general points may be made first. Donatus and Jerome contradict each other, so one must be mistaken: this shows that the class of evidence cannot be simply assumed correct. It may well be that both of them are mistaken. One should beware of supposing that because they offer specific dates, and we desire specific dates, their information is necessarily reliable (and more reliable than the evident fictions they offer). If we may suppose that they go back to Suetonius, either one at least is not representing Suetonius accurately, or Suetonius contradicted himself or left the matter unclear. Whether Suetonius himself knew the date of Lucretius' death depends on whether he had a sound source of information. Such a source could perhaps be

context. Cf. e.g. J. Porter, 'Content and form in Philodemus: the history of an evasion', in D. Obbink (ed.), *Philodemus and Poetry: Poetic Theory and Practice in Lucretius, Philodemus, and Horace* (Oxford, 1995), 102–17.

¹¹ It appears in Herrmann (n. 4), 472–3. It had occurred to me, it is germane to mention, not because of the argument in §1, which had not yet come to mind, but because of dissatisfaction with the usual views of *Lucreti poemata*. The earliest point at which one can say that probably no other poems by Lucretius were current is Gell. 12.10.7 'Titus autem Lucretius in carmine suo . . .'. Of the 'fragments' (cf. J. Martin's edition [Leipzig, 1969], 281–2), some are clearly not Lucretius, others may have vanished in lacunae.

¹² I have looked at the text of the passage in the oldest MS, O, itself (facsimile in J. K. Fotheringham, *The Bodleian Manuscript of Jerome's Version of the Chronicle of Eusebius Reproduced in Collotype* [Oxford, 1905]).

imagined, say a contemporary poem lamenting the event which could itself be securely dated or which joined the event to some other securely dated event. But it is equally easy to imagine (or easier) that no such source was available.¹³

We cannot, then, regard either of the passages as offering an indisputable fact which demands belief and must outweigh the indication of the poem itself. There are further grounds for suspicion of each. First, Jerome. The date of birth implied is probably 94 B.C.; even if it were 94/93, the death would still fall in 51/50 (before the forty-fourth birthday). Jerome may well have hazarded a suitable date for the birth himself, as he did with Suetonius' *grammatici* and *rhetores*; perhaps he derived the forty-three years of life from Suetonius. It would be somewhat surprising if Jerome calculated this birth-date on the basis of a Suetonian death-date in the consulship of Pompey and Crassus (55), when he himself dates the consulship in 56 (so a miscalculation of the birth-date by five years). However, even if he derived from somewhere an authentic date of birth or death, a lesser error would be no surprise at all. Jerome is exceedingly liable to be out by a year or more. For example he places Cicero's exile in 61 not 58, Catullus' death in 58 or 57 when Catullus is writing in 55, Carrhae in 56 not 53 (and in Crassus' consulship), the battle of Actium in 33 not 31, and so on. The date of death which Jerome implies need in fact only be mistaken by a year or two for it to be compatible with the dating suggested in §1.¹⁴

The passage of Donatus is still less promising. The consular date of 55 conflicts with the date within Virgil's life (54 or 53). If we suppose a textual error, whether made by or to Donatus, the consular date has much the stronger claim to being original, because it can hardly result from corruption; and if we were to take the whole passage back to Suetonius, the consular date would suit well (cf. Donatus, *Vit. Verg.* 2, Jerome, *Ol.* 177.3, p. 153 Helm). The Jerome, however, discourages us from doing so. It could be that Suetonius' *Life* of Virgil gave one date for Lucretius' death, his *Life* of Lucretius another, or no date, or alternative dates; but none of these possibilities would give us much confidence that the real date was known. Whatever the original date in

¹³ For the kinds of poem envisaged cf., on Tibullus' death, *Ov. Am.* 3.9, Domitius Marsus fr. 7 Courtney. Jerome's general use of Suetonius in his work is shown by his preface, pp. 6–7 Helm: additions 'in Romana maxime historia'; 'plurima, quae de Tranquillo et ceteris inlustribus historicis curiosissime excerpti'. Donatus' *Life* is reasonably thought to have Suetonius' as its verbal basis; but quite how much of this long *Life* is pure Suetonius remains very uncertain. Confident views are presented by H. Naumann (*Enciclopedia virgiliana* [6 vols, Rome, 1984–91], V.571–4, with refs.); but if some additions are allowed, more might exist (G. Brugnoli, *ibid.*, 2.126, V.576–7, is much less assured). It should be noted that the dedicatory letter in P is a preface to Donatus' commentary as a whole; how relevant it is to the *Life* is unclear. As far as expression goes, 'euenitque ut eo ipso die Lucretius poeta decederet' could perfectly well be Suetonian (cf. *Aug.* 101.1, *Claud.* 2.1, 7, *Galb.* 6.1). For the surrounding context cf. Jerome, *Chron.* *Ol.* 180.2, 181.4, pp. 154, 155 Helm.

