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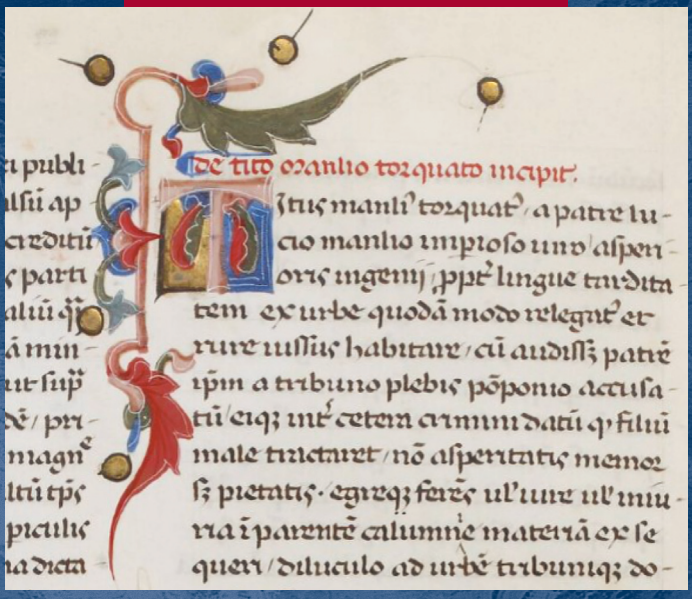
Reading Images from the Past

In Honour of Karl A.E. Enenkel



Intersections

Interdisciplinary Studies in Early Modern Culture

BRILL

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CHAPTER 31

'Une lumière qui écarte les nuages': Bibliometric Perspectives on Lucretius's Eighteenth-Century Modernity

Alicia C. Montoya

Abstract

This essay presents new bibliometric evidence on Lucretius's reception in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, and on Lucretius's vexed "modernity" more generally. Analyzing some of the patterns emerging from the MEDIATE database (Measuring Enlightenment: Disseminating Ideas, Authors, and Texts, 1665–1830) of the contents of 600 eighteenth-century private libraries recorded in printed sale and auction catalogues, it focuses especially on the co-presence of works by Lucretius and by other authors in these libraries. Not only do the works of Lucretius actually gain in popularity during the course of the eighteenth century, as evidenced by the increasing numbers of library catalogues that report them as the century progresses. The presence of his works in libraries also correlates with the presence of works by mainstream Enlightenment authors like Newton, Locke and Montesquieu, but correlates even more strongly with authors associated with the radical Enlightement, like freethinker Anthony Collins in the English-speaking world, controversialist Pietro Giannone from Italy, and the anti-absolutist Henri de Boulainvilliers in France. By contrast, there appears to be a weaker relation between Lucretius and the other classical authors most frequently found in the private library sale catalogues.

Keywords

Lucretius – Enlightenment – private library sale catalogues – big data – bibliometrics

In the allegorical frontispiece that provides the opening image to Denis Diderot and Jean Le Rond d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* [Figure 31.1] Truth is depicted veiled, while two figures representing Reason and Philosophy lift away her veil

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FIGURE 31.1 Bonaventure-Louis Prévost (engraver) and Charles-Nicolas Cochin (designer). Engraving for the *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, 33.7 × 21.7 cm. distributed separately in 1772 PUBLIC DOMAIN. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

to allow her light to shine forth.[1] As the accompanying "Explication du frontispice de l'Encyclopédie", written by Diderot, explains:

> Sous un Temple d'Architecture Ionique, Sanctuaire de la Vérité, on voit la Vérité enveloppée d'un voile, & rayonnante d'une lumiere qui écarte les nuages & les diperse. A droite de la Vérité, la Raison & la Philosophie s'occupent l'une à lever, l'autre à arracher le voile de la Vérité. A ses piés, la Théologie agenouillée reçoit sa lumiere d'en-haut.[2]
>
> Beneath an Ionic Temple, the Sanctuary of Truth, one sees Truth enveloped in a veil and radiating light which parts the clouds and disperses them. To the right, Reason and Philosophy are busy, one in raising the veil from Truth, the other in tearing it away. At her feet, Theology, on her knees, receives the light from on high.

The image of Truth portrayed as 'une lumière qui écarte les nuages' might have reminded readers of the *Encyclopédie* of another famous opening scene, the opening invocation to Venus in Lucretius's *De rerum natura*. Although at least half a dozen French translations were in circulation by this date,[3] the "Explication du frontispice" appears to refer to one specific version, authored by the notorious French freethinker and Spinoza correspondent Jean Hesnault (or Dehénault), which enjoyed a cult status as a quasi-forbidden, underground classic. First published posthumously in Holland in a 1694 verse miscellany, re-edited there in 1714[4] and cited in part in Montesquieu's *Esprit des Lois*,[5] Hesnault's verses were repeatedly and strategically cited by other authors for their bold criticism of 'religion' (a term that he was the only translator to use,[6]

1 This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 682022. See the project website, www.mediate18.nl [accessed February 28, 2024].

2 All references to the *Encyclopédie* are to the online ARTFL edition. Diderot Denis – D'Alembert Jean Le Rond (eds.), *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, etc.*, University of Chicago ARTFL Encyclopédie Project (Autumn 2022 Edition), ed. R. Morrissey – G. Roe: http://encyclopedie.uchicago.edu/ [accessed February 28, 2024].

3 For an overview and anthology, see Chométy P. – Rosellini M. (eds.), *Traduire Lucrèce. Pour une histoire de la réception française du* De rerum natura (*XVI^e–XVIII^e siècle*) (Paris: 2017) 297–359.

4 First published in the *Recueil de pièces curieuses et nouvelles tant en prose qu'en vers* (The Hague, A. Moetjens: 1694) 330–337, and re-edited in a 1714 *Recueil de pièces choisies* edited by Bernard de La Monnoye.

5 Montesquieu, *De L'Esprit des lois*, ed. L. Versini (Paris: 1995) vol. II, 749.

6 As noted by Chométy – Rosellini, *Traduire Lucrèce* 69.

significantly ending his version on his ringing translation of Lucretius's arguably most famous verse, 'Tant la religion peut enfanter des Maux!'):[7]

> Je t'invoque, ô Vénus, ô mere de l'Amour.
> C'est par toi qu'est conçu tout ce qui voit le jour [*lumina solis*]
> Un seul de tes regards *écarte les nuages*,
> Chasse les Aquilons, dissipe les orages,
> Redonne un air riant à Neptune irrité,
> Et répand dans les airs une vive clarté.[8]

Of course the image of a female allegorical figure 'qui écarte les nuages',[9] allowing light to shine forth, may at first sight appear banal. Using light to represent true understanding was one of the founding tropes of the Enlightenment movement, indeed of figurative language more generally. While Diderot invoked Truth in his opening of the *Encyclopédie*, Lucretius's initial image was more earthy, invoking 'voluptas' in the first verse. However, further on in Book 1, in verses 148–149, and in Book 2, verses 59–61, it is specifically knowledge of nature ('naturae species ratioque') that shines the light that dispels shadows. There were also other indications in the *Encyclopédie*'s opening pages pointing to Lucretius.[10] In the "Discours préliminaire" that followed the frontispiece, D'Alembert celebrated the progress of modern science, which had led from Bacon to Locke, Newton, and others, to a present-day apogee in a French author described as the model *philosophe*, the naturalist Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon, hailed as the modern 'rival de Platon & de Lucrece'.[11]

---

7 Or 'tantum religio potuit suadere malorum' (Lucretius, *De rerum natura* 1.101). All references to Lucretius are to the edition Lucretius Titus Carus, *On the Nature of Things*, trans. W.H.D. Rouse – M.F. Smith, Loeb Classical Library 181 (Cambridge, MA: 1975).

