

The Study of Lucretius in Renaissance Italy and France

Research Thesis

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by

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## Introduction

Lucretius may not be the most widely studied ancient author, but he has had an undeniable impact on authors and scholars who followed him. This impact is especially apparent in the Renaissance when his poetry was contradictorily considered both morally dubious and beautifully poetic. However, there is still much to uncover about Lucretius's transmission to and through the Renaissance, and I aim to add to the discussion in a few material ways. My first goal is to compile a compendium of what is known about the transmission and reception of the *De rerum natura* from roughly when it was first composed to the French early modern period. The focus of reception will be from 1400 to 1650 in Italy and France. Additionally, I intend to present the main arguments of the dominant scholarship concerning the various issues present in Lucretian transmission – especially when there is disagreement. My second – and primary – goal for this project is to assess handwritten notes found in a heavily annotated copy of Denis Lambin's 1565 printed pocket text of the *De rerum natura* (Cambridge, UL, Kkk.607) to add evidence to the understanding of Lucretius in early modern France. This area has not been explored in nearly as much detail as Renaissance Italy, yet both places and times would benefit from any additional evidence.

Such additional evidence is presently useful. When Stephen Greenblatt's 2011 book *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern* was released, Lucretius, his ideas, and his influence on important, secularized figures of the history of science met a general audience for the first time. His book is undoubtedly influential and well-known, but it has not gone without criticism by important Lucretian scholars concerning three of Greenblatt's main points: the influence of Lucretius in the Renaissance, the self-awareness of both Lucretius and his Renaissance readers about their subversive and revolutionary ideas, and the efforts of the Church to combat these

ideas.<sup>1</sup> Because of *The Swerve* and some of the specific myths it perpetuates, evidence to expand our knowledge about early modern French understanding of Lucretius is particularly important.

There are three important areas which must first be explained to properly understand the marginalia in this pocket text: the transmission of Lucretius from antiquity, the main commentaries from the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the important figures who engaged with the *De rerum natura* in both Renaissance Italy and early modern France.

### The Fortuna of Lucretius

In 1416, Poggio Bracciolini and his companion Bartholomew of Montepulciano, inspired by the efforts of the early humanists Petrarch, Boccaccio, and Poggio's mentor Coluccio Salutati, set out to search through uncatalogued stores of manuscripts in monasteries and libraries throughout Europe. In 1417 during the Council of Constance and somewhere in Germany – likely not a monastery but some “locus satis longinquus” which he mentions in one of his letters – Poggio stumbled across the text of Lucretius's *De rerum natura*.<sup>2</sup> This manuscript, referred to as  $\pi$  or the *Poggianus*, has since disappeared, but Poggio lent it to his friend Niccolò Niccoli to copy. Despite Poggio's frequent requests, Niccoli had not yet returned his friend's copy to him by 1429.<sup>3</sup> Influential 19<sup>th</sup>-century Lucretian scholar H. A. J. Munro doubts whether Poggio ever saw his original copy again.<sup>4</sup> This story, though, is perhaps only a romanticizing account as Poggio's letters hint that he may have retrieved it in 1434 upon his return to Florence. Niccoli

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<sup>1</sup> Ada Palmer, “Lucretius after *The Swerve*,” *Modern Philology* 115, no. 2 (2017): 289-97: Palmer reviews Greenblatt's book with special attention to scholarly and non-scholarly response to it and academic works which dispel certain myths surrounding both Lucretius and Renaissance censorship.

<sup>2</sup> A. C. Clark, “The Literary Discoveries of Poggio,” *The Classical Review* 13, no. 2 (1899): 125.

<sup>3</sup> L. D. Reynolds, “Lucretius,” in *Texts and Transmission: A Survey of the Latin Classics* (1983): 221.

<sup>4</sup>H. A. J. Munro, *T. Lucreti Cari 'De Rerum Natura' Libri Sex with Notes and a Translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1866) 2-3: Munro tends toward the romantic in various points of his introduction and, while these stories should not be taken as truth, they still serve – whatever Munro's actual intentions may have been – to humanize whomever he discusses.

was a renowned Florentine book collector with a library comparable only to that of his own patron Cosimo de Medici. When Niccoli died in 1437, he left his own Lucretian autograph, referred to as L (Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 35.30), as well as the rest of his collection, to Cosimo de Medici to endow a public library. Cosimo chose to house this library in the Dominican convent of San Marco where L remained for some time before being moved to the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana in Florence, no earlier than 1571 when the library was built, where it is currently housed.<sup>5</sup> By this time, many copies had been made from L, or perhaps more accurately  $\pi$ , which then circulated around Florence, Rome, Venice, and Naples but also around parts of Iberia, while staying notably absent from another important intellectual center, France. Lucretius seems to have been relatively unstudied in France until the rediscovery of the *Quadratus* later in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, only coming to full prominence when the center of the printing industry moved to France from Italy beginning around 1515 and when Denis Lambin published his authoritative commentary in 1563.<sup>6</sup> The more than 50 descendants of  $\pi$  or Niccoli's L, and L itself, are collectively referred to as the *Itali*, or *Italici*, since they were produced in Italy. Though they are generally considered of negligible importance to the modern text, they are nevertheless key in understanding the *De rerum natura*'s transmission and reception during the Italian Renaissance.<sup>7</sup>

Several recent scholars have attempted to coherently untangle the web of the Italian tradition. Müller, Reeve, Butterfield, and Reynolds all treat it in great detail, either discussing the possibility of several hypothetical manuscripts placed throughout the stemma or refuting the

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<sup>5</sup>H.W. Garrod, *Manilii Astronomicum liber II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1911): xxxvi; W. F. Meehan "The Importance of Cosimo de Medici in Library History," *Indiana Libraries* 26, no. 3 (2007): 15-16.

<sup>6</sup> Ada Palmer, "Lucretius in Renaissance Thought," in *Oxford Bibliographies* (2019): 1; Ada Palmer, *Reading Lucretius in the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014): 162-3.

<sup>7</sup> Reynolds, "Lucretius," 221; David Butterfield, *The Early Textual History of Lucretius' De rerum natura* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013): 31.

unnecessary complexity of others' claims.<sup>8</sup> In 1973, Konrad Müller first proposed his stemma for the *De rerum natura* based on an earlier and less complex stemma advanced by Büchner, with particular attention paid to the *Itali*. Müller suggests somewhat complex inter-relationships between each group of the *Poggianus*'s descendants with a total of four different traditions referred to as  $\varphi$ ,  $\xi$ ,  $\alpha$ , and  $\lambda$  (see fig. 1 below). He also suggests that Niccoli's L, generally considered the direct offspring of  $\pi$ , is a sibling of other *Itali* rather than their parent.<sup>9</sup> Using Müller's study as a starting point, Reeve set out to elaborate or challenge many of the ideas which Müller had proposed. Chief among his disagreements, Reeve notes that two of Müller's interpolations,  $\lambda$  and  $\xi$ , could be removed through the simple hypothesis of textual contamination while still preserving the general shape of Müller's stemma. Reeve agrees with Müller that not all the *Itali* descend from L, and Reeve himself claims that only 12 of 53 *Itali* which he investigated could be confidently claimed as offspring of L.<sup>10</sup>

In broad terms, Butterfield agrees with Reeve's rejection of Müller's needlessly complex stemma. He particularly agrees with Reeve's exclusion of  $\xi$  on the basis that there seem to be non- $\pi$  readings found in some of the *Itali* which likely come from O, allowing him to conclude that the seemingly idiosyncratic or common variants found in the *Itali* are derived from texts older than  $\pi$ , not younger. Butterfield uses this argument, similar in many respects to Reeve's, to remove  $\xi$  from consideration. Perhaps the most logical and simple point in rejecting  $\xi$  as a parent of L in particular – and thus removing its need for existence – is that Niccoli would have been very unlikely to choose to copy an apograph of  $\pi$ ,  $\xi$ , to create his own L as opposed to copying  $\pi$

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<sup>8</sup> Both Reynolds and Butterfield present their stemmas for the whole tradition while Müller and Reeve confine theirs to the *Itali*.

<sup>9</sup> Konrad Müller, "De codicum Lucretii Italicorum origine," *Museum Helveticum* 30, no. 3 (1973): 166-8

<sup>10</sup> Michael D. Reeve, "The Italian Tradition of Lucretius," *Italia Medioevale e Umanistica* 23 (1980): 30: Reeve also includes a list of the manuscripts he believes are the only 12 descendants of L.

directly since it was still in his possession.<sup>11</sup> Overall, Butterfield agrees with Reeve that the bulk of the *Itali* do not derive from L but rather from other manuscripts, though their arguments of the exact cause of this are slightly different. Butterfield mostly uses  $\pi$  itself and the corrections made both to O and to  $\pi$ 's parent  $\chi$  to challenge  $\xi$  while Reeve focuses more on contamination in the opposite branch of the *Itali*.<sup>12</sup>

Reynolds' stance is similar to both Reeve's and Butterfield's. But while the latter two go so far as to expand the Italian tradition, albeit for differing purposes, Reynolds is more content to simplify the argument to its most basic level, saying that disallowing L to be a direct descendant of  $\pi$  is dubious even when some non- $\pi$ , non-*Itali* material is added as a possible source of variance.<sup>13</sup> Reynolds, while not delving into the complexity of the *Itali*, provides a succinct explanation of the issues facing the Italian tradition and his logic for finding Müller's stemma unsatisfactory. Since Butterfield's stemma suggests numerous additional interpolations at various points in the tradition and expands the *Itali* more extensively than any other including Müller's, I shall thus use Reynolds' more conservative stemma for any later discussion of the Lucretian tradition (see fig. 2 below). In addition, any further discourse concerning the *Itali* will mainly center around their use as educational or academic focal points in various scholarly circles around Renaissance Italy, consequently making any arguments less reliant on the interpretation of any stemma.

