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The Tradition of Virgilian Travesty and Mock Epic

A Presidential Address given to the Virgil Society on 17 October 2020

Epic and humour are not natural bedfellows. And, while Ovid's own idiosyncratic brand of epic in the *Metamorphoses* certainly invites smiles and chuckles, and the grotesqueries of Lucan's epic on the *Civil War* have been read by some as comedy, there have been few attempts to diagnose a vein of comedy in Virgil's *Aeneid*.[1] There are no index entries for 'comedy' or 'humour' in either the first or the second edition of *The Cambridge Companion to Virgil*.[2]

Indeed, if one surveys Virgil's three major works, there is a decreasing amount of humour as we progress from the *Eclogues* to the *Aeneid*. As we move upwards through the *rota Vergiliana*, there is, unsurprisingly, an inverse relationship between the presence of humour and generic elevation.

It is easy to smile at the self-delusion of Corydon's unrequited love in *Eclogue* 2, and of the lovers of *Eclogues* 8 and 10, and at the aggressive banter of Menalcas and Damoetas in *Eclogue* 3. And there is perhaps something comic about the self-dyeing sheep of *Eclogue* 4, a poem which concludes with an invitation to smile, at line 60: *incipe, parue puer, risu cognoscere matrem*.

In the *Georgics* humour is generated by the grandiose treatment of lowly and small things, things associated with the soil, and creatures lower than the dignity of man.[3] At 1.184–5 small pests are described as if they were earthborn Giants (*gegeneis*), *quae plurima terrae | monstra ferunt* ("monsters which the earth produces in large numbers"). This anticipates the sustained play on the incongruity between grand and small in the bees of *Georgic* 4, of which I shall say more later.

Coming to the *Aeneid*,[4] forms of *rideo* uncompounded appear only thrice. Once it refers to the laughter, or smile, of Venus when she detects Juno in an attempt at deception (*dolis*

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1 See Wilner (1942); Macleod (1965) (referring to Richard [1951], which I have not seen); Lloyd (1977).

2 Mac Góráin and Martindale (2019).

3 McCarter (2019) is an exercise in diagnosing a strong strain of humour in the *Georgics*.

4 Setting aside the debate over what Servius meant when he said of Book 4, *nam paene comicum stilum habet* ("for it has almost a comic style"): Anderson (1981) argues that Servius was misled by excessive dependence on his teacher Donatus' discussion of Terence.

risit Cytherea repertis: "Cytherea laughed/smiled at the discovery of her trickery", 4.128), the laughter of Homeric gods in reaction to attempted deception.[5] But the humour of the Virgilian gods, such as it is, is a much watered-down version of the 'erhabene Unernst' of the Homeric gods. Virgil's conformity to a Hellenistic sense of epic decorum has the effect of eliminating much of what had come to be felt as incongruously comic or lowly in Homer. This decorum is relaxed in the relatively light-hearted games of *Aeneid* 5, where *rideo* occurs twice. The Trojans laugh at the helmsman Menoetes, unceremoniously pitched overboard by his impatient captain, and spewing up salt water: *illum et labentem Teucri et risere natantem | et salsos rident reuomentem pectore fluctus* ("At him as he slipped and swam the Trojans laughed; and they laugh as he spews up salt waves from his chest", 5.181–2). Here *rideo* takes an accusative object ("laugh at"). *rideo* takes a dative object when Aeneas "smiles at"[6] Nisus when he demands a prize, his face and limbs smeared in the dung in which he had slipped and fallen in the foot-race: *et simul his dictis faciem ostentabat et udo | turpia membra fimo. risit pater optimus olli | et clipeum efferri iussit* ("And as he said this he displayed his face and limbs, befouled with moist dung; the excellent father smiled at him and ordered a shield to be brought out", 5.357–9). In a bold elision of low and high, the ridiculous and the sublime, this is at once a smile provoked by Nisus' laughable appearance, but also a smile that identifies Aeneas with the supreme god Jupiter, who smiles (*olli subridens*) at two critical points where he administers the course of Fate (1.254, at Venus; 12.829, at Juno).[7] The small example of scatological humour in *Aeneid* 5 will be the starting-point for something much less restrained in the games of writers and booksellers in Pope's *Dunciad*.

Of course, the more serious and pretentious a genre, the more it invites mockery and deflation. In the paratragedy of Aristophanes' *Frogs*, the lofty and grand Aeschylus is a more straightforward target for parody than is Euripides. From a very early date tragedy has its comic *alter ego* embedded institutionally, in the form of the satyr play. Epic, which shares a place with tragedy at the summit of the hierarchy of genres, is also accompanied by parody from a very early date. The eponymous hero of the *Margites*, of the seventh or sixth century BC, was a moron who did not know whether his mother or his father had given birth to him, and who did not know what to do on his wedding night.

To return to *Georgics* 4, Joe Farrell's classic book on the *Georgics* (1991) reads the poem as progressing through the different kinds of didactic hexameter epos, to sustained

[5] Halliwell (2008) 66.

[6] *OLD rideo* 2; Uden (2014) 72 n. 4.

[7] The argument that Aeneas' smile in Book 5 identifies him in a Jovian role is convincingly made by Uden (2014), who also shows that the two other instances of *subrideo* in the *Aeneid* occur at moments when enemies of Aeneas mistakenly assume a Jovian role: 9.740 (Turnus), 10.742 (Mezentius). On smiles in the *Aeneid*, see also De Saint-Denis (1964); Konstan (1986); Newman (1988).

engagement with Homer in Book 4, in preparation for the epic flight of the *Aeneid*. In the Aristaeus epyllion that concludes the book there is close and extended imitation of Homer, first in the narrative of Aristaeus' complaint to Cyrene, based on Achilles' complaint to his mother Thetis in the *Iliad*, and then in Aristaeus' capture of Proteus in order to force him to reveal the reason for the loss of his bees, based on Menelaus' capture of Proteus to tell him of the fate of the other Greeks after the fall of Troy, and of his own future, in *Odyssey* 4 (351–570). This is a good example of how Virgil sanitises an indecorous, and potentially comic, Homeric model, since he cuts out the detail of the foul smell of the seal-skins in which Menelaus and his companions disguise themselves in order to sneak up on Proteus.

But before we reach these warming-up exercises for the full-scale epic to follow, we have had a complete, if appropriately miniature, episode of mock heroic in the battle of the bees near the beginning of *Georgics* 4 (lines 67–87). As a narrative of grand epic battle waged by very small creatures, the battle of the bees is comparable to the *Batrachomyomachia*, the war of the frogs and the mice (of uncertain date); and the great-hearted heroics of a small insect are the subject of the pseudo-Virgilian *Culex*, the "Gnat". In terms of the Virgilian career, it is noteworthy that Virgil gives a specimen of mock heroic before turning to write the full-scale Homeric epic that is the *Aeneid*. It is probably coincidental that in the prefatory essay to Alexander Pope's *The Dunciad*, the fictional Martinus Scriblerus was to assert, with reference to the *Margites*, that "it doth appear, that the first Dunciad was the first Epic poem, written by Homer himself, and anterior even to the Iliad or Odyssey".[8]

The contrast in the battle of the bees between large and small, momentous and trivial, serious and unserious, is a defining feature of both mock heroic and travesty. Virgil twice draws attention explicitly to the contrast of large and small at the end of the battle of the bees: ***ingentis*** *animos* ***angusto*** *in pectore uersant* ("They stir great passions in a narrow breast", 4.83); *hi motus animorum atque haec certamina* ***tanta*** | *pulueris* ***exigui*** *iactu compressa quiescent* ("These turmoils of the spirit and these great contests will fall quiet when suppressed by throwing a little dust at them", 4.86–7). These contrasts pick up the programmatic statement at the beginning of Book 4, *in tenui labor; at tenuis non gloria, si quem* | *numina laeua sinunt auditque uocatus Apollo* ("I labour at a slender subject; but not slender is the glory, if the adverse powers permit one, and Apollo listens to prayers", 4.6–7). The Callimachean contrast between *tenuis* ("slender") and *non tenuis* ("not slender") is also the contrast that structures mock epic. This is recognised by Pope in his imitation of Virgil's programmatic words, in the prologue to *The Rape of the Lock* 1.5–6: "Slight is the subject, but not so the praise, | If She inspire, and He approve my lays".