¹⁴ An error of one year over a Roman poet's birth or death would be utterly commonplace in Jerome. One could also hypothesize a death-date, distinct from that in Donatus, of 50 or 49, which would have been inferred by a scholar from the latest date necessarily attested by the poem (in the poem). For discussion of the passage, see R. Helm, *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte: Eusebius Werke 7. Die Chronik des Hieronymus*, pref. U. Treu (Berlin, 1984³), xxiv; *Hieronymus' Zusätze in Eusebius' Chronik und ihr Wert für die Literaturgeschichte*, *Philologus* Suppl. 21.2 (Leipzig, 1929), 33–5. For Jerome's treatment of Suetonius' *De grammaticis et rhetoribus*, see R. Kaster, *C. Suetonius Tranquillus, De Grammaticis et Rhetoribus: Edited with a Translation, Introduction, and Commentary* (Oxford, 1995), li–lii; for Jerome on Actium, R. W. Burgess, *Studies in Eusebian and Post-Eusebian Chronography, Historia Einzelschriften* H. 135 (Stuttgart, 1999), 24–5. One awaits eagerly R. W. Burgess's monograph on Jerome's version of Eusebius; cf. also G. Herbert-Brown, 'Jerome's dates for Gaius Lucilius, *satyrarum scriptor*', *CQ* 49 (1999), 535–43.

Donatus and its provenance, the synchronism must raise suspicion. The synchronistic connection is not a modern inference but made in the text; and some measure of biographical invention must surely be conceded here (unless one is sanguine enough to believe *eo ipso die*). That leaves the year very vulnerable. Besides this, the year 55 is easily explained (54 almost equally so): if Cicero's letter of February 54 was taken to have been written shortly after Lucretius' death, the date of the year before would have been a natural guess. That it was so taken is made plausible by the *quos postea Cicero emendauit* of Jerome, whether that notion was brought to Cicero's text or, as is more probable, derived from it. The letter would readily be dated to 54 from the connected one that followed it in the collection (cf. 2.10.2 with 2.11.1–2).¹⁵

4. CALIDUS AND CATULLUS

No real difficulty is created for the dating in §1 by Nep. *Att.* 12.4:

idem L. Iulium Calidum, quem post Lucreti Catullique mortem multo elegantissimum poetam nostram tulisse aetatem uere uideor posse contendere, neque minus uirum bonum optimisque artibus eruditum, post proscriptionem equitum propter magnas eius Africanas possessiones in proscriptorum numerum a P. Volumnio, praefecto fabrum Antoni, absentem relatum expeditiit.

Evidently Calidus was adult in 43 and presumably wrote or continued writing after his preservation; the passage does not necessarily suggest that he began writing after Lucretius' death, but if it did, this would not be difficult to accommodate. The order *Lucreti Catullique* need not imply Lucretius died first: his being born first would be quite sufficient to explain the order even in this context (cf. the pair Haydn and Mozart), and one can easily imagine other explanations: for example, the more archaic or obviously imposing poet first. Or the order might be random.¹⁶

Connections between Catullus and Lucretius do not constitute a strong argument against the date. It is commonly supposed that Catullus is imitating Lucretius: the connections are thought to be confined to Catullus 64, and Lucretius is thought unlikely to have borrowed from just one poem of Catullus. The first point is questionable: Cat. 68 B. 89 *commune sepulcrum Asiae Europaeque* and Lucr. 5.259 *rerum commune sepulcrum* form a link as notable as any of those involving Catullus 64; it seems awkward to assume that Cat. 64.261–3 (on the Bacchae) were influenced by Lucr. 2.618–19, 637, 4.546, but Cat. 63.8, 21, 29 were not. The second point is as dubious as most such general arguments, and is invalidated by the consideration that Catullus 64 is uniquely related to Lucretius' own genre. Even if Catullus is borrowing

