

*nam neque nos agere hoc patriai tempore iniquo
possumus aequo animo nec Memmi clara propago
talibus in rebus communi deesse saluti.
omnis enim per se divum natura necessest
immortali aevo summa cum pace fruatur* 45
*semota ab nostris rebus seiunctaque longe;
nam privata dolore omni, privata periculis,
ipsa suis pollens opibus, nihil indiga nostri,
nec bene promeritis capitur nec tangitur ira.
Quod superest, vacuas auris <animumque sagacem>* 50
*semotum a curis adhibe veram ad rationem,
ne mea dona tibi studio disposta fideli,
intellecta prius quam sint, contempta relinquant.*

Therefore all the more grant to my speech, goddess, an ever-living charm. Cause meanwhile the savage works of war to persuade Mars your lover to give us peace. sleep and be still over every sea and land. For you alone can delight mortals with quiet peace, since Mars b mighty in battle rules the savage works of war, who often casts himself upon your lap wholly vanquished by the ever-living wound of love, and thus looking upward, with shapely neck thrown back, feeds his eager eyes with love, gaping upon you, goddess, and, as he lies back, his breath hangs upon your lips. There as he reclines, goddess, upon your sacred body, do you, bending around him from above, pour from your lips sweet coaxings, and for your Romans, illustrious one, crave quiet peace. For in this time of our country's troubles neither can I do my part with untroubled mind, nor can the noble scion of the Memmii at such a season be wanting to the common weal. [I pray to you for peace,] for the gods dwell apart in eternal peace. the very nature of divinity must necessarily enjoy immortal life in the deepest peace, far removed and separated from our affairs; for without any pain, without danger, itself mighty by its own resources, needing us not at all, it is neither propitiated with services nor touched by wrath. For the rest, ears unpreoccupied and keen intelligence detached from cares you should apply to true philosophy, that my gifts, set forth for you with faithful solicitude, may not by you be contemptuously discarded before they have been apprehended.

These lines from Lucretius' first proem appeal to Venus to make the poem attractive and thus bring peace to the troubled state of Rome through its and her capacity to calm the spirit of war, here symbolised by her erotic domination of her lover Mavors (Mars). The poet calls on Venus to speak words via the poem which will bring peace to the Romans, words evidently parallel with the Epicurean message of tranquillity in the *DRN* itself.

At this point in the text of Lucretius two problems emerge. First, the immediately following lines 1.44-49 on the tranquillity of the gods famously repeat 2.646-51, where they are much more firmly in context, and editors have long disagreed over whether they should be retained in Book 1.¹ Second, lines 50-54 contain several second person singular forms which have no apparent specified referent (*adhibe* 51, *tibi* 52 *relinquas* 53, *tibi* 54). Venus, the last second-person addressee in 38-40, certainly cannot be addressed here, while Memmius, the obvious candidate for addressee here, has been mentioned only in the third person at 1.26 *Memmiadae nostro*, and, on the usual reading, similarly at 1.42 *Memmi clara propago*. That Memmius, the major addressee of the poem, is not actually addressed by name before the poet turns from using the second person singular of Venus in 40 (*funde*) to using it of Memmius in 51 (*adhibe*) has rightly been identified as a real problem: as Lachmann argued in his commentary, *nam ut poeta a Venere orationem ad Memmium ne nomine quidem appellatum deflecteret fieri nullo modo potuit*. (LACHMANN, 1872, p. 21). The non-address of Memmius is extremely unusual in the treatment of the addressees of whole works in Roman poetry, who are regularly introduced with a vocative.²

¹ For a summary of arguments against retention in Book 1 see Gale, M. *Myth and Poetry in Lucretius* (Cambridge, 1991, p. 215-7); for those in favour of retention see Buglass, A. *Repetition and internal allusion in Lucretius' De Rerum Natura* [DPhil thesis] (Oxford, 2015, p. 131-3). My current view is that they should be retained in Book 1: *enim* (44) explains why Venus' inspiration of Lucretius' poem should bring peace to Rome (40 *pacem*), since the gods live in peace (45 *pace*). The two most modern commentaries on Book 1 differ on the issue: Brown, P. M. *Lucretius: De Rerum Natura I* (Bristol, 1984) 43-4 (excludes), Piazzzi, L. *Lucrezio: le leggi dell'universe* (La natura, Libro I) (Venice, 2011) 136 (retains).

² Cf. e.g. Catullus 1.3, Horace *Sat.* 1.1.1, *Sat.* 2.1.4, *Epodes* 1.2-4, *Odes* 1.1.1, Vergil *Georg.* 1.2, Propertius 1.1.9, Tibullus 1.1.53, Ovid *Fasti* 1.3, 2.15, *Tristia* 2.27, 5.1.1, *Pont.* 1.1.3, 2.1.49, 3.1.3, 4.1.1. The other eight occasions in the *DRN* (outside 1.1-43) where Memmius is mentioned are all vocative addresses (*Memmi* : 1.411, 1052, 2.143, 182, 5.8, 93, 164, 867, 1282).

Most editors, whether or not they excise 1.44-9, clearly feel the lack of a direct address to Memmius by the end of line 43. The clear lacuna in the MSS in the second half of line 50, plausibly filled by Smith and others with the text supplied by the *Scholia Veronensia* on Vergil *Georg.*3.3, *animumque sagacem*, can also be filled with an address to Memmius. Lachmann (1872, p. 21) suggested reading *animumque age, Memmi* here (supplying a verb which is not needed before *adhibe* in line 51), Diels *quod superest, Gai* in line 50, (surely an over-intimate form of address),³ and Konrad Müller adopts Sauppe's version *quod superest, Memmi, vacuas auris animumque* (MÜLLER, 1975, p. 7). All those who excise lines 44-9, and many of those who do not, also feel the lack of connection between line 43 and line 50, and follow Lachmann in supposing a lacuna before line 50. My purpose here is to suggest that *Memmi clara propago* in 42 can be interpreted as a vocative: this provides the missing address to Memmius and makes Lachmann's lacuna unnecessary.

