Politics and Peace: Lucretian Intertextuality on Statesmanship in the *Aeneid*

This paper will evaluate Vergil's use throughout the *Aeneid* of allusion to the *De Rerum Natura* of Lucretius in order to explore the tension between statesmanship and peace. Scholars disagree on whether Vergil's frequent quotations of Lucretius express sympathy toward the Epicurean views he learned as a young man, or whether they are what Farrington termed "polemical allusion" in combining "quotation of Lucretius with contradiction of his opinion" (Farrington 1963, 89). My contribution to this discussion will be to argue that Vergil quotes Lucretius at key moments throughout the poem to present an increasingly Lucretian, and thus negative, attitude toward statesmanship. Such evaluation of the Lucretian intertext will support O'Hara's thesis that such "conflict between optimistic expectations and a harsher reality is characteristic of Vergilian prophecy" (O'Hara, 131), thus adding an Epicurean layer to the ambiguity that scholars such as Gale (2003), Thomas (2001), Putnam (1988), and Perkell have described as "the defining virtues" (Perkell 1999, 19) of Vergil's poetry.

This paper first builds on Hardie's observation that the opening scenes of *Aen.* 1 borrow the language of Lucretius (Hardie 1986, 182), arguing that these scenes invert the Epicurean antithesis between peace and statesmanship by portraying the statesman as the means by which peace will be achieved. As the epic unfolds, reference to Lucretius gradually undermines this vision of statesmanship in such a way that the narrative questions yet not altogether denies the ability of Aeneas to achieve peace. Book 3 uses Lucretian reference to suggest the first incompatibility of statesmen with peace, questioning the fulfillment of the vision cast in Book 1. Book 5 reveals the statesman capable of securing peace for others, but at the price of Palinurus' life. Vergil's description of the death of this figure borrows the language of Lucretius (Brenk

1988, 75) to create a parallel between Palinurus and Iphigenia, whose sacrifice, Lucretius argues, illustrates that statesmanship requires human victims. Book 7 continues to use allusion to Lucretius to undermine the Book 1 vision for statesmen, depicting them as unable to secure peace at all due to the intervention of the gods. The statesmanship of Book 9 uses Lucretian intertextuality that, as Farrell observes, associates Trojan statesmanship with the worst accusations of Lucretius (Farrell 1997, 235), demanding as additional human victims Nisus and Euryalus. Read in light of the Epicurean undertones running throughout the *Aeneid*, the death of Turnus highlights the fundamental ambiguity of the epic: Aeneas' final act secures the promised *sedes quietas*, but such peace, absent from the narrative itself, remains a prophesy as unfulfilled as it was in Book 1.

In addition to contributing to the scholarly conversation on the presence and significance of Lucretian intertextuality in the *Aeneid*, this paper has pedagogical value for high school Latin teachers and professors who teach introductory Vergil classes in that several key passages likely to be read in such settings will be discussed, evaluated, and connected thematically to one another. This paper also provides scholarly context relevant to such teachers by summarizing and providing a metric for evaluating contemporary responses to Vergil, supporting Parry's claim that "[w]e hear two distinct voices in the *Aeneid*, a public voice of triumph, and a private voice of regret" (Parry 1963, 79).

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