¹⁵ Canfora (n. 5), 15, and N. Horsfall, 'Virgil: his life and times', in N. Horsfall (ed.), *A Companion to the Study of Virgil*, *Mnemosyne* Suppl. 151 (Leiden, etc.), 5–6, are properly dubious of the synchronism. For such synchronisms, to make the beginnings of one poet coincide with the death of another, cf. e.g. A. Mosshammer, *The Chronicle of Eusebius and Greek Chronographic Tradition* (Lewisberg and London, 1979), 218–21. Horsfall's whole chapter offers a suitably sceptical approach to Donatus' *Life*; cf. also O. Zwielerlein, *Die Ovid- und Vergil-Revision in tiberischer Zeit I*, *Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte* Bd. 57 (Berlin and New York, 1999), 603–7.

¹⁶ For Lucretius as possessing the more obvious credentials for renown, cf. perhaps Vell. 2.36.2 'auctoresque carminum Varronem ac Lucretium neque ullo in suscepti operis sui genere minorem Catullum' (cf. also Ov. *Trist.* 2.423–30). Note too that if Lucretius lived for forty-three years and Jerome's birthdate of 82 for Varro is not a long way out, Varro would probably be considerably younger than Lucretius. For an unchronological pair, note e.g. Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.97 *Accius atque Pacuuius*; Accius was fifty years the younger (Cic. *Brut.* 229). Cf. also Macer et Lucretius (Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.87); Macer certainly died many years after Lucretius (cf. E. Courtney, *The Fragmentary Latin Poets: Edited with Commentary* [Oxford, 1993], 292).

from Lucretius, we know that some kind of philosophical poetry by Lucretius was being read by early 54. But contemplation of the list of supposed borrowings suggests that both authors are at least equally likely to be drawing on the traditions of older serious poetry. Even from the little of that poetry that has been preserved there are enough salient connections and enough likeness of language to make one doubt the negative assertion that such phrases could not have appeared in earlier poets.¹⁷

We may run briefly through the main examples of resemblance. Cat. 64.125 *clarisonas imo fudisse e pectore uoces*, 198 *quae quoniam* (sc. *querelae*) *uerae nascuntur pectore ab imo*, 202 *maesto profudit pectore uoces*, Lucr. 3.57 *nam uerae uoces tum demum pectore ab imo / eliciuntur* (*eiciuntur* Gifanius): the resemblance of thought between 64.198 and 3.57 rests on the specific idea of holding truths in the bottom of the chest, which cannot have been peculiar to these two authors (cf. Sen. *Tro.* 580 *pectore imo condita arcana eruet*; *De Ira* 3. 13 *in imo pectoris secessu recondatur*); otherwise cf. Enn. *Ann.* 553 Skutsch *effudit uoces*, Acc. 315 Dangel *composita dicta e pectore euoluunt suo*, Cic. fr. 10. 28–9 Courtney *oracla furenti / pectore fundebant*, Hom. *Il.* [10.]9–10 ἀνεστρονάχιζ' . . . νειόθεν ἐκ κραδίης, Virg. *Aen.* 6.55 *funditque preces rex pectore ab imo* (*pectore ab imo* also 1. 485; contrast Ap. Rhod. 2.207–8), and note below for *clarisonas*. Cat. 64.156 *uasta Charybdis*, Lucr. 1.722 *uasta Charybdis*: cf. Hom. *Od.* 12.260, etc. δεινὴν τε Χάρυβδι, Virg. *Aen.* 7.302 *uasta Charybdis*, Cic. *Har.* 59 *quam . . . tam immanem Charybdim poetae fingendo exprimere potuerunt . . . ?* Cat. 64.178 *ponti* (sc. *me a Creta*) *truculentum diuidit aequor*, Lucr. 1.718–19 *rapidum mare diuidit undis / Italiae terrarum oras a finibus eius*: cf. Enn. *Ann.* 302 Skutsch *Europam Libyamque rapax ubi diuidit unda*, Hom. *Il.* 1.156–7 μεταξύ . . . θάλασσά τε ἡχήμεκα. Cat. 64.205–6 *tellus atque horrida contremuerunt / aequora*, Lucr. 3.835 *omnia cum belli trepido concussa tumultu / horrida contremuere*: cf. Enn. *Ann.* 309 Skutsch *Africa terribili tremit horrida terra tumultu*. Cat. 64.207 *caeca . . . caligine*, Lucr. 3. 304 *caecae caliginis*: cf. Cic. *Arat.* 345 *caeca caligine*, 478 *caligine caeca*, *Progn.* fr. 1.2 Soubiran *caeca caligine*. Cat. 261–4: on these archaic-sounding lines see above, and note in general the suggestive fragments of Accius' *Bacchae*, including 427 Dangel *facri crepantes† melos*; for Cat. 64.261 *raucisonos . . . bombos*, Lucr. 2.619 *raucisono . . . cantu*, 4.546 *raucum . . . bombum* cf. Enn. *Ann.* 486 Skutsch *raucum sonus* (of a trumpet), inc. 50 Vahlen *Ennius sonum pedum 'bomum pedum' dixit*, Naev. 23 Ribbeck, p. 192 *Marmorale suauisonum* (Voss: *suaue summum* Nonius) *melos*, Cic. *Arat.* 280 Soubiran *clarisonis*, and also Cat. 64.52 *fluentisono*, 125 (above), 320 *clarisona . . . uoce*, Cic. *Tusc.* 2.23 (translation) *horrisono*. Old poetry and its tradition are certainly important for the poem elsewhere. There is as much significance, or more, to the evocation of this poetry and tradition in a poem which thematizes the past as there would be to extensive evocation of a recent work. At the very least, the connections with Lucretius offer no firm knowledge to set against the dating suggested.¹⁸

