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In his commentary on Pierre de Ronsard's sonnet "Pardonne moy, Platon", Marc-Antoine Muret noted the poet's allusion to Lucretius' idea that the universe consists of atoms in an infinite void, finding that "the author asserts the privilege of Poets, who are always free to affirm the false and dispute the true as they see fit" (qtd. in Hock 2021: 45; Hock's trans.). Jessie Hock remarks that "when atomist concepts appear in the *Amours* to Muret it says everything about Ronsard's poetic privilege and nothing about the poetic potential of materialism" (45). By contrast, Remy Belleau's commentary on the second book of *Amours* quotes from Lucretius' poetry more often, linking him with Ovid as another poet of sexual love and desire.

The Erotics of Materialism is firmly with Belleau rather than Muret in seeking to analyze not whether sixteenth- and seventeenth-century poets agreed with Lucretius' philosophical reasoning (most did not), but how his ideas were useful for thinking about the scope of poetry. Poets engaged with *De Rerum Natura* precisely and selectively, making verbal references that offered novel expressive possibilities while activating relevant aspects of the idea of poetry that the poem promoted. Hock's study is especially concerned with the figure of Venus, the amorous deity who provokes erotic obsession as depicted at the conclusion of Book 4. This passage was deemed sufficiently obscene that it was partially or wholly omitted from early English translations by Lucy Hutchinson, John Evelyn, and Thomas Creech whilst also attracting unusually frequent annotation in early manuscript and print copies of the Latin poem.

Hock argues that Renaissance poets found special resonance in Lucretius' notion of *simulacra*, the infinitesimally-thin atomic films given off objects that present themselves as images to the human eye and arouse desire that can only be satisfied with actual bodies. These fantasies are incorporeal but material, made of the same atoms as the things to which they refer. In *De Rerum Natura*, a poem in which the word *elementa* can denote both letters and atoms, words are therefore equivalent to their objects. Here is where the erotics and poetics of materialism coincide, for both Lucretian *simulacra* and poems can be said to lure readers with images that are continuous with the underlying truth of the world. When Lucretius uses poetic metaphors, word-play, and other devices to draw readers towards a better understanding of what invisible atoms are like, they are (to follow an image from Book 1)

as honey that helps the reader imbibe the bitter wormwood of Epicurean philosophy.

This all challenges the familiar Neoplatonic view of human imaginings as a mere shadow of higher truth and disputes the presentation of ideal beauty and truth in Petrarchan and Christian poetic forms. Hock argues that Lucretius' exposition of seductive erotic fantasies, and their association with poetic fictions, allowed Christian poets to use *De Rerum Natura* to invigorate their poetry without accepting his worldview. In this way, her monograph advocates a "nondogmatic approach to Lucretian reception history" (185, fn. 52), arguing that "it was quite common for early modern poets who disagreed fundamentally with Epicurean doctrine to draw deeply from Lucretian thinking that links poetry, matter, and fantasy – every poet (all Christians) in this book does so" (199, fn. 14). Hock's five case studies and epilogue examine how *De Rerum Natura* offered poetic and theoretical affordances that called to mind organizing concerns about poetry's purpose, often set in tension with Christian and Neoplatonic ideas. In doing so, the chapters "tend to offer frameworks for interpretation rather than definitive readings of particular texts" (25).

Chapter 1 examines several of Ronsard's sonnets with Lucretian motifs, chiefly from the *Amours*. These Lucretian moments enliven Ronsard's poetry, enhancing the impression of spiritual fragmentation already latent in Petrarch's verse. By invoking the notion of *simulacra* in order to reject it, the poet could re-assert the permanence of ideal beauty more richly: his "valorization of poetry by means of atomism, or against Platonism, operates despite or even in tandem with his ironizing of those very systems" (36). This chapter goes on to show how the erotic Venus of Book 4 coordinates how Ronsard, in the "Hynne de l'Autonne", associates Autumn with the decay and dissolution of ungoverned passion. Chapter 2 considers how these same ideas framed an understanding of poetry's contribution to political debate during the Wars of Religion, beginning with a study of how the *simulacrum* allows Ronsard to present an image of Hélène de Surgères in the *Sonnets pour Helene* that is essentially equal to her antecedent, Helen of Troy, whilst also being more arresting in her "glorious contemporaneity" (62). The rest of the chapter studies Belleau's Prometheus poems in his *Bergerie*, which engage with the idea of producing images through poetry that promote *ataraxia* (mental calm) and political stability; and the lapidary poems of Belleau's *Pierres*, which are imagined to possess something of the same force as the stones they describe.