8 My emphasis. [Hesnault J.], "Traduction du commencement du poème de Lucrèce", in *Recueil de pièces curieuses et nouvelles tant en prose qu'en vers* 330. Lucretius's original read 'Aeneadum genetrix, hominum divumque voluptas, / alma Venus, caeli subter labentia signa / quae mare navigerum, quae terras frugiferentes /concelebras, per te quoniam genus omne animantum / concipitur visitque exortum lumina solis' (1.1–6).

9 Hesnault is the only translator who used this specific phrasing. In Marolles's translation, these verses are rendered 'Déesse, à ton aspect, les grand vents se modèrent / Les nuages de l'air leur rudesse tempèrent', while in Des Coutures's translation, 'les vents se calment, et les nuages se dissipent'. Translators after 1751 all also chose other wording.

10 In total, in the *Encyclopédie* Lucretius is referenced 130 times across 28 article authors and 52 classifications.

11 For other comparisons between Lucretius and Buffon, see Chométy – Rosellini, *Traduire Lucrèce* 79.

In the present essay, I propose to add a new element to the story of the Lucretian Enlightenment and Lucretius's vexed "modernity" by examining some of the bibliometric evidence to be found in the European Research Council-funded MEDIATE database (Measuring Enlightenment: Disseminating Ideas, Authors, and Texts, 1665–1830), which contains data on the contents of the printed sales catalogues of 600 eighteenth-century private libraries. The dataset focuses on libraries primarily from three geographical regions – France, the Dutch Republic, and the British Isles – and totals over half a million individual book records. The library catalogues were selected to ensure a comparable distribution and size (on average, fewer than 1000 books) over the course of this period.[12] Preliminary research found that the works of Lucretius appeared, perhaps counter-intuitively, actually to *gain* in popularity during the course of the eighteenth century, as evidenced by the increasing numbers of library catalogues that reported them as the century progressed.[13] In this sense, Lucretius appeared a particularly "modern" author, to take up a much-used *topos* in Lucretius scholarship.[14] Further probing the data from these library catalogues, I will therefore ask how readers in the eighteenth century received *De rerum natura*. Did they view it primarily as an exemplar of Latin poetry – admirable for its literary qualities, but outdated in its scientific ideas? Or rather, as is suggested by a growing body of scholarship, was he read as an original, "modern" philosopher whose ideas served as a powerful, even dangerous model for materialist philosophy, theories of human feeling, notions about humankind's place in the natural world, and other views fundamental to the Enlightenment movement?

1 Using Bibliometric Tools to Evaluate Lucretius's Eighteenth-Century Reception

Of course, it has long been recognised that the eighteenth century, and particularly authors associated with the Enlightenment, were profoundly marked by

12 For a fuller description of the contents, and to access the database, see Montoya A.C. – Hulsbosch M. – Blom H. – Chayes E. – Wilde A. de – Jagersma R. – Reboul J. – Rozendaal J., *MEDIATE* database, 2022 –, https://mediate-database.cls.ru.nl/ [accessed January 29, 2024].

13 Montoya A.C., "Enlightenment? What Enlightenment? Reflections on half a million books (British, French and Dutch private libraries, 1665–1830)", *Eighteenth-century Studies* 54.2 (2021) 909–934.

14 See for example the titles of three recent books on Lucretius. Greenblatt S., *The Swerve: How the world became modern* (New York: 2011); Johnson W.R., *Lucretius and the modern world* (London: 2000); and Lezra – J. – Blake L. (eds.), *Lucretius and modernity: Epicurean encounters across time and disciplines* (Cham: 2016).

Lucretius's *De rerum natura*. D'Alembert's co-editor on the *Encyclopédie* project, Denis Diderot, was rumoured to have been one of the collaborators on Nicolas La Grange's new translation of *De rerum natura*, that appeared in 1768, after La Grange's death, in an edition revised by Jacques-André Naigeon. In his posthumously published *Le rêve de d'Alembert*, Diderot recreated Lucretius for the eighteenth century, demonstrating the Lucretian mantra that 'tout est en flux général, comme le spectacle de l'univers me le montre partout'[15] (everything is in general flux, as the spectacle of the universe shows me everywhere) while playfully setting up a fictional dialogue in which he imagined himself dreaming of having sex with his lover-friend Julie de Lespinasse, among other topics. Diderot's writings are systematically interspersed with references and citations taken from *De rerum natura*, as even the native Tahitian philosophers in his *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville* movingly utter Lucretian phrases.[16] Such uses have led some scholars to suggest a link between Lucretius and the clandestine or forbidden currents in philosophy associated with the so-called "radical Enlightenment".[17] But elements of Lucretius's poem similarly resurface in the works of almost all major *philosophes*, from his account of the rise of human civilisation in Book 5, which seems to presage Rousseau's conjectural history of humankind's origins in *La Nouvelle Héloïse* and *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité*, to the images of natural cycles of creation and destruction, and the evocations of the fall of empires, which announce the musings on revolution of Volney and the Marquis de Sade, among others. These re-uses of Lucretian material thus cover a broad range of intellectual positions, from poetic reminiscences to more general ideas about the cyclical order of nature, and from Rousseau's natural theology to Diderot's materialism.

A first way to approach the question of Lucretius's status in the eighteenth century is to establish in which libraries his works are to be found, in what numbers, in which geographic contexts, and in which languages. Digital bibliometric tools allow historians to leverage new economies of scale in addressing these questions. However, the very omnipresence of Lucretius in the eighteenth century also makes it difficult to measure the extent of his diffusion,

15 Diderot Denis, *Le rêve de d'Alembert*, in *Œuvres*, ed. L. Versini (Paris: 1994) vol. 1: *Philosophie* 611–676.

16 Black M., "Lucretius tells Diderot: Here's the plan", *Diderot Studies* 28 (2000) 39–58.

17 Like the abovementioned volume *Traduire Lucrèce*, published in Champion's "Libre pensée et littérature clandestine" collection. Jonathan Israel is slightly more cautious, including Lucretius among a list of 'the usual stock writers of Franco-Italian libertine culture – Epicurus, Lucretius, Lucian, Machiavelli, Pomponazzi, Cardano, Bodin, and Montaigne'. Israel J.M., *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the making of modernity 1650–1750* (Oxford: 2001) 49.

as this reception was both direct and indirect. The publication history of *De rerum natura* and its vernacular translations in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is particularly complex, as throughout this period, 'translating Lucretius for a broad audience remained a sign of heterodoxy',[18] and the poem was hence frequently published and translated in excerpted form, inserted into works by other authors or even hidden altogether from view by them. As noted above, although Hesnault's translation of the invocation to Venus comprised just 122 verses, its notoriety was such that it circulated in manuscript form, and was reprinted in volumes by other authors. Acknowledging its key role in the popularisation of Lucretian ideas, in 1768 Nicolas La Grange included it in the introduction to his own translation of *De rerum natura*, and Jean-Baptiste Sanson de Pongerville did likewise in his new French translation published in 1823, a century and a half after Hesnault first composed it. More problematically, as Philippe Chométy and Michèle Rosellini note in their overview of early modern French translations of Lucretius, *De rerum natura* was a text that lent itself especially well to being excerpted, anthologised and cited in fragmented fashion, in a range of settings ranging from Latin schoolbooks to opera librettos (Philippe Quinault's libretto for Jean-Baptiste Lully's *Phaeton* in 1683), the *Bibliothèque universelle des romans* in 1776, and even in French revolutionary plays in the 1790s (one of which has Robespierre citing Lucretius to justify the Terror).[19]

