



DAEDALA IMAGO AND THE IMAGE OF THE WORLD IN LUCRETIUS' PROEM (1.5–8)*

ABSTRACT

This article aims to discuss how Lucretius arranges the four 'roots' at the end of successive lines of verse in the *De rerum natura* (henceforth, *DRN*) (1.5–8). In this passage Lucretius, alluding to Empedocles, puts the words in such an order that one can see the layers of the world by a vertical reading. In the same passage, Lucretius imitates the very beginning of Homer's ecphrasis (Il. 18.478–85), which the allegorical tradition will explain as an image of the world, related to Empedoclean theory. The article also discusses the allusion to Daedalus by means of the adjective *daedalus* in *DRN* 1.7 (*daedala tellus*), which could be related to both Empedocles and Homer. This adjective is a keyword for discussing the image produced by the words on the written page.

Keywords: Lucretius; *DRN*; proem; Empedocles; four 'roots'; Homer; vertical reading; Daedalus

Since the publication of Friedländer's influential article,¹ in which he was the first to point out the relationship between Epicurus' atomistic theory and Lucretius' wordplays, many studies of the crafted language (*daedala lingua*)² of the *DRN* have emerged, closely scrutinizing Lucretius' poetic technique not simply as a mannerism but also in relation to his philosophical background. In support of this view, scholars have always cited the passages in the *DRN*,³ where Lucretius presents the analogy between letters (*elementa*), which produce words and lines, and atoms (*elementa*), which constitute the world; therefore, *words* and *world* would be analogous in the poem of Lucretius. However, I would like to point out in Lucretius' proem (1.5–8) another poetic device which consists not of an association of two similar words within the same line or in nearby lines but of the disposition of words that are not similar in the same *sedes* in successive lines, as a result of which the reader can *see* what the poet says, something comparable to an acrostic,⁴ and requiring a vertical reading. It is not, therefore, about

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¹ P. Friedländer, 'Pattern of sound and atomistic theory in Lucretius', *AJPh* 62 (1941), 16–34.

² See, for example, J.M. Snyder, *Puns and Poetry in Lucretius' De Rerum Natura* (Amsterdam, 1980), who cites Friedländer (n. 1), 31; B. Holmes, 'Daedala lingua: crafted speech in *De rerum natura*', *AJPh* 126 (2005), 527–85, who also mentions Friedländer's article at 527–8.

³ Cf. 1.196–8, 1.814–29, 1.907–14, 2.688–99, 2.1013–21. There are many discussions and commentaries about these passages, among which I refer to Snyder (n. 2), 31–51; Holmes (n. 2) with bibliography at 528 n. 4. On analogy as a method of explanation in Lucretius, see A. Schiesaro, *Simulacrum et imago: gli argomenti analogici nel De rerum natura* (Pisa, 1990), with further bibliography; G.B. Conte, *Generi e lettori: Lucrezio, l'elegia d'amore, l'enciclopedia di Plinio* (Milan, 1991), 21–3; M. Garani, *Empedocles Redivivus: Poetry and Analogy in Lucretius* (New York and London, 2007), 18–25.

⁴ On acrostics in Latin poetry, see G. Damschen, 'Das lateinische Akrostichon. Neue Funde bei Ovid sowie Vergil, Grattius, Manilius und Silius Italicus', *Philologus* 148 (2004), 88–115;

producing a play with sounds but rather about producing an *image* with the words on the written page.⁵ As I shall argue, such an image is related chiefly to two of Lucretius' philosophical and poetic models, Empedocles and Homer.

Before looking at the *daedala imago*, it is also important to remember the Empedoclean presence in the much-debated proem of the *DRN*, with its famous and controversial invocation to Venus (1.1–43).⁶ It is not my intention here to discuss the presence of the goddess at the very beginning of a poem in which the poet preaches the Epicurean doctrine, or even to examine why Lucretius, as an Epicurean, starts with allusions to Empedocles.⁷ What is crucial for my purpose in this article is that the presence of Empedocles in Lucretius' proem is recognized, even if there is no agreement regarding the interpretation of such presence.⁸

I can now move on to the proem and first look at its image of the world (1.1–13):

Aeneadam genetrix, hominum diuomque uoluptas,
 alma Venus, caeli subter labentia signa
 quae mare nauigerum, quae terras frugiferentis
 concelebras, per te quoniam genus omne animantum
 concipitur uisitque exortum lumina *solis*: 5
 te, dea, te fugiunt uenti, te nubila *caeli*
 aduentumque tuum, tibi suauis daedala *tellus*
 summittit flores, tibi rident aequora *ponti*
 placatumque nitet diffuso lumine caelum.
 nam simul ac species patefactast uerna diei 10
 et reserata uiget genitabilis aura fauoni,
 aerae primum uolucres te, diua, tuumque
 significant initum percussae corda tua ui.

THE FOUR 'ROOTS'

Discussing *DRN* 1.6–9, Furley⁹ was the first to note Empedocles' four 'roots'¹⁰ in the proem. He recognized the 'root' *air* in line 6 as *uenti*, *nubila* and *caeli*; the 'root' *earth*

M. Robinson, 'Arms and a mouse: approaching acrostics in Ovid and Vergil', *MD* 82 (2019), 23–73; M. Robinson, 'Looking edgewise: pursuing acrostics in Ovid and Vergil', *CQ* 69 (2019), 290–308. However, as I will point out, my focus is not on letters but on words at the end of successive lines.

⁵ This is something similar to the use of tmesis in *DRN* 1.452, when Lucretius is writing of separation and fatal dissolution: there he makes us see the separation by means of the tmesis (*seque gregari*), which is also a dissolution of sense, as S. Hinds, 'Language at the breaking point: Lucretius 1.452', *CQ* 37 (1987), 450–3 pointed out.

⁶ In relation to Venus, see M.R. Gale, *Myth and Poetry in Lucretius* (Cambridge, 1994), 208–28, with bibliography, who summarizes many explanations put forward by earlier critics: E. Courtney, 'The proem of Lucretius', *MH* 58 (2001), 201–11; E. Asmis, 'Lucretius' new world order: making a pact with nature', *CQ* 58 (2008), 141–57, at 157.