Chapter 3, on John Donne's poetry, continues the close reading of lyric poetry of the previous two chapters that sets Lucretian ideas in tension with Neoplatonic and Petrarchan poetry. It also initiates a series of three chapters about English poets, particularly women readers of Lucretius. It examines how Donne, in the *Songs and Sonnets* and *The First Anniversary*, uses Lucretian materialism to describe how incorporeal souls love each other while trapped in corporeal bodies. In his verse

epistle to the Countess of Huntingdon, he employs the Lucretian image of "wit's mere *atomi*" (qtd. in Hock 2021: 106) to flatter his patron that she can restore coherence to a fragmented world. Chapter 4 investigates how Lucy Hutchinson uses the same erotic imagery of *De Rerum Natura*, Book 4 that was omitted from her translation to repudiate her "wanton dalliance" (qtd. in Hock 2021: 132) with the poem. Lucretian images also support Hutchinson's portrayal of fallen sexual desire in her biblical meditation *Order and Disorder*. Margaret Cavendish's *Poems and Fancies* is the subject of Chapter 5. In "The Fairy Queen" Lucretius' Venus becomes a "tinker's wife" (qtd. in Hock 2021: 147) who celebrates the pleasures of variety – here conceived of as infinite combinations of letters and atoms. This chapter examines how atomism is not just a source of imagery but underpins the collection's loose organization. An epilogue considers how Rochester's poetry embraced Lucretian ideas.

The Erotics of Materialism is a lucidly-argued and elegantly-written monograph that is up-to-date on recent research, and supported by examples that cover multiple nations, languages, genders, and backgrounds. Hock is keenly aware of the resultant need to analyze "both the diversities and the continuities of these poets' moves in relation to an erotic Lucretian poetics" (22). The overall argument is weighted towards continuity: "The diversity of these authors allows me to make a claim for a lyric tradition of Lucretian poetics – a cumulative, adaptive, flexible tradition that is coherent but not restricted" (22). The book contends that this tradition does more than tie together a set of diffuse examples, going so far as to claim that *De Rerum Natura* "served in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as a textbook of poetics, offering a stronger defense of poetry than its Neoplatonic or Horatian alternatives and leaving a complex and profound legacy in Renaissance and early modern lyric" (8).

These statements invite reflection on what traditions are: how they arise and are sustained over time, for example, in stable intellectual and ideological conditions or through the shared use of particular editions or translations. They also raise the related question of how a "cumulative, adaptive, flexible tradition" that exists continuously over time looks different from a cluster of consistent but discrete responses that pick up on the same sections of a poem for similar purposes in situations that are only indirectly connected to each other. The answer depends, in part, on whether you are reading for Lucretius or the early modern poets. *The Erotics of Materialism* does not dwell on the fundamental issues that it raises about the nature of literary reception, intertextuality, and interdiscursivity. What it does demonstrate, through its careful selection of examples and their sensitive handling, is why we need to attend to difference and variation within the perceived continuity of how a canonical writer like Lucretius was read across centuries.

In other words, Hock's study guides us towards a more sophisticated appreciation of individual responses to Lucretius that are inextricable from the specific his-

torical and intellectual conditions in which those encounters with his poem took place. *The Erotics of Materialism* deals thoughtfully with aspects of these conditions, for example, in sections on the early modern editions of Lucretius and Ronsard, and on "Women and Lucretius in Seventeenth-Century England" (129). Several long footnotes present additional contextualizing information that brings them into sharper focus. Far from being background material, these footnotes illuminate and invite further analysis of, for example, how far Denis Lambin's edition of *De Rerum Natura* inspired early French responses (subject of a detailed footnote on page 189, fn. 19); why readers were drawn to Book 4 in particular (182, fn. 26); how Donne's use of Lucretius' ideas coheres with John Carey's recommendation for Donne's readers to "watch the shaping imagination instead of the transient opinions" (201, fn. 37); and when, how, and why Epicurean philosophy was gendered female (209, fn. 24). The longer passages from *De Rerum Natura* and early modern poems quoted in those notes are a spur to examining how paraphrases, allusions, and imitations might incite readers to reflect on Lucretian poetics. One topic that deserves more nuanced treatment than it receives anywhere in the book is early modern Christianity, framed here as the hegemonic theological counterpart of Neoplatonism that maintained a "moral filter" (176; following Ada Palmer) across the period covered. But Christian teaching was flexible, too, as poets as confessionally divergent as Ronsard and Hutchinson syncretized, meditated on, isolated, or ironized Lucretian views on poetic imagination and dealt with sex and sensuality in their poetry.

Attending still more closely to these subtle specificities within the broader trends that Hock delineates would only advance the book's arguments further while helping remove any traces of repetition (which include occasional repeated phrases and a paragraph on pages 31–32 that is lightly adapted from pages 12–13). *The Erotics of Materialism* is not meant to be the last word on these poems, though: it succeeds in illustrating how poets used Lucretius to disrupt the cosily uncomfortable orthodoxies of early modern Petrarchan and other Christian poetry, and asks us to think harder about the poetic affordances of classical allusions, how such allusions are assimilated within the coordinating voice of a literary work, and, in particular, how they can generate concepts for their own interpretation. In drawing together such distinct writers within a single study so fluently, *The Erotics of Materialism* looks to the future of research on literary reception by making an original and valuable contribution to a more balanced perception of the diversity within emergent traditions.