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<sup>11</sup> Butterfield, *The Early Textual Tradition*, 33-41: in addition to this, Butterfield lists several more arguments for  $\xi$ 's removal in order of decreasing strength.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 32: see for Butterfield's stemma. It is the most recent, elaborate, and thorough of those currently proposed, but it does make one of the arguments which Reynolds discourages, mainly that there is not enough evidence for an intermediary between O and  $\pi$  – Reynolds calls it  $\Pi^?$ , Butterfield calls it  $\chi$ ; 41-2: Butterfield gives his rationale for the existence of  $\chi$  as an interpolation, claiming that it may very well be a separate manuscript which either Poggio or Bartolomeo had discovered between 1418 and 1440.

<sup>13</sup> Reynolds, "Lucretius," 221-2.

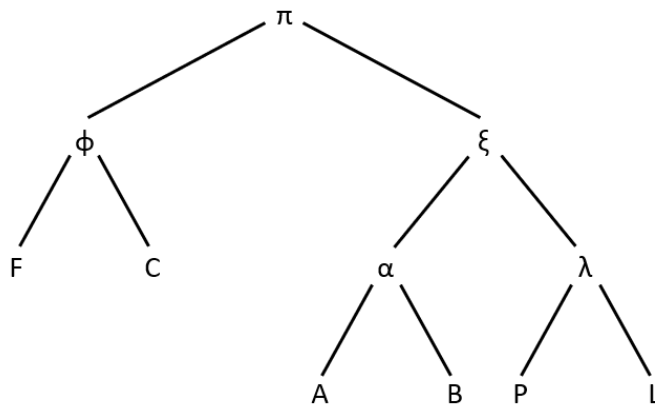


Figure 1. Müller's *Itali* stemma (1973)

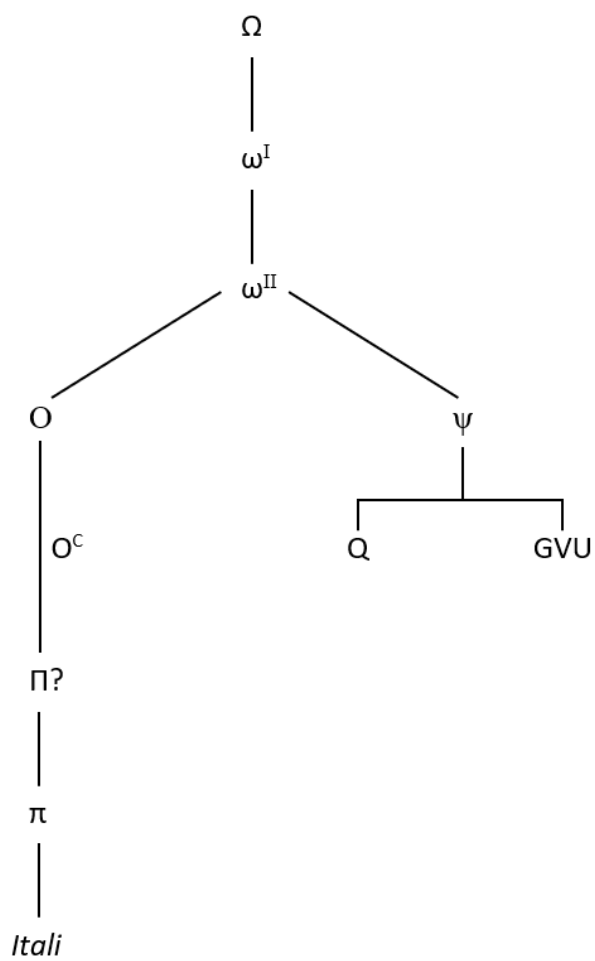


Figure 2. Reynold's *Lucretian* stemma (1983)

In 1479, another complete text of Lucretius was discovered in St. Martin's at Mainz, Germany. Referred to as the Codex Oblongus or O (Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, Voss. Lat. F. 30), the text was written in Caroline miniscule sometime in the early-9<sup>th</sup> century in Northern France under the guidance of Alcuin of York, who had been appointed abbot of Saint-Martin at Tours by Charlemagne in 796.<sup>14</sup> By this point in time, Epicureanism and especially Lucretius had been excised from the general education of any classically minded student. Because of this, most of the Lucretian references made between the early Roman Empire and the Carolingian era are limited to the works of grammarians as examples of archaic vocabulary and interesting metrical variations. These quotations were often, however, not taken directly from the text by each grammarian, but were simply copied secondhand from earlier grammarians or other ancient authors who quoted Lucretius.<sup>15</sup> It is important to bear in mind that the grammarians chose Lucretius not based on the content of his poem but on his archaizing qualities, as they had a tendency to prefer more antiquated examples to evince their linguistic points.<sup>16</sup> Although the grammarians gave some insights into Lucretius, they were no longer a major authority, and O became the dominant strain of text in Renaissance Italy since it was far older than L or any of the other *Itali* and since Poggio's original was likely already lost by that time. Moreover, it is now commonly agreed that the *Poggianus*, which had formerly been considered a sibling of OQ, is

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<sup>14</sup> David Ganz, "Lucretius in the Carolingian Age: The Leiden Manuscripts and their Carolingian Readers," *Proceedings of the Seminar in the History of the Book to 1500* (1996): 91-4; Butterfield, *The Early Textual History*, 8; R. Clemens and T. Graham, *Introduction to Manuscript Studies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 143.

<sup>15</sup> Butterfield, *The Early Textual Tradition*, 62-7: the 4<sup>th</sup>-century grammarian Nonius Marcellus is likely an exception to this secondhand quotation tradition. In his *De compendiosa doctrina* he references Lucretius on 111 occasions for a total of 134 lines of which only 3 are found in earlier authors. The likelihood of the remaining 108 instances being in non-extant works is low, so Nonius himself clearly had access to a complete text. Butterfield gives the relevant argument. If his reasoning is correct, it may suggest that there was interest in Lucretius later than had previously been assumed.

<sup>16</sup> J. Griffith, "A Taxonomic Study of the Manuscript Tradition of Juvenal," *Museum Helveticum* 25, no. 2 (1968): 102: for example, one would expect to find more quotations from Juvenal in grammarians given the abundance of his manuscripts compared to other classical authors, but this infrequency compared to authors such as Lucretius suggests a greater interest in archaic sources.



actually a descendant of O from some point after it had been corrected, but likely not before its final, current corrected state.<sup>17</sup> Whether or not  $\pi$  is a direct descendant of O is debated.

Butterfield inserts  $\chi$  between O and  $\pi$  while Reynolds, unconvinced either way, places  $\Pi^?$  between the two.<sup>18</sup> Over the first several centuries of its existence, O underwent a series of corrections. The first of these corrections is attributed by Bischoff to Dungal, an Irish monk and scholar at Bobbio, Italy, who completed many unfinished lines of the poem and corrected many of the mistaken letters such as the original's switching *s* for *r* among others.<sup>19</sup> Dungal made his corrections sometime in the early-9<sup>th</sup> century, presumably not more than a few decades after O was originally made. The next set of corrections was added later in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, followed by a third set around the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century – Leonard and Smith support the idea that the final corrections were made by a Benedictine monk named Otlo at Fulda between the years 1062-1066.<sup>20</sup> Reynolds, again, provides a simplified version, only discussing the corrections of Dungal and saying nothing about any other possible correctors.<sup>21</sup> Munro, in agreement with Lachmann, maintains that one of the early correctors of O must have had access to the archetype,

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<sup>17</sup> W. H. D. Rouse, and Martin F. Smith, *De Rerum Natura*, trans. W. H. D. Rouse (Harvard University Press, 1992), lvi.

<sup>18</sup> Butterfield, *The Early Textual History*, 32; Reynolds, “Lucretius,” 218-9: Reynolds very quickly summarizes the main proponents of each side listing Cini as a supporter of direct descent and Müller as a supporter of an intermediary.

<sup>19</sup> Ganz, “Lucretius in the Carolingian Age,” 96-8: Ganz lists many other corrections Dungal made and gives figured examples of his points; Virginia Brown, “The ‘Insular Intermediary’ in the Tradition of Lucretius,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 72 (1968): 301-8: in addition to providing quick summaries of other relevant scholarship, Brown makes the convincing argument – in opposition to scholars such as Hermann Diels and Cyril Bailey – that there was no insular intermediary in the tradition of Lucretius since the presented evidence was not adequate to make such a large claim.