⁷ On this subject, see D. Sedley, *Lucretius and the Transformation of Greek Wisdom* (Cambridge, 1998), 1–34, who bases his study on D.J. Furley, 'Variations on themes from Empedocles in Lucretius' proem', *BICS* 17 (1970), 55–64, and D. Clay, *Lucretius and Epicurus* (Ithaca and London, 1983).

⁸ Sedley (n. 7), 34, for example, describes Empedocles as 'father' of the genre for Lucretius, a philosopher to whom Lucretius owes a poetic debt; *contra*, see Gale (n. 6), 210 n. 13. On Lucretius and Empedocles, see also W. Kranz, 'Lukrez und Empedokles', *Philologus* 96 (1944), 68–107; J. Bollack, 'Lukrez und Empedokles', *Die neue Rundschau* 70 (1959), 656–86; P. Hardie, 'The speech of Pythagoras in Ovid *Metamorphoses* 15: Empedoclean epos', *CQ* 45 (1995), 204–14, at 207–10.

⁹ Furley (n. 7), 55–7.

¹⁰ Empedocles did not use στοιχεῖα ('elements') for the basic units of the universe but ῥιζώματα ('roots'), as in fr. D 57.1 (B 6.1): τέσσαρα τῶν πάντων ῥιζώματα πρῶτον ἄκουε.

clearly in line 7 as *tellus*, and the ‘root’ *water* in line 8 as *aequora ponti*. For the fourth ‘root’, Furley looked at line 9 and argued that *caelum* must be understood in a different way from the *caeli* of line 6, both at the end of their respective lines.¹¹ Although he mentioned lines 1–5, Furley did not draw attention to *lumina solis* (‘the light of the sun’) in line 5, immediately above *caeli* in line 6. If the repetition of *caelum* in line 9 is important, *lumine* in the same line, in the penultimate position, must have the same relevance, since it echoes *lumina* in line 5, in the same *sedes*.

The study of the proem was developed by Sedley,¹² building on Furley’s observations, but also separating lines 1–5 from 6–9. He detected all four ‘roots’ at the very beginning of the *DRN*: the reference to the sky (2 *caeli*) as the ‘root’ *air*, to the sea (3 *mare*) as the ‘root’ *water*, to the land (3 *terras*) as the ‘root’ *earth*, and to the light of the sun (5 *lumina solis*) as the ‘root’ *fire*. I fully agree with Sedley’s observations, but neither he nor Furley noticed that Lucretius arranged the four ‘roots’ at the end¹³ of the successive lines 5–8, so that the reader can also *see* the layers of the world: the earth (7 *tellus*) between the sea or water (8 *ponti*), below, and the sky or air (6 *caeli*), above, and the sun or fire (5 *solis*), above all. Placing these key elements at the extremity of lines 5–8 brings to mind the simile¹⁴ in which the doctor puts honey on the rim of a cup in order to give bitter medicine to children (*DRN* 1.936–50 = 4.11–25).¹⁵

Lucretius, however, does not (after all) stop his ‘four roots’ at line 8, since the proem goes on to mention more explicitly air (11–12 *aura fauoni* | *aeriae*), water (15 *rapidus* ... *amnis*; 17 *maria* ... *fluuiosque rapacis*), earth (18 *camposque uirentis*) and fire (9 *lumine caelum*).¹⁶ These do not enact the visual image (as did the identical *sedes*), but they do continue the Empedoclean theme in their own interestingly poetic fashions.¹⁷

The terms used by Lucretius and their position in the verse, namely at the end of the lines, deserve further observations. The four ‘roots’ of Empedocles are not presented with a consistent vocabulary, rather they ‘are variously designated by the terms fire, air, earth and water, by the names of divinities, and by the most obvious manifestations in the physical world’.¹⁸ For the ‘root’ *fire*, Empedocles uses, for example, πῦρ or ἥλιος; for the ‘root’ *air*, ἀήρ or οὐρανός; for the ‘root’ *water*, ὕδωρ or πόντος; and for the ‘root’ *earth*, γαῖα or χθών.¹⁹ It seems, therefore, that Lucretius in the proem alludes to the ‘roots’ by their manifestations in the physical world, using corresponding terms, such

¹¹ Furley (n. 7), 56: ‘It is not true that the fourth sentence [line 9] simply repeats the first [line 6]. The disappearance of the clouds may *cause* the light of the upper sky to shine on earth. But the clouds are not the same as the light. The sentence about the clouds differs from the sentence about the light in just this way, that according to the traditional fourfold division the former says something about *air* and the latter says something about *fire*.’

¹² Sedley (n. 7), 16–21.

¹³ The beginning and the end of a line are known to be emphatic positions.

¹⁴ On the similes in Lucretius, see D. West, *The Imagery and Poetry of Lucretius* (London, 1969), 74–8, including this one about the doctor.

¹⁵ On this simile as an important passage for understanding Lucretian poetics, see P.H. Schrijvers, *Horror ac divina voluptas. Études sur la poétique et la poésie de Lucrèce* (Amsterdam, 1970), 27–47; on the repetition in *DRN* 4.11–25, see C. Bailey (ed.), *Lucreti Cari De rerum natura libri sex* (Oxford, 1947), 756–8; on repetition and similes in the *DRN* in relation to Empedoclean poetics, see Gale (n. 6), 63–5.

¹⁶ With Furley’s observation cited above (n. 11). Thus *lumine caelum* (9) reprises *lumina solis* (5).

¹⁷ I owe these observations to the referee.

¹⁸ M.R. Wright (ed.), *Empedocles: The Extant Fragments* (London, 1981), 22.

¹⁹ For a complete table of the terms used by Empedocles, see Wright (n. 18), 23.

as *sol* (ἥλιος) or *pontus* (πόντος), and that, like Empedocles, he uses varied vocabulary for indicating the four ‘roots’ throughout the poem.