¹⁷ The singling out of Cat. 64 looks awkward again at 64. 136–7 *mentis | consilium*, Lucr. 3. 615 *animi . . . mens consiliumque*, cf. Cat. 65.4 *mens animi*. The *tantis fluctuat ipsa malis* that follows in 65.4 is relevant to 64.62 *magnis curarum fluctuat undis*, Lucr. 6.34 *uoluere curarum . . . fluctus*, 74 *magno irarum uoluere fluctus* (neither adjective nor image is remarkable, and the context in Cat. 64 is significant); cf. also Cat. 68a.13 *quis merser fortunae fluctibus ipse*, and e.g. Plaut. *Merc.* 890 *animus fluctuat*, Acc. 404 Dangel *quantos belli fluctus concites*.

¹⁸ Some discussions of the connections: Munro on Lucr. 3. 57 (II pp. 179–80; the starting point); Norden on Virg. *Aen.* 6.55 (p. 139; Ennius 'die gemeinsame Quelle'); T. Frank, 'The mutual borrowings of Catullus and Lucretius and what they imply', *CP* 28 (1933), 249–56; Herrmann (n. 4), 465–71; P. Grimal, 'Le poème de Lucrèce en son temps', *Entretiens Hardt* 24

5. MEMMIUS

We return now to an aspect of the dating in §1 which needs further exploration: the identity of Lucretius' addressee. There are no great difficulties with his being the best-known Memmius, C. Memmius L. f., *pr.* 58. We have seen (§1) that his death by 46 B.C. would not cause a problem (participation in the war would become one possible cause of it). We would certainly have to suppose that by the time of the war he had been recalled from his exile (he was exiled in 52); but this is no wild supposition. We know that by early 50 his cousin the tribune Curio was thinking of getting him restored (Cic. *Att.* 6.1.23 *de Memmio restituendo ut Curio cogitet te audisse puto*). It is not implausible to have Memmius taking a senatorial side in the war (cf. §1). Memmius' relations with Caesar and Pompey were complicated, and were dictated by advantage. (They became all the more complicated after he infuriated Caesar, who had supported him, by revealing his own spectacular misconduct over the elections for 53, Cic. *Att.* 4.17.2.) Lucretius' remarks on exile might seem unfeeling (3.48–58), though not entirely relevant to Memmius. Yet on any view of the date, Lucretius' remarks about love-affairs, and especially his remarks about political ambition, would not seem particularly tactful if addressed to this person.¹⁹

In any case, the most famous Memmius is not altogether an ideal candidate for the position in Lucretius. A man *perfectus litteris, sed Graecis, fastidiosus sane Latinarum* (Cic. *Brut.* 247) might not seem the most suitable recipient for Lucretius' project of adapting Greek thought into Latin poetry. Less weighty, but of some interest, is the point that his sympathy with Epicureanism seems slender, to judge from his disrespectful plans to build on the ruins of Epicurus' house, and his obvious anger at the intervention of Patron the head of the Epicurean school (cf. *Att.* 5.11.6, which explains *Fam.* 13.1.4 *init.*). Yet the poet claims to hope for his conversion and so his friendship.²⁰

