



include more *exempla*. An avenue of further inquiry would be comparison between Lucretius' etymologising and, say, Varro's, to determine whether Lucretius might be subtly criticising or otherwise conversing with received derivation practices.

Chapters 5–6 delve further into the mechanics and poetic opportunities involved in translating and transforming Greek terms, syntax and style. T.'s tutelage with D. Sedley is evident in these chapters, although T. produces new readings independent of his mentor's work. A standout section in Chapter 5 is T.'s fresh discussion of the rhetorical power of 'code-switching' between transliterated Greek terms and terms adapted to Latin morphology. T. not only reads Lucretius' own conscientious code-switches, he also teases out how Lucretius creates characters in his poem (men blinded by desire) who describe the objects of their obsession in shifting morphology – now Latin, now Greek – in a confusion of percipience brought about by lust and misapprehension of reality. Chapter 6 is a technical discussion of Lucretius' attempts to Latinise the apparatus of Epicurean and other philosophical terminology (especially Empedoclean) through his pervasive use of calques and compounds. T. also demonstrates that compounds were already traditional in Latin poetry predating Lucretius (Ennius, Pacuvius, Accius) and that his project was simultaneously an act of poetic reception and innovation. T. sees Lucretius' linguistic creativity not only as poesis and translation. The author also shows that linguistic expansion and refinement is a continuing feature of Stage 2 language development and implies that Lucretius' conscientious labour in this vein is the fulfilment of the Garden's evangelising mission.

The text is well edited, and I found no significant errors (I did not run down each primary source, however). The bibliography could be seen as a little on the sparing side, though it comports with the scope of the book and allows for a clean reading experience with notes kept to reasonable numbers and length. This important study forms part of the newest wave of Lucretian scholarship (see, e.g., recent monographs, commentaries, edited collections and editions from W.H. Shearin, L. Fratantuono, T.H.M. Gellar-Goad, D. O'Rourke and M. Deufert) and is a welcome addition to a healthy, ongoing conversation about one of Rome's greatest poets. My only complaint, which is not really a complaint at all, is that there was not enough space in the book to include a thoroughgoing discussion about the physics of language development, its transmission from person to person and diachronically through time and across languages (i.e. the atomics of communication, invention, memory, translation, evolution etc.). T.'s contribution belongs on the shelves of critics and students of Lucretius.

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AN UNUSUAL INTERPRETATION OF LUCRETIUS

NAIL (T.) *Lucretius III. A History of Motion*. Pp. x + 217, ills. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022. Paper, £14.99 (Cased, £95). ISBN: 978-1-4744-6424-6 (978-1-4744-6423-9 hbk).

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This monograph is the third volume of a trilogy dedicated to the author of *De rerum natura* (*DRN*). The very first sentence of the first volume of this trilogy reads: 'The time has come for a return to Lucretius. A text that was lost for over a thousand years is today once again collecting dust on the bookshelves, read only as a historical document that once inspired an

outdated scientific revolution'. These first few lines reveal N.'s attitude towards Lucretius: he presents himself as the new Poggio Bracciolini who re-discovered the *DRN* and whose project is 'the first attempt in a long time to reinterpret this classical text as an absolutely contemporary one' (Nail, *Lucretius I* [2018], p. 1). These statements may sound baffling to some readers, especially to scholars of Lucretius, given that many publications in the last decade have discussed the modernity of *DRN*. The problem with N.'s books is precisely the presumption to have understood and uncovered the 'real Lucretius' while other scholars, who have been studying the *DRN* so far, have not.

The first book of this trilogy is dedicated to ontology (and analyses Books I–II of *DRN*), the second (2020) to ethics (Books III–IV of *DRN*), and the third and last one to history (Books V–VI of *DRN*). An excellent review (and fair critique) of the first two books have been published (M.J. Bennet, *Parrhesia* 35 [2022]).

'No atoms', 'no stasis', 'no gods' (2022, pp. 11–13): this is the Lucretian formula, the recipe that, according to N., all Lucretian scholars should adopt instead of following what he labels the 'Epicurean hypothesis'. The fact that N. marks his interpretative model as a (magical) 'formula', while the most accepted interpretation (i.e. that Lucretius was an Epicurean) is labelled as a 'hypothesis', is an indication of his attitude. N. admits that Epicurus profoundly influenced Lucretius, but also says that the Roman poet diverged from the Greek philosopher to the point that his famous eulogies of Epicurus were acts of 'performative contradiction' (p. 22). Furthermore, Lucretius was not an atomist, and he did not believe in gods (therefore, he was an atheist); more than everything, he was 'a philosopher of movement and motion', which entails that, for instance, he did not value *ataraxia*, the static pleasure, as the goal of life.