Besides Hesnault's verses, at least two other works also played an important role in disseminating Lucretius's poem among a wider audience in the eighteenth century. These are, first, Pierre Gassendi's *Animadversiones in decimum librum Diogenis Laertii, qui est de vita, moribus, placitisque Epicuri* (Lyon, Guillaume Barbier: 1649), that interlarded the texts of Diogenes Laertius and Epicurus with about two-thirds of the text of *De rerum natura.*[20] A second important text was John Dryden's translation of substantial passages from the poem – the exordium to Venus (verses 1–40), the opening of Book 2 (verses 1–61), and portions of Books 3 (verses 830–1094), 4 (verses 1052–1287) and 5 (verses 222–234) – first published in his *Sylvae* (together with translations of Virgil, Theocritus, and Horace) in 1685, and subsequently included in various editions of his *Miscellanea*, in his collected works and in larger compilations such as

18 My translation. Chométy – Rosellini, *Traduire Lucrèce* 59.

19 Chométy – Rosellini, *Traduire Lucrèce* 77–83.

20 Reprinted in volumes 5 and 6 of Gassendi's *Opera omnia* edited in 1658 by Henri-Louis Haber de Montmor.

John Bell's *Poets of Great Britain* (109 volumes, 1777–1793).[21] Eighteenth-century receptions of classical authors like Lucretius were mediated to a very significant extent by such translations, partial or complete.[22] Thus, as suggested above, Lucretius may well have been remembered by the authors of the *Encyclopédie* in Hesnault's partial translation. In a similar vein, Stuart Gillespie has demonstrated that when later English poets and scholars cited Lucretius, it was not to the Latin that they referred, but to the English translation, as '[Cambridge classicist] Munro as well as Wordsworth and Arnold received Lucretius through the powerful English poetic handling of John Dryden'.[23]

While identifying every single book in the private library sale catalogues that might contain excerpts from Lucretius is beyond the scope of the present essay, especially given the often approximative or incomplete bibliographic detail they provide, I have sought not only to identify stand-alone editions of *De rerum natura* in the catalogues, but also the works by Gassendi and Dryden that excerpted the poem, as well as Hesnault's verse translation of the invocation to Venus. Thus, in the MEDIATE database I have currently identified 560 complete copies of Lucretius's *De rerum natura*, that in most cases also bear Lucretius's name as the author. In addition, I have identified 17 copies of the partial edition by Gassendi, 44 copies of the partial translation by Dryden, and 11 copies of the Dutch-published *Recueils*, from 1694 and 1714, bearing Hesnault's verses. This brings the total of book items containing Lucretius's text up to 632, in 300 individual libraries, or exactly half of the total corpus. While this methodology may appear to overcount Lucretius's presence in the corpus – can reading Hesnault's version of the first 122 verses really be equated with true familiarity with *De rereum natura*? – in fact partial editions and translations most often appear in the same libraries as those bearing full editions, and therefore complement rather than replace access to the full Latin text.

The first library catalogue in the MEDIATE database that lists works by Lucretius is the one attributed by a handwritten note to the English philosopher exiled in Paris, Kenelm Digby, and catalogued in the Bibliothèque nationale de France as such.[24] After Digby's death in 1665, his books became

21 On other partial translations, see Hopkins D. "The English voices of Lucretius from Lucy Hutchinson to John Mason Good", in Gillespie S. – Hardie P. (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Lucretius* (Cambridge: 2007) 254–273.

22 Chométy – Rosellini, *Traduire Lucrèce* 78; Edelstein D. – Morrissey R. – Roe G., "To quote or not to quote: Citation strategies in the *Encyclopédie*", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 74.2 (2013) 213–236; Gillespie S., *English translation and classical reception: Toward a new literary history* (Chichester: 2011).

23 Gillespie, *English translation and classical reception* 161.

24 Call number RES P-Q-68.

the property of Louis XIV, through the so-called *droit d'aubaine*, and a sale of them took place in Paris at an unknown date, for which this catalogue was drawn up.[25] In total, the catalogue lists five copies of Lucretius. Two are dated: the 1560 edition by Denis Lambin, published in Paris; and the 1595 edition produced by Hubert van Giffen and published in Leiden. One is described as 'Lucrecius & Valerius Maximus cum commento, gottiq.', which might possibly suggest an incunable edition. This relatively high number of Lucretius items is consistent with what is known about Digby's role in the diffusion of Lucretian thought toward the end of the seventeenth century. Not only has his name been proposed for the authorship of a post-1659 manuscript translation into English of *De rerum natura* now at the Bodleian library.[26] He was also referred to as an authority by both Michel de Marolles and John Evelyn in their own vernacular translations of Lucretius, and in a dialogue later penned in response to Evelyn's translation.[27]

The last catalogue to mention Lucretius is that of the library sold in Amsterdam in 1830 that had belonged to Gijsbrecht van der Jagt, described on the title page as the director of the Dutch Royal Academy of Arts, lecturer in physics and a member of various learned societies. The catalogue of Jagt's library lists three editions of *De rerum natura*, the Latin original edited by Denis Lambin (Cambridge 1675), the French translation by Charles-Joseph Panckoucke (Paris 1768) and the Dutch translation by Jan de Witt (Amsterdam 1701).

Lucretius appears in five languages in the library sale catalogues. His books are reported most often in Latin, followed by English, French, Italian, and Dutch. There are also substantial numbers of bilingual editions – although these are underreported in the catalogues, as booksellers often noted the vernacular language only in the case of a bilingual edition. Table 31.1 summarises the distribution across languages and geographic regions of the Lucretius editions reported in the library catalogues for the period 1701–1830, during which the dataset comprises the same number of catalogues for the three major regions, hence ensuring ease of comparisons.

25 On Digby's library, see Rubin D., *Sir Kenelm Digby, F.R.S., 1603–1665: A bibliography based on the collection of K. Garth Huston, Sr., M.D.* (San Francisco: 1991).

26 Butterfield D., "Lucretius in the early modern period: Texts and contexts", in Norbrook D. – Harrison S. – Hardie P. (eds.), *Lucretius and the early modern* (Oxford: 2015) 63.

27 Cottegnies L., "Michel de Marolles's translation of Lucretius (1650) and its reception in England", in Norbrook et al. (eds.), *Lucretius and the early modern* 167–168, 180.

TABLE 31.1 Distribution of books by Lucretius in private library catalogues, 1701–1830

	LAT	ENG	FRE	ITA	DUT	FRE-LAT	ENG-LAT	DUT-LAT	Total copies	Total libraries
U.K.	152	109	2	7	–	4	7	–	290	111
France	77	3	47	21	–	14	–	–	165	85
Holland	53	1	4	5	17	1		4	85	56
Italy	10	–	–	4	–	1	–	–	15	6

As the table shows, much larger numbers of books by Lucretius are reported in libraries sold in the British Isles than elsewhere. Twice as many libraries in the British Isles list books by Lucretius than in the Dutch Republic. This is in keeping with an overall pattern whereby British catalogues are more classically oriented than catalogues elsewhere in Europe. Possible explanations range from the more vibrant second-hand book market in the Netherlands, which ensured greater turnaround, to more conservative literary taste in the British Isles. Just as interesting is the frequency in which Lucretius was read in the Latin original. This was highest in the Dutch Republic, at 62.3%, followed by the British Isles, at 52.4% (excluding bilingual editions and Italian libraries, as their number is too small to warrant generalisations). France was the only one of the three countries where Lucretius was read primarily in the vernacular, as only 46.6% of the editions were Latin-only ones. If language can be taken as a crude indicator of modernity, then it might be concluded that the Lucretius being read in France was the one closest to eighteenth-century literary expectations.

There are also differences in the size of the collections in the MEDIATE corpus. British libraries are on average slightly larger than libraries on the continent, and consequently also hold higher absolute numbers of books by Lucretius. Twenty libraries report five or more volumes by Lucretius. Of those, sixteen are British. The three largest collections include those of Charles Oliphant, Scottish physician and politician, sold in London in 1720, and the library of Abel Louis François Malartic de Fondat, described as 'ancien maître des requêtes' in the 1809 catalogue printed for the sale in Paris. Both libraries report nine copies of Lucretius, most of them in the Latin original, as well as translations by Creech, Marchetti and La Grange.