(1977), 258–9 (with earlier literature); R. Jenkyns, *Three Classical Poets: Sappho, Catullus and Juvenal* (London, 1982), 130–2; G. P. Goold, *Catullus: Edited with Introduction, Translation and Notes* (London, 1983), 251; J. Godwin, *Catullus: Poems 61–68* (Warminster, 1995), 7–16 (further areas of contact between Cat. 64 and Lucretius); N. Horsfall, *Virgil, Aeneid 7: A Commentary*, *Mnemosyne Suppl.* 198 (Leiden, etc., 2000), 211 ('and thus some old poet?'). For Lucretius reacting to Catullus, a possibility that could be mingled with Lucretius' own use of tradition, see e.g. E. J. Kenney, 'Doctus Lucretius', *Mnemosyne* 23 (1970), 388–90 (finale of Book 4). On some of the other connections of 64 with old poetry, see esp. J. E. G. Zetzel, 'Catullus, Ennius, and the poetics of allusion', *JCS* 8 (1983), 257–60. For these historical purposes, the activity of the authors would matter, not only the relation of the texts.

¹⁹ For Memmius' scandalous amours cf. Cic. *Att.* 1.18.3, and later Suet. *D.G.R.* 14.1. On events in 54 see G. V. Sumner, 'The *coitio* of 54 B.C., or waiting for Caesar', *HSCP* 86 (1982), 133–9. Note that Pompey as well as Caesar supported Memmius' original candidature (Cic. *Att.* 4.16.6). Memmius' exile: App. *B.C.* 2.90–3; Memmius in exile: Cic. *Fam.* 13.1 (esp. 1), *Att.* 5.11.6. Caesar's restoration of exiles from 52 in 49 (Caes. *BC* 3.1.4, etc.) would be less suitable, if the view in §1 on *communi . . . saluti* is sound. In general on Memmius, see Fr. Münzer, 'Memmius 8', *RE* 15 (1931), 609–16.

²⁰ Patron's earlier attempts to gain Memmius' favour (Cic. *Fam.* 13.1.2) are not a strong argument for making him Lucretius' addressee: Memmius might well have had Athenian interests. Nor does Patron's (resented) appeal on Epicurean grounds (4) show anything about Memmius: such was Patron's case. Memmius is still thought likely to oppose the desired revocation of the *ὑπομνηματισμός* (cf. J. Kirchner, *Prosopographia Attica* [2 vols, Berlin, 1901–3], 2.222). Cf. C. J. Castner, *Prosopography of Roman Epicureans from the Second Century B.C. to the Second Century A.D.*, *Studien zur klassischen Philologie* Bd. 34 (Frankfurt, etc., 1998), 103–4. The important treatment of M. Griffin, 'Philosophy, politics, and politicians at Rome', in Griffin and

Another Memmius could be thought to present little difficulty: the tribune of 54, C. Memmius C. f. His father was a distinguished soldier (cf. *Memmi clara propago*, 1.42), who fought in Spain against Sertorius, was ὁ τῶν ὑπὸ Πομπηίῳ [his father-in-law] στρατηγῶν ἡγεμονικώτατος (Plut. *Sert.* 21.2; cf. Cic. *Balb.* 5), and fell in battle. The son's coinage (Crawford, *R.R.C.*, no. 427) shows a vigorous assertion of his family (cf. *Memmiadae*), and its record in war and peace ('C·MEMMIVS IMPERATOR'; 'MEMMIVS·AED·CERIALIA·PREIMVS·FECIT'). His tribunate itself and his activity in it show him as a significant figure; his handling of the case against Gabinius in 54 impressed Cicero (*Q.F.* 3.2.1 *Gabinium ad populum luculente calefecerat Memmius*; cf. Val. Max. 8.1.3). Besides, terms like *clara* and *inclute* (Lucr. 5.8) can in this period rest partly on the distinction of the family. His dedication to the Senate (Cic. *Rab. Post.* 7 *cuius auctoritati te ab adolescentia dedidisti*) would certainly accord well with the implications of *communi desse saluti* (1.49). Whatever is thought of this further heresy, the addressee scarcely poses an insuperable obstacle to the dating.²¹