In addition, I would like to draw attention to the arrangement of the terms in the Empedoclean lines, where all the four ‘roots’ are presented together: in three instances all the terms appear in only one line.²⁰ Apart from these lines, there is a tendency to place some terms at the beginnings of the lines. The most frequent pattern is to put two words at the beginning, one at the end, and for the fourth term to occupy any other position. This arrangement is found in three fragments: D 77a.3–6 (B 21.3–6): ἥλιον (at the beginning of line 3), ὄμβρον (at the beginning of line 5) and ἀνγῆ (at the end of line 4);²¹ D 207.1–2 (B 109.1–2): γαίη (at the beginning of line 1), ὕδωρ (at the end of line 1) and αἰθέρι (at the beginning of line 2);²² D 57.2–3 (B 6.2–3): here the ‘roots’ are presented by the names of gods: Ζεὺς (at the beginning of line 2), Αἰδωνεύς (at the end of line 2) and Νῆστις (at the beginning of line 3).²³ There is only one example with three ‘roots’ placed at the beginning of successive lines: D 10.9–11 (B 115.9–11): αἰθέριον (at the beginning of line 9), πόντος (at the beginning of line 10) and ἡελίου (at the beginning of line 11).²⁴ In D 122.3–4 (B 38.3–4) there is one ‘root’ at the beginning (3 γαῖα) and another at the end of the same line (ἀήρ).²⁵ In only one example is a single ‘root’ placed at the beginning: D 190.1–2 (B 98.1–2), where Ἡφαίστω (2) is the first word.²⁶

Although there is no extant fragment where the terms appear as they do in the *DRN*—namely, the four ‘roots’ at the ends of successive lines—this tendency to collocate words, especially at the beginning of the line, can be another feature of Empedoclean λέξις, which Lucretius imitates, emphasizing the ‘roots’ by this position.²⁷ However, Lucretius not only highlights the four ‘roots’, placing them artistically in a specific place, but also makes us *see*²⁸ the layers of the world through the arrangement of the words. If this is the case, he goes one step further than Empedocles and gives even greater prominence to the ‘roots’, with his drawing of the universe, on the edge of the lines as an artist both of the *elementa* and the words.

²⁰ Cf. frs. D 73.249 (B 17.18), D 101.2 (B 22.2), D 61.2 (B 71.2). In the first two, the ‘root’ fire (πῦρ and ἠλέκτωρ) is at the beginning. See, for example, *DRN* 5.434.

²¹ αἶης is not the first word in line 6, but is found immediately after the preposition ἐκ and the particle δ’.

²² πῦρ is in the penultimate position (2). All the terms are repeated in this passage.

²³ Ἡρη is at the end of the first hemistich. On the identification of the gods with the ‘roots’, see Wright (n. 18), ad loc.

²⁴ The fourth ‘root’, earth, appears twice in line 10: χθονός, fourth word from the beginning, and γαῖα, fourth word from the end, placed symmetrically.

²⁵ Apart from the first line which is defective, the two other ‘roots’, πόντος (3) and αἰθήρ (4), are at the end of the first hemistich.

²⁶ The other three—namely, ὄμβρον (2), αἰθέρι (2) and χθών (1)—are not at the beginning or at the end, but the first is at the end of the first hemistich. Also, note Κύπριδος at the beginning of line 3, immediately below Ἡφαίστω.

²⁷ As W.J. Tatum, ‘The Presocratics in Book One of Lucretius’ *De rerum natura*, *TAPhA* 114 (1984), 177–89 pointed out, Empedocles is an *exemplum* for a philosophical language, especially for clarity (*DRN* 1.732).

²⁸ On this capacity in Lucretius, i.e. how the poet must know how to make the reader *see* things, see Conte (n. 3), 26.

ACROSTICS AND VERTICAL READING

I mentioned above that the reading I am proposing here is somehow similar to an acrostic and, I might even say, to a *technopaignion*, requiring the text to be read both horizontally and vertically. Quite apart from its associations with how Empedocles placed words in his lines, it is a Hellenistic characteristic²⁹ that can be traced back to didactic poets such as those by Nicander³⁰ and Aratus,³¹ both of them poetic models in this genre for Lucretius. Therefore, I believe that the Roman poet by means of this image located at the edge of lines of verse inserts himself in the acrostic tradition, particularly an acrostic tradition related to didactic poetry. Castelletti, in a study of the allusions of Valerius Flaccus to Aratus' *Phaenomena*,³² focussing on the Flavian poet's use of acrostics, proposed three 'objective criteria' in order to 'help verify' whether an acrostic is intentional or not. These criteria are useful for my argumentation about elements located on the edge of lines of verse: 'a) the relation between the acrostics and the context of the passage in which they appear; b) various signposting techniques devised by the author; and c) intertextual references that embed the acrostics within the literary tradition'.

The first criterion is the clearest: Venus is, as many scholars have pointed out, the Empedoclean principle of Love (φιλότης), and she acts on the 'roots',³³ bringing them into a unity. Second, words of 'seeing' could act as signposts³⁴ to acrostics. This is the case with *uisit* (5) at the very beginning of the image. Even the phrase *caeli subter labentia signa* (2) could be interpreted as a *signa* to read in a vertical direction, and the mention of sky implies a vertical gaze.³⁵ This interpretation can be supported by other signposts present in the passage in which the *LVCE* acrostic occurs (5.710–16):³⁶

inde minutatim retro quasi condere lumen
debet item, quanto propius iam solis ad ignem

²⁹ On Hellenistic acrostics, see J. Danielewicz, 'Further Hellenistic acrostics: Aratus and others', *Mnemosyne* 58 (2005), 321–34. As Conte (n. 3), 17 already emphasized, 'Lucrezio è impensabile senza gli alessandrini, anche se è così diverso da loro.'

³⁰ The acrostic signature in *Ther.* 345–53 is detected by E. Lobel, 'Nicander's signature', *CQ* 22 (1928), 114.