[8] Rumbold (2009) 70.

One last point to note, in light of the subjects of some of the most significant early modern examples of mock heroic, is that the battle of the bees hints strongly at the historical civil wars of first-century BC Rome. *Discordia* is the word used of the "strife" between the two kings (4.68), a word that is not restricted to civil strife, but which often has that connotation, particularly in Virgil. Mynors in his commentary indeed labels the battle of the bees "Civil War".[9] The passage immediately following the battle of the bees, on the need to kill the inferior of the two bee-kings, once their battle has been quelled by throwing at it a handful of dust, has often been read as an allegory on Octavian and Antony. Mock heroic is one way of making speakable the unspeakable subject of civil war. In the *Aeneid* Virgil will use other forms of indirection to talk of civil war.

In the rest of my lecture I will look at the tradition of parodies *of* the *Aeneid*. This is a long tradition, and an important part of the reception of the *Aeneid*. Again, I note that in the second edition of *The Cambridge Companion to Virgil* there are no index entries for mock heroic (or mock epic), or travesty, despite the fact that eight of the twenty-six chapters in the *Companion* are on the reception of Virgil. A travesty of Virgil can even claim to be the foundational work of a national literature: Ivan Kotlyarevsky's travesty the *Eneida* (written in 1798, published in 1842) was the first work written wholly in Ukrainian, and marks Kotlyarevsky as the father of Ukrainian literature.[10] Kotlyarevsky transforms the Trojans into the Zaporozhian Cossacks.

I will look at two segments of the parodic reception of the *Aeneid*: firstly the Europe-wide fashion for travesties of the *Aeneid* in the seventeenth century, and secondly the vogue in France and England for mock heroic poetry, in the late seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth centuries. First, some brief definitions. A travesty is the clothing of the lofty matter of an epic in low manners and low language; 'travesty' is, etymologically, a cross-dressing or disguise. Mock heroic, or mock epic,[11] is the application of the lofty generic features of epic to undignified or trivial subject matter. What travesty and mock heroic share is an incongruity between form and matter, a deliberate infringement of decorum, in French a 'disconvenance'; what divides them is given lapidary expression in Charles Perrault's distinction between the two, "disconvenance en deux manières, l'une en parlant bassement des choses les plus relevées, et l'autre en parlant magnifiquement des choses les plus basses" ("incongruity of two kinds, the one speaking in low terms of the most exalted things, and the other speaking in grand terms of the lowliest things").[12]

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[9] Mynors (1990) 268.

[10] Kotliarevsky (2004).

[11] 'Mock heroic' and 'mock epic' may be used interchangeably, but Robertson (2009) would make a distinction between the two: see n. 42.

[12] Perrault (1692) iii.296.

In France and England, the fashion for mock heroic follows, and is responsible for eclipsing, the fashion for travesty. The key document in the history of mock heroic is Boileau's *Le Lutrin* ("The lectern") of 1674. In his preface "Au lecteur", Boileau presents *Le Lutrin* as a new kind of burlesque, in contrast to the "burlesque" that is the travesty: "C'est un burlesque nouveau, dont je me suis avisé en notre langue: car, au lieu que dans l'autre burlesque, Didon et Enée parlaient comme des harengères et des crocheteurs, dans celui-ci une horlogère et un horloger parlent comme Didon et Enée" ("It is a new kind of burlesque on which I have ventured in our language; for, while in the other kind of burlesque, Dido and Aeneas speak like fishwives and picklocks, in this a clockmaker and her husband speak like Dido and Aeneas"). Boileau criticises travesty in his Horatianising *Art poétique*, also published in 1674: "Le Parnase parla le langage des Hales" (1.84), in Dryden's translation "Parnassus spoke the cant of Billinsgate".

Fashions have their own momentum, but it is always worth asking what factors external to the self-perpetuating impetus of a fashion encourage its emergence and continuation. Various answers have been suggested to this question in the cases of both travesty and mock heroic, that have to do with both social and political determinants, and with the trajectory of the millennia-long history of the genre of epic.

The first point to be made is that, as parodistic responses to epic, neither travesty nor mock heroic need imply a dismissive disrespect for epic as a genre.[13] Parody, as we all know, is a form of allusion or intertextuality, or what Gérard Genette calls "palimpsest", that may be as respectful of that which is mocked as are other forms of intertextuality or reworkings. These kinds of parasitism, if one may use the image, flourish only so long as the hosts on which they are parasitic are in – at least relatively – vigorous health. As Claude Rawson puts it, "If the epic ceases to matter, the ground for serious mock-heroic disappears".[14]

At the same time, it may be true that travesty and mock heroic are symptoms of a growing unease with the dominant position of epic in the literary system, under stress from changes in readerships, and from evolutions in social and moral values. The seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries are a period in which epic is being displaced from its primacy as a literary form, however much reports of its death may be greatly exaggerated. In particular, this is the time when the novel was beginning to take over from the epic as the dominant long narrative form. In England, the greatest classicising epic, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, published in its twelve-book form in 1674, both marks a *ne plus ultra* of the genre, and already contains within itself both far-reaching critiques of epic, and a

[13] See Warburton's note on *Dunciad* 2.405: "...the ridicule falls not on the thing *imitated*, but *imitating*": "Warburton sets out the standard account of such parodic genres as mock epic" (Rumbold [2009] 209).
[14] Rawson (2010) 181.

large-scale specimen of what is often read as a parody of martial epic, in the war in heaven (Book 6), a war that is hyperbolical but inconsequential, because of the invulnerability of its combatants – inconsequential until the point at which the Son, riding alone in the chariot of the Father, plunges the rebel angels into the bottomless pit. The central action of *Paradise Lost* is the domestic story of a married couple, Adam and Eve, precursor of the domestic narratives of the eighteenth-century novel. The most enduring products of the epic genre in England in the sixty or so years after *Paradise Lost* are not independent new poems (although there was no shortage of such), but derivative, in different ways: firstly, translations, Dryden's *Aeneid* and Pope's *Iliad*, both masterpieces of English poetry in their own right; and, secondly, mock heroic, of which the outstanding examples are Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* and *The Dunciad*.

Another point to note about the propagation of both travesty and mock heroic is the easy crossing of national and linguistic boundaries, not a causal, but a facilitating, determinant. Travesty starts off in Italy, and migrates to France, and thence to England. Boileau's *Le Lutrin* prompts imitations and translations in England, including the homage paid to Boileau by Pope in *The Rape of the Lock*. The traffic was two-way: *The Rape of the Lock* was translated into French prose in 1728, into Italian verse, as *Il riccio rapito*, in 1739, into German verse in 1744 and into Dutch prose in 1772.[15] Literary fashion was as international in early modern Europe as perhaps only fashions in clothing and accessories are in the modern world.

Boileau's *Le Lutrin* and Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* and *The Dunciad* have stood the test of time and achieved the status of classics. The same is not true of the travesties of the *Aeneid*. Genette, in his acute analysis of travesty in *Palimpsests*,[16] thinks that the ephemerality of travesty is due to the fact that it brings epic up to date, and so fades with its topicality. This cannot be the whole story, since mock heroic also applies the hallowed forms of epic to the contemporary, and usually trivial: *Le Lutrin* takes off from a dispute between the treasurer and precentor of the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris; Samuel Garth's *The Dispensary* from a dispute between the Royal College of Physicians and the Company of Apothecaries; and Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* from Lord Petre's cutting off of a lock of Arabella Fermor's hair, while *The Dunciad* satirises the literary scene of Pope's own day.

