



Phaeacian Dido: Lost Pleasures of an Epicurean Intertext

ἀδύνατον γὰρ μὴ φρονίμους εἶναι Φαίακας,
οἳ μάλ᾽ αὖ φίλοι εἰσι θεοῖσιν, ὡς ἡ Ναυσικᾶα φησίν.
Eratosthenes¹

“It is impossible for Phaeacians not to be prudent,
since they are very dear to the gods, as Nausikaa says.”

An Epicurean philosopher named Diodorus who committed suicide in the mid-first century CE reportedly chose as his last words the penultimate declaration of Virgil’s Dido: *vixi, et quem dederat cursum fortuna peregi* (“I have lived, and I have run the course that fortune granted,” *Aen.* 4.653). Although Seneca (to whom we owe the story) depicts Diodorus as a good philosopher who died with a clear conscience after a life of Epicurean tranquillity, other contemporaries seem to have protested that in choosing suicide, Diodorus had violated Epicurus’ own teachings (*de vita beata* 19). Diodorus’ quotation of Virgil, however, signaled more than a dramatic final exit; it was also a gesture toward a complex Epicurean tradition. Diodorus had an Epicurean precedent of sorts in Dido.

Commentators since antiquity have remarked that Virgil’s Dido espouses an intermittently Epicurean outlook in the face of Aeneas’ similarly imperfect Stoicism.² Several recent articles have gone beyond previous statements of

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1. Eratosthenes (ca. 285–194), who succeeded Apollonius Rhodius as head of the library at Alexandria, quoted by Athenaeus *Deipnosophistae* 1.16e.

2. For Virgilian citations and bibliography see Pease 1935 and Dyson 1996.

this issue by asserting that Dido's apparent Epicureanism and the Epicurean atmosphere of her court are couched not just in the traditional language of the Garden of Epicurus, but in specifically Lucretian terms.³ This essay—while resisting the impulse to claim Virgil for either the Stoa or the Garden—proposes that there is an even richer and more persistent Epicurean presence intertwined with the Dido episode. Although Virgilian quotations of Lucretius provide the most obvious references to Epicureanism, too narrow a focus on the traces of the *de rerum natura* obscures important resonances with Virgil's more obvious models: the *Odyssey* and Apollonius' *Argonautica*. Reversion to Homer and Apollonius Rhodius, however, does not dim the Epicurean aura around Dido. Rather, what I wish to show is that the reader who keeps in mind the Homeric context is a reader even more convinced of the presence in Virgil's Carthage of the virtues (or—in the eyes of some readers—the vices) of the authentic Epicurean.

At play here is the merging of two traditions. First, there is the well-known story of Odysseus among the Phaeacians (*Od.* 6–12), long recognized as the most fundamental of the many Homeric elements in Virgil's depiction of Aeneas' sojourn with Dido. Also present, however, is a particular type of post-classical Homeric interpretation. In revisiting Homer, the *Aeneid* also revisits traditional ways of reading Homer, including approaches that view the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as harbingers of the wisdom of the Hellenistic philosophical schools. Thus the Dido episode resonates not only with Odysseus' landing in Phaeacia (and its post-Homeric literary descendants), but also with a later (and currently uncelebrated) philosophical or *para*-philosophical tradition that associates the Phaeacians with the philosophy of Epicurus.

PHAEACIA, ODYSSEUS, AND AN EPICUREAN PALIMPSEST

Today the tradition of referring to Epicureans as "Phaeacians" is familiar to few people who are not well acquainted with the backroads and sidestreets of the Epicurean tradition, but the formula had wide currency in antiquity.⁴ Although its most unambiguous statements appear on the margins of the classical canon, once those sources are known it is difficult to miss the presence of an "Epicurus the Phaeacian" cliché in better known authors such as Lucretius, Philodemus, Horace, Seneca, Plutarch, Athenaeus, and—as I propose here—Virgil. To start with the

3. Recent treatments of Lucretian language in Virgil's Dido episode include: Hardie 1986, Hamilton 1993, Lyne 1994, and Dyson 1996. Cf. also Brown 1987: 142. Farrell 1997: 234–35 demonstrates that Virgil also uses Lucretian language to present an Epicurean point of view in the episode of Nisus and Euryalus in *Aen.* 9. Virgil's debt to Lucretius in general has of course long been recognized.

4. For a short list of ancient sources that associate the Phaeacians specifically with Epicureans, see Bignone 1936: 269–70. DeWitt 1954: 365 (note 12 to chap. 4) and Buffière 1956: 319–21 cite the same texts. Recent articles that mention the Phaeacian/Epicurean tradition include Sider and Asmis in Obbink 1995.

most obvious example, and one that is hostile to Epicurus: the cliché figures conspicuously in a work called *Homeric Questions* by a certain Heraclitus (second or third century CE; not to be confused with the famous Ionian philosopher). There Heraclitus, whose goal is to defend Homer against the criticism of both Plato and Epicurus, refers derisively to Epicurus as “the Phaeacian philosopher, the farmer of pleasure in his secret gardens” (Ο δὲ φαίαξ φιλόσοφος Ἐπικούρος, ὁ τῆς ἡδονῆς ἐν τοῖς ἰδίοις κήποις γεωργός, 79.2).⁵

Heraclitus also sheds some light on the apparent origins of the cliché, for he makes it clear that Epicurus has been dubbed a “Phaeacian” not simply because Epicurus (as a Hellenistic philosopher who praised the virtues of pleasure) seemed to be vaguely similar to the Phaeacians (who were generally regarded as archetypal hedonists).⁶ Heraclitus reveals that the supposed connection is in fact more precise: there was an established tradition of reading Odysseus’ professed appreciation of Phaeacian pleasures (*Od.* 9.5–11) as an Epicurean manifesto. Odysseus delivers his famous declaration, of course, at the Phaeacian banquet soon after his rescue by the princess Nausikaa. After years of war, and years of wandering through inhuman realms Odysseus declares:

οὐ γὰρ ἐγὼ γε τί φημι τέλος χαριέστερον εἶναι
ἢ ὅτ’ εὐφροσύνη μὲν ἔχη κατὰ δῆμον ἅπαντα,
δαιτυμόνες δ’ ἀνὰ δώματ’ ἀκουάζωνται αἰδοῦ
ἡμενοὶ ἐξείης, παρὰ δὲ πλήθωσι τράπεζαι
σίτου καὶ κρειῶν, μέθυ δ’ ἐκ κρητῆρος ἀφύσσω
οἰνοχόος φορέησι καὶ ἐγγχείη δεπάεσσι·
τοὔτό τί μοι κάλλιστον ἐνὶ φρεσὶν εἶδεται εἶναι.

Od. 9.5–11

I maintain there is no *telos* more pleasing than when good cheer fills all the people, and guests sitting side by side throughout the halls listen to the bard, and the tables are loaded with bread and meat, and a steward drawing wine from the bowl brings it around to fill our cups. To my mind this (*telos*) is something most beautiful.

In Homer, *telos* should be an innocent enough word (here meaning simply “fulfillment,” or “conclusion”), but in later Classical and Hellenistic Greek the word had become the shared property of the philosophical schools.⁷ Thus generations of readers took the Homeric passage as Odysseus’ statement of the purpose of life (*telos* in its later sense), and a tradition known to Heraclitus claimed that Epicurus himself had stolen his philosophy of pleasure directly from the mouth of Odysseus. Heraclitus suggests that Epicurus stole from Homer unknowingly; a detail he adds not to exonerate Epicurus, but to intensify the charge by implying that Epicurus

5. For text, see Buffière 1962.

6. On Phaeacians as hedonists: Plato *Republic* 3.390a-b (a passage that also cites *Od.* 9.5–11) and Athenaeus *Deipn.* 12.531a-b (*Od.* 9.5–11).