<sup>20</sup> Butterfield, *The Early Textual History*, 35: in chronological order, Butterfield refers to these three corrections as O<sup>D</sup>, O<sup>2</sup>, and O<sup>3</sup>. He also postulates that his  $\chi$ ,  $\pi$ 's parent, was created from O sometime between O<sup>2</sup> and O<sup>3</sup>. He presents the details of this argument in 35-40; W. Leonard, S. Smith, *De Rerum natura: The Latin Text of Lucretius* (The University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), 96-7.

<sup>21</sup> Reynolds, “Lucretius,” 219: Reynolds calls Dungal's corrections O<sup>C</sup>, leaving open the option of other instances of correction.

Reynolds'  $\omega^{\text{II}}$ , based on the reasoning that these corrections agree with Niccoli's L at various key points.<sup>22</sup>

The Oblongus is now the most important source for the modern text, but it was not the only Carolingian manuscript to resurface during the later Renaissance. The next to be found was the Codex Quadratus, or Q (Voss. Lat. Q. 94), and it is generally considered to have been written around the mid-9<sup>th</sup> century, just a few decades after O. Little is known about the Quadratus during the late-9<sup>th</sup> to mid-16<sup>th</sup> century or about its rediscovery. It seems to have remained at Corbie, likely where it had originally been produced, before moving to St. Bertin sometime before its rediscovery;<sup>23</sup> nevertheless, it is certain that it reappeared at least by 1560, giving enough time for Adrien Turnèbe to collate it and for Denis Lambin to use it for his 1563 commentary. The Quadratus seems to have remained in France for the majority of its immediate post-discovery usage, at least serving as the main textual base for Lambin's later texts and Obertus Gifanius.<sup>24</sup> The Quadratus does not seem to have gained widespread use like the Oblongus, and while O still holds the greatest textual authority, Q is the next most authoritative. After about a century of possession by various scholars around Europe, O and Q both ended up in the possession of Leiden University Library in 1689 through a post-mortem auction of Dutch classicist Isaac Vossius's estate.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Munro, *De Rerum Natura*, 23-4: Munro calls the Oblongus A and values its readings greatly in conjunction with L, which he simply calls Niccoli. The corrections Munro discusses are certainly Dungal's.

<sup>23</sup> W. Leonard, S. Smith, *De Rerum Natura*, 98-9: Leonard and Smith also present the question of whether the Quadratus actually existed at Corbie or if it was a copy of the Quadratus – with the main discussions being by Karl Lachmann and Cyril Bailey, both of whom believed that Q originated from the 10<sup>th</sup> century; Reynolds, "Lucretius," 220-1: Reynolds briefly discusses the "echoes" of Lucretius in works from the surrounding time and place of Q.

<sup>24</sup> The Turnèbe-Lambin text and commentary, as well as the questionable text of Obertus Gifanius, will be further discussed in the next section.

<sup>25</sup> Butterfield, *The Early Textual History*, 309, 312.

Roughly contemporary to the Oblongus and Quadratus are the fragments generally referred to as either the *schedae* or GVU (Copenhagen, Detkongelige Biblioteket, Gl. Kgl. S. 211 2<sup>o</sup>; Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, 107 fols. 9-14, 15-18). These fragments are so close in text and format to Q, except that they are smaller than Q's quarto-sized folia, that they are placed together as siblings of Q in every stemma.<sup>26</sup> Unlike O and Q, however, GVU were copied somewhere either in southwest Germany or – more likely – Northern Italy.<sup>27</sup> GVU, however, are not generally useful to the modern text since they are fragmentary and agree with Q in nearly every instance.

These Carolingian manuscripts were not the last pieces of text to resurface, however. During the excavation of Herculaneum begun in the 1750s, archaeologists uncovered the Villa dei Papyri which held roughly two thousand papyrus scrolls which – so far as scholars have been able to open and read them – largely contain the works of the Epicurean Philodemus who lived contemporaneously with Lucretius.<sup>28</sup> After further investigation in the late 1980s, Kleve was convinced that two fragments which his colleague had found in a long-forgotten drawer were indeed of Lucretius: one with a partial line from 5.1301 and another from 5.1409;<sup>29</sup> however, his colleague, Mario Capasso, was not convinced. Kleve went on to find several other fragments which he claims are of the *De rerum natura*, all included in pieces labelled PHerc. 1829-31 and PHerc. 395. Within these, Kleve claims that every book except book VI is currently

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<sup>26</sup> Munro, *De Rerum Natura*, 24.

<sup>27</sup> M. Reeve, "Lucretius in the Middle Ages and early Renaissance: transmission and scholarship," in *The Cambridge Companion to Lucretius* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 206: Reeve attributes these claims to Bernard Bischoff and treats them in greater detail.

<sup>28</sup> Knut Kleve, "The Puzzle Picture of Lucretius: A Thriller from Herculaneum," *A Master of Science: Essays in Honor of Charles Coulston Gillispie* (2012): 65: these texts ranged from rhetoric to ethics and even included fragments of Epicurus's work *περὶ φύσις*.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* 68: Kleve includes two figures, one of each of the mentioned fragments.

represented.<sup>30</sup> While Capasso still disagrees with Kleve's readings, he has not produced any of his own as a counter, and others such as Enrico Flores and M. Smith do support Kleve's assertions.<sup>31</sup> However, the readings within these fragments do not entirely agree with those of OQGVU – unsurprisingly so given the vast lengths of time between these texts – and Capasso and others use this to disprove Kleve's claims. The majority consensus supports the Lucretian readings of these fragments, and as such there is much more to be done with them.

#### Notable Commentaries of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries

While there were several notable editions of the *De rerum natura* in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, such as Ferandus of Brescia's *editio princeps* of 1473, there is no extant commentary until the early-16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>32</sup> Even then, there were still only three by the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, though the 17<sup>th</sup> century saw a notable increase in commentary writing and publication. Several other commentaries have garnered greater importance than others by virtue of their novelty, their thoroughness, or their controversy. The first of these to be published was that of Johannes Baptista Pius, an Italian scholar of the early-16<sup>th</sup> century based in Bologna and, for a small part of his academic life, Rome. His commentary was first published in Bologna in 1511 and later reprinted in Paris in 1514.<sup>33</sup> The second of these, and indeed the second to be published, was that of Denis Lambin, a French scholar of the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century who worked almost exclusively in Paris. He produced three separate editions published from 1563-1570. Third was the 16<sup>th</sup>-century scholar Obertus Gifanius's commentary which was published in 1566. His was rather

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 70.

<sup>31</sup> Dirk Obbink, "Lucretius and the Herculaneum Library," in *The Cambridge Companion to Lucretius* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 34: Obbink also largely agrees with Kleve's claims and explains the opposing arguments.

<sup>32</sup> Munro, *De Rerum Natura*, 3.

<sup>33</sup> Wolfgang B. Fleischmann, "Lucretius Carus, Titus," in *Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum: Mediaeval and Renaissance Latin Translations and Commentaries*, Vol. 2 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1971), 356-9.

controversial among academics because of its similarity to Lambin's, but it was nevertheless important for Lucretian studies. Fourth in importance were the commentaries of the 15<sup>th</sup>-century Italian scholar and priest Marsilio Ficino. There is some question of whether or not they actually ever existed. If they did exist, his would then be the earliest commentaries of all, likely written around 1457 and so predating even Pius's by over five decades.<sup>34</sup> Real or not, Ficino makes many allusions and references to Lucretius in his other works, sometimes explicitly, sometimes obscurely, which, if he did in fact write these commentaries, allow us to consider what he found most important.

The commentary of Johannes Baptista Pius was a major step forward in the study of Lucretius. Published in 1511, it became the first official and comprehensive reference work for the text. Pius provided a sound starting point to a text generally considered philosophically and morally dubious – and even dangerous – not so much with the promise that its ideas were too unbelievable to be dangerous as by expanding the common connection between both Lucretius's poetry and atomism and Empedocles, who was relatively welcomed by Christian philosophers.<sup>35</sup> Following the logic of earlier biographies and setting the tone for future commentaries, Pius uses his textual introduction to defend Lucretius's use of Epicurean “nonsensical ideas.” In his introduction he references the *De opificio dei* of Lactantius, an early Christian opponent of Epicureanism and a favorite of contemporary anti-Epicureans, in which he says that Epicurus is responsible for the delusions of Lucretius. Pius uses this quote to separate the less than accepted doctrine of Lucretius from him and his poetry.<sup>36</sup> He focuses mainly on the atomist aspect which

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<sup>34</sup> Paul O. Kristeller, *Supplementum Ficinianum*, Vol. 1 (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1937), clxiii.

<sup>35</sup> Elena Nicoli, “The Earliest Renaissance Commentaries on Lucretius and the Issue of Atomism” (PhD diss., Radboud University, 2017), 98-9.