In what follows, I will proceed chronologically. I will start with the travesty, which is wholly dependent on the *Aeneid*, and then move on to mock heroic.[17] Mock heroic deploys the

[15] Information in Tillotson (1954) 105.
[16] Genette (1997) 56–65.
[17] Jump (1972) includes surveys of both travesty and mock heroic.

themes, forms and language of epic, writing to a recipe that need not constantly allude to specific models or intertexts, but Virgil is inevitably a major presence. I shall focus on those aspects and episodes of mock heroic that do acknowledge the Virgilian model.

The label 'travesty' derives from the first such exercise, Giambattista Lalli's (1572–1637) *L'Eneide travestita* (1634).[18] Lalli presents his work as a continuation of the task of translating the *Aeneid*, in his "To the reader" ["Al lettore"]. He says that the *Aeneid* had already been translated ("tradotto") "in lingua toscana", partly in ottava rima, partly in verso sciolto (blank verse); it would have done an injustice to the poem not to translate it ("tradurlo") also "into a delightful and playful style, so that the taste for it might be more universal, and so that everyone could find suitable relief in the hours of taking breath from serious business" ("in dilettevole stile giocoso, affinchè il gusto fosse più universale, e potesse ciascuno, nell'ora di respirare dalle gravi occupazioni, prendere opportuno sollevamento"). The claim is that this kind of "translation" will win a wider readership for Virgil's epic. However, Lalli continues, he was concerned that he might cheapen ("avvilire") the majesty of the epic language, "and it might seem that this incomparable author, previously clothed in gold, should wish to be disguised (*travestir*) in poor and coarse rags" ("e parea che quell' incomparabile autore già vestito d'oro, di poveri e ruvidi panni travestir si volesse"). Nevertheless, one day, bored of more serious occupations, he says, I hastily translated four octaves, and was encouraged, and finally prevailed upon, by friends to continue, finishing the job in eight months – so displacing the responsibility for cheapening Virgil on to others. The use of low and vulgar words might occasionally give rise to "il grazioso", "prettiness"; maxims ("motti") and proverbs, and less noble and uncivil ("poco civili") words, are a route to the generation of wit and laughter ("l'arguzia e il riso"). Returning to the topic of translation, Lalli says that his is not a word for word "volgarizzamento" of the poem, but "in the manner of paraphrase" ("con modo parafrastico"). "Virgil's famous work, like gold wrapped in rags, will never lose its perfection as a result" ("L'opera famosa di Virgilio, come oro ravvolto negli stracci, non perderà per questo mai la sua perfezione"). Finally, Lalli situates his work within classical contexts: he has aimed to produce something in jest and in a playful style, to avoid the criticism directed at Homer for writing his *Batrachomyomachia* "in too harmonious a manner" ("troppo armonosiamente"). Lalli thus anticipates the distinction made by Boileau and Perrault between the burlesque of travesty and the burlesque of mock heroic. Rather, Lalli hopes that he will achieve what Pliny the Younger claimed could be achieved by the production of playful light verse in the intervals of relaxing from more serious literary endeavours: "these things are called trifles (*lusus*); but these trifles sometimes win no less

[18] I have used the text in Lalli (1822) (accessible on Google Books). On Lalli and Scarron see Stackelberg (1982).

glory than serious compositions" (*lusus uocantur; mihi* [*sed hi*] *lusus non minorem interdum gloriam, quam seria consequuntur*, Pliny, *Ep.* 7.9.10).[19]

To give the flavour, I offer two samples of Lalli's travesty. Firstly, the Prologue:

> Io canto l'arme, e 'l bravo Capitano,
> D'una Troja figliuol, che al Tebbro venne;
> E per terra e per mar con tempo strano,
> Fortune del gran diavolo sostenne:
> Gli fe' Giunone più d'un sopra mano;
> Portò i suoi Dei nel sacco, e gli mantenne:
> I suoi fondaro, a rischio de le coste,
> Roma, e fornilla poi di calde arroste.
>
> I sing the arms and the good captain, son of a sow/whore/Troy, who came to the Tiber, and, on land and sea, in difficult weather, endured the fortunes/storms of the great devil. Juno gave him more than one blow from above; he carried his gods in his bag, and kept them safe. Risking their ribs, his men founded Rome, and then supplied it with hot chestnuts.

Secondly, the end of the interview in Book 1 between Aeneas and his disguised mother, at the point where Venus reveals her true self as she leaves her son (*Aen.* 1.402–9):

> Così diss' ella, e a un tratto indi sparita
> Di faville e d' ambrosia empì la terra;
> E mandò al naso tali odori e tanti,
> Quanti n' ha seco un profumier di guanti.
>
> Enea, come un fanciul, che tiene in mano
> Stretto un augel, che nel più bel gli scappa,
> Segue pur lei con l' occhio di lontano;
> Ma faccia quanto vuol, non la richiappa:
> E grida, ahi madre, ahi con che modo strano
> Queste beffe mi fai sotto la cappa?

[19] Pliny here perhaps remembers the words of Virgil at the beginning of the fourth *Georgic* (*in tenui labor; at tenuis non gloria* ..., 4.6–7), which is certainly echoed at Tacitus, *Ann.* 4.32.3, *nobis in arto et inglorius labor*.

> Perchè non mostri al figlio il volto istesso,
> E toccarti la man non mè concesso?
>
> So she spoke, and, suddenly disappearing, she filled the earth with sparks and ambrosia, and wafted to the nose such and so many odours as a perfumer of gloves has in store. Aeneas, like a child who holds a bird tightly in his hand, which escapes from him just at the best moment, nonetheless follows her with his eye at a distance, but, do as he will, cannot grab her again; and shouts, "Ah, mother, why do you play these pranks on me under the cloak? Why do you not show your son your true face, and why am I not allowed to touch your hand?"

Lalli was followed in France in the next decade by Paul Scarron's wildly successful *Le Virgile travesti*, which, between 1648 and 1653, Scarron carried through as far as Book 8 of the *Aeneid*.[20] Scarron's title *Le Virgile travesti* declares that his is a reclothing of Lalli's *L'Eneide travestita* in a French translation, with the slight swerve from *"L'Eneide"* to *"Virgile"*. Scarron establishes his independence from Lalli by what might be described as a hypercharacterisation of Lalli's distortion of the Virgilian text. Lalli's ottava rima is replaced by the octosyllabic 'vers burlesque', marked as 'low' in distinction to the alexandrines of French epic. The low humour is intensified. A nineteenth-century scholar noted that Lalli lowered Virgil by a couple of tones, Scarron by several octaves.[21] There is an increased concentration on the body and on food, a Rabelaisian carnivalesque, with a liking for long lists. Even allowing for the greater length of the hexameter compared to the octosyllable, there is an enormous expansion of the bulk of the Latin original: Scarron's Book 4, for example, comes to 3030 lines, in comparison to Virgil's 705 lines. Epic objectivity is shattered through the frequent use of anachronism, eliding the distance between the epic legendary past and the familiar present day, and through the constant intrusion of the writer's first person, providing what sometimes amounts to a running commentary on his handling of the narrative, in which the "je" of Scarron elbows out the reticent *ego* of the original author, who becomes the source of information for the author of the travesty ("messire Maron …": "Master Virgil tells us …"). "Je" is indeed the first word of *Le Virgile travesti*, in a rewriting of the *Ille ego* proem, which gives a first sampling of the profound difference of tone that separates the travesty from its original:

[20] Text: Serroy (1988), with systematic bibliography.
[21] Morillot (1888) 192–3.

Je, qui chantai jadis Typhon,
D'un style qu'on trouva bouffon,
Aujourd'hui, de ce style même,
Encor qu'en mon visage blême,
Chacun ait raison de douter
Si je pourrai m'en acquitter,
Devant que la mort qui tout mine,
Me donne en proie à la vermine,
Je chante cet homme pieux,
Qui vint, chargé de tous ses dieux
Et de Monsieur son père Anchise,
Beau vieillard à la barbe grise,
Depuis la ville où les Grégeois
Occirent tant de bons bourgeois,
Jusqu'à celle où le pauvre Rème
Fut tué par son frère même,
Pour avoir, en sautant, passé
De l'autre côté d'un fossé.