By far the largest collection of Lucretian volumes in a single library, however, are the thirteen books listed in the catalogue of the library of David Garrick

and his Vienna-born wife, the former dancer Eva Maria Veigel. Significantly, the preface to the catalogue mentions that Eva Maria had already disposed of a large proportion of the books by classical authors, noting that 'towards the conclusion of her protracted life, Mrs. Garrick presented the greater part of the Greek and Latin Classics, together with her numerous and highly valuable Italian books, to Christopher Philip Garrick, Esq., the only son of [David Garrick's nephew] Mr. Carrington Garrick, and at present the male representative of the family'.[28] These thirteen remaining books that contain Lucretius are mostly richly illustrated and bound, in some cases with gilt edges added, and are mostly English translations or English-Latin bilingual editions. However, they include also one incunable folio edition, described as 'Lucretius, morocco Ed. rariss. Verona 1480' – possibly a misprint for the 1486 edition – and the 1514 folio Paris edition produced by Giovanni Battista Pio. As the preface to the auction catalogue adds, after noting Eva Marie Veigel's 'cultivated taste for literature' and the 'mutual gratification' the library provided her and her husband, the collection had been 'considerably augmented by Mrs. Garrick since 1779'. Despite the fact that all the Lucretian items listed in the catalogue date from before David Garrick's death, it appears likely that Eva Maria, if not responsible for the actual purchase of the volumes of Lucretius, had expressly retained them for her own use – a suggestion that is corroborated by the predominance of translations in the collection.

2 Editors, Translators and Illustrators

As this quick survey of Lucretius collectors suggests, books by Lucretius could be valued for a variety of reasons. They could be working copies used in schoolroom settings, they could be vernacular translations read as part of a belletristic culture, or they could be prized for their material qualities such as illustrations. A second way to address Lucretius's eighteenth-century reception is therefore to determine which editions were most widely circulated [Table 31.2], and which of the multiple creators involved in producing them – editors, translators and illustrators – was foregrounded by the booksellers who drew up the catalogues for the sale of these libraries.

28 *A catalogue of the library* [...] *of David Garrick, Esq. removed from his villa at Hampton, and house on the Adelphi Terrace, with the modern works added thereto by Mrs. Garrick* (London: 1823).

TABLE 31.2 Lucretius editions reported in private library sale catalogues, 1665–1830

	British Isles	France	Holland	Italy	Total
Tomasso Ferrando (1471–1473)	1	–	–	–	1
Pier Candido Decembrio (1512)	1	–	–	–	1
Giovanni Battista Pio (1514)	2	1	–	–	3
Andrea Navagero (1515)	7	4	2	–	13
Denis Lambin (1563–1564)	15	5	13	–	33
Hubert van Giffen (1565–1566)	10	3	12	1	26
Daniel Pareus (1631)	1	–	–	–	1
Giovanni Nardi (1647)	1	1	1	–	3
Pierre Gassendi (1649)	5	5	7	–	17
Tanneguy Le Fèvre (1662)	21	3	6	–	30
Michel Dufay (1680)	8	5	–	–	13
Thomas Creech (1695)	28	14	8	–	50
Michel Maittaire (1713)	12	–	–	–	12
Giovanni Antonio Volpi (1721)[a]	–	–	–	2	2
Siwart Haverkamp (1725)	13	5	7	1	26
Frans Oudendorp (1728)	–	1	–	–	1
Étienne André Philippe de Prétot (1744)	2	13	1	1	17
Heinrich Karl Eichstädt (1801)	–	1	–	–	1

a Despite its prestige, the Volpi edition is largely copied from Thomas Creech's, reprinting substantial portions of his and Tonson's prefaces.

It bears underlining that Table 31.2 was established on the basis of the limited bibliographic details provided by the catalogues. In some cases this meant the editor was deduced from the date and place of publication; in many others, the catalogues simply provided insufficient detail to make an attribution. Additionally, some editors are named more often than others in the library catalogues, reflecting different degrees of prestige accorded to their work. The most frequently cited editors, Tanneguy Le Fèvre, Denis Lambin and especially Thomas Creech, are those most often mentioned by name by the booksellers who drew up the catalogues. Other editors, by contrast, are more rarely named. Thus Étienne André Philippe de Prétot is named in only one of the seventeen references to copies of his Lucretius edition in the catalogues. Instead, the publishers are identified (Coustelier and Barbou), and the presence of illustrations

TABLE 31.3 Lucretius translations reported in private library sale catalogues, 1665–1830

Translator	British Isles	France	Holland	Italy	Total
Girolamo Frachetta (1589)[a]	1	–	–	–	1
Michel de Marolles (1650)	–	–	1	–	1
John Evelyn (1656)[b]	5	1	–	–	6
Thomas Creech (1682)	73	1	–	–	74
Jacques des Coutures (1685)	5	22	6	–	33
John Dryden (1685)	40	3	1	–	44
Jan de Witt (1701)	1	–	21	–	22
Alessandro Marchetti (1717)	7	21	5	4	37
Nicolas La Grange (1768)	–	22	–	1	23
Charles-Joseph Panckoucke (1768)	–	2	1	–	3
Antoine Le Blanc de Guillet (1788)	–	2	–	–	2
John Mason Good (1805)	1	–	–	–	1
Thomas Busby (1813)	1	–	–	–	1
Jean-Baptiste Sanson de Pongerville (1823)	–	1	–	–	1

a I include Frachetta's version, which is formally a praphrase rather than a translation, because of its early date as an important first proto-translation.

b Although Evelyn translated only Book 1, this partial translation was frequently cited, warranting its inclusion in this overview.

is noted, suggesting that the main attraction of the edition he produced was not the text, which in fact was largely based on Siwart Haverkamp's very learned edition, published in Leiden in 1725, but the illustrations, which were reduced versions of those designed by Frans van Mieris Junior for the Leiden edition.

Besides editions of *De rerum natura* in the original Latin text, the catalogues also report large numbers of vernacular translations [Table 31.3]. The presence of Creech's translation is overwhelming in the catalogues. Creech's version, and to an important extent also John Dryden's partial translation, dominated English vernacular reception of *De rerum natura*. By contrast, and perhaps surprisingly, Michel de Marolles's often-cited French translation of 1650 is reported only a single time, despite claims that 'it seems to have sold well'.[29] In France, it was instead Jacques de Coutures's translation that enjoyed the

29 Cottegnies, "Michel de Marolles's translation" 163.

greatest success, followed by Nicolas La Grange's 1768 prose translation, in which Denis Diderot may or may not have collaborated. In Holland, finally, Jan de Witt's translation of 1701 – with prefatory verses by Adriaan Reland, author of *De religione mohammedica*, an influential text in circles associated with the early radical Enlightenment – enjoyed a good reception.

In translations, as in the case of editions, the illustrations sometimes took precedence over the text. As translations, which were supposedly aimed at a *mondain* reading public rather than scholars, gained ground, illustrations took on new prominence. One of the first editions to include illustrations is Jan de Witt's Dutch translation, which was accompanied by a frontispice by Romeyn de Hooghe. The illustrations accompanying Marchetti's translation, by Noël Lemire after Cochin, Eisen, Le Lorrain, and Vassé, were especially noted by booksellers. Thus the catalogue of the library of the magistrate Maurits Cornelis Pasques de Chavonnes, sold in Amsterdam in 1792, refers to 'Tito Lucretio Caro della Natura dellecose [sic], Amst. 1754 met extra fraaye plaaten en Vignetten' (with extra fine plates and vignettes). The catalogue of the Dutch aristocrat Jasper Hendrik van Zuylen van Nievelt, sold in Amsterdam in 1828, similarly describes a copy of 'Di Tito Lucrezio Caro della Natura delle Cose; Amst. 1754. avec superb. fig. 2 vol. demi rel.' (classified as 'Poésie in octavo'). In some cases, the only person named was the illustrator. In the catalogues of the library of Sir Herbert Croft, sold in London in 1797 to pay off his debts, and that of Lucian translator John Carr, sold in London in 1807, for example, the only creator named in the description is the Franco-British illustrator Louis (or Lewis) du Guernier, with the books referred to as, respectively, 'Guernier's Lucretius, 2 vol. 1743', and 'Lucretius, by Guernier, Lat. and Eng. 1743'.