³¹ On the acrostic in *Phaen.* 783–7, which was identified by J.-M. Jacques, 'Sur un acrostiche d'Aratos (*Phén.*, 783–787)', *REA* 62 (1960), 48–61, there is a voluminous bibliography; see, e.g., L. Kronenberg, 'Seeing the light, part I: Aratus's interpretation of Homer's *LEUKĒ* acrostic', *Dictynna* 15 (2018[a]) (<https://journals.openedition.org/dictynna/1535>); L. Kronenberg, 'Seeing the light, part II: the reception of Aratus's *LEPTĒ* acrostic in Greek and Latin literature', *Dictynna* 15 (2018[b]) (<https://journals.openedition.org/dictynna/1575>); in particular, L. Kronenberg, 'The light side of the moon: a Lucretian acrostic (*LUCE*, 5.712–15) and its relationship to acrostics in Homer (*LEUKĒ*, *Il.* 24.1–5) and Aratus (*LEPTĒ*, *Phaen.* 783–87)', *CPh* 114 (2019), 278–92.

³² C. Castelletti, 'Aratus and the Aratean tradition in Valerius' *Argonautica*', in A. Augoustakis (ed.), *Flavian Poetry and its Greek Past* (Leiden, 2014), 49–72, at 49.

³³ See, e.g., D 73.233–66 (B 17). For the identification of Love (φιλότης) with Cypris/Aphrodite (Κύπρις/Ἀφροδίτη) in Empedocles, see D 199 (B 73), D 200 (B 75), D 217 (B 95) and D 190 (B 98).

³⁴ On signposts in acrostics, see Kronenberg (n. 31 [2018(a)]), 7 and n. 18, with further bibliography.

³⁵ In order to corroborate the interpretation of *signa caeli*, note the repetition of *caelum* in lines 6 and 9. Another important word here is *lumina* (5), repeated in the same position in line 9, 'highlighting' the image.

³⁶ It was considered accidental by I. Hilberg, 'Ist die *Ilias Latina* von einem Italicus verfasst oder einem Italicus gewidmet?', *WS* 21 (1899), 264–305, at 283.

*l*abitur ex alia signorum parte per orbem;
*u*t faciunt, lunam qui fingunt esse pilai
 consimilem cursusque uiam sub sole tenere.
*e*st etiam quare proprio cum lumine possit
 uoluer et uarias splendoris reddere formas.

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The word that initiates the acrostic is *labitur* ('sinks, glides down'), the same verb as in the proem (*labentia*), and it could indicate the downward movement of the eye as it reads the acrostic.³⁷ Such movement is reinforced by *subter* ('below'), where one finds *signa* ('an image, as a work of art').³⁸ Moreover, as Kronenberg³⁹ has highlighted with regard to *DRN* 5.705–19, 'Lucretius fills his *LUCE* acrostic passage and the surrounding context with words for light (*luna, lumen*).' In the same way, in the proem and in the line immediately after it he places light (*5 lumina; 9 lumine*) in the penultimate position, significantly just before the first word of the image (*solis*) and in the line immediately following the last word in the image (*ponti*), as if embracing the words that should be read vertically. Furthermore, the repetition of 'sky' (*6 caeli; 9 caelum*) at the end of the lines draws attention to their extremities, where it is possible to see an image of the world. Finally, the third point in a way is the most difficult owing to the fact that, as far as I know, there is no tradition of producing an image by means of words at the edge of successive lines. Nevertheless, as I have mentioned, Lucretius inserts himself in the acrostic tradition, particularly related to didactic poetry. Perhaps, as Kronenberg⁴⁰ has argued regarding *DRN* 5.705–19, Lucretius also emulates an Aratean name-acrostic in the proem, creating 'his own brilliance'.⁴¹

That Empedocles is an important point of reference in Lucretius' proem is well known, and scholars have already paid a lot of attention to this. Aratus' presence, however, at the beginning of the *DRN*, albeit acknowledged,⁴² has not been extensively studied. Accordingly, in order to reinforce my arguments so far for the emulation of the Aratean acrostic, I would like to examine more closely the relationship between Lucretius' proem and Aratus' *Phaenomena*. As Asmis has argued, the Lucretian Venus is an allegorical rival to Stoic Zeus, the only ruler of the universe, according to Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus*. While admitting that Lucretius does not necessarily depend on Cleanthes' *Hymn*,⁴³ she draws attention to similarities between them. Irrespective of this possibility, it is almost certain that Lucretius knew the *Phaenomena*, whose opening hymn (1.1–18) presents Stoic ideas.⁴⁴ Moreover, there are verbal correspondences, some of them unnoticed hitherto, between the invocation to Venus and the invocation to Zeus, as follows: *Phaen.* 2 μεστáι and *DRN* 1.4 *concelebras*;⁴⁵ *Phaen.* 3 θάλασσα and *DRN*

³⁷ See Kronenberg (n. 31 [2019]), 280.

³⁸ See *OLD* s.v. *subter* 1.

³⁹ See Kronenberg (n. 31 [2019]), 279.

⁴⁰ Kronenberg (n. 31 [2019]), 287.

⁴¹ On the wish to overcome Alexandrian poetics, see Conte (n. 3), 16.

⁴² See, for example, Gale (n. 6), 210.

⁴³ Cf. E. Asmis, 'Lucretius' Venus and Stoic Zeus', *Hermes* 110 (1982), 458–70, at 468. On Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus* and Lucretius, see E. Gee, 'The rising and setting soul in Lucretius, *De rerum natura* 3', in D. O'Rourke (ed.), *Approaches to Lucretius. Traditions and Innovations in Reading the De Rerum Natura* (Cambridge, 2020), 195–215, at 198–200.

⁴⁴ Gale (n. 6), 221 n. 63 had already observed this in relation to Asmis's thesis. On the Stoic element in Aratus' opening hymn, see D. Kidd (ed.), *Aratus Phaenomena* (Cambridge, 1997), 10–12, 161–2.

⁴⁵ This has already been noted by Gale (n. 6), 210, who also pointed out the correspondence between ἥπιος (*Phaen.* 5) and *alma* (*DRN* 1.1).

