Handout for “Tantalized by Natural Phenomena: Tantalus and Intratextual Allusions in Lucretius’ *DRN* 6”

Ryan Baldwin

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

rmasato@live.unc.edu

1. Lucretius Describes Tantalus in the Underworld: *DRN* 3.978-983[[1]](#footnote-1)

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| Atque ea nimirum quaecumque **Acherunte** profundo  prodita sunt esse, in vita sunt omnia nobis.  nec miser **inpendens** **magnum** **timet** aere **saxum**  Tantalus, ut famast, **cassa formidine** torpens;  sed magis in vita **divom metus** **urget** inanis  mortalis, **casumque** **timent** quem cuique ferat fors. | And certainly, whatever things are fabled to exist in deep **Acheron**, all of these exist for us in life. Miserable Tantalus does not, as the story goes, **fear** **the great rock** that **hangs** **over** **him** in the air, frozen **with vain terror.** Instead, in life, the **fear of the gods** **oppresses** mortals without cause, and **they fear the destruction** which chance may bring to each person. |

1. List of 27 Uses of *Pendeo* and its Cognates in *DRN* (Bolded words are referenced in this talk)
   1. Book 1 (5 times): Lines 37 (*pendet*); 305 (*suspensae*); 326 (*inpendent*); 361 (*pendere*); 694 (*pendent*)
   2. Book 2 (3 times): Lines 602 (*pendere*); 1042 (*perpende*), 1127 (*dispendi*)
   3. Book 3 (2 times): Lines 196 (*suspensa*); **980 (inpendens)**
   4. Book 4 (1 time): Line 173 (*inpendent*)
   5. Book 5 (4 times): Lines 118 (*pendere*); 295 (*pendentes*); 964 (*inpensa*), 1069 (*suspensis*)
   6. Book 6 (12 times):
2. Introduction (Lines 1-95): Line **51 (*pendent*)**
3. Meteorological Phenomena (Lines 96-534): Lines 114 (*suspensam*); **195 (*pendentibus*)**, **254 (*inpendent*)**; 472 (*suspensae*); **491 (*inpensa*)**; 504 (*pendentia*)
4. Other Natural Phenomena (Lines 555-1137): Lines 564 (*inpendent*, earthquakes); 911 (*pendentibus*, magnets); 914 (*dependet*, magnets)
5. Plague (Lines 1138-1286): Lines **1128 (*suspensa*)**; **1277 (*pendebantur*)**
6. Lucretius’ Introduction to Book 6: *DRN* 6.50-55

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| cetera quae fieri in terris caeloque tuentur  **mortales, pavidis cum pendent mentibu’ saepe**,  et faciunt animos humilis **formidine divom**  depressosque premunt ad terram propterea quod  ignorantia causarum conferre deorum  cogit ad imperium res et concedere regnum. | [I will explain] the rest of the things which mortals see happening in the earth and sky, **when they are often held in suspense with trembling minds.** These [phenomena] make their spirits humble through **fear of the gods** and press them as they are crushed to the earth, because their ignorance of causes forces them to attribute [these things] to the power of the gods, and to yield authority to them. |

1. Lucretius Describes how Lightning is Created: *DRN* 6.189-198

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| contemplator enim, cum montibus adsimulata  nubila portabunt venti transversa per auras,  aut ubi per magnos montis cumulata videbis  insuper esse aliis alia atque **urgere superne**  in statione locata sepultis undique ventis:  tum poteris magnas moles cognoscere eorum  **speluncasque velut saxis pendentibu’ structas**  cernere, quas venti cum tempestate coorta  conplerunt, magno indignantur murmure clausi  nubibus, in caveisque ferarum more minantur;... | Observe, when the winds carry the clouds—similar to mountains—across through the air, or when you will see them cumulating about the great mountains one on top of the other and **pressing down from above,** and lying still with the winds buried on every side: then you will be able to recognize their great masses **and see them as caves constructed with hanging rocks**, which the winds fill with the rising storm and are angry with a great roaring because they are shut up in the clouds, and they threaten in the manner of beasts in their cages:... |