7. See Ambrose 1965.

was ignorant of Homer: ἄρ' οὐχὶ καὶ ταῦθ' ἅ μόνα τῷ βίῳ παρέδωκεν αἰσχρῶς ἀγνοήσας παρ' Ὀμήρου κέκλοψεν; “And is it not true that the only things he offered the world were shameful unwitting thefts from Homer?”⁸

For Heraclitus, who approves neither of the Garden nor of Odysseus’ professed “philosophy,” it is obvious that Odysseus had experienced far greater moments (as hero at Troy, as invader of Thrace, as a man who had been to the underworld and back, etc.) and is praising Phaeacia simply out of a need to ingratiate himself with his rescuers.⁹ Thus Heraclitus concludes, sarcastically: Epicurus mistook Odyssean lies for the purpose of life and “planted them in his blessed gardens” (ταῦτα τοῖς σεμνοῖς κήποις ἐμφυτεύσας, 79.10; cf. 79.2). Similar criticism of Epicurus’ affinities with Odysseus and the Phaeacians appears in the work of Athenaeus (fl. ca. 200 CE), who attributes this assessment of the Garden to Megacleides (*Deipnosophistae* 12.513 a-e).¹⁰ A new twist to this discourse appears in Lucian’s (or pseudo-Lucian’s) *Parasite*, where a character named Simon contends that Epicurus stole his professed ideal of pleasure from Homer but never pursued it. Instead of enjoying the life of a parasite among the Phaeacians, Epicurus—Simon asserts—concerned himself with incessant inquiries into the shape of the earth, the infinity of the universe, and the existence of the gods (*Parasite* 11).

Moving back in time from the era of Heraclitus and Athenaeus, one sees that the “Epicurus the Phaeacian” cliché spelled out by Heraclitus is one of Plutarch’s favorite anti-Epicurean put-downs. Plutarch (ca. 50 - ca. 120 CE) never explains the Epicurean/Phaeacian equation, but recognition of the formula is essential to an appreciation of the rhetorical force of his *On the Fact that Epicurus Actually Makes a Pleasant Life Impossible* (= *Non Posse*). The central argument of this polemic is that the Epicurean life is ironically *unpleasant* because the Epicureans have given up everything valuable—from heroic acts to all intellectual endeavors, including reading—for the mindless pursuit of sensual pleasures. This is of course a gross misrepresentation of Epicurean hedonism (see Epicurus, *Ep. Men.* 132), but objectivity regarding the Garden is not Plutarch’s strong point. Thus in the midst of praise for the pleasures one takes in reading great authors like Aristotle and Homer, Plutarch scoffs:

Who would take greater pleasure in eating and drinking Phaeacian fare than in following Odysseus’ tale of his journey? Who would find more pleasure in going to bed with the most beautiful woman than in staying up late with the stories Xenophon wrote about Pantheia, or Aristobulus about Timocleia, or Theopompus about Thebe? But they [the Epicureans]

8. The logic of Heraclitus’ vitriol does not stand up to translation. Buffière 1962: 86 translates: “Le peu qu’il a laissé au monde, il faut encore qu’il l’ait impudemment volé à Homère, sans le savoir.”

9. Cf. Ps. Plutarch *Essay on the Life and Poetry of Homer* 150. For discussion of Odysseus’ speech see Most 1989.

10. There is, however, at least one Homeric scholion (to *Od.* 9.28) that cites Epicurus’ “borrowing” from Homer with approval. See Dindorf 1855: 408.

banish all these pleasures from the mind (*psyche*), and they even banish the pleasures that come from mathematics.

(*Non Posse* 1093c)

In the first rhetorical question quoted here, Plutarch opposes Phaeacian feasting to heroic poetry and offers the implied answer that only an ignorant *Epicurean* would rate parties over literature.¹¹ A more literal translation of Plutarch's text muddies the message but reveals that the question must be an intertextual rejoinder: "Who would eat while hungering and drink while thirsting the stuff of the Phaeacians with more pleasure than he would follow Odysseus' tale of his journey?" (τίς δ' ἂν φάγοι πεινῶν καὶ πίοι διψῶν τὰ Φαιάκων ἥδιον ἢ διέλθοι τὸν Ὀδυσσέως ἀπόλογον τῆς πλάνης; *Non Posse* 1093c). I understand the awkwardness of this language as an example of what Michael Riffaterre has called "agrammaticalités," textual ripples or anomalies that can serve as clues to lost intertexts (Riffaterre 1981: 5). Not necessarily a matter of grammatical error, an "ungrammaticality" can be a shift in style, syntax, or register that alerts one to an allusion or quotation. Thus I take the obtrusive participles ("hungering" and "thirsting") as signs that Plutarch is quoting or parroting a lost Epicurean text, possibly one that asserted the difference between the pleasure of drinking while thirsty and the pleasure of quenched thirst (cf. *de fin.* 2.9), or perhaps one that proclaimed that food and drink provide genuine pleasure only to the hungry and thirsty (cf. *Ep. Men.* 131). The odd and apparently allusive phrase "the stuff of the Phaeacians" (τὰ Φαιάκων) also sounds like the vestige of some other text(s).

The lack of subtlety in Plutarch's intertextual engagement with Phaeacia, as well as his condemnation of the supposedly Phaeacian pleasures of the Epicureans, is even clearer elsewhere. At the beginning of the *Non Posse*, Plutarch's mingling of the Homeric with the Epicurean goes beyond making the Epicureans the perpetual dinner guests of the Phaeacians. For Plutarch, the Phaeacian sensibility is so closely aligned with the Epicurean that the words of the Phaeacian king Alcinous can be merged with those of Epicurus as though both were official spokesmen for the Garden. Thus in the opening chapters of the *Non Posse*, Plutarch cuts and pastes Homeric and Epicurean quotations into one ersatz Epicurean voice that shouts in hexameters spliced with prose: "*No brave boxers we,* or orators, or leaders of the people, or magistrates, *'but always dear to us is the banquet'* and *'every pleasing stirring of the flesh that is sent up to give some pleasure and delight to the mind'*" (οὐ γὰρ πυγμάχοι εἰμὲν ἀμύμονες οὐδὲ ῥήτορες οὐδὲ προστάται δῆμων οὐδὲ ἄρχοντες, ἀεὶ δ' ἡμῖν δαῖς τε φίλη καὶ πᾶσα διὰ σαρκὸς ἐπιτερπῆς κίνησις ἐφ' ἡδονὴν τινα καὶ χαρὰν ψυχῆς ἀναπεμπομένη, 1087b). The two hexameter lines (italicized in my translation) in this macaronic "Epicurean"

11. Plutarch's second rhetorical question, which implies that his audience should agree wholeheartedly that love stories are better than sex, is highly unusual. Plutarch asserts throughout the *Non Posse* and elsewhere in the *Moralia* that the Epicureans indulge in intercourse frequently, an assertion that is at odds with Lucretius (*DRN* 4.1030–1287) and other Epicurean texts. See Brennan 1996.

quotation come from a speech by Alcinous that was regarded in antiquity (as the Homeric scholia reveal) as a notorious avowal of Phaeacian sensuality: “No brave boxers or wrestlers are we, but at fast racing—by foot or by ship—we are the best, and always dear to us are the banquet, the cithara, dances, changes of clothes, warm baths, and our beds” (*Od.* 8.246–49). Between the quoted hexameters Plutarch has apparently inserted his own editorial remark, and the third quotation seems to be an otherwise unattested fragment of Epicurus.¹² Plutarch’s hostile citing of this “Epicurean” text reveals in a nutshell what Plutarch and so many others found most threatening about the Garden: the Epicureans’ professed hedonism (which Plutarch distorts into sensualism) and the ideal Epicurean’s withdrawal from the turmoil of public life struck outsiders as tantamount to a wholesale repudiation of masculine prerogatives and responsibilities.¹³

It is difficult to say whether the tradition of associating the Garden with Phaeacia was hostile from its inception, or whether Plutarch and Heraclitus are distorting a tradition that was initially friendly to the Garden. Norman DeWitt, the well-known (if controversial) scholar of the Garden, once claimed that it was Epicurus himself who first added Odysseus’ speech on the *telos* to the Epicurean canon (DeWitt 1954: 73–74). But ultimately it is irrelevant whether the comparison between Phaeacians and Epicureans was first voiced by hostile outsiders, by Epicurus *ipse*, or by later Epicureans. Once the formula becomes an established way of ridiculing the Garden, the task of later Epicureans is to align themselves for or against Phaeacia. In other words, the affronted Epicurean must either reject the “Phaeacian” stereotype as an unjust lampoon of the Garden, or embrace the slur and defend Phaeacian pleasures. One Epicurean tactic would be to cite Phaeacia as an exemplum not of luxurious living but of peace, goodwill, and friendly communion. Such an interpretation of the “Epicurus the Phaeacian” tradition is recorded by Seneca, who complains that all of the philosophical schools, including the Garden, find their models in Homer:

Nam modo Stoicum illum faciunt, virtutem solam probantem et voluptates refugientem et ab honesto ne immortalitatis quidem pretio recedentem, modo Epicureum, laudantem statum quietae civitatis et inter convivia cantusque vitam exigentis, modo Peripateticum tria bonorum genera inducentem, modo Academicum, omnia incerta dicentem. Adparet nihil horum esse in illo, quia omnia sunt. Ista enim inter se dissident.