<sup>36</sup> Lact., *DOD VI.1: Non possum hoc loco teneri quominus Epicuri stultitiam rursum coarguam: illius enim sunt omnia quae delirat Lucretius.*; Nicoli, “Renaissance Commentaries,” 102.

would have been most unfamiliar and problematic to readers; however, Pius incorrectly glosses certain words or misinterprets certain ideas – especially with atomic theories – likely due to his previous Aristotelian education. Despite this, he still attempts to provide a complete understanding of Lucretius’s doctrine, including input from other schools of thought such as Platonism both simply to explain the theories but also to link it to the Empedoclean and Aristotelian four element theory.<sup>37</sup> Along with his commentary, Pius also included a *vita Lucretii*. While this was neither the first to be written nor the first to be published, Pius’s was the first to be included with a commentary, and he used it to justify some of the points he would go on to make, specifically with regard to his defense of Lucretius and his text. Like his separation of Lucretius and Epicurus in his introduction, Pius makes a conscious effort to closely connect Lucretius to Vergil.<sup>38</sup> By quoting these lines, Pius forces the uncomfortable acknowledgment that even Vergil, considered the most virtuous of pagans by contemporary academics, respected Lucretius. This commentary set a standard for what to include in any future Lucretian commentary from the justification of the philosophy versus the poetry to the glossing of certain, unusual terms while also making clear to more modern scholars what the important topics of interest were. It remained the most important reference work for the *De rerum natura* until Denis Lambin released his edition 50 years later, but despite this his biography maintained especially significant value to scholars for at least another century.

The next commentary published was Denis Lambin’s in 1563 in Paris. Using the collation of Adrien Turnèbe, Lambin produced one of the most influential commentaries on

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 106-15 – see for a very thorough treatment of Pius’s analysis of Epicurean/Lucretian atomism which explicates further the mistakes in his glossing which lead to certain, inaccurate conclusions as well as the importance of his connecting Lucretius to Empedocles.

<sup>38</sup> Verg., *Geor.* II.490-2: *felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas / atque metus omnis et inexorabile fatum / subiecit pedibus strepitumque Acherontis auari.*; Palmer, *Reading Lucretius in the Renaissance*, 157.

Lucretius. This collation, according to Lambin, consisted of five different manuscripts: three from Rome and two from Paris. Two of these, coincidentally, were the *Quadratus*. Lambin referred to two texts, the *Bertinianus* and the *Memmianus*, which, as proven by Reeve and supported by Butterfield, are both in fact the *Quadratus*. Lambin's misidentification likely stemmed from his never having seen his *Bertinianus* in person.<sup>39</sup> His first edition eclipsed Pius's in terms of detail, discussing nearly every aspect of the poem but with a similar emphasis on the physical theories contained within; surprisingly, however, this edition contained no Lucretian biography.<sup>40</sup> His massive commentary had several letters dedicating either the entire work or specific books to different people including the reader, the king of France Charles IX, and his various patrons – one for each book.<sup>41</sup> In his introductory dedication to Charles IX, he makes arguments similar to those of Pius, mainly that Epicurus is responsible for the “nonsensical ideas” of Lucretius. Lambin does, however, add the argument that the complex use of language and reasoning in the poem can bolster education without even contemplating any aspect of Epicurean dogma.<sup>42</sup> His commentary on Lucretius's physical theories is similar to Pius's, but Lambin shows a much more complete and competent understanding of Epicurean theories. Of particular note is the Epicurean denial of the providence of the soul and absence of divinities in natural processes. Lambin finds these ideas nothing more than impious doctrine and extremely

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<sup>39</sup> M. Reeve, “Lucretius From the 1460s to the 17<sup>th</sup> Century: Seven Questions of Attribution,” *Aevum* 80, no. 1 (2006): 175-7; Butterfield, *The Early Textual Tradition*, 309-10: both Reeve and Butterfield give a thorough account of Q's provenance and thus when Lambin had most likely seen it.

<sup>40</sup> Palmer, *Reading Lucretius in the Renaissance*, 103.

<sup>41</sup> Mary Morrison, “Another Book From Ronsard's Library: A Presentation Copy of Lambin's Lucretius,” *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 25, no. 3 (1963): 563: book I was dedicated to Henri de Mesmes, book II to Pierre de Ronsard, book III to Vaillant de Guélis, book IV to Marc-Antoine de Muret, book V to Adrien Turnèbe, and book VI to Jean Dorat.

<sup>42</sup> Ada Palmer, “The Persecution of Renaissance Lucretius Readers Revisited,” in *Lucretius Poet and Philosopher: Background and Fortunes of 'De Rerum Natura'* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2020), 180-1; Nicoli, “Renaissance Commentaries,” 132-3.

mistaken.<sup>43</sup> As opposed to Pius's attempts to merge parts of these theories with Aristotelianism, Lambin takes these theories as they are, explaining them as part of a fully alien system of beliefs which, in large part, could not be reconciled with the prominent Christian philosophies. Lambin does frequently reference Aristotle when there is a comparable enough Aristotelian quotation – especially with the physical theories of book VI. He also attempts to soften the harshness of Epicurean atomism by replacing certain words Epicurus uses to describe his atomism with those of Aristotle, a much more acceptable atomic system.<sup>44</sup> Lambin was an expert translator of Greek – even being appointed *Interpres Regius* of Greek for the French Royal Court – and so must have been acutely aware of the precise meanings of the words he chose to summarize Epicurus's own explanation.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, in several parts of his commentary, he uses an argument reminiscent of Pius's: Vergil respected and imitated Lucretius.<sup>46</sup> While Pius used the *Georgics*, Lambin used the cosmological portion of the song of Silenus in the *Eclogues* to provide his support.<sup>47</sup>

Lambin produced two more editions of his text and commentary in the following years. The next, published in 1565 in Paris, was a pocket edition – including the text, introductory epistles, and index of his 1563 edition but entirely dispensing with the commentary – that also contained a slightly edited version of Petrus Crinitus's Lucretian biography.<sup>48</sup> This second edition is the main subject of this paper and will be discussed more thoroughly in a later section. It was after the publication of this edition that Obertus Gifanius, a German scholar, published his own edition in 1566, without the innumerable notes of Lambin's but with a lengthy biography. In

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 156: Nicoli's main example is Lambin's use of *διάστημα* ("space") for *κενόν* ("void") and *χώρα* ("void") for both *τόπος* ("place") and *χώρα* ("room").

<sup>45</sup> Linton C. Stevens, "Denis Lambin: Humanist, Courtier, Philologist, and Lecteur Royal," *Studies in the Renaissance* 9 (1962): 234-41: see for a general account of Lambin's career.

<sup>46</sup> Nicoli, "Renaissance Commentaries," 157-8.

<sup>47</sup> Verg., *Eclogues* VI.31-34: Lambin only quotes this section, but Vergil's imitation carries on to line 40.

<sup>48</sup> Palmer, *Reading Lucretius in the Renaissance*, 103.



response to numerous similarities in notes and emendation between the two scholars' works, Lambin and his colleagues claimed that Gifanius had plagiarized a bulk of his 1563 edition;<sup>49</sup> however, Gifanius's edition contained a drastically reduced number of notes which was frequently preferred by students and some scholars of the time to Lambin's lengthy commentary.<sup>50</sup> Because of this, Gifanius's text remained in popular use alongside Lambin's for about a century, but it ultimately fell out of general circulation when Lambin's even more thorough and detailed commentary became the clear option for serious readers.

Largely as a response to Gifanius, some of Lambin's close friends and colleagues urged him to publish a third edition in 1570 with a Lucretian biography of his own.<sup>51</sup> His *vita Lucretii* doubled Gifanius's, which by all accounts was already the longest by about five times at 2,500 words, and included not just a biography of Lucretius but also a history of the *gens Carii* and the *gens Memmii*.<sup>52</sup> Also in his *vita*, Lambin reframed the circumstances of Lucretius's death by refuting through omission Jerome's account of his love-philter-induced suicide and proposing a more glorified Stoic suicide in response to the moral state of the Republic – an interesting choice perhaps intended to further disarm the dangerous aspects of Epicureanism while simultaneously granting Lucretius a respectable death.<sup>53</sup> As a further response to Gifanius, Lambin corrected several readings of various passages and added an index containing every word of the poem and keywords of the commentary. As a result, he added over 100 pages to his already lengthy 1563

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 103; Reeve, "1460s to the 17<sup>th</sup> Century," 177-8.

<sup>50</sup> Munro, *De Rerum Natura*, 16-7.

<sup>51</sup> Giuseppe Solaro, *Lucrezio: Biografie umanistiche* (Dedalo, 2000), 69: see for the text of Lambin's *vita Lucretii*.

<sup>52</sup> Palmer, *Reading Lucretius in the Renaissance*, 103, 176.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 176-82: here, Palmer details the main arguments of Lambin's biography as well as the probable effect his third edition had on the growth of Lucretian study as a morally acceptable subject.

edition. This final edition had the greatest impact of his three on the future study of Lucretius, almost immediately becoming the definitive commentary for more than a century.