1. Lucretius Describes Thunderbolts: *DRN* 6.246-255

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| Fulmina gignier e crassis alteque putandumst  nubibus extructis; nam caelo nulla sereno  nec leviter densis mittuntur nubibus umquam.  nam dubio procul hoc fieri manifesta docet res,  quod tunc per totum concrescunt aera nubes,  undique uti tenebras omnis **Acherunta** reamur  liquisse et **magnas caeli complesse cavernas**:  **usque adeo taetra nimborum nocte coorta**  **inpendent atrae formidinis ora superne**,  cum commoliri tempestas fulmina coeptat. | It must be believed that thunderbolts are produced from clouds that are thick and piled up high; for nothing is ever sent from a calm sky nor from lightly-packed clouds. The facts make clear without a doubt that at the time when clouds grow together throughout the sky that we think that everywhere all the darkness has abandoned **Acheron** and **filled the great caverns of the sky: thus at that point, as the foul night of clouds break forth the face of black terror hangs over [us] from above**, when the storm starts to set the thunderbolts in motion. |

1. Lucretius Describes how Atoms Help Create Storms: *DRN* 6.489-494

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| haud igitur mirumst si parvo tempore saepe  tam magnis nimbis tempestas atque tenebrae  coperiant maria ac terras **inpensa** **superne**,  undique quandoquidem per caulas aetheris omnis  et quasi per magni circum spiracula mundi  exitus introitusque elementis redditus extat. | Therefore, it is not at all miraculous if, in a short time with such great clouds, the storm and darkness which **overhang from above** cover up the sea and land, since everywhere, through all the passages of the ether, and as if through the vents of the great world around, there exist exits and entrances for the atoms. |

1. Lucretius Introduces the Plague: *DRN* 6.1125-1130

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| Haec igitur subito **clades** nova pestilitasque  aut in aquas cadit aut fruges persidit in ipsas  aut alios hominum pastus pecudumque cibatus,  **aut etiam suspensa manet vis aere in ipso**,  et, cum spirantes mixtas hinc ducimus auras,  illa quoque in corpus pariter sorbere necessest. | Therefore, this new **destruction** and pestilence suddenly falls on the waters or settles down on the corn itself or other food of mankind or nutriment of beasts, **or even remains as a force suspended in the air itself**, and when we lead the mixed air, breathing it in, it is necessary that [we] also absorb it into our body. |

1. Lucretius Describes the Symptoms and Ailments of the Diseased Athenians: *DRN* 6.1174-1177

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| multi praecipites lymphis putealibus alte  inciderunt, ipso **venientes ore patente**:  **insedabiliter sitis arida**, corpora mersans,  aequabat multum parvis umoribus imbrem. | Many fell headlong from high up into wells of water, arriving **with their own mouths gaping open. Dry thirst beyond all quenching**, immersing their bodies, made a great flood equal to a few drops. |

1. Other References to the Homeric Tantalus: *DRN* 3.1084 and 4.1097-1100

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| et **sitis** aequa tenet vitai **semper** **hiantis**.  ut bibere in somnis sitiens quom quaerit, et umor  non datur, ardorem qui membris stinguere possit,  sed laticum simulacra petit frustraque laborat  **in medioque sitit torrenti flumine** potans,... | And an unchanging **thirst** of life fills us, [mouths] **always agape.**  As when in dreams a thirsty person seeks to drink, and no water is present which is able to extinguish the burning in their limbs, but they seek the images of water and labor in vain as they, drinking **in the middle of a rushing river,** [continue to] thirst... |

1. Lucretius’ Description of the Athenian Reaction to the Plague: *DRN* 6.1272-1277

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| Omnia denique sancta deum delubra replerat  corporibus mors exanimis, onerataque passim  cuncta cadaveribus caelestum templa manebant,  hospitibus loca quae complerant aedituentes.  **nec iam religio divom nec numina magni**  **pendebantur enim**: praesens dolor exsuperabat. | Finally, death had filled all the holy sanctuaries of the gods with lifeless bodies, and all the temples of the celestials, which places the sacristans had filled up with suppliants, remained burdened indiscriminately with corpses. **The worship of the gods and their power were no longer regarded to be of much value**: the present grief was too great. |

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1. The text for Lucretius’ *DRN* was taken from Rouse’s Loeb (1992). Translations and emphases my own. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)