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The employment of mythological language and imagery by an Epicurean poet – a professed adherent of a system which was not only materialist, but overtly hostile to myth and poetry – is highly paradoxical. This apparent contradiction has often been ascribed to a conflict in poet's personality, between reason and intellect, or to a desire to enliven his philosophical material with attractive mythological digressions. This book attempts to provide a more positive assessment of Lucretius' aims and methodology, by considering the poet's attitude to myth, and the rôle which it plays in the *De Rerum Natura*, against the background of earlier and contemporary views. Dr Gale suggests that Lucretius was not only aware of the tension between his two rôles as philosopher and poet, but attempted to resolve it by developing his own, Epicurean poetic, together with a bold and innovative theory of the origins and meaning of myth.

This book will be of interest to all classical scholars but especially to Latinists and those concerned with Lucretius and with ancient philosophy.

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CAMBRIDGE CLASSICAL STUDIES

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Published by the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge  
 The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP  
 40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA  
 10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

© Faculty of Classics, University of Cambridge 1994

First published 1994  
 Reprinted 1996

*A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data*

Gale, Monica.

Myth and poetry in Lucretius / Monica Gale.

p. cm. – (Cambridge classical studies)

Revision of the author's thesis (Ph.D.) – Cambridge, 1991.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0 521 45135 3 (hardback)

1. Lucretius Carus, Titus. *De rerum natura*. 2. Lucretius Carus, Titus—Knowledge—Mythology. 3. Mythology, Classical, in literature.  
 4. Philosophy, Ancient, in literature. 5. Myth in literature. I. Title. II. Series.

PA6484.G35 1994

871'01-dc20 93-17771 CIP

ISBN 0 521 45135 3 hardback

Transferred to digital printing 2002

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**For Steve**  
**pro voluptate suavis amicitiae**

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## PREFACE

This book is a revised version of my Ph.D. thesis, ‘Myth in the *De Rerum Natura* of Lucretius’ (Cambridge 1991). With the intention of making it more accessible to the non-specialist reader, I have translated (or transliterated) all Greek words, phrases and quotations. For citations from the *De Rerum Natura*, I have used Bailey’s Oxford Classical Text (second edition, 1922) throughout.

I am indebted to a number of scholars and colleagues for their comments and advice. I would particularly like to thank my research supervisor, Michael Reeve, for many stimulating criticisms and suggestions; and my examiners, Don Fowler and John Henderson, for their invaluable comments, both verbal and written, which formed the basis for the revision of my thesis. I am also grateful to Myles Burnyeat, Philip Hardie, David Sedley and David West, who read drafts of my work at various stages of composition. I have benefited greatly by their scholarship and by improvements which they suggested. Finally, I would like to thank Steve Linley for help and support of many kinds: for advice on technical and editorial matters, for many hours spent proofreading the entire manuscript, for encouragement and moral support, and for bearing with me and Lucretius over the last six years.



## ABBREVIATIONS

Bailey	C. Bailey, <i>Lucretius: De Rerum Natura libri sex, edited with prolegomena, critical apparatus, translation and commentary</i> (Oxford 1947)
D–K	H. Diels and W. Kranz, <i>Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker</i> (6th edn, Berlin 1951–2)
Ernout/Robin	A. Ernout and L. Robin, <i>Lucrèce: de rerum natura; commentaire exégétique et critique</i> (Paris 1925)
FGrHist	F. Jacoby, <i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> (Berlin 1923)
Leonard/Smith	W. E. Leonard and S. B. Smith, <i>Lucretius: De Rerum Natura libri sex, edited with introduction and commentary</i> (Milwaukee and London 1968)
LSJ	H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, rev. by H. S. Jones and R. Mackenzie, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> (9th edn, Oxford 1940)
Munro	H. A. J. Munro, <i>T. Lucreti Cari De Rerum Natura Libri Sex</i> (4th edn, London 1893)
OED	<i>The Oxford English Dictionary</i> (Compact edition, Oxford 1981)
OLD	<i>The Oxford Latin Dictionary</i> (Oxford 1968)
RAC	T. Klauser, <i>Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum</i> (Stuttgart 1950–)
RE	A. Pauly and G. Wissowa, <i>Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> (Stuttgart 1894–)

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Roscher	W. H. Roscher, <i>Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie</i> (Leipzig 1884–1937)
SVF	H. von Arnim, <i>Stoicorum veterum fragmenta</i> (Leipzig 1903–24)
TLL	<i>Thesaurus Linguae Latinae</i> (Leipzig 1900– )

Fragments of the Presocratic philosophers are numbered according to D–K.