The commentaries of Marsilio Ficino stand out as troublesome compared to the commentaries mentioned above because there is some doubt concerning whether they ever truly existed. Ficino himself claimed to have written numerous commentaries in his relative youth but to have burned them later after deciding that the Epicureanism, which had truly captivated him, was not just a distraction from but was actively dangerous to his Christian Platonism. They were particularly dangerous, he felt, not because of the qualities of atomism but because of the implications and conclusions which Epicurean atomism drew.<sup>54</sup> And yet, many Lucretian traces can still be found throughout his works, particularly those dealing with the theory of the four elements and other theories on matter wherein he conglomerates various ideas from four main philosophies: Empedocleanism, Aristotelianism, Platonism, and Epicureanism.<sup>55</sup> One reason why Ficino may have burned these commentaries is also the greatest source of doubt about their existence. Ficino was heavily inspired by Plato and, as reported by Diogenes Laertius in his biography of Democritus, Plato had once set fire to his own poetry and desired to burn the works of Democritus as well.<sup>56</sup> He may very well have wanted to mimic Plato in such a glorious display of self-aware passion to show his fervent rejection of Epicurean atomism. It was not necessary, however, that the commentaries ever existed or were ever burned for Ficino to spread this story. Whatever the truth, his anecdote earned him praise from scholars such as Poliziano who

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<sup>54</sup> Nicoli, "Renaissance Commentaries," 63-4.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 26-8, 37-64: (26-28) Nicoli provides an incredibly detailed and thorough analysis of the numerous Lucretian references in Ficino's writings both from his youth when he claims to have written his commentaries and (37-64) from his later years after he claims to have destroyed his commentaries and rejected the moral corruption of Epicureanism.

<sup>56</sup> Elena Nicoli, "Ficino, Lucretius, and Atomism," *Early Science and Medicine* 23, no. 4 (2018): 333.

personally commended him for overcoming the errors of Epicureanism with the truth of Christian Platonism.<sup>57</sup>

These are the main commentaries of Lucretius produced between 1417 and 1600. Lambin's 1570 edition was by far the most influential of these in the long term, followed by Obertus Gifanius and Albertus Pius. While Marsilio Ficino has no surviving commentary, his general works still provide insight into his opinions on Epicureanism, and his vocal story-telling concerning his youth likewise offer perspective into attitudes towards the study of Epicureanism in mid- to late-15<sup>th</sup>-century Italy. There were numerous other academic works surrounding the *De rerum natura* during these two centuries, all falling under one of two categories: texts and biographies.<sup>58</sup> While they were successful enough to be used and perpetuated, they were not as dramatically and noticeably impactful as the commentaries.

#### Italian and French Engagement with Lucretius

Before the rediscovery of Lucretius, there were some prominent, less-than-favorable portrayals or beliefs surrounding Epicureanism and its un-Christian tenets. Because of this, the study of Lucretius and Epicureanism during the Renaissance and early modern period was met with varying levels of hostility and adversity which forced those eager to pursue Epicureanism to the fringes of academic discourse. The most easily traceable instances of these Lucretian circles can be found in three main Italian cities: Rome, Florence, and Naples. Following the works of scholars and thinkers like Pomponio Leto, Niccolò Machiavelli and Michele Marullo among others, these circles perpetuated the study of Epicureanism despite a few distinct periods of

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<sup>57</sup> Palmer, *Reading Lucretius in the Renaissance*, 27.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 101-4: Palmer lists the biographies in particular and briefly discusses all eight of them. She includes a detailed table with their publication dates and number of printings on 104; 140-91: here, Palmer dedicates an entire chapter to a much more thorough discussion of each biography.

opposition by the Catholic Church and other organizations or individuals – with Epicurean interest growing quickly in 1450s Florence.<sup>59</sup> Italy was not the only place to develop particular interests in Lucretius and Epicureanism, however. Starting in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and continuing even as late as the 18<sup>th</sup> century, France became a major center both for general classical studies and for the study of Lucretius and Epicureanism with figures such as Pierre de Ronsard, Michel de Montaigne, and Cyrano de Bergerac playing prominent roles.<sup>60</sup> There is a much broader and deeper understanding of the use of Lucretius in Italy than France during these periods. In particular, scholarship surrounding the French early modern period generally focuses more on poetic or literary engagement and less on academic engagement – the only exception being Denis Lambin.

During Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, various authors engaged with the *De rerum natura* in different ways and for different purposes. Jerome is likely the most well-known critic of Epicureanism and especially Lucretius from this period. For example, Jerome's *Chronicon* provides the earliest known account of Lucretius's suicide by madness which led to over a millennium of belief in the defaming story.<sup>61</sup> The *De natura rerum* of Isidore of Seville, a late-6<sup>th</sup>- to early-7<sup>th</sup>-century Christian scholar, demonstrates a working knowledge of Epicurean physics, and Isidore himself seems to accept certain aspects of the philosophy – including earthquakes, lightning, and disease among others – without ever mentioning his source by name.

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<sup>59</sup> Alison Brown, "Lucretius and the Epicureans in the Social and Political Context of Renaissance Florence," *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 9 (2001): 12: this increased interest was likely due to the rediscovery of Diogenes Laertius in 1416 in Constantinople, just a year before Poggio's rediscovery of Lucretius.

<sup>60</sup> Philip Ford, "Lucretius in early modern France," in *The Cambridge Companion to Lucretius* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 232, 236, 239: for Ronsard, Montaigne and Bergerac respectively.

<sup>61</sup> Fleischmann, "Lucretius," 350; Jerome, *Chronicon*, entry under the 171<sup>st</sup> Olympiad: *Titus Lucretius poeta nascitur. Postea, amatorio poculo in furorem uersus, cum aliquot libros per interualla insaniae conscripsisset, quos postea Cicero emendauit, propria se manu interfecit anno aetatis XLVIII*; D. B. Gain, "The Life and Death of Lucretius," *Latomus* 28, no. 3 (1969): 545-7.

Isidore, however, makes no allusions to any Epicurean moral principles throughout his works. Dante Alighieri, the famous Italian poet, also shows familiarity with Epicureanism, though not, it seems, with Lucretius himself. In his *Inferno*, Dante places Epicurus and his followers apart even from other sinners due to their rejection of the soul's immortality – their most grievous fault.<sup>62</sup> This belief, more than in previous centuries, becomes a major point in anti-Epicurean arguments. Of these three influential pre-rediscovery authors, Isidore of Seville is the only one who views Epicureanism in a positive manner, while the writings of both Jerome and Dante form the basis of many future anti-Epicurean arguments.

In an intellectual and Christian world which valued the ancients for their morals, the immorality of Epicureanism – along with similar dissensions – posed an existential threat, many thought, to the fragile structure of Italian society. Despite this, many scholars sought to better understand Lucretius's text, and thus made great efforts to do so. Michele Marullo, a Greek poet living in Naples, and Niccolò Machiavelli, an Italian philosopher living in Florence, are two notable examples of engagement with Lucretius in the Italian Renaissance. In 1497, Marullo composed the *Hymni naturales* which made extensive use of Lucretius, and he made notable emendations to the text, many of which were taken up by later editors such as Lambin.<sup>63</sup> Despite Marullo's engagement with Lucretius as poetic inspiration, more like the later French poets than his contemporary Italian scholars, he still made academic contributions to the text itself in the form of substantial emendations. Niccolò Machiavelli, on the other hand, engaged more with Lucretius's broad ideas about religion being a major cause of needless fear. Machiavelli, widely regarded as a religious sceptic, applied this concept not to religion but to politics and rule as is

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<sup>62</sup> Dante, *Inferno* X.1-15: *da questa parte hanno / con Epicuro tutti i suoi seguaci, / che l'anima col corpo morta fanno.*

<sup>63</sup> Flesichmann, "Lucretius," 353-5: see for further examples of texts from the same time which engaged with Lucretius; Palmer, *Reading Lucretius in the Renaissance*, 81-2, 289: see for Marullo's emendations and their impact.

evident in his famous work *The Prince*.<sup>64</sup> Meanwhile in his *Discourses*, he outlines his view of the evolution of society while mimicking in many ways the account of Lucretius in book V by mainly focusing on the transition from a simple and safe society to a dangerous and anxious one.<sup>65</sup> The personal *De rerum natura* manuscript of Niccolò Machiavelli – with Terence’s *Eunuchus* in the same codex – is housed in the Vatican Library (Vatican City, BAV, Ross. 884) and is dated to 1497. It was written entirely in Machiavelli’s own hand and is very heavily annotated. Additionally, it frequently agrees with the other *Itali* manuscripts against O and Q. In fact, his text follows many of Marullo’s emendations which is perhaps surprising given the geographical separation between Naples and Florence and the contemporaneous nature of their work, but this fact may show how closely scholars of Lucretius communicated.<sup>66</sup> Lucretius was not so accepted as the works of writers like Machiavelli and Marullo might suggest, however. In 1517 in Florence, when and where Machiavelli himself lived, the *De rerum natura* was banned in schools because of its views concerning the mortality of the soul – the same core issue Dante had with Epicureanism 200 years earlier. This ban was not common around Italy, however, and was neither broad-reaching, being limited to schools, nor long-lasting.<sup>67</sup>

Perhaps the best example of an Italian working with Lucretius is Pomponio Leto, a scholar based primarily in Rome who lived from 1428-1498. Leto produced a great deal of work on Lucretius including a *vita Lucretii* and at least one edition of the text. Several manuscripts of his text survive – about 10% of the *Itali* – the most important of these being the *Neapolitanus*,

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<sup>64</sup> A. Brown, “Lucretius in Renaissance Florence,” 57-8.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 59: Brown also presents the common interpretation that Polybius was Machiavelli’s inspiration for this section, but cites Gennaro Sasso (1987) as the first to point out particularly Lucretian images. This image, though, is not entirely uncommon in ancient philosophy, but the most notable thematic connection between Machiavelli and Lucretius lies in their aversion to religious principles.