1.3 *mare; Phaen.* 5 τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος εἰμέν and *DRN* 1.4–5 *per te quoniam genus omne animantum | concipitur*;⁴⁶ *Phaen.* 10 σήματ' ἐν οὐρανῷ and *DRN* 1.2 *caeli ... signa*. It seems, therefore, that Lucretius read Aratus' *Phaenomena*, at least through Cicero's *Aratea*.⁴⁷ If so, 'a feeble day light' (*Phaen.* 786 φῶς ἀμειννήν) and 'the slender and clear [moon]' (*Phaen.* 783 λεπτή μὲν καθαρή τε) of the Stoic Aratus of Soli⁴⁸ were replaced by 'the lights of the sun' (*DRN* 1.5 *lumina solis*), the sky of the Epicurean Lucretius which 'gleams with spreading light'.

Before examining in some detail the *daedala imago*, I would also like to add that the four 'roots'—fire, air, land and sea—are not found elsewhere in the *DRN* in this sequence but only in the proem (1.5–8). There are, for example, several cases where three of them appear, but the order does not duplicate the layers of the world,⁴⁹ as it does in the proem, as I have been arguing. Finally, the words at the end of the successive lines are prepared for by the penultimate words because these can be related to the 'roots' as their products: *lumina solis* ('the lights of the sun'), *nubila caeli* ('the clouds of the sky') and *aequora ponti* ('the [calm] surface of the sea'),⁵⁰ always a neuter noun followed by a word in the genitive case. However, there is a significant exception: *daedala tellus* ('the crafty earth' or 'the variously adorned earth', 7).

DAEDALA IMAGO

There is even more in this passage. Lucretius, fine craftsman that he is, makes us *see* another image. Let me separate what I argue to be an *imago* from the rest (1.5–8), highlighting the ingenious 'picture':

concipitur uisitque exortum lumina solis:	5
te, dea, te fugiunt uenti, te nubila caeli	
aduentumque tuum, tibi suavis daedala tellus	
summittit flores, tibi rident aequora ponti	

⁴⁶ This is also in Gale (n. 6), 210. I would add that *Aeneadum genetrix* (*DRN* 1.1) may be related to this passage.

⁴⁷ On the dialogue of the *DRN* with Cicero's translation, see E. Gee, *Aratus and the Astronomical Tradition* (Oxford, 2013), 81–109, 189–231 (Appendix B).

⁴⁸ Although I think that it would be a very subtle allusion to Aratus of Soli's 'light' (stars), at the beginning of the image (in line 5) there is a suggestion to see (*uisit*) *lumina solis*. On the possible pun on Aratus *Soleus* in *DRN* 5.705 (*luna potest solis radii percussa nitere*), see Kronenberg (n. 31 [2019]), 287; on puns on proper names in the *DRN*, see M.R. Gale, 'Etymological wordplay and poetic succession in Lucretius', *CPh* 96 (2001), 168–72. Aratus himself puns on his proper name at the very beginning of the *Phaenomena* (2 ἄρητον). The poet emphasizes the word 'unsspoken', ἄρητον, by placing it, in enjambement, at the beginning of the line followed by a strong pause (*Phaen.* 1–2 ἐκ Διὸς ἀρχώμεσθα, τὸν οὐδέποτ' ἄνδρες ἐῶμεν | ἄρητον. μεστὰ δὲ Διὸς πᾶσα μὲν ἄγυϊα). On this pun, see Kidd (n. 44), ad loc.

⁴⁹ See, e.g., *DRN* 1.271–6 *principio uenti uis uerberat incita pontum | ingentisque ruit nauis et nubila differt, | interdum rapido percurvens turbine campos | arboribus magnis sternit montisque supremos | siluifragis uexat flabris: ita perfurit acri | cum fremitus saeuitque minaci murmure uentus* (on *uentus* here, see Bailey [n. 15], ad loc.); 1.1086–8 (here I do not quote Bailey's text, who transposes lines 1085 and 1086; see G.W. Munro [ed.], *Lucreti Cari De rerum natura libri sex* [Cambridge, 1928]; A. Ernout and L. Robin [edd.], *Lucrèce, De rerum natura: Commentaire exégétique et critique* [Paris, 1925–1928], ad loc.) *umorem ponti magnasque e montibus undas | at contra tenuis exponet aeris auras | et calidos simul a medio differrier ignis; 5.264–7 ... sed primum quicquid aquai | tollitur in summaque fit ut nil umor abundet, | partim quod ualidi uerrentes aequora uenti | deminuunt radisque retexens aetherius sol; 5.457–9 ... ideo per rara foramina terrae | partibus erumpens primus se sustulit aether | ignifer et multos secum leuis abstulit ignis*. See also *DRN* 5.650–2, 6.620–4, 6.680–2.

⁵⁰ *OLD* s.v. *aequor* 1.

I direct my attention now to *daedala* (7), which qualifies *tellus*, ‘the crafty earth’. In general, with small differences, the main commentaries⁵¹ make reference here to Festus’ lexicon (Paul. Fest. 59.26), where the word is explained and Lucretius’ proem is mentioned along with passages from Ennius and Virgil.

I shall argue that, apart from the adjective’s meaning and sense, Lucretius ‘draws’ with the words here and makes the reader see a *picture*, namely Daedalus’ famous flight. As I have already suggested, word order in *DRN* 1.5–8 is not random but rather has the purpose of showing an image of the world. It is not fortuitous, I think, that *daedalus*—a rare adjective—is also an attribute of wonderful things to *see*.⁵² Here, in the horizontal reading axis, it describes the stupendous variety of *suavis flores* that are produced at the beginning of spring, but in the vertical reading axis the disposition of the words suggests an image of the flight of Daedalus, who must remain between the sky (6 *caeli*) and the sea (8 *ponti*) in order to reach the land (7 *daedala tellus*) safely. His son, Icarus, fell into the sea by trying to reach the sun (5 *solis*). Daedalus had enjoined his son neither to fly as high as the sun, nor to fly near the sea, but Icarus, not observing his father’s recommendations, flew more and more highly, and, when the wax that bound the wings melted, he fell into the sea and died.