I, who whilom sung of Typhon, in a style thought to be farcical, today, in the same style – although from my pale complexion, anyone might have reason to doubt that I could finish the task before death, which destroys everything, gives me as prey for the worms – I sing this pious man, who came, loaded with all his gods, and with monsieur his father Anchises, a fine old man with a grey beard, from the town where the Greeks killed so many good burghers, to the town where poor Remus was killed by his own brother, because, taking a jump, he had crossed from the other side of a ditch.

In his dedication "À la reine" (Anne of Austria, the Queen Mother, and regent from 1643 to 1651, during the minority of her son, Louis XIV) Scarron styles himself as a "humble petit faiseur de vers burlesques" ("humble little maker of burlesque verses"). His stated aim is similar to that of Lalli, to raise an occasional laugh, and to give pleasure, but he also draws attention to the lofty status of his addressee: "And why should my book not please her, since the most insignificant monkey can sometimes amuse the spirits of the loftiest circles?" ("Et pourquoi ne lui plaira-t-il pas, puisque la moindre guenon peut quelquefois divertir l'esprit du monde le plus relevé?"). A "guenon" literally means a female monkey, and colloquially an

ugly (old) woman. Scarron alludes in jest to his own physical deformity, an arthritis-ridden dwarf. The social and physical distance between writer and addressee mirrors the 'disconvenance' between high and low that defines the travesty: the lowest touching the highest, the queen condescending to the gutter. Scarron stands to his patron in the same relationship as travesty to epic. But, a cat may look at a queen. The image of a monkey perhaps also alludes to the way that Scarron apes the *Aeneid*. For a much earlier example of simian parody of a Virgilian image one might compare the Pompeian wall-painting of the group of Aeneas, Anchises and Ascanius fleeing from Troy, in the shape of dog-headed apes.[22]

I don't know whether we have any evidence that the queen enjoyed *Le Virgile travesti*. Genette talks of the "lower-middle-class public of *Virgile travesti*", for whom epic, distanced by grandeur and time, is "familiarized" by burlesque trivialisation. I suspect this is only part of the story: *Le Virgile travesti* was a runaway success, and established a wider fashion for burlesque and travesty, that was surely enjoyed by the upper-class and well-educated, as well as by the *petite bourgeoisie*. More plausibly it has been claimed that the success of *Le Virgile travesti* is partly to be explained by the fact that it coincided with the rise of the novel in France. This was a time when the *roman épique* was in the ascendant over the *roman comique*. The *roman épique* was also the target of Scarron's burlesque, in sympathy with the realism of the comic novel. Tiring of *Le Virgile travesti*, which he abandoned before completing Book 8, he turned to *Le Roman comique* (1651–7), the history of a troupe of strolling actors. The birth of the realistic novel thus owes something to the travesty of epic.

It has also been claimed that the iconoclastic disrespect displayed by *Le Virgile travesti* mirrors the political conditions of the time in which it was produced, a period of crisis of authority; the years of its publication coincide exactly with the period of the Fronde, the civil wars of 1648–53 in which Louis XIV faced the opposition of the French princes, nobility and people. This is perhaps too easy an equation, belied, it would seem, by Scarron's dedication of the work to the Queen Mother. A further counter-argument might be drawn from the political conditions in England at the time of the publication of the most successful of the English travesties of Virgil, Charles Cotton's *Scarronides*, a travesty of Books 1 and 4 of the *Aeneid*, published respectively in 1664 and 1665, a few years after the restoration of the monarchy.[23] It would be easy to see *Scarronides* as an expression of the exuberant spirits of the Restoration, continuing in English a fashion with which the English court had come into contact while in exile in France, at a time when Scarron's popularity was at its height. Things may be more complicated, since there was also a pre-existing English tradition of

[22] Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples, inv. 9089; discussed by Clarke (2007) 151–7, with plate 16.
[23] Modern critical edition: Dust (1992).

'drollery' that mixed scatology with classical works, going back to the 1650s, in part an expression of protest against the humourlessness of Puritanism. Closely related to travesty is another very popular work of the time, Samuel Butler's satirical epic *Hudibras*, published from 1662 onwards, a polemic against Roundheads, Puritans and Presbyterians.

Scarron's title declared his dependence on Lalli; Cotton's title *Scarronides* declares him to be the "son of Scarron".[24] Succession is one, central, epic theme that the writers of travesty seem to take seriously. *Scarronides* owes much to *Le Virgile travesti*, but is far from being merely a translation into English. Cotton in fact departs much further from the Virgilian text than either his Italian or French predecessor. Some passages are omitted entirely, or replaced with something different. For example, the famous wounded deer simile of Dido's love in Book 4 is replaced with a comparison to a heifer stung by a gadfly. This is claimed as autopsy ("So have I seen in pastures fair", 179), but owes more to Virgil's description of the gadfly in *Georgics* 3, redirected by Cotton to a crudely physical description of the sex-crazed Dido: "An heifer young when she doth itch, | With gad-breeze sticking in her breech" (181–2). A few lines earlier, Virgil's *est mollis flamma medullas* ("the flame eats at her soft marrow", *Aen.* 4.66) has become "Dido for love in woeful wise, | Bubbles and boils, and broils and fries" (173–4). Scatology and sex, whether explicit or by innuendo, play a major role in lowering the tone through reference to bodily functions, particularly in Book 4. The social status of the characters is also brought down. Dido has a dairy in Carthage. When Mercury comes down to tell Aeneas to leave Carthage, Aeneas' city-founding has been reduced to "building for the queen a jakes" (664), quarreling with the carpenters who "would not follow his advice | (As workmen still are over-wise) | Which made him foam, and flirt out spittle, | Because they made the holes too little" (641–4). Smutty English humour has perhaps not changed much over the centuries.

The line of late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century mock heroic[25] begins, as I have said, with Boileau's *Le Lutrin* (published 1674).[26] The great motions of epic are played out in Paris within the urban institutions of the church and the lawcourts. The *casus belli* is a reading desk in the Sainte-Chapelle, placed in storage many years ago, and which the treasurer[27] plots to reinstall at night in order to spite the precentor, who has been giving himself airs by dispensing blessings in the chapel. After the reading desk has been installed and then removed again by the supporters of the precentor, the dispute is taken to the lawcourt, where the two

[24] On Scarron and English travesty see Leavitt (1919).
[25] On mock heroic see Terry (2005); Robertson (2009) ch. 2.
[26] Boileau Despréaux (1674), published together with *L'Art poétique*.
[27] Previously Bishop of Coutances.

sides descend into a battle of books – the model for Swift's *The Battle of the Books* – hurling at each other the stock of a bookseller. Finally, the First President of the Parliament of Paris, Guillaume de Lamoignon, Boileau's patron and protector, restores the peace. The opening corresponds closely to the opening of the *Aeneid*: eight lines outlining the mission of the hero (seven lines in the *Aeneid*), followed by a four-line invocation of the Muse.

Je chante les combats, et ce prélat terrible
Qui, par ses longs travaux et sa force invincible.
Dans une illustre église exerçant son grand cœur,
Fit placer à la fin un lutrin dans le chœur.
C'est en vain que le chantre, abusant d'un faux titre,
Deux fois l'en fit ôter par les mains du chapitre:
Ce prélat, sur le banc de son rival altier
Deux fois le reportant, l'en couvrit tout entier.
  Muse, redis-moi donc quelle ardeur de vengeance
De ces hommes sacrés rompit l'intelligence,
Et troubla si longtemps deux célèbres rivaux:
Tant de fiel entre-t-il dans l'âme des dévots!