(*Epistles* 88.5)

For sometimes they make him [Homer] a Stoic, who approves only of virtue and shuns pleasures and refuses to give up honor even at the price of immortality; sometimes they make him an Epicurean, who praises the condition of a citizenry at peace that lives a life of symposia and songs; sometimes they make him a Peripatetic, who classifies the good

12. See Usener 433 and 552. On pleasure and the mind cf. *DRN* 2.18–19.

13. See Gordon forthcoming. Plutarch and others in the anti-Epicurean and anti-Phaeacian camps of course overlook the lines about racing and ship-faring.

in three ways; and sometimes they make him an Academic, who holds that everything is uncertain. It is obvious that none of these philosophies is in Homer, since they all are. For they are mutually exclusive.

Seneca write as though an Epicurean or Epicurean-friendly interpretation of the Phaeacia connection (one that highlights peace and conviviality, with no suggestion of excess) were a commonplace in the first century CE. I imagine that the tradition Seneca knew linked the Garden with the groves and gardens of Phaeacia (*Od.* 6.321–22; 7.112–33) and extolled both as utopian communities that offered safe harbor on the fringes of a dangerous world. The Epicurean position was neither monolithic nor static, however. Lucretius, for example, firmly rejects the Phaeacian aesthetic, including the golden statues that adorn the Phaeacian palace and the cithara that accompanies the banquets there. Lucretius' unambiguous position on Phaeacia appears in the famous proem to Book 2, where he pronounces certain pleasures as unnecessary:

ergo corpoream ad naturam pauca videmus
 esse opus omnino, quae demant cumque dolorem,
 delicias quoque uti multas substernere possint.
 gratius interdum neque natura ipsa requirit,
 si non aurea sunt iuvenum simulacra per aedes
 lampadas igniferas manibus retinentia dextris,
 lumina nocturnis epulis ut suppenditentur,
 nec domus argento fulget auroque renidet
 nec citharae reboant laqueata aurataque templa,
 cum tamen inter se prostrati in gramine molli
 propter aquae rivum sub ramis arboris altae
 non magnis opibus iucunde corpora curant,
 praesertim cum tempestas arridet et anni
 tempora conspergunt viridantis floribus herbas.

(*DRN* 2.20–33)

Thus we see how few things are at all necessary to satisfy our bodily nature—just enough to remove our pain—and so to provide us with many delights. Nor does nature from time to time require anything more pleasing; even if there are no golden statues of boys throughout the house holding fire-bearing lamps in hand to furnish light for nighttime banquets, and the house does not glow with silver or gleam with gold, and no paneled and gilded beams echo with the lyre, nevertheless, stretched out in groups on the soft grass near a stream of water under the branches of a tall tree, people happily take refreshment at no great cost, especially when the weather is lovely and the season of the year sprinkles the green grass with flowers.

Readers of the *Odyssey* should recognize that Lucretius' survey of needless extravagances is no random list, but a direct allusion to particular Phaeacian pleasures. The description of the golden statues (*DRN* 2.27–29) is a close paraphrase of *Odyssey* 7.100–102, where Homer's lamp-bearing "golden boys" provide light

for Phaeacian diners. In addition, the gold, the silver, the paneling, and the lyre reflect a composite of the dining scene described at the beginning of *Odyssey* 9 and the Phaeacian palace as Odysseus first beholds it (*Od.* 7.81–99).¹⁴ Although it seems to me that the commentaries miss the broader import of this Phaeacian intertext, most note the “unusually close rendering of Homer’s words”¹⁵ in *DRN* 2.24–26 and many readers have recognized in Lucretius’ description of unnecessary luxury the setting in which Odysseus addressed King Alcinous on the *telos*.

Thus Lucretius declines to sit at the Phaeacian table and settles his ideal Epicureans on the grass outside where they will be just as happy, weather permitting. Not all first-century Epicureans, however, were so concerned about distinguishing Phaeacian from Epicurean pleasures. The other eminent Epicurean philosopher-poet of that era, Philodemus (ca. 110 - ca. 40/35 BCE), writes admiringly (and perhaps apologetically) of Phaeacia in his scholarly work and playfully accepts the Epicurean/Phaeacian cliché in a poem to Piso (consul in 58 BCE). This poem invites Piso for a modest meal in celebration of “Epicurus day” (the twentieth of the month):¹⁶

αὔριον εἰς λιτὴν σε καλιάδα, φίλτατε Πείσων,
 ἐς ἐνάτης ἔλκει μουσοφιλῆς ἕταρος
 εἰκάδα δειπνίζων ἐνιαύσιον· εἰ δ’ ἀπολείψεις
 οὔθατα καὶ Βρομίου Χιογενῆ πρόποσιν,
 ἀλλ’ ἑτάρους ὄψει παναληθέας, ἀλλ’ ἐπακούσῃ
 Φαιήκων γαίης πουλὺ μελιχρότερα.
 ἦν δέ ποτε στρέψῃς καὶ ἐς ἡμέας ὄμματα, Πείσων,
 ἄξομεν ἐκ λιτῆς εἰκάδα πιωτέρην.

Epigram 27, Sider = Pal.Anth. 11.44 = 22 Gow and Page.¹⁷

Tomorrow, friend Piso, your musical comrade drags you to his modest
 digs
 at three in the afternoon,
 feeding you at your annual visit to the Twentieth. If you will miss udders
 and Bromian wine *mis en bouteilles* in Chios,
 yet you will see faithful comrades, yet you will hear things far sweeter
 than
 the land of the Phaeacians.

14. Purple dye (later a catchword for excess) is less recognizable as a peculiarly Phaeacian accouterment, but the superfluous purple coverlets Lucretius spurns in the next lines (as no more helpful to the sick than a “plebeian” cover; *DRN* 2.34–36) also recall Arete’s purple wool and the purple bedding provided to Odysseus by the Phaeacians on his first night after washing up on their shores (7.336–38). Purple dye is also abundant in Virgil’s Carthage (e.g. 1.700 and 11.72–75), where it seems to be not only Phaeacian but typically Tyrian.

15. See Bailey 1947: 802 on line 2.25. See also Gale 1994: 111, who does note the Epicurean/Phaeacian tradition.

16. On Epicurus’ birthday and the monthly Epicurean gatherings, see Sider 1997: 156.

17. Translation by Sider 1997: 152; earlier translation also in Obbink 1995: 47.

And if you ever turn an eye to us too, Piso, instead of a modest feast we shall lead a richer one.

Here Philodemus deftly redeems the Phaeacian/Epicurean stereotype by refusing to align the Phaeacians with luxury or excess, linking them instead with poetry and the most basic Epicurean pleasures. Thus the Phaeacian pleasures emphasized by Plutarch (wine and food) are replaced with two crucial Phaeacian pleasures also lauded by Odysseus in his *telos* speech: friendship and listening to the bard. As David Sider puts it, the reference to the Phaeacians promises Piso that he will receive “the combined pleasures of poetry and Epicurean companions.”¹⁸ (No paradox is implied here: the widespread misconception that poetry and the Garden are intrinsically incompatible has more roots in anti-Epicurean polemic than in Epicurean doubts about literature.)¹⁹ Philodemus’ tone is more defensive in his essay *On the Good King According to Homer*, which is also addressed to Piso. There Philodemus defends Demodocus’ choice of the (often condemned) story of Ares and Aphrodite, praises Alcinous as a good king who knows how to achieve peace, and challenges the hackneyed notion of the allegedly lazy, effete, and self-indulgent Phaeacian.²⁰

Horace takes yet another approach. Scholarly positions on Horace’s attitudes toward Epicureanism are diverse, depending as they do upon each reader’s estimation of the poet’s “sincerity,” tone, and ironic self-effacement. Readers of all persuasions, however, should recognize traces of the “Epicurus the Phaeacian” tradition in three poems of the first book of Horace’s *Epistles*. In my reading, these epistles meet the slur head on by affirming sardonically that the Epicureans are indeed a herd of well-fed and self-indulgent Phaeacians: Horace should know, for he is one of them.