<sup>66</sup> Chauncey Finch, “Machiavelli’s Copy of Lucretius,” *The Classical Journal* 56 (1960): 30-1.

<sup>67</sup> A. Brown, “Lucretius in Renaissance Florence,” 12-3: see for more detail on this prohibition.

dated to 1458, which Reeve refers to as N (Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale, IV E 51). According to Reeve, N was written, corrected, and even annotated by Leto himself using at least 3 different exemplars including  $\phi$  (see fig. 1 above), and it was later copied at least four times.<sup>68</sup>

Additionally, it is probable that the influential humanist scholar Poliziano, the student of Marsilio Ficino, borrowed a copy of N to use for his own purposes. Leto also produced the first Renaissance *vita Lucretii* no later than 1486, as it is first found in an incunable from Verona from that year.<sup>69</sup> This incunable is, in fact, one of the only places where his biography can be found. His *vita* was only about 1,000 words and mostly gave whatever details Leto could find on Lucretius's life from other authors like Jerome, Ovid, Cicero and four other authors with a total of nine related citations – the least of all the Renaissance biographies. Despite its apparent novelty, there is no evidence that it was circulated widely or read often, one indication of this being that no Lucretian biographer other than Leto mentions Astericon, a figure who, according to Leto, was the homosexual lover of Lucretius.<sup>70</sup> Also in this *vita*, Leto makes one direct statement about a specific opinion concerning the study of Epicureanism and its dangers. In this, he engages directly with Cicero and blames him more than any other for the negativity against the study of Epicureanism.<sup>71</sup> To Leto, Lucretius was certainly more dangerous than he was to any of the later biographers, and so his judgement against Cicero is rather bold since he was one of the more respected authors of the classical canon. One reason for this may be that Cicero is still, of course, a pagan and thus makes a more acceptable target than Saint Jerome himself, whom Leto only cites for his account of Lucretius's suicide. The rest of Leto's work on

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<sup>68</sup> Reeve, "Italian Tradition," 32-3, 35, 39-40: see for a thorough explication of N, Leto's annotations, and N's descendants as well as more related MSS from Naples.

<sup>69</sup> Solaro, *Lucrezio: Biografie umanistiche*, 25: see also for the Latin text of Pomponio Leto's *vita Lucretii*.

<sup>70</sup> A. Palmer, "The Use and Defense of the Classical Canon in Pomponio Leto's Biography of Lucretius," *Vitae Pomponiae: Biografie di Autori Antichi nell'Umanesimo Romano* (2013): 90.

<sup>71</sup> Solaro, *Lucrezio: Biografie umanistiche*, 29, lines 93-6: *Tecum, M. Tulli, contendo, quum in deliciis ciborum et potus et quouisvis genere libidinis Epicuri voluptatem ponas, et in hanc sententiam alios auctoritate tua traxeris.*

Lucretius mainly came in the form of lectures and teaching between his various editions of the text. Leto, Machiavelli, and Marullo exemplify the main features of the Italian engagement with Lucretius through their more pragmatic use and examination of him, either working directly on the text or using it as a model for practical texts like *The Prince*.

There is a noticeable difference when it comes to the use of Lucretius later in the French early modern period. Many of the authors here fall under the category of poetry, both scientific and more standard subgenres, as opposed to the heavier academic presence of Italy.<sup>72</sup> Pierre de Ronsard is one of these poets. As shown earlier with Lambin's dedicatory epistle to Ronsard in his editions of Lucretius, Ronsard had an overt interest in the text, and so it comes as no surprise that he engaged with it himself. And yet, he had no appreciation of Epicureanism as a philosophy and directly wrote against it at times.<sup>73</sup> Like many others, his main issue with the philosophy was its denial of the soul's mortality. Ronsard does, however, adopt Lucretian theories and passages into his love poetry, *Les Amours*. Specifically, he uses Epicurean atomics to address love as a general feeling of wandering, invoking the "swerve." Other allusions in *Les Amours* include Lucretian ideas of sight and the image of watching a ship sink at sea from the safety of land.<sup>74</sup> In addition to these allusions, there exists a copy of Lambin's 1570 edition – which Lambin himself had gifted to Ronsard – which is now housed at Harvard's Houghton Library (Cambridge, Houghton Library, OLC L964 570).<sup>75</sup> Ronsard is the most poetic of these three French authors,

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<sup>72</sup>S. Fraisse, *L'Influence de Lucrèce en France au seizième siècle* (Paris: Librairie Nizet, 1962): see for a discussion of poetry in general; A.-M. Schmidt, *La poésie scientifique en France au XVIe siècle* (Paris: Editions Rencontre, 1970): see for a discussion of scientific poetry.

<sup>73</sup>Ford, "Lucretius in early modern France," 232-4.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 234-5: Ford discusses these and others in more detail and lists other allusions which are not directly presented in the chapter.

<sup>75</sup>Morrison, "Another Book," 561-4: Morrison examines the copy, its contents, and its genuineness in detail, and she also provides the text of Lambin's dedicatory epistle.



but he also deals the most explicitly with Lucretius while acknowledging quite vocally just how much he disagrees with some of his theories.

Unlike Ronsard, both Cyrano de Bergerac and Michel de Montaigne engage with Lucretius in their less poetic, or at least more pragmatic, works.<sup>76</sup> For example, Bergerac, as a member of the *libertins*, draws from Lucretian ideas to support his claims for rationalism and atheism. In particular, he adopts the Epicurean atomist theories to explain, in a manner similar though not identical to Lucretius, how things can exist and continue without a god in order to prove that there is no need for religion, specifically Christianity. Because of this atheistic goal, Bergerac and the *libertins* do not feel the need to defend their use and acceptance of Epicureanism and its moral shortcomings. Bergerac does take Epicurean ideas on pleasure and the purpose of living past their original intent, particularly those dealing with physical pleasure.<sup>77</sup> Bergerac is the boldest with his interpretation and use of Epicureanism out of all the authors discussed, and he provides an interesting glimpse into how these theories can be taken out of their original contexts for a more secularized purpose. Bergerac and other later writers may be part of the reason why Lucretius is seen as a sort of secular, atheist forefather in some works today, but even with his clearly controversial theories Lucretius was not seen as such before the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Michel de Montaigne, on the other hand, was not so bold as Bergerac would be, nor did he desire to be so intentionally revolutionary. Montaigne dealt with Lucretius most of all in his *L'Apologie de Raimond Sebond* and his *Essays* in general. In his *Apologie*, Montaigne

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<sup>76</sup> Palmer, "Lucretius after The Swerve," 294: here, Palmer briefly mentions a French translation of the *De rerum natura* from 1650 by Michel de Marroles – not to be confused with Michele Marullo – which would have allowed a wider French audience to read it around the time Bergerac's works became more widely circulated.

<sup>77</sup> Ford, "Lucretius in early modern France," 238-9: Ford gives more examples of Bergerac's engagement with Lucretius and the lengths to which he stretches or exaggerates Lucretius's ideas.

thoroughly discusses the fallibility of senses in gaining knowledge for the individual, a theme which is heavily borrowed from Lucretius.<sup>78</sup> Also in his *Essays*, he treats the general fear of death – a major point of Epicurean philosophy. Apart from these references, Montaigne’s interest in Lucretius is seen in his owning a copy of Lambin’s 1563 edition now housed at the University of Cambridge (Cambridge, UL, Montaigne.1.4.4). Specifically, the book contains a vast number of notes in both Latin and French – the front flyleaves are all in Latin and most of the marginal notes throughout the text are in French. As Michael Screech points out in his transcription and discussion of the notes, several French marginal notes mark lines or passages which are represented in Montaigne’s *Apologie*, indicating that this specific book was likely annotated before Montaigne wrote it. Additionally, Screech attempts to unravel Montaigne’s thought process through the specific content and context of a few notes in particular – especially those related to *religio* and its uses and detriments to Montaigne’s arguments.<sup>79</sup> When a given text is so heavily annotated as Montaigne’s, there is no doubt a great amount of information to learn about the annotator and their interests, and this is noticeably impactful when other works of the annotator survive.

### Marginalia and the Anonymous Annotator

Annotations of texts are an important way of gauging the interests of certain groups or periods throughout history, and the notes found in texts of Lucretius are no different. As mentioned above, several authors had personal copies of the *De rerum natura* which they heavily

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 236-8: Ford works through Montaigne’s *Apologie* and identifies 70 total references, a mix of citations and allusions, to Lucretius in the essay. These references, as Ford shows, account for roughly half of all Montaigne’s borrowings in the entirety of his *Essays*. See these pages also for a further examination of Montaigne’s engagement.