First, if in fact Lucretius ‘draws’ this picture with words on the ‘rim of his cup’, the narrative implied here could not only be the honey that helps readers to take the bitter medicine but also fulfil the key role of the admonition of the *magister* to the *discipulus* in didactic poetry.⁵³ As Gale⁵⁴ pointed out, ‘mythical imagery is acceptable provided it is used to illustrate *vera ratio*’.⁵⁵ Furthermore, the decision to place at the beginning of the *DRN* Daedalus, whose representations on artefacts have been documented by archaeology in archaic Italy since the sixth century B.C.,⁵⁶ does not seem accidental. When Daedalus was in Sicily, he artistically constructed (φιλοτεχνῆσαι), among other marvellous artefacts, a golden ram for the cult of Aphrodite of Mt Eryx, as Diodorus of Sicily tells us (4.78).⁵⁷ It is no coincidence, I believe, that in the proem, a hymn to Venus, we find an allusion, albeit indirect, to this artist who honoured the goddess.

⁵¹ Cf., for example, C. Giussani, *T. Lucreti Cari De Rerum Natura libri sex*, vol. 2 (Turin, 1896), ad loc.; H. Diels, *T. Lucreti Cari De Rerum Natura libri sex*, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1923), ad loc.; Ernout and Robin (n. 49), ad loc.; Munro (n. 49), ad loc.; Bailey (n. 15), ad loc. Furthermore, the discussion is limited to the sense of the adjective, whether passive or active. *daedala* here is probably active.

⁵² See Holmes (n. 2), 562 n. 71, who advanced the discussion about the adjective in Lucretius. The adjective attributed to works of visual arts, namely sculpture, appears in *DRN* 5.1451 *carmina picturas, et daedala signa polita*. The other occurrences of *daedala* in the *DRN* are as follows: 1.228 *daedala tellus*; 2.505–6 *daedala chordis | carmina*; 4.551 *uerborum daedala lingua*; 5.234 *naturaque daedala rerum*.

⁵³ The story of Daedalus and Icarus will be used as an *exemplum* of Ovid’s didactic strategy in *Ars am.* 2.21–96. On Daedalus as poet and teacher for Ovid, see A. Sharrock, *Seduction and Repetition in Ovid’s Ars Amatoria II* (Oxford, 1994), especially 146–55. Besides, flight is a common metaphor for poetry: for example, it is used by the didactic Virgil (*G.* 3.8–9). Lucretius also uses this metaphor to describe the power of Epicurus’ mind in search of the ultimate truths about the universe (*DRN* 1.72–7).

⁵⁴ Gale (n. 6), 74.

⁵⁵ On Lucretius’ use of the myth, see Gale (n. 6), especially 26–50.

⁵⁶ See E. Simon, s.v. ‘Dedalo’, *Enciclopedia Virgiliana*, vol. 2 (Rome, 1985), 13. For Daedalus in Greek authors, see Sharrock (n. 53), 91–4 with further bibliography. I do not mean here that Lucretius is imitating a specific painting, but rather that the poet can use images of mythological episodes known or recurring in ‘allegorical works and allegorical interpretation of art’, as Gale (n. 6), 80–4 pointed out.

⁵⁷ Diod. Sic. 4.78 χρυσοῦν τε κριὸν τῇ Ἀφροδίτῃ τῇ Ἐρυκίῃ φασὶν αὐτὸν φιλοτεχνῆσαι περιπτῶς εἰργασμένον καὶ τῷ κατ’ ἀλήθειαν κριῶ ἀπαρεγγεῖρητῶς ὀμοιωμένον.

My point can also be supported by another fragment of Empedocles (D 25 = B 128), usually attributed to his *Καθαρμοί*, not to the *Περὶ φύσεως*:⁵⁸

οὐδέ τις ἦν κείνοισιν Ἄρης θεὸς οὐδὲ Κυδοιμὸς
οὐδὲ Ζεὺς βασιλεὺς οὐδὲ Κρόνος οὐδὲ Ποσειδῶν,
ἀλλὰ **Κύπρις** βασιλεία ὕ | — ὕ ὕ | — ὕ ὕ | — —
τὴν οἴγ' εὐσεβέεσσιν ἀγάλμασιν ἰλάσκοντο
γραφτοῖς τε ζῳοῖσι μύροισι τε **δαιδαλέοδομοις** 5
σμύρνης τ' ἀκρήτου θυσίαις λιβάνου τε θυώδους,
ξανθῶν τε σπονδὰς μελιτῶν ρίπτοντες ἐς οὐδὰς·
ταύρων δ' ἀκρήτοισι φόνους οὐ δεύετο βωμὸς,
ἀλλὰ μῦσος τοῦτ' ἔσκεν ἐν ἀνθρώποισι μέγιστον,
θυμὸν ἀπορραΐσαντας ἐέδμεναι ἡέα γυῖα. 10

In the fragment, in which Kypris/Aphrodite is *Φιλία*, as Porphyry⁵⁹ glosses in transmitting the passage, Empedocles describes the first generations of men, when Kypris was the only divinity worshipped, and in the Golden Age (1–3). The passage must have been relatively well known in antiquity, not only because Porphyry mentions it but also because Aratus⁶⁰ imitates it. The first men propitiated Kypris with images of her (*ἀγάλμασιν*), painted animal figures (*γραφτοῖς τε ζῳοῖσι*), perfumes, myrrh, frankincense and honey (4–7). Apart from the reference to visual arts, the adjective related to perfumes, *δαιδαλέοδομος* ('with artificial fragrance'), is a hapax legomenon, and therefore stands out. Here again there is an indirect reference to Daedalus in a context in which Venus/Aphrodite, goddess of life and peace, is honoured.⁶¹

IMAGO MVNDI AND ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF HOMER

In Lucretius' proem Venus can be taken as the force which brings all living things to birth, among the many possible interpretations which critics have advanced.⁶² In that sense the invocation is also allegorical.⁶³ As is well known, allegorical interpretations emerged around the sixth century B.C. as a response to criticisms of Homer such as those of Heraclitus of Ephesus and Xenophanes.⁶⁴ As I shall argue, such allegorical

⁵⁸ On the works of Empedocles and the view that both of these works are the same poem, see Wright (n. 18), 17–21 as well as A. Martin and O. Primavesi, *L'Empédocle de Strasbourg: (P. Strasb. gr. Inv. 1665–1666). Introduction, édition et commentaire* (Berlin and New York, 1999), 114–19.