First, one poem contrasts the Stoic models that can be learned from Homer with the baser and (implicitly) “Epicurean” models that “Horace” and his friends prefer:

nos numerus sumus et fruges consumere nati,
sponsi Penelopae, nebulones, Alcinoique
in cute curanda plus aequo operata iuventus,
cui pulchrum fuit in medios dormire dies et
ad strepitum citharae cessantem ducere somnum.

(*Epistles* 1.2.27–31)²¹

We’re mere numbers, simple eaters of earth’s substance,

18. Sider 1995: 47.

19. See discussion below and Clay 1995, Asmis 1995, Sider 1995, and Wigodsky 1995 in Obbink 1995.

20. See Asmis 1991: 37 and 41, and Sider 50. Jufresa 1982 (which I know only from Sider’s reference) argues that the *Good King* presents the Phaeacians “as the model of a Utopian Epicurean community” (Sider 1997: 160).

21. Translation by Fuchs 1977: 54.

we are Penelope's wasteful suitors and Alcinous's young men, indecently busy at grooming their hides. A good life to them meant snoozing until afternoon, enjoying a lazy sleep, lulled by a cithara.

The Epicurean Philodemus also finds something to admire in the habits of Penelope's suitors,²² but I take the suitors' presence here as Horatian embellishment of anti-Epicurean polemic.

Elsewhere in the same book, a poem ostensibly about the search for a bathing spot with amenities asks whether a particular location offers fine sea food and game: "so I can thence return home fat, and as a Phaeacian" (*pinguis ut inde domum possim Phaeaxque reverti*, *Epistles* 1.15.24). Confirmation that fat Phaeacians with well tended hides (cf. *in cute curanda* in *Epistles* 1.2.29) are Epicurean doppelgangers appears at the end of another epistle:

me pinguem et nitidum bene curata cute vises
cum ridere voles Epicuri de grege porcum.

(1.4.15–16)²³

Come and see me, your fat, sleek friend with the shiny hide,
a pig from Epicurus's herd, if you ever want a laugh.

For Horace, the Phaeacian tradition is ripe for appropriation, as are other currents of anti-Epicurean discourse. Even his reference to Phaeacian grooming habits (*cute curanda*, 1.2.29; *bene curata cute*, 1.4.15–16) sounds like a travesty of Lucretius' *corpora curant* ("they take refreshment" or "attend the body," *DRN* 2.31), a phrase Lucretius uses in his acclamation of Epicurean (and, in the context, non-Phaeacian) pleasures. While Horace professedly aligns his poetic persona with a version of Epicureanism based on the sort of lampoon later epitomized by Plutarch, his tone marks these references to the Garden as transparent distortions of Epicurean hedonism. Anyone conversant with Epicureanism knows that it values spiritual or cerebral pleasures over the physical, once essential bodily needs (food and shelter) have been met.²⁴

The observant reader would also be aware that the tradition of ridiculing the supposedly Epicurean-like Phaeacians (and so the Phaeacian-like Epicureans) for rejecting literature and indulging instead in wine and food also distorts the Homeric passage, for the singer of tales at the Phaeacian table is crucial to Odysseus' statement of what is *kalliston* (very/most beautiful). Significantly, Epicurean (and Epicurean-friendly) sources that refer to the Phaeacian-Epicurean equation acknowledge the presence of the lyre or cithara (emblem

22. See Asmis 1991: 38.

23. Translation by Fuchs 1977: 56.

24. See Diog. Laert. (10.137), who contrasts pleasures of the body (σάρξ and σῶμα) with the greater pleasures of the mind or spirit (ψυχή), a report that is consistent with Epicurus *Ep. Men.* 132. For discussion see Gosling and Taylor 1982: 349–54 and Long 1986.

of both epic and lyric genres) in the Phaeacian realm. Thus Seneca refers to “symposia and songs” (*Epistles* 88.5), and the “musical” or “muse-loving” Philodemus (μουσοφιλής, Epigram 27, Sider) stresses poetics over comestibles. Even Lucretius is protective of Phaeacian pleasures; although the proem to Book 2 presents Phaeacian pleasures as “unnecessary,” it neither exaggerates nor excoriates them, and the echoing cithara is included in the Phaeacian vignette. Horace, too, retains the cithara in his sardonic glance at the Phaeacians and suitors (although for them the cithara is the accompaniment for sleep, not poetry). Turning to Virgil, we notice the cithara at the table in Dido’s Carthage.

PHAEACIAN DIDO

Readers have long been aware that Dido makes her first entrance in the *Aeneid* as Nausikaa, princess of Phaeacia (cf. Aulus Gellius 9.9). That is to say, Dido’s first appearance in the *Aeneid* (just before she agrees to help the shipwrecked Aeneas) echoes closely the description of Nausikaa on the Phaeacian shore (just before she agrees to help the shipwrecked Odysseus): both are compared to Artemis/Diana surrounded by her nymphs and both embody the beauty, strength, and self-possession of the goddess (*Aen.* 1.498–504 and *Od.* 6.102–109). Dido’s entrance, however, is only the beginning of her Phaeacian past.

Of the many strands of poetic tradition that merge and intertwine in Virgil’s Dido, the Phaeacian strands are the most diverse and yet the most persistent.²⁵ As commentators (both ancient and modern) have noted, Dido at moments looks like Nausikaa, stands in for Arete, and speaks like Alcinous.²⁶ Dido’s banquet for the Trojans recalls the Phaeacian banquet hosted by Nausikaa’s parents, and when Aeneas tells his story there (*Aen.* 2–3), he is following Odysseus’ precedent (*Od.* 9–12). Iopas, the bard at Dido’s table, has affinities with the Phaeacian bard Demodocus.²⁷ And as though it were not enough that Venus herself also plays Nausikaa when she meets Aeneas near the shores of Dido’s Carthage (*Aen.* 1.327–29 and *Od.* 6.149–52; *Aen.* 1.338–41 and *Od.* 6.194–96), and stands in for the little girl (Athena) who assists Odysseus in Phaeacia (*Aen.* 1.315 and *Od.* 7.14–77), Venus’ departure from Aeneas in that scene also gestures toward the story of Ares and Aphrodite as sung by the Phaeacian Demodocus: like Aphrodite in the Phaeacian story, Venus flits away to Cyprus where she can enjoy the incense

25. On Dido’s “multiplicity” in general see Hexter 1992, especially p. 337.

26. See Aulus Gellius 9.9, Knauer 1964: 174 and passim, Clausen 1987: 15–26, Hardie 1986 passim. My summary here focuses on the correspondences between Virgilian characters and their antecedents; also relevant to the Phaeacia/Carthage analogy are the storms, invocations, and wrecks at sea that preceded the respective heroes’ arrivals; and the shade-filled, prosperous landscapes that receive them.

27. See Hardie 1986: 60–66.

lit for her by the Paphians (*Aen.* 1.415–17 and *Od.* 8.362–66).²⁸ The goddesses in both scenes conceal the hero with mist so that he can make his way safely to his rescuer (Aeneas to Dido; Odysseus to Nausikaa’s mother Arete). Like Alcinous in the *Odyssey*, Dido offers her guest safe passage, or, alternatively, the option to stay (*Aen.* 1.569–74; *Od.* 7.311–24). Woven in with these Homeric strands is the memory of an earlier reincarnation of Nausikaa: the young Medea of Apollonius’ *Argonautica*. Apollonius’ tale of Medea’s divinely-orchestrated love for Jason (who also makes his way to Medea enshrouded in mist) asserts itself frequently in the *Aeneid*, especially in Book 4, which Servius described as entirely Apollonian.²⁹ Medea is of course no Phaeacian, and yet the Phaeacians themselves play a crucial role in the *Argonautica*. Here it is important to recall that the notorious cave that provides shelter to Dido and Aeneas (before their supernatural wedding) bears an obvious resemblance to the nuptial cave of Medea and Jason.³⁰ The latter are married, of course, among the Phaeacians.