<sup>79</sup> M. A. Screech, *Montaigne’s annotated copy of Lucretius: a transcription and study of the manuscript, notes and pen-marks* (Genève: Libraire Droz, 1998): 40-2: throughout his book, Screech analyzes the many notes present as well as their significance towards Montaigne’s works. He draws innumerable conclusions about various aspects of Montaigne’s motivations which are all worth further investigation.

annotated – in particular Machiavelli and Montaigne – and their own unique interests and views can be gathered from their notes to add to our understanding of their individual works. While these writers are well known and often studied, most annotators are entirely unknown or are known by name only. Their relative anonymity does not make their notes useless, though, and it is incredibly beneficial to modern scholarship to gain insight into what topics these regular annotators were interested in. We have already seen that there is a common complaint about the Epicurean belief of the soul's mortality, so passages in the text regarding this transgressive theory must have been those most frequently annotated in the surviving copies of the text. Yet, when looked at further, there are surprisingly few passages of this nature marked at all.<sup>80</sup> This, then, raises the question: what were these readers actually interested in?

There are two main ways to determine this interest when looking at marginal notation: the positions of the notes in reference to the text and the actual content of the notes. In her 2014 book *Reading Lucretius in the Renaissance*, Ada Palmer divides Lucretian marginalia content into 6 main categories: corrections, Latin vocabulary, Greek vocabulary, poetic notes, general notabilia, and philosophical/scientific notes.<sup>81</sup> Of these, corrections and poetic notes are the two most frequent in Palmer's 52 manuscripts, occurring in 90% and 52% of the manuscripts respectively. With this in mind, I will now discuss the main subject of this research.

The text I am investigating for this project is a heavily annotated copy of Denis Lambin's 1565 pocket edition (Cambridge, UL, Kkk.607).<sup>82</sup> In terms of the sheer number of marginal

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<sup>80</sup> Palmer, *Reading Lucretius in the Renaissance*, 65-73: Palmer presents this surprising realization and explains what passages are annotated instead. Also, Palmer gives statistics on what comments are made and where they appear most frequently.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 50-61: see for a deeper discussion of these categories.

<sup>82</sup> My many thanks to Ada Palmer for recommending this text as a subject of research and helping to acquire it. It can be found at: [https://discover.lib.cam.ac.uk/permalink/f/t9gok8/44CAM\\_ALMA21330872020003606](https://discover.lib.cam.ac.uk/permalink/f/t9gok8/44CAM_ALMA21330872020003606)

notes, this copy is only rivaled by those of Machiavelli and Montaigne. In fact, of the 259 total pages containing at least one line of the poem, only 10 pages have no marginalia. Also, of the six main dedicatory epistles, only one – to Jean Dorat – has any sort of note which marks the “argument and aim of the sixth book.”<sup>83</sup> Throughout all six books, I have found at least one example of each category of note. The vast majority of these notes are taken from Denis Lambin’s 1570 commentary. They appear in a heavily syncopated form, presumably to save space, but they nevertheless have nearly identical wording. Of the 190 notes I looked into, only 42 were not taken from Lambin’s commentary, and one example was instead taken from Johannes Fungerus’s *Etymologicum Latinum*, an etymological dictionary of Latin published in 1605. There is little doubt that this one note is from Fungerus since it is taken verbatim from his work.<sup>84</sup> The remaining 41 notes are from the annotator himself.

The handwriting is idiosyncratic and informal but is relatively similar to humanist miniscule, is moderately legible, and has little but consistent letter and word separation (see Appendix A). A few letters in particular tend to look similar to others: *r* and *v/n*, *l* and *t*, and *e* and *c*. There are a moderate number of abbreviations – roughly every third word is abbreviated – and around two-thirds of these are nasal suspensions. Each page is about 75mm wide and 135mm tall, and each line of notes is approximately 3mm tall.

The categories of notes which I am using are those of Ada Palmer as described above with a few minor alterations. My categories are as follows: lexical (differentiating between Latin and Greek), notabilia, emendations, poetry, scientific, philosophical, and finally those which cannot be read clearly enough to say for sure. Additionally, I will split these categories into three

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<sup>83</sup> Cambridge, UL, Kkk.607, 238.

<sup>84</sup> Johannes Fungerus, *Etymologicum Latinum* (Frankfurt: Collegio Paltheniano, 1605): 29.

sections: those sourced from Lambin’s commentary, those from Johannes Fungerus’s *Etymologicum Latinum*, and those which are either self-produced or, possibly, from a fourth, unknown source.<sup>85</sup> On occasion, a note fits into more than one category. For the sake of clarity and simplicity, I will only count the category which is most fitting so that no one note may be counted twice. For example, the annotator frequently specifies the references in Lambin’s commentary where Lambin points out a section being similar to a prior passage without listing the line numbers. The annotator frequently adds the line – or even book – numbers himself, but I will still count this as a note sourced from Lambin and not self-supplied. These annotator additions – at least of those in book VI – are only for citations of other Lucretius passages.

	Total	Lexical (Latin/Greek)	Notabilia	Emendations	Poetry	Scientific	Philosophical
Lambin	148	41 (34/7)	32	1	33	40	1
Annotator	41	7 (6/1)	1	0	5	28	0
Fungerus	1	0 (0/0)	0	0	0	1	0

Overall, the spread of source author and frequency of each category is expected if one considers the annotator to be a student rather than an established scholar. The greatest oddity is the lack of philosophical notes which can be explained through an awareness of the content of book VI which is almost entirely scientific, not philosophical. The only other oddity is the single note which is not self-produced or taken from Denis Lambin. Lambin does not skim over these lines, and in fact provides a great amount of detail related to allusions and references in Vergil to these lines, but this annotator includes a mere “lege Virgili Aeneid 3” and instead focuses on the

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<sup>85</sup> While I am confident that all the notes I have ascribed to the annotator are his, there remains the possibility that some of them are taken from another source; however, these 41 notes all seem to be similarly worded and of consistent intelligence levels, so I am comfortable with my conclusions regarding their origins.

scientific side of the passage with references to Mount Aetna and the Aeolian Isles through Vergil and especially Aristotle.<sup>86</sup>

Those notes which the annotator has provided himself – 68% being related to scientific matters – are generally limited to simpler observations or numeration of long or expanded lists such as numerating the list of causes of lightning or asking rhetorical questions which are answered, at least in part, by the text.

The matter of dating these annotations is rather uncertain. The annotator never, so far as I have found, wrote his name or date anywhere in the book. Nevertheless, I can safely claim that they were made after 1605 because of the note sourced from Fungerus. I cannot, however, place an end date for the annotations with absolute confidence, but I do not think that these were written after 1682, the print date of the translation and commentary of Thomas Creech – an Englishman who was the next most influential Lucretius scholar after Denis Lambin – since one would expect to find any reference to his work in these notes.<sup>87</sup> Additionally, there were three other significant commentaries released in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century which are not referenced: Giovanni Nardi's printed in Florence in 1647, Tanquil Faber's printed in Saumur in 1662, and Michel du Fay's printed in Paris in 1680.<sup>88</sup> There is also no evidence of Lambin's pocket editions being printed after the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, so the availability of these editions may have been limited during the time frame in question, making the time of annotation more

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<sup>86</sup> Cambridge, UL, Kkk.607, 264: for the whole annotation and its comparison to Fungerus's work, see Appendix A.

<sup>87</sup> Palmer, *Reading Lucretius in the Renaissance*, 331; Alan C. Kors, *Epicureans and Atheists in France, 1650-1729* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016): see for a detailed account of later Epicurean influence in France, including references to Thomas Creech.

<sup>88</sup> Palmer, "Persecution of Renaissance Readers," 185: for Giovanni Nardi; Reeve, "Lucretius from the 1460s," 181-2: for Tanquil Faber; Butterfield, *The Early Textual History*, 65, 118: for Michel du Fay.