6. CONSEQUENCES

The period 60–31 B.C. is crucial in the development of Latin poetry. It would be interesting to think that *D.R.N.* is most likely being written later than the death of Catullus, and that Virgil is writing the *Eclogues* less than ten years later. One might also conceive of the poem as beginning the profound engagement of Roman poetry with civil war. But the most significant implications are for the poem itself. The argument on dating does not answer the question whether the poem was 'finished', though it might incline us to think it nearer completion than otherwise. For if, as will be claimed, the time of writing is important to the poem and to the work as a whole, then it might seem likely that circulation of the work was envisaged relatively soon rather than several years later, if the work is to have its full impact. A poem like Hor. *Odes* 1.2 would be a different matter, not least because it is a separate entity within a collection. Whether or not the poem was 'finished', the changed understanding of the

Barnes (n. 3), 16–18, is more concerned with Atticus. For a recent treatment of Memmius in Lucretius ('he seems at first an unlikely choice . . .'), see W. R. Johnson, *Lucretius and the Modern World* (London, 2000), 6–11. Doubtless Lucretius was seeking patronage as well as friendship: cf. T. P. Wiseman, 'Pete nobiles amicos: poets and patrons in late Republican Rome', in B. K. Gold (ed.), *Literary and Artistic Patronage in Ancient Rome* (Austin, 1982), 35–6. The well-known Memmius' 'patronage' of Catullus is a difficult subject. Memmius is quite likely to have taken Cinna to Bithynia (Cat. 10.29–30; text tricky), but he is very likely to have taken Catullus' brother too (68b.89–100); so his reason for taking Catullus is not clear (and Cinna and Catullus were learned in Greek poetry too). Cf. also Wiseman 38–42, with mention of Veranius, Fabullus, etc. At all events, not much interest in Catullus was evinced, though Catullus (Cat. 10.11–12, cf. 28.8–9).

²¹ For this Memmius, see G. V. Sumner, *The Orators in Cicero's Brutus: Prosopography and Chronology*, Phoenix Suppl. 11 (Toronto 1973), 85–90, and also M. Harlan, *Roman Republican Moneyers and their Coins: 63 B.C.–49 B.C.* (London, 1995), ch. 12. On Gabinius, see E. Fantham, 'The trials of Gabinius in 54 B.C.', *Historia* 24 (1975), 425–43. M. C. Alexander, *Trials in the Late Roman Republic, 149 B.C. to 50 B.C.*, Phoenix Suppl. 26 (Toronto, 1990), 157, mistakenly ascribes the prosecution of Q. Metellus Scipio in 52, and so exile, to the tribune of 54. *Memmi clara propago* may have various explanations: note Emped. fr. 4 Wright δαῖφρονος Ἀγχιτρώ νύε. Cf. Fowler (n. 3), 121–2. Which C. Memmius (if either) was the love-poet (Courtney [n. 16], 233), we do not actually know; Plin. *Ep.* 5.3.5 suggests a senator. We can hardly argue that Memmius' love-affairs make him uniquely suitable. Whether or not the poetry would be relevant to Lucretius is disputable. One might think it promising for 1.26–7, not necessarily promising for the last part of Book 4.

proem, and the recovery (so it is hoped) of its historical context, confer fresh and pointed meaning on the work as a whole.²²

If we can see the proem as including the latest historical event mentioned in the work, and as poising the poem at a cardinal time in Roman history, that must increase the reader's feeling that this is in some respects the final part of the work as well as its beginning (perhaps like Call. *Aet.* fr. 1 Massimilla; cf. e.g. Thuc. 1.22.1). In the connected passage that follows the 'hymn', e.g. 1.52 and 142 are only notionally earlier than the writing of the work (cf. for 142 Call. *Ep.* 27. 3–4 Pfeiffer, Cinna fr. 11.1–2 Courtney). Some such double role has often been seen in the proem for other reasons; arguably it is needed if 1.41–3 are not simply to rule out the continued reading and writing of the poem. The beginning is in certain respects also a close: but a close utterly without closure.²³