I would punctuate and interpret 1.41-3 as follows:

*nam neque nos agere hoc patriai tempore iniquo
possumus aequo animo nec, Memmi clara propago,
talibus in rebus communi desse saluti.*

For in this time of our country's troubles neither can I do my part with untroubled mind, nor can I, noble scion of the Memmii, at such a season be lacking in the interest of the common good (adapting Smith 1977).

In the traditional interpretation of the passage, *neque nos* and *nec Memmi clara propago* are taken as a co-ordinated and balanced pair of subjects. This requires *potest* (agreeing with Memmius and governing *desse*) to be understood after *possumus*, certainly possible; *nos agere hoc* clearly refers to the poet's writing of the poem (as at 4.969 *nos agere hoc autem et naturam quaerere rerum*,

³ This would be unique in the *DRN* and indeed in high literature: for the intimate circumstances under which the *praenomen* was used in Lucretius' time see Adams, J. N. 'Conventions of Naming in Cicero', *Classical Quarterly* 28:145-166, 1978.

where the poet dreams of his usual daytime activity of composition), and points to the poet's literary activity for peace balanced by Memmius' political activity for peace (appropriate for a rising politician).⁴ But if *Memmi clara propago* is taken as the desired vocative addressing Memmius, then *possumus* governs both *agere* and *desse*, with the poet apparently as subject of both. For *propago* as vocative we may compare Ovid *Am.* 3.6.65 (addressing Ilia) *Troiana propago*, and two similar passages addressing individual figures: Silius 13.749 *o vera propago* and Statius *Theb.* 5.278 *o mea digna propago*.

Two possible objections are possible to this new interpretation: if *nos* is the subject of both *agere* and *desse*, why is it placed after the first *neque*, suggesting that it belongs only to the clause which that word introduces? And is not the appeal to the *salus communis* much more appropriate for the politician Memmius rather than the Epicurean poet, usually thought of as not being an active player in affairs of state?

The first objection can be answered by an appeal to 6.708-11, concerning the various possible causes of death for a casually encountered corpse:

*nam neque eum ferro nec frigore vincere possis
interiisse neque a morbo neque forte veneno,
verum aliquid genere esse ex hoc quod contigit ei
scimus.*

For you could not prove that steel or cold had been the death of him, or disease, or it may be poison, but we know that what has happened to him is something of this sort (Smith 1977).

Here the pronoun *eum* in 708 clearly belongs syntactically outside the triple *neque... neque... neque*, though the word order at first glance suggests that it belongs only to the clause introduced by the first *neque*. This looks like a good parallel for 1.42 *nam neque nos*, where *nos* can similarly be taken

⁴ This is true whether Lucretius' Memmius is the praetor of 58 BCE or the tribune of 54: for the issue see Hutchinson, G. O. 'The Date of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*', *Classical Quarterly* 51:150-162, 2001.

as outside the *neque* clause despite the word order. In both cases, we seem to find the tendency of unstressed pronouns to follow a more emphatic ‘host’ (in J. N. Adams’ terminology),⁵ the negative *neque*, even when this pushes such pronouns from their normal second position and apparently changes their role in the sentence. Several other examples of pronouns moving inside *neque* clauses can be cited, all similarly preceded by *nam*: cf. Plautus *Aul.*765-6 *nam neque ego aurum neque istaec aula quae siet / scio nec novi*, Vergil *Ecl.*5.82-3 *nam neque me tantum venientis sibilis Austri / nec percussa iuvent fluctu tam litora*, Quintilian *Decl.*Mai.5.22.6 *nam neque ego laborem nec difficiles posco conatus*. In all these cases, as in the two Lucretian examples, *nam neque ego* is effectively equivalent to *nam ego neque* and needs to be interpreted as such.

The second objection is more general. Can the Epicurean poet Lucretius present himself as aiding the common good, and being involved in active politics, despite the standard Epicurean view that the wise man should not take part in politics (Diogenes Laertius 10.119)? This seems acceptable; Don Fowler has stressed that might be emergency circumstances where the good Epicurean would be forced to act politically (FOWLER, 1989, p.120-150). And this is fully coherent with the context of the poem: before even mentioning Memmius and his possible political function, the poet has already called on Venus to end all wars (1.29-30), and refers to his own concern *hoc patriai tempore iniquo* (1.41). The turbulent times (probably the extreme civil disorder of the 50s BCE involving Clodius and Milo) demand that the poet proclaim the Epicurean message of peace and tranquility for the benefit of his own city of Rome, and Memmius is first invoked in this context because he is presumed to be endeavouring to bring peace to Rome on the political front. Though on the reading proposed the passage now makes no direct compliment to Memmius’ patriotism, *clara* surely points to Memmius’ distinction in politics, well known to contemporary readers, and the whole context suggests that the poet and his poem are to join his dedicatee in his dedicatee’s characteristic activity of public service.

⁵ ADAMS, J. N. (1994, p. 1-5).

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LUCRÉCIO E MÊMIO: *DE RERUM NATURA* 1.42

RESUMO

O presente artigo apresenta uma nova leitura para uma passagem do primeiro livro do *De Rerum Natura*, de Lucrécio. Por meio de uma reinterpretação dos versos 1.41-3, resolvem-se problemas textuais. Duas objeções a essa nova leitura também são discutidas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Lucrécio; *De Rerum Natura*; crítica textual.

