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978-1-107-03745-8 - The Early Textual History of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*

David Butterfield

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THE EARLY TEXTUAL HISTORY OF LUCRETIUS'
DE RERUM NATURA

This is the first detailed analysis of the fate of Lucretius' *De rerum natura* from its composition in the 50s BC to the creation of our earliest extant manuscripts during the Carolingian age. Close investigation of the knowledge of Lucretius' poem among writers throughout the Roman and mediaeval worlds allows fresh insight into the work's readership and reception, and a clear assessment of the indirect tradition's value for editing the poem. The first extended analysis of the 170+ subject headings (*capitula*) that intersperse the text reveals the close engagement of its Roman readers. A fresh inspection and assignation of marginal hands in the poem's most important manuscript (the Oblongus) provides new evidence for the work of Carolingian correctors and offers the basis for a new Lucretian *stemma codicum*. Further clarification of the interrelationship of Lucretius' Renaissance manuscripts gives additional evidence for the poem's reception and circulation in fifteenth-century Italy.

DAVID BUTTERFIELD is a Fellow of Queens' College and Lecturer in Classics at the University of Cambridge.

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PREFACE

This book represents an expanded revision of a doctoral thesis of the same title submitted to Cambridge University in 2010, although questions about the transmission of Lucretius' *De rerum natura* have interested me for the past decade. From my first term as an undergraduate I was spurred on by the warm and generous encouragement of my friends and colleagues David McKie, David Sedley, James Diggle and Ted Kenney, each of whom opened up numerous rich new avenues of learning for me. More directly, the significant researches of Michael Reeve that appeared in *Aevum* for 2005 and 2006 made immediately apparent the sheer breadth of unanswered questions relating to the transmission of the poem. I owe him exceptional gratitude for generously agreeing to supervise this thesis out of retirement and for graciously providing, with exemplary speed and kindness, a remarkably wide array of material to ponder, often when I found myself against what seemed a particularly stubborn brick wall. He continues to provide me with a formidable and inspiring exemplar of what Latin scholarship can be. The close eye and criticism of my doctoral examiners, Stephen Oakley and Marcus Deufert, have allowed me to improve my account in several respects.

I am immensely indebted to Christ's College, Cambridge, where I studied and worked from 2003 to 2011, an institution that has constantly supported my research, and whose Fellowship has genially and enthusiastically welcomed my own diverse scholarly interests. I hope that W. H. D. Rouse, whose Lucretian Loeb (1924) introduced the great Epicurean poem to thousands of students worldwide, would not be displeased with a more narrow study of this kind carried out under his eponymous benefaction. I also owe a financial debt to Christ's, in conjunction with the Faculty of Classics, for generously meeting the funding costs for my doctoral work, for which I will always be profoundly grateful.

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Finally, I am very pleased to have entered the Fellowship of Queens' College, Cambridge, a place of serious scholarship that has welcomed me with genuine generosity.

I have analysed and (where appropriate) collated the following manuscripts by autopsy: O (Leiden Voss. Lat. F 30: April 2008, September 2009), Q (Leiden Voss. Lat. Q 94: April 2008, September 2009), G (Copenhagen Kgl. S. 211 2°: December 2008), V (Vienna ÖNB Phil. 107 ff.9–17: December 2007) and the *Florilegium Sangallense* (St Gallen Stiftsbibl. 871: September 2008). I have also derived immense benefit from the high-quality facsimiles of O and Q published by Chatelain (1908; 1913), the scans of G available through the *Codices Haunienses* resource online, and the microfilm of VU kindly provided in January 2008 by the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek. I have depended entirely on my own collations and inspection for these manuscripts and am therefore confident in the veracity of my reports. Readings of the various *Itali* I have obtained from a wide range of digital images, printed resources and the private collations of Michael Reeve. Answers to a number of particular queries were kindly provided by André Bouwman (Curator of Western Manuscripts, Leiden University Library), David Ganz (Professor Emeritus of Palaeography, King's College London), Erik Petersen (Research Librarian, Royal Library, Copenhagen) and Martin Ferguson Smith (Professor Emeritus of Classics, University of Durham). The staff of two incomparable institutions, the Rare Books Room in the University Library of Cambridge and the Wren Library of Trinity College, also deserve my sincere thanks for their patient forbearance of my very regular visits and requests. The splendid staff of Cambridge University Press deserve warm thanks, especially my copy-editor, Jan Chapman.

The work published here is designed to serve as a firm basis for future editions of Lucretius' *De rerum natura*, for which there remains a major need. I am currently preparing a new Oxford Classical Text of Lucretius, to replace Bailey's outdated text of 1922; in its wake I intend to produce a full-scale commentary on *De rerum natura*. In the nearer future I shall publish a full *thesaurus emendationum* for the poem, which will contain a comprehensive appendix that catalogues errors transmitted in

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the manuscripts, and a collection of my textual adversaria on Lucretius, uniting previously published material and unpublished emendations.

Finally, it is a pleasure and a privilege to have the opportunity to express my gratitude to those who have tolerated me and my researches for their genuine love, encouragement and good humour. My family have continued to provide unstinting support for my scholarship, even if at some geographical remove: their belief in my studies, and faith in my own passions, is more of a blessing than I could have hoped for. Within Cambridge, particular gratitude is owed to Lyndsay Coe (Pembroke and Trinity), Emily Kneebone (Newnham and Trinity Hall), Shaul Tor (St John's, Jesus, King's College London) and Moreed Arbabzadah (Jesus), four contemporary Classicists and close friends who have spurred me on from the beginning of my time at the University and without whom things would have been very different. The sagacity of a historian, Alex Middleton (Pembroke, Cambridge, and Wadham, Oxford), has been a provocative goad throughout my studies. Lastly, I must record the immeasurable debt I owe to my wife Rhiannon (Queens' College), for all of her unbounded support, understanding and inspiration: *sic rerum summa nouatast*.

Queens' College

Summer 2012