Arms and the priest I sing, whose martial soul
No toil could terrify, no fear control;
Active it urged his outward man to dare
The num'rous hazards of a pious war:
Nor did th' immortal prelate's labours cease,
Till victory had crowned 'em with success;
Till his gay eyes sparkling with fluid fire,
Beheld the desk reflourish in the choir.
In vain the chanter and the chapter strove;
Twice they essayed the fatal desk to move:
As oft the prelate with unwearied pain,
Fixed it to his proud rival's seat again.
  Muse, let the holy warrior's rage be sung;
Why sacred minds infernal Furies stung:
What spark inflamed the zealous rival's heat,
How heavenly breasts with human passions beat!

(translated John Ozell)

This starts with *Arma uirumque cano*, "Je chante les combats, et ce prélat terrible", and ends with *tantaene animis caelestibus irae?* in "Tant de fiel entre-t-il dans l'âme des dévots!" ("Does so much bile enter the souls of the devout?"). The (free and expanded) English translation (1708) by John Ozell makes the Virgilian model even clearer: "Arms and the priest I sing, whose martial soul | No toil could terrify, no fear control …". The overall shape of the plot is also ultimately Virgilian, a conflict between the personifications of Discord and Piety, or, to put it in Virgilian terms, a conflict between lower-case *furor* and *pietas*. The actions of the personification of Discord mirror closely those of Juno and her agent the Fury Allecto in the *Aeneid*. For example, Discord's indignant speech at the beginning, when she sees that the Sainte-Chapelle alone, amidst her empire of tumultuous disorder, enjoys a state of fraternal peace, echoes the indignant speeches of Juno that motivate the action of the *Aeneid* in Books 1 and 7. The abstraction of the Virgilian plot into an opposition of personifications is in the line of a long tradition of post-Virgilian epic, in which Statius' *Thebaid* and the panegyrical epics of Claudian play an important part. The war in Latium triggered by Juno and Allecto in the second half of the *Aeneid* is partly in the image of much more recent social and civil wars in Roman history, and the conflict in *Le Lutrin* is a kind of civil war, disrupting the initial "paix fraternelle".

It is also a civilian war, in which no serious injuries are inflicted and no one gets killed. Claude Rawson notes that "the formula of the battle without killing becomes an essential pattern of the mock-heroic canon";[28] in an English context Rawson notes the importance of Milton's war in heaven, in which no one gets killed because all the participants were angels, and so "incapable of mortal injury | Imperishable" (*PL* 6.434–5). The books hurled as weapons in Canto 5 of *Le Lutrin* inflict injuries allegorical of their contents. Ozell substitutes English titles for Boileau's French: "Some luckless hand a Beaumont's *Psyche* throws | At Clotho's head, and smote him 'twixt the brows; | When, strange effect! the brawny priest began | To yawn and stretch; lethargic stiffness ran | Thro' all the magazines of vital heat; | The veins no more life's quickening task repeat; | The soporiferous rhymes benumbed his breast, | And with strong opiates forced him down to rest". Foxe's weighty *Book of Martyrs*, however, does draw "streams of blood", being, as it is, "a folio swoll'n with floods of gore".

Boileau incorporates an amatory element in his ecclesiastical and legal satire, in the person of the wife of the treasurer's wig-maker, one of his supporters who have been chosen by lot to venture on their night-raid on the Sainte-Chapelle. The monster Renommée (Virgil's *Fama*) brings news to her that her husband is abandoning her bed,

[28] Rawson (2010) 171.

at which she launches into a version of Dido's recriminations to Aeneas, beginning (2.12–22):

"Oses-tu bien encor, traître, dissimuler?"
Dit-elle; "et ni la foi que ta main m'a donnée,
Ni nos embrassemens qu'a suivis l'hyménée,
Ni ton épouse enfin, toute prête à périr,
Ne sauroient donc t'ôter cette ardeur de courir!
Perfide! si du moins, à ton devoir fidèle,
Tu veillois pour orner quelque tête nouvelle,
L'espoir d'un juste gain, consolant ma langueur,
Pourroit de ton absence adoucir la longueur.
Mais quel zèle indiscret, quel aveugle entreprise
Arme aujourd'hui ton bras en faveur d'une église?"

And would'st thou hide this mischief of thy mind?
And can nor sacred vows, nor duty bind?
Dar'st thou then, traitor, so perfidious prove
To plighted Faith, and hymeneal Love?
Are all th' endearments of a wedded life,
The soft embraces of a tender wife,
(A wife alas! just ready to expire)
Too weak to conquer one unkind desire?
False man, wert thou obliged to wear away
The tedious hours from eve to dawning day;
With well-formed curls, or with dissembled hair,
The beau to furnish, or adorn the fair:
I could, perhaps, without regret or pain,
The want of due benevolence sustain;
Thy absence sweetened with the hopes of gain.
But thus to leave your partner in the lurch,
With a mad zeal in favour of a church?

It would be a different matter, she complains, if the wig-maker was, in Ozell's expansion of Boileau's French, "obliged to wear away | The tedious hours from eve to dawning day; | With well-formed curls, or with dissembled hair, | The beau to furnish, or adorn the fair". Was this

one of the things in Pope's mind when he chose to write a mock epic on *The Rape of the Lock*, one of whose classical models was the Callimachean and Catullan "The lock of Berenice", a poem that feeds into Virgil's tragedy of Dido in more than one passage of the *Aeneid*?[29]

Boileau's *Le Lutrin* was certainly the primary model for Samuel Garth's (1661–1719) *The Dispensary*, also in six cantos, of 1699.[30] The poem enjoyed great success: three editions were published in 1699, and eight in all during Garth's lifetime (with successive revisions and additions). Like *Le Lutrin*, *The Dispensary* elevates a professional quarrel into a full-scale epic narrative. The quarrel was between the Royal College of Physicians, of which Garth was a member, and the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries; the occasion was the building of a medical dispensary for the poor at the Royal College, which the Society of Apothecaries took as a threat to its interests. This is another kind of civil war, whose overall trajectory, as laid out in the brief prologue, is similar to that of *Le Lutrin* (1.1–6):

> Speak, Goddess! since 'tis thou that best canst tell,
> How ancient leagues to modern discord fell;
> And why physicians were so cautious grown
> Of others' lives, and lavish of their own;
> How by a journey to th' Elysian Plain
> Peace triumphed, and old time returned again.

Garth's Canto 6, like Book 6 of the *Aeneid*, relates a journey to the Underworld. The goddess of Health, Hygeia, guides one of the physicians, Celsus, beneath the earth, through a subterranean topography which filters the Virgilian katabasis through the excavation of a Virgilian tradition of epic and didactic that tracks through Girolamo Fracastoro, like Garth a physician-poet, the author of the *Syphilis*, Abraham Cowley, and Milton, to arrive at the Elysian Fields. There the shade of William Harvey gives advice on "How her lost health your science may regain" (6.334), referring the Royal Society of Physicians to their Visitor, the orator and statesman 'Atticus', a mask for the chancellor Lord Somers, as the renowned jurist Guillaume de Lamoignon restores peace at the end of *Le Lutrin*.

The poem ends in decidedly non-mock heroic mode, with panegyric that alludes to Anchises' praise of Augustus, the climax of the Virgilian Parade of Heroes: once the College of Physicians has had its wounds healed by 'Atticus', "Then Nassau's Health shall be your

[29] Mason (1969/70) analyses the effect of Boileau's filtering of the Virgilian scene through its prior imitation in Corneille's *Polyeucte*, in which Paulina tries to restrain her husband as he leaves her to go to his martyrdom.