⁵⁹ Porph. *Abst.* II 20. For Aphrodite's identification with *Philia* in the *On nature*, see fr. D 199 (B 73), D 200.2 (B 75.2), D 217 (B 95) and D 190 (B 98).

⁶⁰ *Phaen.* 108–9 οὐπο λενγαλέου τότε νείκεος ἠπίσαντο. | οὐδὲ διακρίσιος πολυεμφέος οὐδὲ κυδοιμοῦ. See E. Bignone, *Empedocle. Studio critico* (Turin, 1916), on fr. 128 (ad loc.), and Kidd (n. 44), ad loc. on Aratus.

⁶¹ In A. Laks and G.W. Most, *Early Greek Philosophy*, vol. 5, part 2 (Cambridge, MA and London, 2016), 376, fr. D 26 (B 130), a text preserved only in the scholium on Nicander's *Theriaca*, complements fr. D 25 ('The reign of Cypris') ἦσαν δὲ κτίλα πάντα καὶ ἀνθρώποισι προσηνῆ, | θῆρές τ' οἰωνοί τε, φιλοφροσύνη τε δεδήει. If so, in Lucretius' proem there may also be references to this passage, as I point out here (*DRN* 1.12 and [15] *aeriae primum uolucres te, diua, tuumque and inde ferae pecudes persultant pabula laeta*).

⁶² On the interpretations, see Gale (n. 6), 208–23.

⁶³ The problems of a purely allegorical interpretation for Lucretius' proem are discussed by Bailey (n. 15), 590–1 and Gale (n. 6), 217.

⁶⁴ For the history of allegorical exegesis of poetry, see D.C. Feeney, *The Gods in Epic: Poets and Critics of the Classical Tradition* (Oxford, 1991), 5–33; D. Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural*

exegeses are very important in understanding how Lucretius too imitates Homer in our passage (*DRN* 1.5–8).

The Epicurean Lucretius imitates the beginning of the Homeric *ecphrasis* of the Shield of Achilles (*Il.* 18.478–608), whose allegorization⁶⁵ is preserved in two ancient texts: in the *Homeric Problems* ascribed to Heraclitus⁶⁶ and in Eustathius of Thessalonica's Homeric commentaries.⁶⁷ The Empedoclean four 'roots' or elements are represented in one version by the four metals (*Il.* 18.474–5) with which Hephaestus makes the shield,⁶⁸ and in another version by the three world-divisions (18.483) and Hephaestus as fire.⁶⁹ Furthermore, the two cities, one at peace (18.491–508) and one at war (18.509–40), are taken to be allegories of the two cosmic forces, Love (Φιλία) and Strife (Νεῖκος),⁷⁰ and Heraclitus (*All.* 49.2) mentions Empedocles in this context, saying that he should recognize that his theory was already to be found in Homer.⁷¹ In short, the poet as a philosopher who explains nature provides an image of the world with the Shield of Achilles.⁷²

In addition to the allegorical tradition already mentioned, it is possible by looking at Homer's *Iliad* to see how in the proem to the *DRN* (1.5–8) Lucretius imitates the very beginning of the *ecphrasis* (18.478–85), an imitation hitherto unnoticed by scholars:

ποιεῖ δὲ πρότιστα σάκος μέγα τε σιβαρόν τε
πάντοσε **δαιδάλλων**, περὶ δ' ἄντυγα βάλλε φαινήν
τρίπλακα μαρμαρέην, ἐκ δ' ἀργύρεον τελαμώνα. 480
πέντε δ' ἄρ' αὐτοῦ ἔσαν σάκεος πτύχες· αὐτὰρ ἐν αὐτῷ
ποιεῖ **δαιδάλα** πολλὰ ἰδίησι πραπίδεσσι.
ἐν μὲν **γαίαν** ἔτευξ', ἐν δ' **οὐρανόν**, ἐν δὲ **θάλασσαν**,
ἠέλιόν τ' ἀκάμαντα σελήνην τε πλήθουσσαν,
ἐν δὲ τὰ τεῖρα πάντα, τὰ τ' οὐρανὸς ἐστεφάνωται 485

First, although some scholars have correctly identified the three terms in the same line (483)—namely, earth, sky and sea—as the tripartite universe (a pattern that will be imitated in Latin poetry),⁷³ Lucretius probably saw here, as did some allegorical

Revision in Ancient Alexandria (Berkeley and Oxford, 1992), 23–72; Gale (n. 6), 19–26. For allegorical interpretation and mythological tradition in Lucretius, see Gale (n. 6), 26–45; for allegorical interpretation of Homer as an important tool in understanding Virgil's imitation, see P. Hardie, *Virgil's Aeneid: Cosmos and Imperium* (Oxford, 1986), especially 25–32 and 340–75, with further bibliography on allegorical exegesis.

⁶⁵ On the ancient allegorizations of the Shield of Achilles, see Hardie (n. 64), 340–6 and P. Hardie, 'Imago mundi: cosmological and ideological aspects of the Shield of Achilles', *JHS* 105 (1985), 11–31.

⁶⁶ *All.* 43–51.

⁶⁷ Eust. 1154.41–1156.9, where he refers to someone called Demo.

⁶⁸ Heraclitus, *All.* 43.11–13.

⁶⁹ Eust. 1154.45.6–50.9. In this passage he uses the adverb συμβολικῶς ('symbolically').

⁷⁰ *All.* 49.4 τούτων δ' ἐκάτερον Ὅμηρος ὑποσημοίων πόλεις ἐνεχάλκευσε τῇ ἀσπίδι τὴν μὲν εἰρήνης, τούτῃσσι τῆς φιλίας, τὴν δὲ πολέμου, τούτῃσσι νείκους. For another allegorical interpretation of the two cities, see Hardie (n. 64), 343–6.

⁷¹ He had previously mentioned (24.6) Empedocles and the theory of the four elements (στοιχεῖα) in order to say that the philosopher imitates (μεμίμηται) the Homeric allegory.