Thus it is significant that Dido’s “patently Homeric palace” (Dyson 1996: 208) is not just Homeric, but Phaeacian (*Od.* 7.100–102). Lucretius had already responded to the “Epicurus the Phaeacian” tradition by explicitly banishing gold, silver, ornate paneling, and other Phaeacian luxuries from the ideal Epicurean gathering (2.23–28). In a move that epitomizes a certain mode of Virgilian/Lucretian intertextuality,³¹ the *Aeneid* reinscribes such luxuries into the Epicurean/Phaeacian world, echoing the very language Lucretius had used to assert that Epicureans prefer simple picnics over Phaeacian banquets: *fit strepitus tectis uocemque per ampla uolutant / atria; dependent lychni laquearibus aureis / incensi et noctem flammis funalia uincunt*. “A roar arises in the hall and they send their voices echoing through the great palace; burning lamps hang from the gold-paneled beams and torches conquer the night with their blaze” (*Aen.* 1.725–27; *DRN* 2.24–28). Even the lyre the bard Iopas plays is golden (*Aen.* 1.741–42).

Thus in the Dido episode the basic Homeric context is mediated through more than one Hellenistic prism: Apollonius’ Phaeacians participate in a complex Epicurean intertext. Virgilian intertextuality, however, bears no resemblance to the cut-and-paste approach of Plutarch. Unlike Plutarch’s mocking pastiche of Homeric and Epicurean texts, which serves to foreclose a favorable view of the Garden’s affinities with Phaeacia, Virgil’s intertextual modes open up the interpretive options. At first glance the reader might suspect that Virgil is

28. On Venus as Nausikaa, Athena in Scheria, and Demodocus’ Aphrodite, see Knauer 1964: 158–63. Knauer points out that Aeneas’ comparison of his (disguised) mother to Diana recalls Odysseus’ comparison of Nausikaa to Artemis (1964: 159 n. 1).

29. *totus hic liber translatus est de tertio Apollonii*. In some respects the character Medea may also be a precursor of the Homeric Nausikaa; cf. Reece 1993: 109–10. On Virgil’s mingling of the Homeric with the Apollonian see Clausen 1987.

30. Cf. Clausen 1987: 23–25.

31. On Virgil’s habit of quoting Lucretius in alien contexts and sometimes even reversing his Epicurean wisdom, see Hardie 1986 *passim*.

simply tapping into the prevailing anti-Epicurean discourse, thus aligning himself with a tradition exemplified by Plutarch's later condemnation of the Epicureans as decadent, womanish, and dangerous sensualists. The fact that Dido is an Easterner, and that the most clichéd of her "barbarian" attributes overlap with her Phaeacian elements, add to this impression.³² Other, more sinister Homeric elements in Dido's ancestry—Calypso, Circe, the Cyclops—would also support such a reading, especially since those aspects emerge gradually, as though they were lurking under a Phaeacian veneer. Interestingly enough, one of the most sinister (and ostensibly non-Phaeacian) Homeric elements of *Aeneid* 4 circles back to Phaeacia: when Dido curses Aeneas, her malediction echoes the parting shot hurled at Odysseus by Polyphemus (*Aen.* 4.612–29; *Od.* 9.528–35). In Homer the Cyclopes have a vague connection with the Phaeacians (*Od.* 7.205–206) and are the Phaeacians' former neighbors (*Od.* 6.3–6), a proximity the *Aeneid* recalls by placing the Cyclops episode temporally and spatially near the Carthage episode (see Quint 1989: 120–23). Thus the appearance of the Epicurean/Phaeacian equation in the *Aeneid* would seem to support a reading of the epic that champions Aeneas over Dido, Stoicism over Epicureanism, Rome over Africa and the East.³³ And yet when we recall that the Garden itself is not univocal regarding the Phaeacians another possibility emerges: perhaps Virgil's overturning of Lucretius' rejection of the alleged connection between the Garden and Phaeacia does not condemn Epicureanism but simply aligns Dido with a less austere (but not debased) Epicurean tradition.

PRUDENCE AND PLEASURE

Whether Epicurus lived to hear himself compared unfavorably to the Phaeacians or not, it is certain that Epicurus did respond to derogatory assessments of Epicurean pleasure. In the *Letter to Menoeceus* Epicurus explains that—contrary to the claims of adversaries—Epicurean pleasures go hand in hand with *phronesis* ("wisdom" or "prudence"). This passage is especially resonant with the "Epicurus the Phaeacian" tradition, even if it can serve as an actual response to the charge only for those who read out of order, turning to Epicurus from Plutarch or Heraclitus. Thus Epicurus responds in advance to the claim that the doctrine of pleasure he "stole" from Odysseus is morally bankrupt and thus deeply "unpleasant":

So when we say that pleasure is the end (*telos*) we do not mean the pleasures of degenerates and pleasures that consist in carnal indulgence,

32. On Dido and Eastern stereotypes see Hexter 1992. The *tecta laqueata* of Dido's palace are an especially rich allusion; in addition to having Phaeacian associations (*DRN* 2.28), such paneling was also considered Trojan or barbarian (for sources see Dyson 1996).

33. For the claim that Virgil's Dido demonstrates the obvious errors of Epicureanism see Feeney 1991: 171–72 and Dyson 1996. For support of the idea that Virgil's depiction of Dido is friendly to the Garden, see Williams 1983: 210–13 and Mellinshoff-Bourgerie 1990.

as some assume (out of ignorance or because they disagree, or because they misapprehend us), but we mean the absence of pain in the body and the absence of distress in the spirit (*psyche*). For it is neither continuous drinking parties nor carnal indulgence in boys and women or fish or other offerings of the rich table that produce a pleasant life, but sober reasoning and searching out reasons for selection and avoidance, and banishing the sorts of received opinions that cause the greatest disturbance of the spirit. The source of all these things and the greatest good is prudence (*phronesis*). Thus prudence is even more valuable than philosophy, for all the rest of the virtues spring from prudence, which teaches us that it is not possible to live pleasantly without living prudently and honorably and justly, nor to live a life of prudence, honor, and justice without living pleasantly. For virtues are naturally part of a pleasant life, and a pleasant life is inseparable from them.

(*Ep. Men.* 131–32)

Turning from Epicurus to Eratosthenes (the Alexandrian scholar quoted in the epigraph to this essay; cf. n. 1), we see that Eratosthenes too is on the defensive. The mythical Phaeacians may strike some readers as unlikely objects of rebuke, but as far as we know, Eratosthenes' favorable opinion of the "prudence" of Homer's Phaeacians was not the majority view at any time in antiquity; the norm—even before the founding of the Garden—was to accuse the Phaeacians of indolence, sloth, and loose morals.³⁴ Thus Eratosthenes' assertion ("It is impossible for Phaeacians not to be prudent, since they are very dear to the gods, as Nausikaa says") is a fragmentary rebuttal to the dominant reading of the *Phaiakis*. Although bringing Eratosthenes' reading of Homer to bear on the Epicurean tradition may be a case of anachronistic intertextuality, Eratosthenes' claim has a role to play in the dialogue with Epicurus. We know that Eratosthenes studied philosophy in Athens while the Garden was in its second generation, and so presumably knew of Epicurus.³⁵ But even if Eratosthenes himself had no knowledge of an early version of the "Epicurus the Phaeacian" tradition, his adducing of Homeric texts to prove that the Phaeacians are virtuous would have interested Epicurean readers. Athenaeus (to whom we owe the quotation of Eratosthenes) reports that Eratosthenes calls other witnesses besides Nausikaa; he also corrects the mainstream tradition on the words of Odysseus. According to Eratosthenes, the true text of Odysseus' speech on the *telos* is explicit about the decency of the Phaeacians. In Eratosthenes' version Odysseus proclaims:

34. This may explain in part why the delightful Nausikaa has such a dismal early *Nachleben*; although an optimistic reader might expect her to have inspired happier heroines, Nausikaa became the model instead for murderous or suicidal abandoned women. For a concise survey of ancient commentary on Phaeacians see Heubeck 1988: 341. For recent assessments of the Phaeacians' friendliness (or hostility) see Carnes 1993 and Reece 1993.