[30] On *The Dispensary* see Ackerman (1979). On eighteenth-century English mock heroic and burlesque see Bond (1932); Broich (1990).

glorious aim, | His life should be as lasting as his fame". William III is praised as a prince of both military conquest and peace, in the very Virgilian language of "cosmic whiggism", as Philip Connelly puts it[31] – or cosmos and imperium, as I put it – language frequently found in panegyric of William III and Queen Anne. Harvey calls for the celebration in song of William's "God-like pow'r, | Which did the lab'ring universe restore; | Fair Albion's cliffs wou'd echo to the strain, | And praise the arm that conquered, to regain | The earth's repose, and empire o'er the main" (6.363–7). Harvey wishes that William should be borne skywards by Jove's eagle late in time, to become a star, the close neighbour of the apotheosed Hercules. Hercules is a comparandum for Anchises' Augustus, and frequently used in the political iconography of William III. But, as a constitutional monarch and hero of British liberties, William outdoes the Julian *gens* which forms the climax of the Virgilian Parade of Heroes: "Had some famed patriot, of the Latin blood, | Like Julius great, and like Octavius good, | But thus preserved the Latian liberties, | Aspiring columns soon had reached the skies: | Loud Io'*s* the proud Capitol had shook, | And all the statues of the gods had spoke" (6.378–83).

Virgil's Parade of Heroes looks to an end of Roman history in the distant future, but the *Aeneid* has another six books to run before the war in Latium comes to an end. Garth's battle between the Physicians and the Apothecaries has already taken place at the end of Canto 5. This is another non-lethal battle in mock-heroic mode – to sing of it Garth looks to "the Muse that sung the frogs in arms" (5.232), the *Batrachomyomachia*. The weapons are the instruments of the medical trade: caustics, emetics, cathartics, syringes, gallypots and phials. The climactic encounter is between Stentor, leader of the Physicians, and the anti-dispensarian physician Querpo, in a replay of the final duel between Aeneas and Turnus. Stentor falls, and supplicates Querpo, who is on the point of yielding to pity, until "He spy'd *Signetur*[32] writ upon his breast" (340), and is "fired with more than mortal fury". But the Virgilian ending is cancelled by a final swerve from epic sublimity into something that smacks more of travesty than of mock heroic, in the closing lines of the Canto (5.349–62):

> With that he drew a lancet in his rage,
> To puncture the still supplicating sage. 350
> But while his thoughts that fatal stroke decree,
> Apollo interposed in form of fee.
> The chief great Pæan's golden tresses knew,
> He owned the god, and his raised arm withdrew.

[31] Connelly (2016).

[32] "Let it be labelled", in prescribing a medicine. Cf. *Aen.* 12.944, *umeris inimicum insigne gerebat*.

Thus often at the Temple-Stairs we've seen
Two Tritons of a rough athletic mien,
Sourly dispute some quarrel of the flood,
With knuckles bruised, and face besmeared in blood;
But at the first appearance of a fare,
Both quit the fray, and to their oars repair.

The hero so his enterprise recalls,
His fist unclinches, and the weapon falls.

I have left until last the three greatest examples of English mock heroic: Dryden's *Mac Flecknoe*, first published in 1682, which may claim to be the first fully formed English mock heroic poem, indebted to Boileau's *Le Lutrin* published just eight years previously; and Pope's two masterpieces, *The Rape of the Lock* (1711 in two cantos, 1714 in five cantos) and *The Dunciad* (1728 in three books, 1743 in four books). To follow through the contribution of Virgil to the weave of these three poems in detail would take more than a lecture in itself, and I have time only for a few points.

The Rape of the Lock makes its Virgilian models[33] very clear in the opening Proposition and Invocation (1–6, 11–12):

What dire offence from am'rous causes springs,
What mighty contests rise from trivial things,
I sing—This verse to Caryl, Muse! is due:
This, ev'n Belinda may vouchsafe to view:
Slight is the subject, but not so the praise,
If she inspire, and he approve my lays.

In tasks so bold, can little men engage,
And in soft bosoms dwells such mighty rage?

Lines 5–6 are an adaptation of *Georgics* 4.6–7, *in tenui labor; at tenuis non gloria, si quem | numina laeua sinunt auditque uocatus Apollo* (see above). Tillotson points out that Pope's phrasing judiciously takes elements from two translations of the *Georgics*:[34]

[33] On the use of Virgil in *The Rape of the Lock* see Rudat (1976).
[34] Tillotson (1954) *ad loc.*

Charles Sedley (1639–1701), "The subject's humble, **but not so the praise**, | If any Muse assist the poet's **lays**"; and Dryden, "**Slight is the subject**, but the praise not small, | If heav'n assist, and Phoebus hear my call". This is comparable to the procedure of Dryden (and other translators) in appropriating and improving on the phrasing of previous translators. And, once again, we are reminded of the affinity between the work of the translator and that of the producer of travesty or mock epic. Line 11 continues the programmatic contrast of *Georgics* 4 of great and small ("In tasks so bold", "little men"), a contrast continued in the following line 12, in the opposition between "soft bosoms" and "mighty rage", but now transposed into an obvious imitation of the summing-up phrase, or *epiphonema*, of the prologue to the *Aeneid*, *tantaene animis caelestibus irae?* (1.12), which had previously been adapted in one of the main modern models for *The Rape of the Lock*, Boileau's *Le Lutrin*, 1.12 (the same line number): "Tant de fiel entre-t-il dans l'âme des devots?"[35]

Pope returns at the very end to the claim for fame, as the trivial lock of hair, and its trivial separation from the head of its bearer, is set in the perspectives of the finality of death, of the vastness of celestial time, and of the immortality of fame (5.141–50):

> Then cease, bright Nymph! to mourn thy ravished hair,
> Which adds new glory to the shining sphere!
> Not all the tresses that fair head can boast,
> Shall draw such envy as the Lock you lost.
> For, after all the murders of your eye,
> When, after millions slain, yourself shall die:
> When those fair suns shall set, as set they must,
> And all those tresses shall be laid in dust,
> This lock, the Muse shall consecrate to fame,
> And 'midst the stars inscribe Belinda's name.

Tillotson notes "The external history of the poem has been one of universal fame".[36] *At tenuis non gloria* indeed. The catasterism of Belinda's lock is compared explicitly to the Lock of Berenice ("Not Berenice's locks first rose so bright", 5.129), but Pope, I think, is also aware of Virgil's allusion to the Lock of Berenice at the end of *Aeneid* 4, when Iris cuts off a lock of the dying Dido's hair to release her from her death struggles. *The Rape of the Lock*

[35] Ozell is further from the Virgilian model: "How heavenly breasts with human passions beat!"
[36] Tillotson (1954) 105.

is another example of the mock heroic in which battle fury does not lead to (literal) death. In the final combat between the beauties and their admirers the "incensed" Belinda "drew a deadly bodkin from her side", to dispatch the Baron, but the *coup de grâce* is forestalled by the discovery that the lock has disappeared, so removing the prize for which the battle is being fought. That second removal of the lock provides the comic closure that replaces *Aeneid* 4's resolution of the tragic story of Dido with the removal of her lock. Intermittent allusions to the story of Dido punctuate the previous narrative: the first two lines of Canto 4 recast the first two lines of *Aeneid* 4, "But anxious cares the pensive nymph oppressed, | And secret passions laboured in her breast". Her cares are for her "ravished hair", not the cares that arise for Dido after her ravishment in the cave. Dido sighs that she would have been all too happy if the Trojan ships had never put to shore in Carthage: *felix, heu nimium felix, si litora tantum | numquam Dardaniae tetigissent nostra carinae* ... (*Aen.* 4.657–8). Pope's Belinda sighs, "Happy! ah ten times happy had I been, | If Hampton-Court these eyes had never seen!" (4.149–50), where her "fav'rite curl" was snatched away. But the event for which Belinda grieves was not entirely trivial, if it is true, as Pope claims, that he was prevailed upon to write *The Rape of the Lock* to heal the estrangement that had arisen between the families of the Fermors and the Petres, when Robert, Lord Petre, cut off a lock of Arabella Fermor's hair. The incident "was taken too seriously", and Pope "wr[o]te a poem to make a jest of it, and laugh them together again" – in the event, not entirely successfully. Slighted honour looms large among early eighteenth-century landed families, as it did in Dido's Carthage.