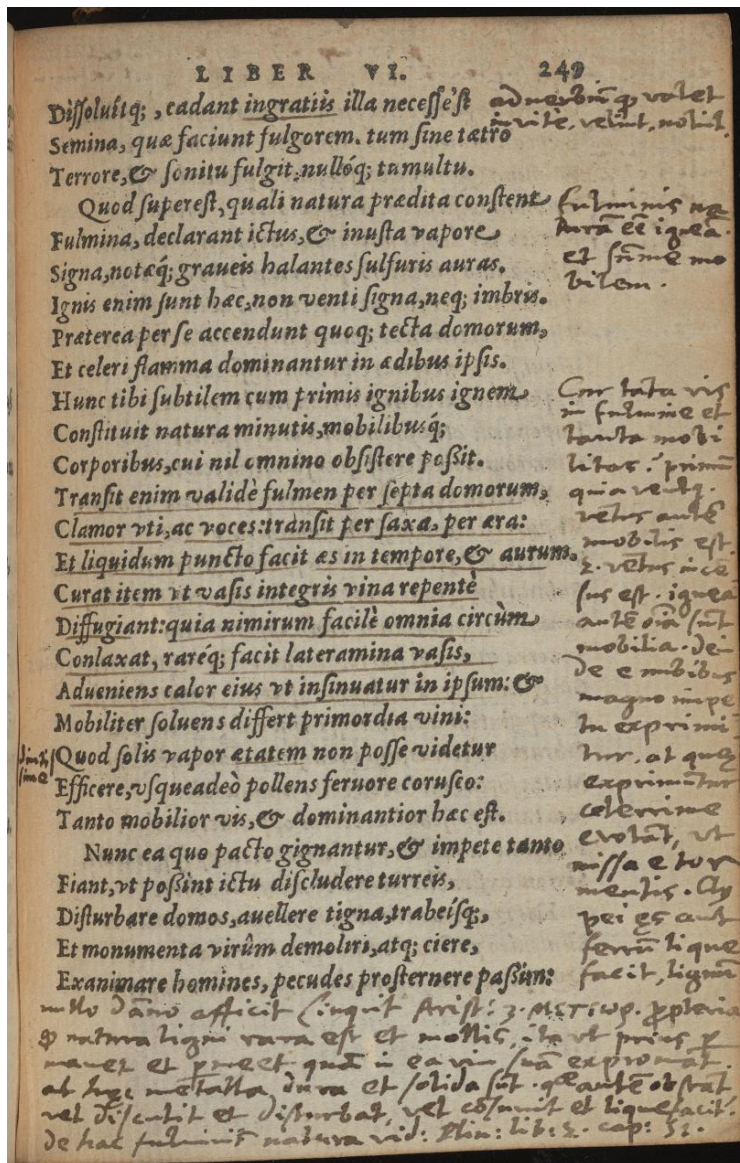
likely to be closer to 1605. With confidence, I place the period of annotation between 1605 and 1682.

The important parts to take away from this investigation are that this annotator was likely a student, likely wrote these notes between 1605 and 1682, and had an acute interest in scientific matters as science-related notes account for 36% of all the notes of book VI. Additionally, those notes which are both taken from Lambin and relate to science generally take up a significant amount of room – far more than those which focus on vocabulary or notabilia – and they occasionally fill an entire page. These long notes occur most frequently in books II and VI, so it is clear that this annotator has a great interest in scientific matters, fitting with the European Scientific Revolution of the late-16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century Scientific Revolution which included figures such as Galileo Galilei, Francis Bacon, Christiaan Huygens, Zacharias Janssen, and Johannes Kepler among others.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> For more on the Scientific Revolution, see: David Wootton. *The Invention of Science: A New History of the Scientific Revolution* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2016).

## Appendix A: Examples of the Anonymous Annotator



adverbiu(m) q(uod) valet  
 invite, velint, nolint.

fulminis natura(m) e(ss)e  
 ignea(m). et su(m)me mobilem.

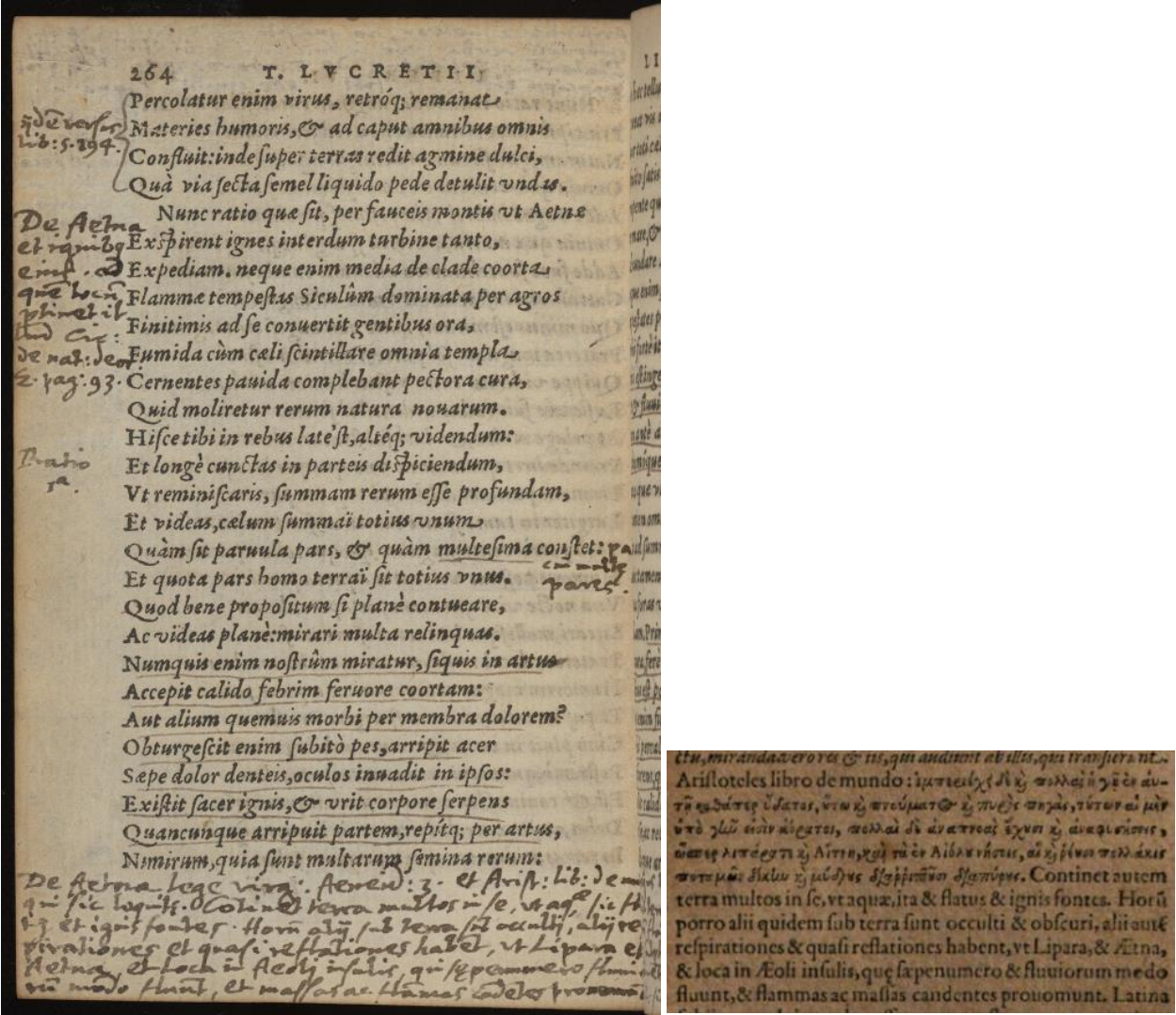
Cur ta(n)ta vis in fulmine et tanta  
 mobilitas? primu(m) quia vent(us).  
 ve(n)tus aute(m) mobilis est.  
 (secundum): ve(n)tus ince(n)sus est.  
 ignea aute(m) o(mn)ia su(n)t  
 mobilia. deinde e nubibus magno  
 impetu exprimitur, at qu(a)e  
 exprima(n)tur celerrime evola(n)t, ut  
 missa e tormentis. Clypei (a)es aut  
 ferru(m) liquefacit, lignu(m) nullo  
 da(m)no afficit / inquit Arist(oteles)  
 3. Μετεωρ. p(ro)pteria (quod) natura  
 ligni rara est et mollis, ita ut prius  
 p(er)manet et p(er)meet qua(m) in  
 ea vim sua(m) expromat. at haec  
 metalla dura et solida su(n)t. q(uae)  
 aute(m) obsta(n)t vel discutit et  
 disturbat, vel co(n)sumit et liquefacit.  
 de hac fulminis natura vid(e) Plin(ii)  
 lib(rum) 2. cap(itulum) 51.

## Translation of Note 3:

Why does lightning have such power and speed? First: because of wind. Specifically, wind is fast. Second: wind is aflame. Additionally, all flames are fast. Then [wind] is pushed from the clouds with a great rush, and what is pushed flies out very quickly, as though shot from cannons. [Lightning] melts the bronze or iron of a shield and attacks wood with no damage (so says Aristotle in *Meteorology* Book 3). On account of which the nature of wood is sparse and soft, such that [lightning] persists and passes through [the wood] before [the lightning] displays its own power in [the wood]. And yet these metals are hard and solid. Moreover, [these metals] block [the lightning] and it either destroys and shatters them, or weakens and melts them. For this nature of lightning, see Pliny, Book 2, Chapter 51.



Note taken from Fungerus (annotation, left; Fungerus's Etymologicum, right):



Transcription of Note 5:

De Aetna lege Virg(ili) Aeneid: 3. et Arist(oteles): lib(rum) de m[undo] qui sic loquit(ur).  
 Co(n)tinet terra multos in se, ut aq(uae), sic fl[at]t(us) et ignis fontes. Horu(m) alii sub terra su(n)t  
 occulti, alii re[s]pirationes et quasi reflationes habe(n)t, ut Lipara et Aetna et loca in Aeoli  
 insulis, qui s(a)epe numero fluvii tu(m) modo fluu(n)t, et massas ac fla(m)mas ca(n)de(n)tes  
 provomu(n)t.

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