35. Although Eratosthenes was reputed to have criticized some of the early Stoics, we know nothing about his attitude toward the Garden. Cf. Pfeiffer 1968: 152–70.

οὐ γὰρ ἐγὼ γε τί φημι τέλος χαριέστερον εἶναι
ἢ ὅτ' εὐφροσύνη μὲν ἔχη κακότητος ἀπούσης,
δαιτυμόνες δ' ἀνὰ δώματ' ἀκουάζωνται ἀοιδοῦ

Quoted by Athenaeus *Deipn.* 1.16d.

I maintain there is no *telos* more pleasing than when there is *euphrosyne*, and baseness is absent, and guests sitting side by side throughout the halls listen to the bard . . .

Eratosthenes glosses his unorthodox reading “baseness is absent” by explaining that the “baseness” or “evil” that Odysseus speaks of here is “recklessness” or “lack of prudence” (*aphrosyne*). The word *euphrosyne* (which I rendered as “good cheer” when I translated the canonical text of *Odyssey* 9.6) takes on a new tone here because Eratosthenes’ use of the cognate *aphrosyne* in his gloss makes clear that he takes *euphrosyne* not simply as “good cheer” but more literally as “good thinking,” or “right thinking.” In other words, Eratosthenes is implicitly drawing a connection between *euphrosyne* and the related word *phronesis* (“wisdom” or “prudence”).³⁶ Far from being dissolute, Eratosthenes’ Phaeacians are paradigms of moral probity.

Turning back to Virgil, we see that the Dido episode too can be read as a revision of the tradition that was hostile to Phaeacia. Readers from diverse eras have questioned the friendliness of the Phaeacians, and Athena’s and Nausikaa’s warnings to Odysseus (*Od.* 7.32–33 and 6.274) are echoed by Venus’ fear that the hero’s hosts are not trustworthy (*Aen.* 1.661). At her first meeting with the Trojans, however, Dido explains that the Carthaginians’ wariness is due to their vulnerable position as recent exiles (*Aen.* 1.563). When thus accounting for her apparent lack of hospitality, she welcomes the Trojans in friendly language that has rightly been recognized as both Epicurean and Lucretian: *solvite corde metum, Teucri, secludite curas* (*Aen.* 1.562).³⁷ After this, the Trojans of course receive full welcome and suffer none of the apparent lapses in hospitality that Odysseus had met with in Phaeacia. We see also that the song of Iopas has something in common with Eratosthenes’ re-reading (or re-writing) of Homer. As many commentators have noted, the text is strewn with signposts that lead us to see Iopas in part as a new Demodocus, the bard of the Phaeacian banquet.³⁸ And yet the *Aeneid* replaces Demodocus’ notorious song (notorious in antiquity, that is) about the love affair of Ares and Aphrodite with a quasi-Lucretian song of natural philosophy.³⁹ As

36. The Homeric scholiasts also consider this interpretation of *euphrosyne*. Ironically, *euphrosyne* is a word that a later Epicurean tradition uses to refer to specifically carnal pleasures. See Diogenes of Oenoanda, Smith fragment 10. col. 4.

37. Dyson: 205.

38. See especially Segal 1971, Hardie 1986, and Dyson 1996.

39. On the moral probity of Iopas’ song, cf. Servius *ad Aen.* 1.742: *bene philosophica introducitur cantilena in convivio reginae adhuc castae*. The Iopas passage is also heavy with intertextual rejoinders: Virgil excises an erotic passage that Lucretius had highlighted in the poem

though to bestow authorial approval on Iopas' words, the text here echoes not only Lucretius, but Virgil's own echoes of Lucretius in the *Georgics*.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, as host of the banquet, Dido is the paradigm not only of Epicurean friendliness and hospitality, but also a model of Phaeacian/Epicurean piety and prudence: she has just made a libation to the gods, but barely tastes the wine (*Aen.* 1.736–37). Dido's temperance is especially noticeable since Venus had suggested that wine has a role to play in Dido's downfall (*Aen.* 1.686). As in the Epicurean tradition exemplified by Philodemus, and in the Phaeacian-friendly tradition exemplified by Eratosthenes, the pleasure in a Phaeacian banquet has little to do with the wine or the food (which receives little attention in the Virgilian scene), but much to do with friendship, good cheer—or *right thinking*—and the bard.

Although Dido foregoes the wine, she of course quenches her thirst with a dangerous poison: love (*longumque bibebat amorem, Aen.* 1.749). Since Venus and Juno have contrived to send Amor to Dido, some readers take Dido's subsequent downfall as Virgilian condemnation of Dido's later crypto-Epicurean assertion that the gods do not meddle in human lives (*scilicet is superis labor est, ea cura quietos sollicitat*, "Surely this toil concerns the gods, this concern troubles their repose" [uttered with apparent sarcasm], *Aen.* 4.379–80). And yet, a convinced Epicurean might read Dido's demise not as confirmation that her Epicurean notions are wrong, but as fulfillment of Lucretius' warnings against the horrible perils of erotic love. In other words: if the divine machinery of the *Aeneid* can be said to prove Epicurus wrong, the description of Dido's passion can be said to prove Lucretius right.⁴¹ Certainly the language that describes Dido's love-sickness is strongly evocative of the attack against passion in Book 4 of Lucretius' *de rerum natura*. As commentators have noted, Dido's sleeplessness as described in the opening of Book 4 (*Aen.* 4.1, 5) is the result of "worry" or "disturbance," a condition that Epicurus calls *tarache*, and that Lucretius calls *cura*.⁴² Thus the vocabulary of Dido's insomnia confirms the repeated theme of Lucretius' polemic against erotic love: passion is bound to result in such *cura*, and thus deprives the would-be philosopher of Epicurean *ataraxia* (tranquillity). Furthermore, Lucretius (notoriously) describes love and sex as a sort of wound (*uulnus, DRN* 4.1049, 1070, 1120); the very image with which Book 4 of the *Aeneid* opens: *uulnus alit uenis* ("she feeds the wound with her blood," *Aen.* 4.2; cf. *uiuuit sub pectore uulnus*, "the wound survives in her breast," *Aen.* 4.67). Even Virgil's description of Dido's obsession with the image and voice of Aeneas (*Aen.* 4.83–84) evokes Lucretius' description of the role of *simulacra* (images)

to *DRN* Book 1, which in turn gestures toward the Phaeacian story by depicting Mars in the arms of Venus.

40. See Hardie 1986: 33–51. See also Gale 1994: 36–61. Segal 1971 stresses the un-Roman, effeminate aspects of Iopas, thus drawing attention to material for an anti-Phaeacian and anti-Epicurean reading of this passage.

41. Cf. Dyson 1996: 204, who describes Dido as "a Lucretian *exemplum malum*."

42. Brown 1987: 142 and Hamilton 1993: 249.

and the sound of the lover's name in the arousal of lovers (*DRN* 4.1061–62).⁴³ Thus although Venus and Juno have been described at work behind the scenes, both the symptoms and the mechanics of Dido's passion are Lucretian.

Once Dido is stricken with love, the Phaeacian intertext (except as it is mediated—in more sinister fashion—through Apollonius' *Medea*) slips away. Dido loses all resemblance to the virginal Nausikaa, along with her prospects for Epicurean tranquillity.