The poem, though decidedly refusing to be a narrative poem, gestures in various ways towards elements of narrative. New historical and argumentative force is given to its political theme by the proposed location of the proem in time. The struggle *rerum . . . potiri* (2.11–13); the desire for wealth and honour which leads men *transcendere finis / iuris*, and to shed the blood of citizens and brothers, *caedem caede accumulantes* (3. 59–78); the desire *regere imperio res . . . et regna tenere* which persists into the present (5.1120–35, cf. 3.995–1002): all the desperate ambition perceived in contemporary politics and recent history can now be seen to find its nemesis in the present Civil War. Phrases like those quoted acquire further significance in the light of this conflict, which lends an extra edge to the argument. The connection between ambition and the war, though not spelled out in the allusive language of the proem itself, would hardly be obscure to contemporaries. The war was very widely seen as caused by the ambition of one, or of two, individuals; the immediate issue, indeed, concerned Caesar's standing for the consulship. For the wider context, Varro's analysis, for example, may be compared (*Vit. Pop. Rom.* frs. 121–2 Riposati): 'tanta porro inuasit cupiditas honorum plerisque ut uel caelum ruere dummodo magistratum adipiscantur exoptent'; ' . . . itaque propter amorem imperi magistratus gradatim seditionibus sanguinulentis aut dominatus quos appeterent . . . ' (text uncertain). The disaster spreads, chronologically, beyond the torments of the individual politician to Rome and the world; we see in the speaker of the proem not detached scorn (5.1129–30) but anxiety.²⁴

²² The question of whether the poem is actually finished is affected by the arguments of Deufert (n. 2), 302–4 on 5.155; note also the small-scale repetition in Emped. fr. 8.1–2, 16–17 Wright (lines 233–4, 246–8 in A. Martin and O. Primavesi, *L'Empédocle de Strasbourg* (P. Strasb. gr. Inv. 1665–1666). *Introduction, édition et commentaire* [Berlin and New York, 1999]). One unkept promise (5. 155) is not perhaps a very weighty argument against circulation by the author (cf. E. J. Kenney, review of Deufert, *CR* 48 [1998], 25); *largo sermone* has a rhetorical function (cf. 1.411–17), and need not be pressed too heavily.

²³ On the logical problem of the prayer in the proem, cf. Fowler (n. 3), 128; it is too involved to discuss fully here. For *agere hoc*, cf. 4.969–70. It would strain Latin syntax to refer *interea* in 1.29 to the future, and strain the passage to separate the two clauses of 41–3 in time. For an 'ending' in fearful uncertainty for Rome, cf. e.g. the breaking off at the end of Boiardo's poem (*Orl. Inn.* 3.9.26) and the infratextual close at Hom. *Od.* 13.185–7. For the idea that the end of the poem leads the reader back to the beginning, cf. P. H. Schrijvers, *Horror ac divina voluptas. Études sur la poétique et la poésie de Lucrèce* (Amsterdam, 1970), 323–4; A. Schiesaro, 'The palingenesis of *De Rerum Natura*', *PCPS* 40 (1994), esp. 91–2, 100, 102–4; A. Gigandet, *Fama deum. Lucrèce et les raisons du mythe* (Paris, 1998), 398–9.

²⁴ On the war and individual ambition, cf. e.g. Cic. *Att.* 7.3.4, 11.1, 13.1, 8.11.2, Caes. *B.C.* 1.4.4, 7.7. With the Varro, cf. e.g. App. *B.C.* 1. 1–25 (24 φιλοτιμίαν ἀνδρῶν ἀμετρον καὶ

The concern of the poem with history becomes a concern with particular events as well as with periods. This can be seen in regard to the theme of war: the technology, range, and purpose of human war form an important aspect of that theme, and the present war becomes the last in a series that leads from early man to the Trojan, Persian, and Punic Wars (those wars 1.84–101, 464–77, 3.833–7, 1029–35, 5.324–31, 1302–4; cf. 2.6–5, 40–53, 323–32, 3.642–53, 4.843–7, 1013–14, 5.1226–32, 1241–1349, 1430–5, 1449, 6.178–9). The present war also forms part of the history of Rome; the precariousness of this history becomes more apparent. Rome was saved by a goose, *Romulidarum arcis seruator candidus anser* (4.683, cf. *Aeneadum*); in the Second Punic War the Carthaginians could perfectly well have won, all things were *in dubio* (3.833–6). Now conflict fills the world, and in this *patriai tempore iniquo* the *communi saluti* is in danger. The cosmic connections are apparent in this passage and the passage from Book 3; the precariousness of Rome's safety is parallel to that of the world's safety (*saluti*, 6.602). The image of civil war is strikingly deployed at 5.380–3, to demonstrate how readily the cosmos can perish: *tantopere inter se cum maxima mundi / pugnent membra, pio nequaquam concita bello*, etc., cf. 392–3. Manilius, revealingly, reapplies these words to actual civil war: *Romamque suismet / pugnantem membris* (4.43–4).²⁵