3 A New Fashion for Lucretius, a New Lucretius?

A third way to assess how eighteenth-century readers received Lucretius is to look more closely at the dates of publication of their books. Thus, the presence of large numbers of eighteenth-century editions of Lucretius in the libraries would point to books acquired during the owners' lifetimes and hence to recent interest in them. On the contrary, the predominance of older editions might suggest legacy books passed down from one generation to the next, and hence books that had lost their intrinsic interest for eighteenth-century readers. However, this hypothesis is complicated by the fact that the eighteenth century witnessed a dramatic rise in the numbers of old books that came onto the market, as political upheaval combined with commercial innovations

TABLE 31.4 Date of publication of Lucretius items in library sale catalogues, 1665–1830

Date of publication	Number of books				
	British Isles	France	Holland	Italy	Total
< 1501	3	–	–	1	4
1501–1550	6	4	2	–	12
1551–1600	27	5	16	1	49
1601–1650	11	4	6	–	21
1651–1700	93	22	22	–	137
1701–1750	97	56	30	7	190
1751–1800	23	64	8	4	99
1801–1830	2	2	1	1	6
No date given	55	19	39	1	114

drove sales, especially from the 1770s onward.[30] As Kristian Jensen and David McKitterick have demonstrated in their studies of book-buying practices in the eighteenth century, collectors of classical authors particularly valued older editions and were helped in their collecting by new works such as Edward Harwood's much-used *View of the various editions of the Greek and Roman classics*, first published in 1775.[31] Bearing these caveats in mind, an overview of the dates of publication of the Lucretius books in the catalogues [Table 31.4] is nonetheless instructive.

Clear differences now emerge between the different regions. French libraries report the largest proportion of eighteenth-century editions of Lucretius. While fully 40.7% of the dated editions in French libraries date from the second half of the eighteenth century, this holds true for only 8.7% of the British ones. The French appreciation of Lucretius appears thus to be a more "modern" one than the British, at least if modernity is equated with material contemporaneity. Taken together, these numbers suggest that rather than being remainders from an earlier epoch, or from the schooldays of their owners, the copies of Lucretius's *De rerum natura* in eighteenth-century libraries were

30 McKitterick D., *The invention of rare books: Private interest and public memory, 1600–1840* (Cambridge: 2018) 5.

31 McKitterick, *The invention of rare books* 219; Jensen K., *Revolution and the antiquarian book: Reshaping the past, 1780–1815* (Cambridge: 2011) 73–75.

very often modern ones, acquired during their owners' adult career. To provide further contextualisation to these figures, Table 31.5 plots the proportion of library catalogues that report works by Lucretius per decade over the course of the entire period from 1701 to 1830, showing both the absolute numbers of books by Lucretius in the catalogues per decade, and the proportion of libraries from that decade that report his works. The graph shows that there is a clear if slight increase over the period in the proportion of libraries that contain his works, from 48.0% to 51.8%. By way of comparison, Tables 31.6 through 31.10 plot the same trends for the five classical authors most frequently reported in the MEDIATE dataset overall: in that order, Ovid, Horace, Virgil, Cicero, and Tacitus.

It seems, then, that Lucretius, like the most frequently cited poets, Ovid, Horace and Virgil, enjoyed a slight increase in commercial success during the course of the eighteenth century. What is more, the increase was more pronounced in Lucretius's case than for the other three poets, and contrasts with the cases of Cicero and Tacitus, who on the contrary – and like most other classical authors – saw their popularity decrease over the course of the century. Once again, this seems to point toward the hypothesis that Lucretius was perceived as a uniquely "modern" author, whose work was particularly relevant to eghteenth-century debates.