LOST IN THE INTERTEXT

Although I am convinced that the long-standing tradition of reading Homer as a font of Hellenistic philosophical wisdom informs Virgil's reworking of the epics, I do not mean to reduce the *Aeneid* to an allegory on Stoic and Epicurean world views, or even to assert that the play of Epicurean versus Stoic values is the main theme of the Dido episode. My far simpler claim is that attention to the Phaeacian lineage of Dido demonstrates that her Epicurean connections are deeper, more varied, and more sophisticated than has hitherto been noted. In fact, the tradition that associates the Garden with Phaeacia seems to me to have such an undeniable presence in the Dido episode as to require an explanation of why it was not rediscovered by nineteenth-century source criticism. I have three answers to this question, and will dispense quickly with the first by acknowledging my own traditional training as a Classicist. Since it was my acquaintance with nineteenth-century philology that led me to notice the Epicurean implications of Dido's Phaeacian connections in the first place, I offer this particular slant on Dido as a late arrival, overlooked though it was during the heyday of source criticism.

The second answer has to do with the efficacy of the vocabulary of intertextuality. Critics have complained that the adoption of the terminology of intertextuality by scholars of literature merely gives a new veneer to old methods (hence the parody by Genette 1992: 82).⁴⁴ Now that the shine has in any case worn off, it seems a good time simply to assert that "intertextual" is an especially apt epithet for the art of the *Aeneid*, a poem that weaves together and reshapes a profusion of traditions (literary and extra-literary) and yet whose surface is somehow not elaborate but austere.⁴⁵ The language of intertextuality also happens to be appropriate to a discussion of a long-standing paraphilosophical tradition involving a series of Homeric allusions and anti-Epicurean misreadings. Thus the inquir-

43. Hamilton 1993: 250.

44. "All literary critics, for centuries, have been producing metatext without knowing it." "They'll know it as of tomorrow: what a staggering disclosure and invaluable promotion. I thank you on their behalf." From Genette's interview of himself in the conclusion of *The Architext: An Introduction* (1992: 82).

45. On Virgilian intertextuality see especially Clausen 1987, Conte 1986, Farrell 1991 and 1997, and Lyne 1994. Conte's term for the typically Virgilian intertextual mode is "integrative allusion" (1986: 69).

ing reader starts to think not in terms of origins and imitations, but in terms of overlapping retorts, rereadings, and rejoinders from all sides. The fact that Virgil seems not to have taken the “Epicurus the Phaeacian” formula from any particular text makes “intertextuality” even more pertinent here, for intertextuality since Kristeva has acknowledged the presence not only of literal texts within texts, but also the presence of clichés, of later traditions, and of peculiar translations. To bring the author of the text more openly into this discussion: the concept of intertextuality helps one conceive of Virgil in a great dialogue not just with Homer, Apollonius, Lucretius, and Epicurus (to pass over so many other sources of Virgil’s inspiration), but with generations of friends and foes of the Garden, who in turn are engaged in spirited dialogue with Homer and Epicurus, and their friends and enemies.

My third answer circles back to the epigraph to this essay and to a theme that recurs throughout: the “Epicurus the Phaeacian” cliché has been ignored largely because the dominant tradition (in Greek and Roman antiquity as well as in nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarship) is hostile to the Garden. Epicureans and Phaeacians alike have been ridiculed as gluttons, sensualists, and philanderers. The philosophy of the Garden has been treated not only as effeminate and anti-intellectual, but as downright dangerous. This supposed emasculating potential of the Garden is latent in the jibes of Iarbas, who questions the masculinity of Aeneas and his men (*semiviro comitatu* 4.215) and in Mercury’s rebuke of Aeneas for building a “pretty” city and subordinating himself to a woman (*pulchramque uxorius urbem*, 4.266). Virgil’s exact location in this tradition is difficult to pin down: readers who place Virgil squarely on the side of *imperium* will line him up against the Garden, but others will demur.

Michael Riffaterre has argued for a pragmatic engagement with a science of intertextuality, the purpose of which is to uncover the true message of a text.⁴⁶ Notions of intertextuality that are more akin to the Bakhtinian approach first articulated by Kristeva, however, stress the *polyphony* and *heteroglossia* of any text that contains echoes of earlier texts. Interpretations of Virgil’s *Aeneid* are notoriously diverse, and my own conviction is that one can appeal to Virgil’s allusions to earlier texts to argue (with equal success) either for or against Virgilian sympathy for an Epicurean point of view. When reading Virgil it seems more appropriate to assert (with Barthes) that plurality is inherent in textuality, and (at the risk of promoting a cliché) that the poem is the question, minus the answer.⁴⁷ Such seems to be the stance of R. O. A. M. Lyne’s most recent discussion of the last lines of *Aeneid* 4, where the description of Dido’s death meshes perfectly with Lucretian expositions of Epicurean belief:

46. See, e.g., Riffaterre 1987: 12.

47. “The Text’s plurality does not depend on the ambiguity of its contents, but rather on what could be called the stereographic plurality of the signifiers that weave it.” Roland Barthes, “From Work to Text,” in Barthes 1986.

omnis et una
dilapsus calor atque in uentos uita recessit.

(4.704–705)

And at once all the heat and life slipped away and receded into the winds.

As Lyne makes clear, the final description of Dido's death evokes Lucretius' descriptions of the soul's dissipation into air at death (*DRN* 3.128–29, 3.214–15, 3.400–401, and 3.455–56) and thus aligns the narrator—for the moment at least—with the Garden. For some readers, this Lucretian intertext, “an intertext that subverts some of our certainties” (as Lyne puts it) will stand as Virgil's last word on Dido's Epicurean leanings.⁴⁸ Those readers may then take Dido's ghostly re-appearance in the underworld as a sort of illusion, or even as the illusory fulfillment of Dido's threat to haunt Aeneas.⁴⁹ Others, however, may agree with the claim that Dido's re-appearance in the underworld constitutes a final undermining of Dido's Epicureanism that “leaves no doubt.”⁵⁰

For many readers the *Aeneid* is, on the contrary, a poem of doubt that knows no simple resolutions.⁵¹ My own conviction is that the complex intertextual modes of the *Aeneid* expand its capacity to present multiple viewpoints.⁵² This brings me again to that last scene of Dido's, where a bewildered Aeneas catches a glimpse of her shade (*Aen.* 6.469–74). For most readers of the *Aeneid*, this passage echoes the moment in the *Odyssey* when Odysseus spots Ajax in the underworld (*Od.* 11.563–64). Thus the Virgilian passage poignantly evokes the grief and loss expressed in the Homeric pre-text, while exploiting the Homeric reader's untroubled allegiance with Odysseus. And yet here as elsewhere in the *Aeneid* the direct Homeric allusion is only one of many intertextual strata. Layered over this reference to Odysseus and Ajax are the verdicts passed on Odysseus by later generations. Despite the Stoic tradition of idealizing Odysseus, the centuries before Virgil had also seen generations of poets and philosophers who knew Odysseus primarily as a notorious liar and cheat who had not only brought about the death of Ajax, but had engineered or assisted in the murders of Iphigenia, Astyanax, Polyxena, and Palamedes. The reader of the *Aeneid* who recalls not only the *Odyssey* but the Ulixes of Book 2 of the *Aeneid*—or the Euripidean or post-Homeric Odysseus in general—knows why Ajax, like Dido, does not look back.

48. Lyne 1994: 196.

49. See Lyne 1994: 196.

50. Dyson 1996: 219.

51. On Virgilian ambiguity and various interpretations of Dido's death, see Perkell 1994.

52. See Perkell 1994, especially 66–67, for another way to account for Virgilian complexity and ambiguity: it is the characters within the epic who express contradictory interpretations of the action. Particular readers may be inclined to accept a particular character's view even if the poet withholds explicit endorsement.

DIODORUS' EPILOGUE: A PLEA FOR PLURALITY

Although Plutarch liked to maintain that Epicureans are too depraved to read books, one can imagine various Epicurean responses to the *Aeneid*, including Epicurean readings that accept Dido as a worthy representative of the Garden. Such hypothetical Epicurean readers might pity Aeneas not only for his failure to accept the refuge of Phaeacian/Epicurean harbors, but also for his subsequent zeal for bloodshed and revenge.⁵³ An Epicurean attuned to the Phaeacian/Epicurean tradition might also understand Aeneas' delivery from the storm before Carthage as an obvious allusion to the saving wisdom of the Garden. Salvation from troubled seas is a pervasive Epicurean metaphor; witness Lucretius on Epicurus:

quique per artem
fluctibus e tantis vitam tantisque tenebris
in tam tranquillo et tam clara luce locavit.
(*DRN* 5.10–13; cf. *DRN* 2.1ff.)

who through skill
rescued life from such great waves and darkness
and placed it in such calm and in such clear light.