Succession and empire, two central themes of the *Aeneid*, structure the plots of *Mac Flecknoe* and *The Dunciad*. Dryden's satire on his literary opponent Thomas Shadwell tells of Shadwell's succession to Richard Flecknoe in the empire of Nonsense and Dullness. The Roman analogy is established in the opening lines: "All human things are subject to decay, | And, when Fate summons, monarchs must obey: | This Flecknoe found, who, like Augustus, young | Was called to empire, and had governed long". The central scene of succession draws on Virgilian passages in *Aeneid* 2 and 12, which put the spotlight on the figure for Julian succession, Aeneas' son Ascanius (108–11):[37]

> At his right hand our young Ascanius sate,
> Rome's other hope, and pillar of the state;
> His brows thick fogs, instead of glories, grace,
> And lambent dullness played around his face.

[37] *Aen.* 2.682–4; 12.168, *et iuxta Ascanius, magnae spes altera Romae*.

Having bestowed on Shadwell the insignia of monarchy, Flecknoe bursts out in prophetic mood, after "Repelling from his breast the raging god", like Virgil's Sibyl (*Aen.* 6.77–9), and looks to Shadwell's future empire (139–42):

> "Heavens bless my son! from Ireland let him reign,
> To far Barbadoes on the western main;
> Of his dominion may no end be known,
> And greater than his father's be his throne."

Line 141 combines Virgil's prophetic *imperium sine fine* with the prophecy of the Angel of the Annunciation in Luke, 1:32–3: "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end". This is just one example of Dryden's combination of allusions to Virgilian and biblical succession. Dryden may also stake a claim, through these allusions to succession, to his own pretension to be a successor to Virgil, as he does elsewhere through Virgilian allusion.[38]

Virgilian and biblical are also combined in Pope's *The Dunciad*, which is a vastly expanded reworking of the themes of Dryden's *Mac Flecknoe*.[39] To maintain and further extend her empire, the goddess Dullness anoints, as successor to the poet and playwright Elkanah Settle, Lewis Theobald, in the 1728 edition of *The Dunciad*, and the playwright and poet laureate Colley Cibber, in the 1743 edition. *The Dunciad* contains large-scale parodies of major episodes of the *Aeneid*, including the Parade of Heroes in Book 6, and the games in Book 5. The games are notable in the present context for their revelling in episodes of scatology and sexual innuendo which can claim to be licensed by the one mention of "shit" in the *Aeneid*, the dung (*fimus*: 5.333, 358) of sacrificed cattle in which Nisus slips in the footrace in *Aeneid* 5, an incident that raises a rare smile from Aeneas, as we have seen.

The *Aeneid* allusively places the localised plot of Aeneas' adventures from the sack of Troy to the death of Turnus within much larger structures of cosmic space and cosmic time. *The Dunciad* focuses obsessively on the literary figures of Pope's own day, and their in-fighting; the present-day reader needs a detailed key to identify the large cast of characters, many of whose claim to immortality now rests solely on Pope's merciless satirisation of them. But

[38] See Ricks (1976).

[39] On *The Dunciad* see Robertson (2009) ch. 3; Robertson classifies *The Dunciad* as an example of 'mock-epic', defined as (p. 3) "a group of poems, written over a period from the 1720s to the 1840s, which derive from mock heroic ... but engage in imaginative explorations that burst the bounds of mock heroic" (*The Rape of the Lock* being an example of 'mock heroic').

Pope places the plot, such as it is, within larger perspectives, Miltonic as well as Virgilian. 'Martinus Scriblerus' identifies the "one, great and remarkable action", demanded of *The Dunciad* as of any self-respecting epic, as "the restoration of the reign of Chaos and Night, by the ministry of Dullness their daughter, in the removal of her imperial seat from the City to the polite world; as the action of the *Aeneid* is the restoration of the empire of Troy by the removal of the race from thence to Latium". This *translatio imperii* is set within universal time, since it was in a Hesiodic "eldest time" when Dullness "ruled, in native Anarchy, the mind", in the "old Empire" that she now seeks to restore (1.16–17). This is also another kind of mythological renewal: in the opening prayer-like address to Jonathan Swift, Swift is invited to "behold [Dullness's] mighty wings out-spread | To hatch a new Saturnian age of lead" (1.27–8), welding the Virgilian theme of the return of the golden age of Saturn under Augustus on to the Miltonic image of the Holy Spirit who "with mighty wings outspread | Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast abyss | And mad'st it pregnant" (*PL* 1.20–2).

At the end of *The Dunciad*, the stage of the world is returned to the chaos out of which it was created: "Lo! thy dread empire, Chaos, is restored; | Light dies before thy uncreating word: | Thy hand, great anarch! lets the curtain fall; | And universal darkness buries All" (4.653–6). There are Shakespearean, Miltonic, and Iliadic notes in these strangely powerful lines. The "fall" / "all" rhyme is found in Dryden's translation of Hector's prediction of the fall of Troy in *Iliad* 6: "And yet my mind forebodes, with sure presage, | That Troy shall perish by the Grecian rage: | The fatal day draws on, when I must fall; | And universal ruin cover all" ("The last parting of Hector and Andromache", 114–17). Dryden's second couplet is in fact an addition to the Homeric original, in the gap between lines 449 and 450 of *Iliad* 6 (448–50): ἔσσεται ἦμαρ ὅτ' ἂν ποτ' ὀλώλῃ Ἴλιος ἰρὴ | καὶ Πρίαμος καὶ λαὸς ἐϋμμελίω Πριάμοιο. | ἀλλ' οὔ μοι Τρώων τόσσον μέλει ἄλγος ὀπίσσω... ("There will be a day when sacred Ilios shall perish, and Priam and the people of Priam of the fine ash spear. But the pain of the Trojans hereafter is not so much a care to me..."). The suggestion that the fall of the city will lead to universal ruin strikes a more Virgilian than Homeric note, since the *Aeneid* works with an analogy between city-founding and cosmogony, the analogy that is reversed in Lucan's equation of the collapse of Rome, consequent on civil war, with the end of the world.

By ending with allusion to Dryden, Pope marks himself as a successor to Dryden, hinting at a continuation of the cultural and poetic values for which Dryden stood, a kind of *translatio studii*, not the least important part of which is the maintenance of that living rootedness in the traditions of Greece and Rome, of which Dryden's Homeric and Virgilian translations are evergreen monuments. More particularly, *The Dunciad* is a successor to Dryden's *Mac Flecknoe*. Mock epic poets are as conscious of themselves as successors and rivals to their

predecessors as are the serious epic poets about whom I wrote many years ago in *The Epic Successors of Virgil* (1993). And not just mock epic poets; we have seen that the writers of travesties also proclaim themselves as working in a succession. This was a tradition that continued: the author of a Homeric travesty, *A new and accurate translation of the first book of Homer's Iliad* (Dublin, 1749), goes under the pseudonym of Henry Fitzcotton, "son of Cotton" who wrote *Scarronides*, "the son of Scarron".

Is this a mockery, or travesty, of the line of epic successors that stretches from Homer to Milton, or is it a seriously meant statement of poetic pretension? As often, when we are dealing with mock epic or travesty, the answer seems to lie somewhere in between.