TABLE 31.5 Books by Lucretius in private library sale catalogues, 1701–1830

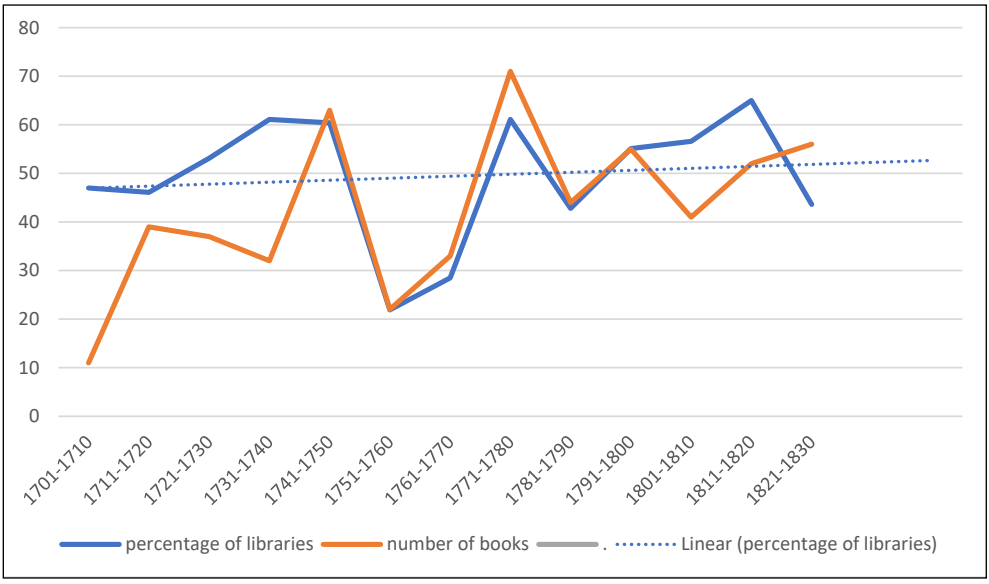


TABLE 31.6 Books by Ovid in private library sale catalogues, 1701–1830

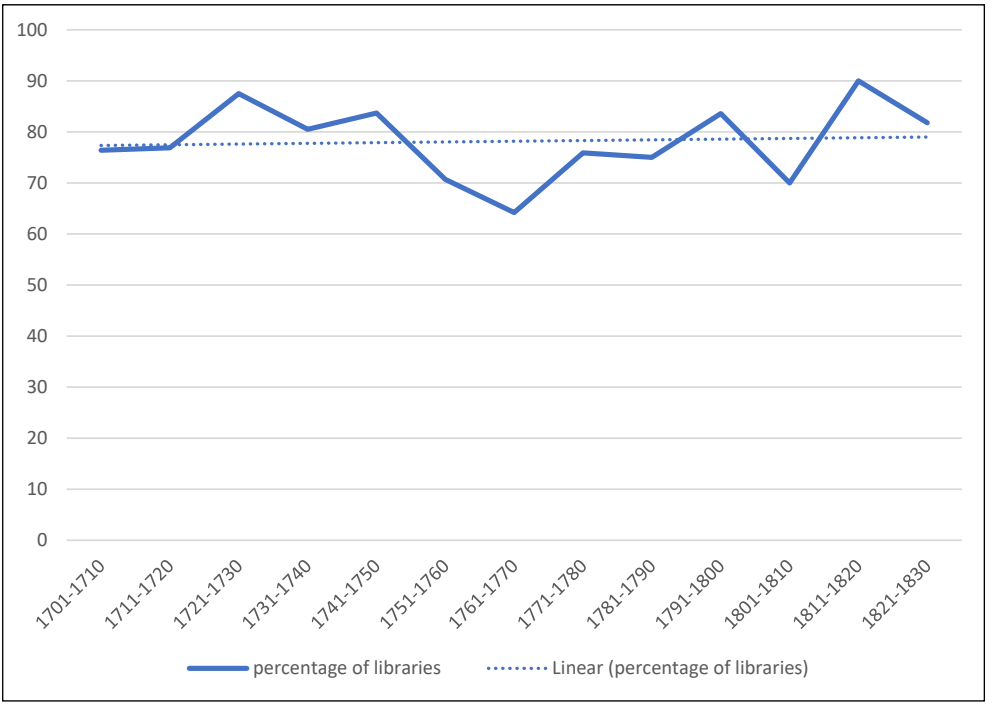


TABLE 31.7 Books by Horace in private library sale catalogues, 1701–1830

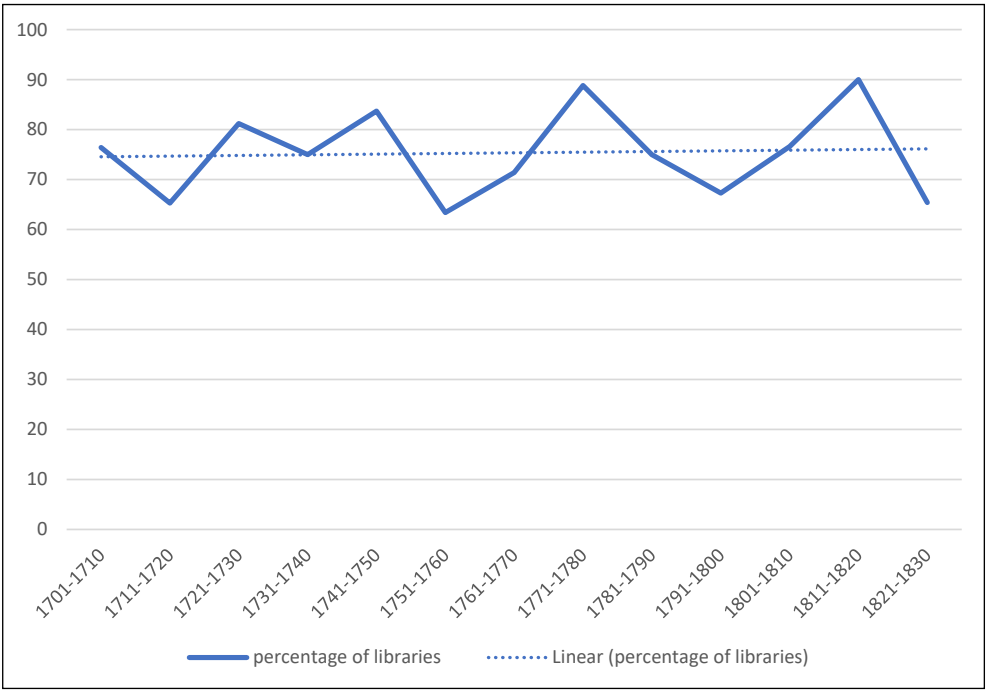


TABLE 31.8 Books by Virgil in private library sale catalogues, 1701–1830

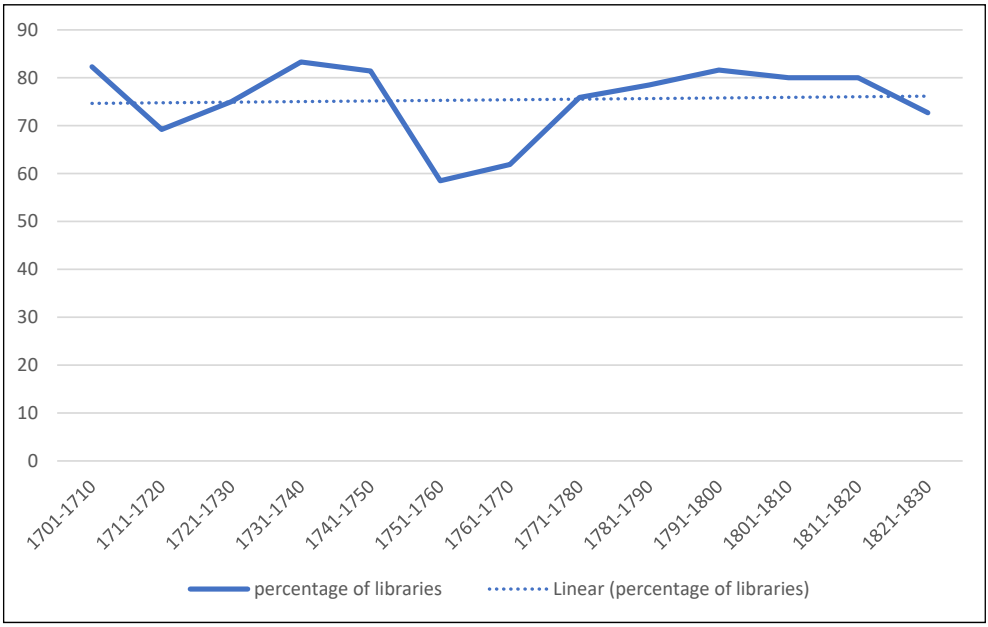


TABLE 31.9 Books by Cicero in private library sale catalogues, 1701–1830

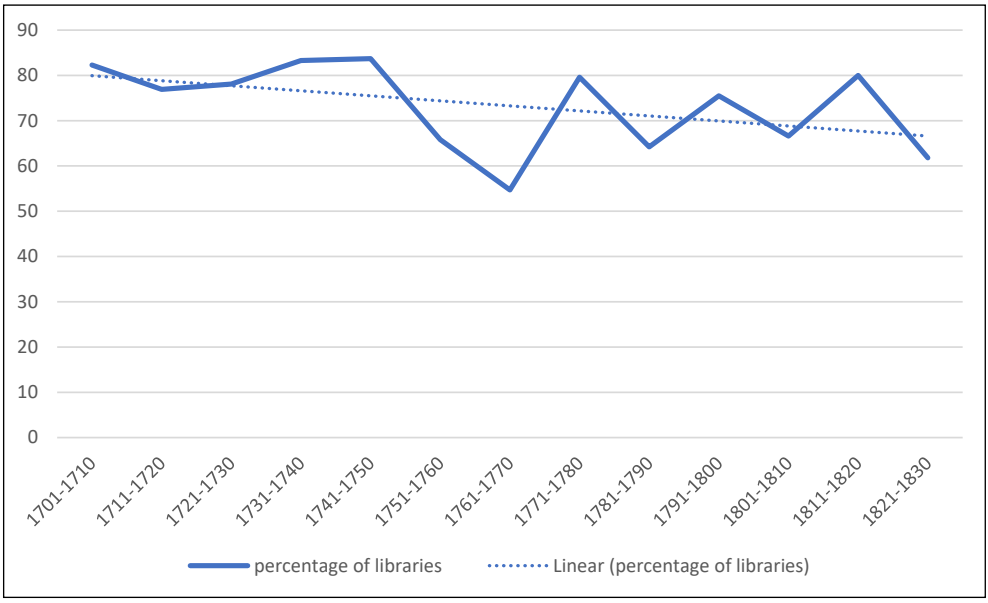
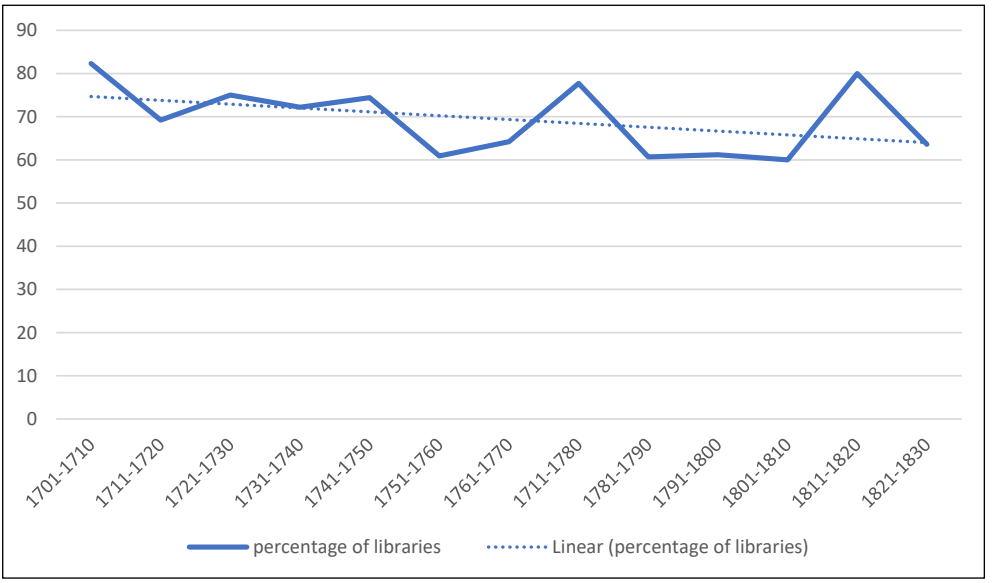


