

While the fictionalization of live speech has been recognized as one of the defining formal features (Volk 2002, 39-40) and inner organizing principles (Effe 1977, 69-70) of the didactic genre, the complicating fact that fictitious live speech is a formal feature of a number of other genres circulated in the written medium has not yet been adequately addressed. Besides didactic poems, fictitious live speech structures the exposition of published speeches, scientific lectures, and technical handbooks. Each of these distinct genres was perceived by ancient audiences within a diachronically developed “horizon of expectations” (Jauss 1970, 173 ff.). A conscious play with this horizon, introduced by Hellenistic poets, was developed by their Roman successors. For example, Lucretius’ *DRN*, one of the most remarkable instances of *Kreuzung der Gattungen* in ancient literature, is an experiment calculated to expand the intellectual horizon of its audience by defying the boundaries of expectations set by the genre. Technically, the unusual meeting of Epicurus’ scientific lecture with didactic form of epic poetry was made possible through the poet’s use of a fiction of live speech (on Epicurus’ Περὶ φύσεως as Lucretius’ *Prosavorlage* see Sedley 1998, 134-65).

In order to clarify the technical aspect of Lucretius’ challenging rewriting of Epicurus, I first examine references to the “here and now” of performance in ancient works articulated as lectures, i.e., the works belonging to the genres of didactic poetry (Empedocles, Nicander, Lucretius), epideictic oratory (Gorgias, Isocrates, Cicero), philosophical discourse (Aristotle, Epicurus, and Cicero) and technical discourse (*Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*, *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, and *De inuentione*, following Fuhrmann 1960, 28, 57-8, 69). After offering an overview of such references, I explain their function in Lucretius’ *DRN*. The overview comprises the following categories: references to the present moment, e.g., νῦν (Epic.) or *nunc* (Lucr.); direct address to the audience/addressee, e.g., imperative forms such as φράζεο (Nic.) or *accipe* (Lucr.); verbs of saying in past and in future tense, personal or impersonal, e.g., εἴρηται (Arist.)/*demonstratum est* (*Rhet. Her.*) and ποιήσομαι τοὺς λόγους (Isocr.)/*dicam* (Cic.); and combinations of the preceding elements, e.g., νῦν δ’ ἄγε (Emp., Nic.)/*nunc age* (Lucr.), or ἐπεὶ δὲ περὶ... εἴρηται, περὶ... λοιπὸν εἰπεῖν (Arist.)/*quoniam de... dixi, nunc de... pauca dicam* (Cic.). In all the examined works, references of this kind are subordinated to explanatory purpose: they are “signposts” (Gagarin 1999, 168) that enable the authors to develop a clear and systematic exposition. When oral explanations become universal, like those of Epicurus, and need to be circulated more widely, they morph into staged acts ready to be re-performed. Thus in Lucretius’ *DRN* the references to “here and now” become marginal organizational devices, comparable to stage directions. They are only one step away from modern printing conventions, such as the use of title, subtitle, line space, and paragraph. Further development in this direction can be illustrated first by the MSS tradition of Lucretius, marked by insertion of various *capitula* in the transitional points of the text, and then by the modern editions of the text, where visual printing conventions are used to enhance the visibility of the inner structure of the poem.