

FIEC-Conference 2009

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Title of the lecture: *Animals at the Crossroads. The Use of Animal Exempla in Lucretius' De Rerum Natura Between Poetry, Biology, Experience and Folk Culture.*

Language of the lecture: English

Abstract: In my paper I will try to show how the many animal *exempla* we find in Lucretius' *De rerum natura*, if studied from a many-sided perspective, can give us the opportunity to appreciate the intersection of different cultural levels in the poet's imagery. As in a famous analogical argument of book IV (1197-1208), in fact, animal figures can be symbolically seen staying *in triviis* in Lucretian poetry, at the crossroads between converging ideological contributions. Analysing two other examples of similar kind (III, 288-307; IV, 54-64), I will underline the ideal meeting of four basic aspects in these didactic explanations: the rhetorical strategies of poetical representation, the influence of scientific-biological concepts, the role of direct experience as a part of Epicurean methodology and the repercussions of folk categories.