A further connection is apparent too, with the end of the poem: catastrophe is under way for Rome now as well as devastating Athens then (*exhausit ciuibus urbem* 6.1140, cf. 590, 1143). If 6.1251 ends the poem, a very attractive suggestion, the connection of the final *tempore tali* with *patriai tempore iniquo* and *talibus in rebus* (1.41, 43) seems difficult to escape. The catastrophe in Book 1, unlike that in Book 6, is caused by human behaviour; it is only beginning (if the date is early in the war) and it could be ended. But any straightforward opposition between the beginning and close of the poem is notably infringed; the complexity of the world in the poem is forcefully established in the 'hymn' itself, which begins from the birth of the Roman race, and ends with peril for the Romans. The movement is full of significance for the work as a whole, and its portrayal of an unplanned universe.²⁶

φιλαρχίαν δεινῆν). The pair *bellum concordia* at 1.456 (*libertas* goes with *seruitium*) gains in interest from this view of the poem. On Lucretius and politics, see the excellent treatment by Fowler (n. 3). On war in the poem, cf. C. Segal, *Lucretius on Death and Anxiety: Poetry and Philosophy in De Rerum Natura* (Princeton, 1990), 212–14.

²⁵ Needless to say, the total destruction of Rome need not actually be envisaged for the connection to obtain. For the danger averted by the geese cf. e.g. Liv. 5.47.1, 4, 6.17.4, Virg. *Aen.* 8.655–62. *Aeneadum* 1.1, *Romanis* 1.40, *Romulidarum* 4.683, are the only places where Rome or Romans are named in the poem.

²⁶ The link between 6.1251 and 1.41–3 would hardly be affected by 1.183 *tempore iniquo*, 1.408 *talibus in rebus*, 2.147 *tempore tali*, in quite different contexts. On the other hand, one should see a genuine connection between 41–3 and *in tali tempore* at 1.93 of Iphigenia beseeching her father in her supreme need (cf. Eur. *I.A.* 1216–22, and also *I.T.* 361–3, Aeschin. 3.77). For the transposition at the end of Book 6, see P. G. Fowler, 'Lucretian conclusions', in D. H. Roberts, F. M. Dunn, and D. Fowler (edd.), *Classical Closure: Reading the End in Greek and Latin Literature* (Princeton, 1997), 112–38, and also D. P. Fowler, *Roman Constructions: Readings in Postmodern Latin* (Oxford, 2000), 248–9. On the contrast between the beginning and end of the poem, and its limitations, cf. P. G. Fowler, 116–17; this whole admirable article is relevant here. The remarks above are not meant to offer a total account even of the poem: for some important recent treatments see M. Gale, *Myth and Poetry in Lucretius* (Cambridge, 1994), 208–33; D. Feeney, *Literature and Religion at Rome: Cultures, Contexts, and Beliefs* (Cambridge, 1998), 16, 43–4; Gigandet (n. 23), 33, 395–408; R. Jenkyns, *Virgil's Experience. Nature and Wisdom: Times, Names, and Places* (Oxford, 1998), ch. 5; Sedley, (n. 4), ch. 1. Other points that I would want to stress in a wider treatment would include the intertextuality with the Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite and the importance of the connection between Venus and artistic charm (21–8, cf. e.g. Cat. 36.3–4, 11–17; in 35.7–18 the girl owes her existence to a play on *uenuste*).

The dating thus makes the poem in not unimportant ways both more complex and more pointed. If it should be found attractive, there are undoubtedly literary implications to pursue beyond the suggestions offered here. The case for the dating seems to me, after several years' intermittent reflection, a strong one. The more one reads the contemporary writing, the more does the time of the Civil Wars appear suitable to the poem, other times unsuitable. Scholars have apparently been prevented from considering what looks so clear a combination by convention and by a somewhat mistaken ranking and evaluation of the evidence. So there may be a wider moral too.

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