An Epicurean reader might take Aeneas' departure from Dido not as an escape from danger but as precisely its opposite.

Such an interpretation of Virgil may seem as eccentric as Eratosthenes' Phaeacian-friendly interpretation of Homer.⁵⁴ And yet perhaps eccentricity is to be expected of the Epicurean; contexts in which Epicurean perspectives conform to the majority position are certainly rare. Eccentric or not, a stray fragment of an Epicurean reading of Virgil in which the Epicurean identifies with Dido survives in Seneca's reference to Diodorus the Epicurean (*de vita beata* 19, cited at the beginning of this essay). Diodorus is otherwise unknown, and it is difficult to appraise Seneca's claim that Diodorus quoted Dido before slitting his own throat. The imperfectly contextualized tale projects a complex and arresting image: a male Epicurean philosopher, presumably Greek, quotes in Latin—knife in hand—the exit speech of Virgil's Carthaginian queen. Seneca makes clear, however, that Dido's words have a particular resonance for him, and—apparently—for Diodorus. For Seneca, Dido's words are not merely Virgilian or tragic in a general sense. Rather: for Seneca, Dido's *Vixi* . . . ("I have lived, and I have run the course that fortune granted") is emblematic of the type of respectable, austere Epicureanism that he often admired. Although Seneca's works contain harsh ridicule of the Garden that corresponds closely with the

53. For differing views on the Epicurean and/or Stoic ramifications of Aeneas' killing of Turnus, see Galinsky 1988, Putnam 1990, Erler 1992, and Fowler 1997.

54. In Seneca's anecdote, even Diodorus himself refers to his Epicurean life as a life lived in a safe harbor (*de vita beata* 19).

anti-Epicurean rhetoric promoted by Cicero and Plutarch (see Gordon 1997 and Gordon forthcoming), Seneca occasionally acknowledges that the stereotype of the effeminate and debauched Epicurean is misleading: authentic Epicureanism is actually virtuous, upright, and austere (*sancta; recta; tristia, de vita beata* 13).

In fact, Seneca quotes Virgil's Dido (*Aen.* 4.653) in at least three different works (*de vita beata* 19, *de beneficiis* 5.17.5, and *Epistles* 12.9).⁵⁵ Each time he quotes her with approval, and each time with implicit (and sometimes explicit) acknowledgment of the Epicurean content of her words: *vixi, et quem dederat cursum fortuna peregi*, "I have lived, and I have run the course that fortune granted." In *Epistle* 12.8–9, Seneca mentions to his addressee Lucilius the dissolute life of Pacuvius (a vice-governor of Syria under Tiberius), who allegedly ended his dinners with mock funerals in which attendants carried him to bed singing in Greek "He has lived his life" (βεβιωται). Seneca proposes Dido's words as a more seemly alternative, not just for Pacuvius, but for himself and his reader(s): "Let us do from a good motive (*conscientia*) what he did from a bad one; let us say as we go happily and joyfully to our sleep: *vixi, et quem dederat cursum fortuna peregi*." (Seneca seems to use the word "sleep" here both literally and metaphorically, both of nightly rest and of death.) Nor does Seneca ignore the fact that Dido's words are a prelude to suicide. After quoting Dido, Seneca cites Epicurus on suicide: "It is bad to live under constraint; but there is no constraint to live under constraint." Since Seneca "quotes" Epicurus in Latin rather than in the original Greek, and since the original text is lost (for a remnant see *Sent. Vat.* 9), it is difficult to know where the quotation ends and where Seneca's interpretation begins, but Seneca's epistle continues: "Many short, simple paths to freedom are open to us. Let us thank god that no one can be held in life. We may spurn the constraints themselves." At this point Seneca anticipates Lucilius' response: *Epicurus, inquis, dixit, Quid tibi cum alieno?* ("Epicurus said that, you say; 'What are you doing with another's property?' "). Seneca responds: "What is true is mine," and ends the letter with the assertion that the best ideas are shared property.

Dido's third appearance in Seneca occurs in his lengthy meditation on ingratitude in *On Benefits*. From the context it is obvious that Dido here is an exemplum of the sort of gratefulness that ordinary people lack:

Who dies without complaint? Who dares to say in the end: "I have lived, and I have run the course that fortune granted"? Who dies without rebelling, without wailing? Yet not to be satisfied with the time one has had (*praeterito tempore*) is to be an ingrate.

(*Ben.* 5.17.5)

The broader context of this passage in the argument of *On Benefits* also makes clear that Seneca aligns Dido's gratitude with the wisdom of Epicurus, who taught

55. For commentary on Seneca's quotation of Dido in *de vita beata* and *Ep.* 12, see Görler 1996.

that one ought to be grateful for one's past good fortune (*praeterita . . . bona*, *Ben.* 3.4.1), and that an increase in time does not increase pleasure (cf. *Ben.* 5.17.6–7 and Epicurus *Principal Doctrine* 19). Seneca's account of Epicurus' teachings on gratitude is confirmed in part by Epicurus' reference to the aging philosopher's gratitude (*charis*) for past experience (*Ep. Men.* 122), but I suspect that Seneca is also thinking of Lucretius' personified "Nature," who denounces the ingratitude of foolish mortals who do not want to die (*DRN* 3.931–77).⁵⁶

This context also suggests that Seneca understands Dido's declaration at *Aeneid* 4.653 as the words of the proverbial Epicurean who leaves life as a satisfied guest (*ut plenus vitae conuiua*, *DRN* 3.938). Another proverbial guest, Odysseus among the Phaeacians, may be latent in that image. The notion that the true Epicurean faces death with equanimity and even happiness is not made explicit in the canonical texts of Epicurus, but is certainly present in other Epicurean sources.⁵⁷ In a saying attributed to Metrodorus (another founding member of the Garden), the sage says he will leave life singing that he has lived well (εὖ . . . βεβίωται, *Sent. Vat.* 47), and the second-century Diogenes of Oenoanda seems to make a similar declaration (Smith fr. 3). The Epicurean tradition also attributes composure and happiness to the dying Epicurus (*Diog. Laert.* 10.15–16). Thus in Seneca's reading, Dido's last words are a declaration of contentment that earn her a place among the Epicurean worthies.

To return to Diodorus: Seneca does not explain why Diodorus has chosen to die. What is clear is that Diodorus is content with the years he has spent "at anchor" in the safety of the Garden's metaphorical harbors (*ille interim beatus ac plenus bona conscientia reddidit sibi testimonium vita excedens laudavitque aetatis in portu et ad ancoram actae quietem; de vita beata* 19). Although some of Diodorus' detractors held that suicide was unacceptable to Epicurus, Seneca's assertion to the contrary demonstrates his close familiarity with the texts of Epicurus (whom he quotes—in translation—in *Epistle* 12.10, as mentioned above). Fundamental to Epicureanism, clearly, is the notion that life offers many pleasures even when adversity exists (*Ep. Men.* 126–27). Thus Epicurus is said to have claimed that a sage would not commit suicide simply because of the loss of vision (*Diog. Laert.* 10.119), and Lucretius ridicules the folly of someone who commits suicide because of a fear of death. This does not mean, however, that the Garden prohibited suicide (cf. Cicero *Tusc.* 5.118).⁵⁸ In fact, Diodorus' emulation of Dido and Seneca's citing of Epicurus in *Epistles* 12.9 suggest that Seneca and Diodorus read Dido's suicide as an act that was both dignified and Epicurean. The dominant tradition may view Epicurean heroism as an oxymoron, but Seneca and Diodorus

56. Cf. *ingrata* *DRN* 3.937; *ingratum* 3.934. Lucretius was not necessarily following a lost text of Epicurus.

57. See Rosenbaum 1990: 22 for a recent sketch of what he calls "the obscure but significant Epicurean idea of complete living."

58. I view the misrepresentation of Epicurean doctrine as a result of the exaggerated Stoic/Epicurean dichotomy.

are dissenters from the majority view. Whether they are also perverse readers of Virgil remains an open issue.

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