⁷² Cf. Heraclitus, *All.* 43.2.

⁷³ On this, see Hardie (n. 64), 293–335, who studies 'universal expressions' in Virgil's *Aeneid*, i.e. 'phrases which summarize the totality of the world or universe in schematic form' (293). This can be done basically with two (296–313), three (313–25) or four terms (325–9). For the Homeric passage (*Il.* 18.483–5) as the ultimate model for the three world-divisions, see Hardie (n. 64), 70, 320–4. On Lucretius, in particular, as an important source for Virgil, Hardie (n. 64), 324–5 asserts that Lucretius 'frequently in the *De Rerum Natura* uses the tripartition of Earth, Sea and Heaven; Lucretius' use of the tripartite world-picture consorts somewhat uneasily with the more scientific four-element

interpretations, the four elements or ‘roots’,⁷⁴ taking line 483 together with line 484 which has the sun at the beginning. Given that in Empedocles and in Lucretius the four ‘roots’ are designated by varied terms, it is very relevant for my purpose that the terms here used by Homer correspond to those used by Lucretius in the proem: ἥλιος (484) and *sol* (5), οὐρανός (483) and *caelum* (6), γαῖα (483) and *tellus* (7), and θάλασσα (483) and *pontus* (8). Furthermore, only one term is repeated at the very beginning of Lucretius’ proem: *caelum*, in the same *sedes* in lines 6 and 9, as I have pointed out, exactly as is the case at the beginning of Homer’s *ecphrasis*, where οὐρανός is also in the same *sedes* in lines 483 and 485.

However, the most important term here which links Homer and Lucretius very closely is δαίδαλα (482), announcing the many spectacular images which will be described in the Shield of Achilles. In addition, the word δαίδαλα plays an important role here because another word with the same root, δαιδάλλον (479 ‘adorning’), stands at the beginning of the opening of the *ecphrasis*, and δαίδαλα closes the introduction,⁷⁵ both words emphasizing the varied and marvellous images on the shield.

In Homer, however, Daedalus is not just the subject of an indirect reference; he is also explicitly mentioned in line 592. On the shield Hephaestus makes a dancing-floor, which is said to be similar to those Daedalus made in Cnossos for Ariadne. Therefore, the text itself establishes a link between the adjective, which qualifies works that are well decorated and difficult to achieve, and the proper name. Thus the works of Daedalus, who was the archetypal sculptor, are analogous to the works of Hephaestus himself,⁷⁶ since both men construct works which are θαύμα ἰδέσθαι, such as the Shield of Achilles. So, if Lucretius imitates the Homeric passage, as I have argued so far, the word *daedala* in the proem of the *DRN* can also point to the image ‘drawn’ at the extremities of his poetic lines. It is important for Lucretius’ imitation that at the very beginning of his *ecphrasis* Homer refers to the rim of the shield where the description of the ornaments begins (479 πάντοσε δαιδάλλον, περι δ’ ἄντυγα βάλλε φαεινὴν). By decorating the extremities of his lines, Lucretius, in his invocation to Venus, imitates at the same time both Homer and the Ὀμηρικὸς Empedocles.

CONCLUSION

Lucretius, therefore, in the invocation to Venus, on the *threshold* of the book, alluding to Empedocles, his philosophical and poetic model, refers to the four ‘roots’ in various ways. In a manner hitherto unnoticed by scholars, he arranges the four ‘roots’ at the end of successive lines (*DRN* 1.5–8) in such a way that one can *see* the layers of the world, an image placed on the poem’s extremities like the honey on the rim of a cup used by the doctor to give bitter medicine to children. As many scholars have pointed out, Lucretius praises Empedocles for the clarity of his λέξις, an important characteristic

categorization, which Lucretius also uses and which in its turn is superimposed on the basic atomistic dichotomy of the atoms and the void’.

⁷⁴ G. Cerri, *Omero. Iliade. Libro XVIII. Lo Scudo di Achille* (Rome, 2010), 165, in his modern commentary on *Il.* 18.483–4a follows the ancient allegorical interpretations.

⁷⁵ See M.W. Edwards, *The Iliad: A Commentary. Volume V: Books 17–20* (Cambridge, 1991), ad loc. on lines 478–82.

⁷⁶ R.B. Rutherford, *Homer Iliad Book XVIII* (Cambridge, 2019), 30–1 goes further and considers that there is an analogy between Daedalus’ own work and the plastic arts.

for the poet in making his reader *see* the *rerum natura*. Similes, analogy and images are essential in order to allow the invisible to become visible. In this sense, Daedalus, the skilled craftsman, who is able to amaze everyone's eyes with his wonderful works, is a very suitable character, here alluded to by the adjective derived from his name. *daedala*, as I have shown, plays an important role in the *ecphrasis* of the Shield of Achilles, a passage that has been interpreted allegorically as the image of the world and that has been imitated also by Lucretius in the proem. In addition, it is possible to see Daedalus' successful flight to Sicily as a mythological example very suitable for the didactic genre in which the *magister* seeks to persuade the *discipulus* to follow his advice. Thus Lucretian language,⁷⁷ including *daedala* (*DRN* 4.551),⁷⁸ enables us to see that *thin* image which emanates from things, from the outermost body of things, and a discourse about the nature of things is by analogy an *image of things* (*DRN* 4.63–4):

quae quoniam fiunt, tenuis quoque debet **imago**
ab rebus mitti summo de corpore **rerum**.

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⁷⁷ The Lucretian phrase *daedala tellus* appears in a Latin inscription (*CLE* 469.1–3): *inter odoratos nemorum ubi laeta recessus | Mater pingit humus, et lectis daedala tellus | floribus exultat ...*

⁷⁸ On the *daedala lingua*, see Holmes (n. 2), especially 574–7, on how language is necessary to make people see 'atomic reality'. I also think that the *daedala lingua* is in opposition to the Stoic theory of natural word order. On this topic, namely the arrangement of words in opposition to Stoic theory, see K. Freudenburg, *The Walking Muse: Horace on the Theory of Satire* (Princeton, 1993), 132–45.