TABLE 31.10 Books by Tacitus in private library sale catalogues, 1701–1830



4 Library Shelf Neighbours

A final way in which one can approach the question of how eighteenth-century readers received Lucretius is to consider the library as a whole, and to establish what other books were sitting next to Lucretius on library shelves. Using the potential of "big data", as the MEDIATE database allows historians to do, with a corpus encompassing literally hundreds of thousands of individual books listed in library sale catalogues, makes it possible to calculate correlations between an individual author like Lucretius and the 12,000 other authors who are also mentioned in the catalogues. The overview of the authors who appear significantly more often alongside Lucretius in library catalogues [Table 31.11] provides additional insight on how his eighteenth-century readers may have approached his work.

As might be expected, Table 31.11 shows that books by Lucretius were found most frequently alongside works by other classical authors and by classicists more generally. Thus four of the fifteen most highly correlated authors dated back to classical antiquity. Another four were classicists: Thomas Creech, John Potter and Joshua Barnes were known for their editions of classical authors, while Conyers Middleton made a name for himself with an extremely popular *Life of Cicero* (1741). George Stanhope, while not formally a classical scholar, was

TABLE 31.11 Authors who correlate most frequently with Lucretius (> 60 libraries)

	Author	Relation value	Library ratio[a]
1	Thomas Creech	9.6	96/10
2	William Chillingworth	5.67	51/9
3	Dionysius Periegetes	5.0	70/14
4	Julius Pollux	4.91	54/11
5	John Potter	4.68	89/19
6	Eilhardus Lubinus	4.54	59/13
7	Thomas Stanley	4.5	54/12
8	Anthony Ashley Cooper, earl of Shaftesbury	4.44	71/16
9	Barnes, Joshua	4.43	62/14
10	George Stanhope	4.42	53/12
11	(pseudo-)Longinus	3.94	67/17
12	Henry Dodwell	3.93	59/15
13	Edmund Gibson	3.92	51/13
14	Athenaeus	3.9	82/21
15	Conyers Middleton	3.89	74/19

a The library ratio is the number of libraries that report works by Lucretius as well as works by the author listed, divided by the number of the libraries that do not report works by Lucretius but do report works by the author listed. This ratio is expressed as a numerical value in the "relation value" column. The higher the relation value, the higher the correlation between those two works. To reduce statistical "noise", I list only authors whose works are reported in at least 60 libraries.

known for his translations of the philosophers Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, besides his publications as a clergyman. The table further shows a strong bias toward British authors, which is in keeping with the fact that Lucretius appears more often in British libraries than on the continent.

The remaining six authors present a more mixed picture. William Chillingworth and Henry Dodwell were controversialist English churchman, while Eilhardus Lubinus was a Lutheran theologian and mathematician, considered a heretic in his own day. Thomas Stanley was the author of a *History of philosophy* (1655–1661) that has been described as 'a curious patchwork of Epicurus's letters and Lucretius's poem'.[32] Anthony Ashley Cooper, earl of Shaftesbury, was one of the most influential philosophers associated with

32 Allen D.C., "The rehabilitation of Epicurus and his doctrine of pleasure in the early Renaissance", *Studies in Philology* 41 (1944) 1–15.

the early Enlightenment, and repeatedly quoted Lucretius (without attribution) in his *An Enquiry concerning virtue, or merit*, revealing Lucretius's profound influence on his own moral vision.[33] Edmund Gibson, finally, was an antiquarian who, besides a Quintilian edition, produced a translated, updated version of William Camden's *Britannia* (originally 1586, translated 1695). In all cases, then, there is an evident connection between Lucretius and these fifteen authors, all of them with classical, philosophical or religiously controversial leanings, whose works appear more frequently in libraries carrying his works.

What happens, however, when, removing the British and classicist bias, the dataset is narrowed to interrogate the correlation between Lucretius and Enlightement authors more specifically? Table 31.12 shows the correlations between Lucretius and the fifteen most frequently reported Enlightenment authors in the entire MEDIATE dataset.[34]

TABLE 31.12 Correlation between Lucretius and the top 15 Enlightenment authors in the MEDIATE corpus

	Author	Relation value	Library ratio
1	Isaac Newton	1.7	109/64
2	William Robertson	1.61	95/59
3	Denis Diderot	1.57	88/56
4	John Locke	1.5	150/100
5	Jonathan Swift	1.4	140/100
6	Alexander Pope	1.39	151/109
7	Joseph Addison	1.37	181/132
8	Pierre Bayle	1.32	178/135
9	Charles Louis de Secondat de Montesquieu	1.29	139/108
10	David Hume	1.21	92/76
11	Frederick II, King of Prussia	1.2	71/59
12	Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle	1.17	134/115
13	Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon	1.15	76/66
14	Jean-Jacques Rousseau	1.11	93/84
15	Voltaire	0.95	162/171

33 Black, "Lucretius tells Diderot" note 33.

34 Adopting a strict definiton of the "Enlightenment", I exclude authors like Fénelon, whose inclusion in the Enlightenment movement, despite later appropriations, is disputed.

Lucretius correlates positively, across the line, with Enlightenment authors. However, there is again a strong British bias, and with this, a slight bias towards more moderate varieties of the Enlightenment, to follow Jonathan Israel's typology. Swift, Pope, and Addison's social conservatism is hardly representative of the most combative forms of Enlightenment. John Locke was both the proponent of an empiricism whose complex relationship to materialism continues to be debated by philosophers, and the author of apologetic texts such as *The reasonableness of Christianity* (1695). Isaac Newton, although deeply indebted to Lucretius, remained true to a providentialist theological outlook.[35] The only French author really to break through the conservative British dominance is the leader of the materialists himself, Denis Diderot. For the rest, neither Buffon, whom the authors of the *Encyclopédie* had associated with Lucretius, nor the arch-*philosophe* himself, Voltaire, fare particularly well. This is perhaps not suprising, as Voltaire's appreciation of Lucretius's ideas, as attested by his own "Letters of Memmius to Cicero" (1771), in which Memmius critiques Lucretius's teachings, was lukewarm at best.[36] The results are therefore somewhat mixed and invite further, deeper contextualisation, which is beyond the scope of the present quantitative survey.

What about the more materialist, radical varieties of Enlightenment, then? Taking as a starting-point the authors discussed in Jonathan Israel's magnum opus on the topic, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750*, Table 31.13 shows the correlations between Lucretius and these more openly radical, controversial, and at times even forbidden authors.