N. is firmly convinced that Lucretius did not believe in the existence of atoms. This is the most radical and least convincing feature of his thesis: without postulating atoms as the building blocks of our world, many of Lucretius' theories do not make sense; think, for instance, of the letter-atom analogy or the idea according to which atoms have different shapes. But, for N., the fact that Lucretius did not use the word 'atom' is decisive evidence that he did not believe in atoms. It may suffice to say that the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence and that a convincing refutation of this hypothesis has already been provided (Bennet, *Parrhesia* 35 [2022], 125–6).

After having got rid of atoms, N. replaces them with 'flows, folds, and weaving' (p. 12): according to (his) Lucretius, the primary constituents of the world are not the atoms but the movements and flows of matter. Matter, therefore, constantly flows, spreads out and dissipates, and its dissipation and iteration produce history. N. accurately chooses powerful images to illustrate his ideas and persuade readers; according to him, history is 'a woven and unwoven web stretched across the universe like a cosmic labyrinth of mycelium' (p. 53).

Death is the foreseeable outcome of a history made through dissipation and unmaking; hence, the plague at Athens is a perfectly suitable ending for Lucretius' poem. N. deals with the plague at Athens in the last chapter and in the conclusion of this third book, large portions of which have already been published in an article ('Dark Lucretius', *Rev. Int. Philos.* 6 [2021]). N. disproves (and he is probably right on this point) the thesis advanced by G. Deleuze and other commentators, according to which the sixth book of the *DRN* must be unfinished because the poem's dreadful and deathful ending would be incompatible with the vitalist interpretation of matter that some scholars at times attach to Lucretius. But N.'s Lucretius is a philosopher of indeterminacy and dissipation, for whom there is no 'vitalist redemption' at the end of the universe, 'just an indeterminate swerve' (p. 202). And it is precisely the swerve theory and the indeterminacy it entails that make Lucretius' philosophy compatible with the laws of quantum physics. This not-so-unexpected suggestion is just one of the foreseeable conclusions of N.'s bold

premise in the introduction that ‘much of the basic scaffolding of contemporary cosmology, physics, and history . . . was initially put forward by Lucretius’ (p. 19).

It seems evident that N. finds it challenging to place *DRN* in a historical-philosophical perspective; on the contrary, he cannot help looking at Lucretius through the lenses of modernity and attaches his preconceptions to *DRN*, remodelling the text according to his philosophical view.

What draws the attention of any (classical) scholar is the abundance of typos and inaccuracies, especially when N. quotes ancient texts: see, for instance, on p. 50, *declinare solerant* instead of *solerent*; on p. 64, *similus* instead of *similis*. Then, on p. 129, N. refers to line 5.1176, where Lucretius explains that humans get visions of gods while sleeping. The verb *subpediābatur* is wrongly transcribed as *subpeditatur* and, most importantly, incorrectly translated as ‘get under our feet’, while the word means ‘to be available, fully supplied’. Lucretius is saying that images of the gods were continually reinforced in our minds, so we ended up attributing immortality to the gods. The wrong translation of this term leads N. to misread the passage entirely. He says that the images of the gods may ‘get under our feet’ – just as *religio* in the first book of *DRN* – and trip us up. This is not the sole instance in which the wrong reading of the Latin text leads to a misleading interpretation.

N. notes (p. vi) that he follows W. Englert’s 2003 translation, but he modifies it when it does not suit his interpretation; for instance, on p. 61, he writes: ‘Only indeterminate matter will not perish. This is not because it is not a self-identical thing but an “indivisible material” [*solida cum corpore*] process or flow (5.552)’. The correct line is 352, and the right word is *solido* (not *solida*). But, apart from these minutiae, Lucretius explains that natural calamities, like floods, prove the earth’s mortality; what is everlasting must have a solid body. The word ‘solid’, however, would inevitably lead to atoms; thus, even though Englert uses the term ‘solid’, N. changes the translation to accommodate his reading.

Finally, the lack of a comprehensive bibliography makes it challenging for readers to follow up on some of the themes and to verify N.’s sources, some of which (but not all) are only mentioned in the endnotes of each chapter. In many cases page numbers are not included. A general index (*nominum et rerum*) completes the volume, while an *index locorum* is missing, and references to ancient texts, except Lucretius’, are inaccurate. The book also features many illustrations that make the reading more pleasant, but do not make the thesis more convincing.

Even though the book contains a few thought-provoking ideas, the primary and most controversial claim that Lucretius was not an atomist but rather a philosopher of flux and movement remains unconvincing.

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AUGUSTAN POETS AND DIVINISATION

XINYUE (B.) *Politics and Divinization in Augustan Poetry*. Pp. xii + 239. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. Cased, £65, US\$85 ISBN: 978-0-19-285597-8.

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This book is a nuanced exploration of how Augustan poets reflect larger societal trends, in particular Romans grappling with Octavian’s anomalous position and the political changes