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978-0-521-84801-5 - The Cambridge Companion to Lucretius

Edited by Stuart Gillespie and Philip Hardie

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THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO
LUCRETIUS

Lucretius' didactic poem *De rerum natura* ('On the Nature of Things') is an impassioned and visionary presentation of the materialist philosophy of Epicurus, and one of the most powerful poetic texts of antiquity. After its rediscovery in 1417 it became a controversial and seminal work in successive phases of literary history, the history of science, and the Enlightenment. In this *Cambridge Companion* experts in the history of literature, philosophy and science discuss the poem in its ancient contexts and in its reception both as a literary text and as a vehicle for progressive ideas. The *Companion* is designed both as a handbook for the general reader who wishes to learn about Lucretius, and as a series of stimulating essays for students of classical antiquity and its reception. It is completely accessible to the reader who has read Lucretius only in translation.

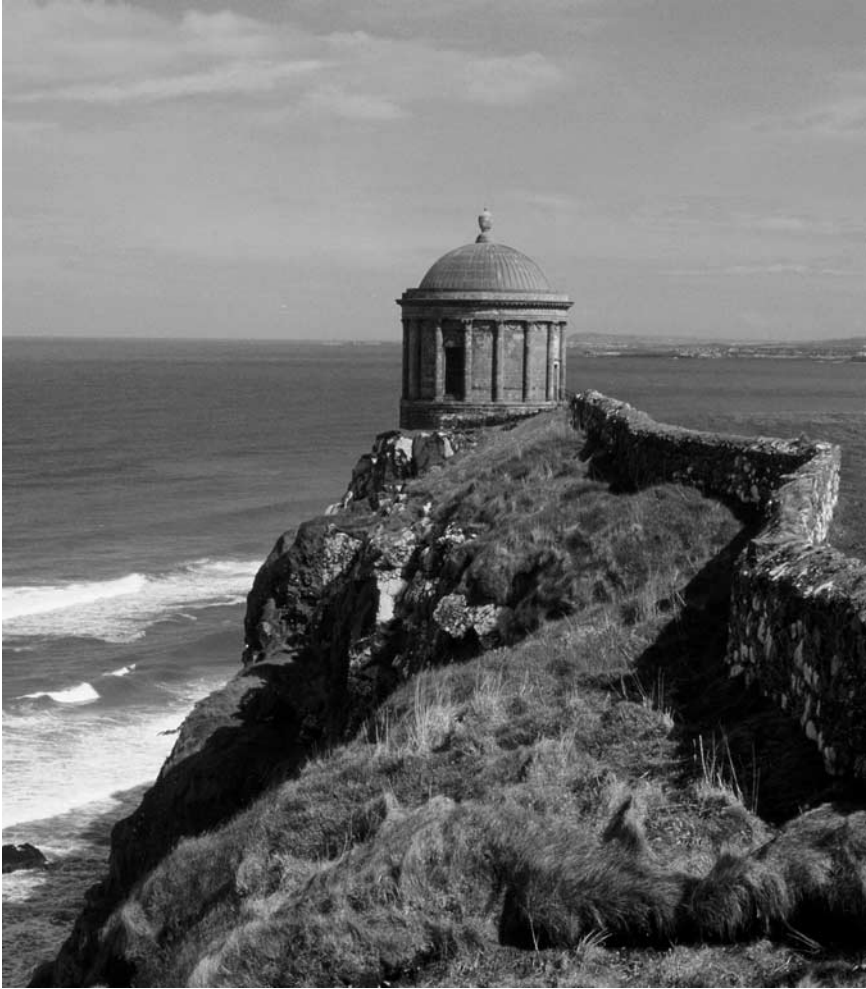
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Mussenden Temple, Co. Antrim

An eighteenth-century architectural realisation of the Lucretian ‘calm temples of the wise’
looking out over a storm-tossed sea (see p. 14 below)

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THE CAMBRIDGE
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commentary of Lucretius, *De rerum natura* III (1971), [Virgil] *Moretum* (1984), Apuleius, *Cupid & Psyche* (1990) and Ovid, *Heroides* XVI–XXI (1996); a translation with introduction and notes of Apuleius, *The Golden Ass* (1998); and *The Classical Text* (1974). He is at present working on a commentary on Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 6–9 for the series *Scrittori Greci e Latini* (Fondazione Lorenzo Valla), due for publication in 2009.

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PREFACE

The editors have felt fortunate in being able to draw upon the expertise of scholars in a number of fields. We are extremely grateful for advice to Diskin Clay, Robert Cummings, Peta Fowler, John Henderson, Kit Hume, Doug Hutchinson, W. R. Johnson, Elisabeth Leedham-Green, Martin McLaughlin, Charles Martindale and David Norbrook. Several of our contributors have also ranged well beyond their briefs and responsibilities in assisting us, and Michael Sharp of Cambridge University Press has provided all the help we sought.

The generous support of two institutions should be acknowledged: the British Academy and the Faculty of Classics, University of Oxford, which together funded an essential conference that brought contributors, editors and others to Corpus Christi College, Oxford in June 2005. Participants in this event showed us not only that Lucretius can command attention across the disciplinary spectrum, but that sharing cross-disciplinary expertise is an especially fruitful, and pleasurable, way of approaching the *De rerum natura*. We hope the present volume demonstrates this equally successfully.

Abbreviations of ancient works follow those in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* and the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*.