The relative frequency with which works by heterodox thinkers, hard-core materialists and other radicals appear in libraries reporting works by Lucretius is nothing short of remarkable. The controversial English deists Anthony Collins and Matthew Tindal appear four times more frequently alongside Lucretius than otherwise – although in both cases, the low absolute numbers of their occurrences surely also have an exaggerating effect on the relation value. The leading French materialists, D'Holbach, De La Mettrie and Diderot appear more often in Lucretius-carrying libraries than any of the most frequently cited Enlightenment authors overall. On the other hand, the very limited reception of Spinoza and Balthazar Bekker might possibly point to a regionally circumscribed influence – if not simply to the fact that their works were considered so

35 Küppers J., "Framing Newton's *Principia*: The three versions of Edmond Halley's Lucretian ode and Newton's reception of Lucretius' *De rerum natura*", in Markevičiūtė R. – Roling B. (eds.), *Die Poesie der Dinge: Ziele und Strategien der Wissensvermittlung im lateinischen Lehrgedicht der Frühen Neuzeit* (Berlin: 2021) 163–184.

36 Johnson, *Lucretius and the modern world* 98–101.

TABLE 31.13 Correlation between Lucretius and materialist, heterodox or radical authors

	Author	Relation value	Library ratio
1	Anthony Collins	4.75	38/8
2	Matthew Tindal	4.38	35/8
3	Pietro Giannone	2.87	43/15
4	John Toland	2.67	56/21
5	Henri de Boulainvilliers	2.03	61/30
6	Bernard Mandeville	2.00	40/20
7	Paul Henri d'Holbach	2.00	24/12
8	Julien Offray de La Mettrie	1.78	16/9
9	Nicolas Gueudeville	1.74	54/31
10	Denis Diderot	1.57	88/56
11	Louis-Armand de Lom d'Arce de Lahontan	1.5	24/16
12	Jean-Baptiste Boyer d'Argens	1.44	46/32
13	Thomas Hobbes	1.43	130/91
14	Benedictus de Spinoza	0.9	53/59
15	Balthazar Bekker	0.51	55/108

controversial that they were left out of catalogues outside Holland altogether (where, on the contrary, works by Spinoza are regularly reported in the catalogues, sometimes helpfully classified in a separate category, "Libri prohibiti"). Indeed, an important caveat is that most of these radical authors occur in substantially lower numbers throughout, which reduces the reliability of statistical analyses.[37] On the face of it, nonetheless, these correlations appear to confirm the idea that Lucretius himself might also have been read as a radical thinker. Finally, comparing these numbers to the fifteen most frequently reported classical authors in the entire MEDIATE dataset [Table 31.14] appears to confirm the significance of these initial findings.

Classical authors as a whole correlate less strongly with Lucretius than do Enlightenment authors – and even less strongly than do heterodox or radical

37 A quick comparison with the most frequently reported religious authors, however, confirms the fact that Lucretius-carrying libraries find themselves on the deistic or even atheistic side of the religious spectrum: Jacques-Benigne Bossuet 0.91 (130/143), Pierre Nicole 0.9 (104/115), Jean Calvin 0.87 (116/133), Catholic Church 0.74 (139/189), Thomas à Kempis 0.65 (134/205), Pierre du Moulin 0.53 (55/104), etc.

TABLE 31.14 Correlation between Lucretius and the top 15 classical authors in the MEDIATE corpus

	Author	Relation value	Library ratio
1	Juvenal	1.28	246/192
2	Sallust	1.27	219/173
3	Caesar	1.18	234/199
4	Suetonius	1.14	212/186
5	Homer	1.11	254/228
6	Terence	1.08	255/236
7	Seneca	1.05	237/246
8	Plutarch	1.08	240/222
9	Livy	1.02	222/217
10	Quintus Curtius	1.0	227/227
11	Horace	0.99	283/287
12	Tacitus	0.96	259/269
13	Cicero	0.94	275/292
14	Ovid	0.87	277/320
15	Josephus	0.72	207/289

Enlightenment authors. While Voltaire was the only Enlightenment author with a relation value below 1.0, five of the top 15 classical authors have a value lower than 1.0. The contrast is even sharper between the classical authors who score highest – Juvenal, with a relation value of 1.28 to Lucretius – and the eighteenth-century authors who fare best, such as 'the apostle of freethinking' Anthony Collins in the English-speaking world (4.74),[38] the political exile Pietro Giannone from Italy (2.87), on the run from the Vatican, or the resolutely anti-absolutist Henri de Boulainvilliers in France (2.03). Again, however, the same caveat needs to be borne in mind that the low absolute numbers in library catalogues of books by radical authors – which may itself be a consequence of their often forbidden or controversial status – may lead to artificially high correlations, so only a full, computer-powered analysis of the correlations between all 12,000 authors in the dataset will eventually be able to do justice to the relational complexities of the co-presence of these authors from different periods and cultural horizons.

38 Israel, *Radical Enlightenment* 614.

5 Conclusion

It is therefore on an interrogative note that I would like to conclude this survey. The strong correlation between Lucretius and a number of radical Enlightenment authors suggests that while Lucretius was a classical author, it was not in the company of other classical authors that eighteenth-century readers viewed him primarily. In this sense, he could be said to be a "modern" author in the a-chronological meaning of exemplifying views and preoccupations that resonated with his eighteenth-century readers. But this begs the question of who, exactly, was driving this "modernity". For the results I have presented also suggest that the uses to which Lucretius was put depended on the language in which he was read, the materiality of the editions in which he was transmitted, including non-textual elements like illustrations, and the intellectual and geographic contexts in which his works sat on library shelves alongside works by other authors, both modern and ancient. Lucretius's "modernity", therefore, was very much in the eye of the beholder – including that of modern historians, whose tendency teleologically to project back onto the eighteenth century "modern" narratives of the Enlightenment may well blind them to other aspects of Lucretius's reception. Although at certain moments and in certain contexts, citing Lucretius – for example, in Diderot's description of the *Encyclopédie* frontispiece – might well have served as a coded allusion to materialist or anti-religious views, the notion of a "modern Lucretius" who helped birth the radical Enlightenment may prove to be just one aspect of a complex reception – as the patterns emerging out of digitally enabled, "big data" surveys certainly suggest. The image of knowledge driving away the clouds in the *Encyclopédie*'s frontispiece, allowing light to shine forth, turns out to carry multiple entanglements of literary reminiscences, relationships and meanings, which digital tools are just beginning to help us unravel.

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Reading Images from the Past is conceived as a Festschrift for Karl Enenkel. The contributors include art historians, literary scholars, and historians, and the topics cover a wide range of periods, countries, and cultural contexts. They explore the complex relation between word and image, consider the rhetorical and hermeneutic functions of various types of image-making, and examine theories and practices of knowledge production across diverse media. They also reflect on the multi-faceted uses of the past in early modern European culture within debates on art, antiquarian studies, book culture, literature, and historiography. Throughout the volume, special attention is paid to the interaction amongst visual and textual forms and materials.

Contributors are *Barbara Baert, Susanna de Beer, Frans Blom, Wietse de Boer, Stijn Bussels, Arjan van Dijk, Jan van Dijkhuizen, Anna Dlabačová, Reindert Falkenburg, Christine Göttler, Harald Hendrix, Jan L. de Jong, Marc Laureys, Coen Maas, Walter S. Melion, Alicia C. Montoya, Colette Nativel, Konrad Ottenheym, Christian Peters, Christoph Pieper, Lukas Reddemann, Bernd Renner, David Rijser, Bernd Roling, Sophie van Romburgh, Robert Seidel, Paul J. Smith, John Thompson, Anita Traninger, Geert Warnar, Claus Zittel,* and *Cornel Zwierlein.*

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