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Illuminating Darkness: Virgilian Ambiguity and Lucan's Underworld

*Revised from a paper given to the Virgil Society on 5 December 2020**

Lucan's *Bellum Civile* (henceforth *BC*) has long been assumed to stand in striking opposition to Virgil's *Aeneid*. The *BC's* opening lines appear to adopt a competitive – even combative – stance relative to Virgil's epic undertaking: Lucan's declaration to sing of *bella plus quam civilia* (Lucan 1.1) goes beyond the *Aeneid*'s theme of *arma virumque* (Virgil, *Aen.* 1.1), while his description of his epic project as *inmensum opus* (Luc. 1.68) outstrips even the "greater" series of events – the war in Italy – which Virgil frames as his *maius opus* (*Aen.* 7.44–5) in the *Aeneid*'s latter books. Lucan's proem, with its visceral imagery of Roman self-harm and language of criminality (Luc. 1.1–7), seems to establish a decidedly destructive trajectory for the poem, a marked diversion from the theme of (extremely) hard-won progress towards Roman greatness which Virgil lays out (*Aen.* 1.1–7). Yet even as his poem's *furor* blossoms like a fresh bloodstain and Lucan presents us with harrowing descriptions of the Roman world in ruins (Luc. 1.24–39, 7.397–406), with laments on the triumph of Caesarian tyranny (Luc. 7.385–459), and with morbid images of the bodies of nations mouldering on the plains of Pharsalus (Luc. 7.617–43),[1] we should not – and cannot – take a wholeheartedly 'pessimistic' approach to the question of the *BC*'s engagement with Virgil's epic.[2] After all, this question depends entirely upon our conception of Virgil and his ambivalence.[3] To

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1 Fantham (2010) 209–11. For an overview of tensions of remembering and forgetting, speech and silence, and civil war, see Thorne (2011).

2 On broader questions of Lucanian optimism and pessimism, particularly regarding the outcome(s) of civil war and Nero's reign, see Sanderson (2020) 190–223, 231–6; and Sanderson (forthcoming), respectively.

3 Casali (2011) 85.

quote Masters: "Lucan is either laying bare the ambiguities inherent in Virgil, or he is setting up a straw Virgil to smash down ... there is ... either a negation of an imagined Virgilian stance, or otherwise an assertion that what is worrying in Virgil's vision should not be left in shadow".[4] Also, Casali has shown that the *BC*'s proem not only challenges Virgil's epic beginning, but also alludes to and builds upon two Virgilian discussions of civil war at the close of *Georgics* 1 (1.489–92) and during the 'parade of heroes' in *Aeneid* 6 (6.826–35).[5] It is therefore, as Narducci has noted, excessively short-sighted to see Lucan only in raging opposition to Virgil.[6]

This study builds upon these discussions of the dynamics of Lucan's interaction with Virgil's epic by considering how some of the most shocking, horrifying, and g(l)oriously overblown elements of the *BC*'s necromancy episode represent a calculated development rather than irreverent perversion of elements already present in the *Aeneid*'s underworld episode.[7] These episodes have often been read in conjunction with one another given their comparable positioning in the sixth book of their respective epics, and their inclusion of key shared elements:[8]

Table 1:

SHARED ELEMENTS	VIRGIL	LUCAN
INTENTIONS	Virg. *Aen.* 6.243–64: Aeneas' brave and honourable intentions	Luc. 6.420–4: Sextus Pompey is unworthy and fear-driven
GAINING ACCESS	Virg. *Aen.* 6.98–155, 236: Aeneas buries Misenus and acquires the golden bough	Luc. 6.667–774: Erictho's necromancy brings the underworld into the upperworld

[4] Masters (1992) 194.
[5] Casali (2011) 85.
[6] Narducci (1979) 35.
[7] Weber (2012) takes a similar approach to Virgil's exploitation of inconsistencies in Homer. On interactions between the dead and the living as a stock feature of ancient epic, see Finkmann (2020); Reitz (2020); Heil (2022) 1–3. For an overview of irreverence in/and Lucan's necromancy, see Pinkham (2020) 36.
[8] For the structuring role of encounters with the dead in epic, see Heil (2022) 24. Finkmann (2020) 750–1, 774, 792–3, notes the presence of at least one of the following "character roles" in epic necromancy scenes: the consulter who requests the necromancy, the necromancer (intermediary between the living and the dead), the prophet ghost tasked with delivering the prophecy; and three distinct stages within the episode – preparations and votive offerings, invocations, conversations with the dead. Cf. Baertschi (2013) 116–19; Heil (2022) 6–7.

PROPHETIC FIGURE	Virg. *Aen.* 6.38–97: The reverent and revered Sibyl respects underworld laws and rites.	Luc. 6.695–718, 730–49: Erictho, while framed as a prophetic *vates* (Luc. 6.590–623), nonetheless bends the chthonic powers to *her* will.[9]
UNDERWORLD VISIONS	Virg. *Aen.* 6.679–702: Anchises leads Aeneas through Elysium to view figures from the future history of Rome.	Luc. 6.775–820: The corpse reanimated by Erictho describes an underworld in turmoil, with the shades of the damned delighting in Roman strife and suffering.[10]

Virgil's underworld episode is broadly understood as a kind of *nekyia*,[11] and the Cumaean Sibyl, Deiphobe, has been identified as not only Aeneas' tour guide for the underworld but also the instructor of a *necromantic* ritual and the facilitator for his conversations with the dead.[12] Given the wider metapoetic use of underworld scenes to explore one's relationship to earlier poetry,[13] this section of the *BC* can offer rich commentaries on Lucan's engagement with Virgil's own underworld episode. I begin by showing that since much of Erictho's characteristic impiety – her association with unspeakable acts, aggressively intimate relationship with the underworld, and execution of necromantic rites – is already present (albeit in a more muted form) in Deiphobe, we cannot read Lucan's witch as an uncomplicated perversion of Virgil's Sibyl. Next, through consideration of the specific means by which Aeneas and Deiphobe and Sextus and Erictho access the underworld, I demonstrate that Virgil's *katabasis* process already contains distinctively necromantic elements: the preparation and arrangement of Misenus' body anticipates Erictho's treatment and reanimation of the unnamed corpse, while the episode's overarching structure and the sacrificial process the Sibyl oversees correspond closely to evocation rituals elsewhere in the literary tradition. Finally, I examine an instance of ambiguity within Virgil's parade of heroes, the mention of the Drusi and the Gracchi (*Aen.* 6.842–3) – an ambiguity which is unpacked further

[9] For parallels between Lucan's Erictho and Virgil's Allecto (*Aen.* 7.341–571), see Tesoriero (2000) 272.
[10] On the limits of the corpse's prophecy, see Masters (1992) 193–9; Pinkham (2020) 34.
[11] On *nekoumanteia* more broadly in Greco-Roman antiquity, see Ogden (2001) xviii.
[12] Ogden (2001) xxvi, xxix; Finkmann (2020) 754. This piece follows Ogden (2001) xix in understanding "necromancy" as "communication with the dead in order to receive prophecy from them". For distinctions between *katabasis* and necromancy, see Heil (2022) 3–4. On necromancy as a particularly transgressive branch of ancient magic, see Gordon (1999) 174–6, 182–4, 253; Ogden (2002) 9–60. Cf. Baertschi (2013) 33–4; Finkmann, Reitz, and Walter (2020).
[13] Parkes (2010); Schiesaro (2013) 20–4; Trinacty (2014) 220–31. Cf. Hardie (1993) 59–65.

and more explicitly in Lucan's presentation of these families within the underworld. This in turn invites a more nuanced and pragmatic reading of Virgil's treatment of Roman history in the underworld. Rather than attempting to frame the *BC*'s relationship with Virgil as being simply contrastive, this piece instead endeavours to understand what the manner of Lucan's engagement with his epic predecessor can reveal to us about the darkness already present within the *Aeneid* itself.

1. Underworld Guides: Lucan's Erictho and the Dark Side of Virgil's Sibyl

Both Virgil's Sibyl and Lucan's Erictho are identified as *vates*,[14] privileged prophetic figures with significant associations with poetic production by the early imperial period.[15] There has been a tendency to read Erictho as the antithesis of Virgil's Sibyl, who is introduced as *sanctissima vates* (*Aen*. 6.65).[16] After all, Lucan's *Thessala vates* (Luc. 6.651) revels in and excels at that which is – at least etymologically – unspeakable: her powers compel the Olympian deities to permit her to commit every kind of crime (*omne nefas superi prima iam voce precantis | concedunt carmenque timent audire secundum*, Luc. 6.527–8).[17] By terming Erictho's god-granted ambitions and direct engagement with the underworld as *nefas*, Lucan appears to construct an unsolvable paradox between Erictho and the *vates*' fundamental affiliation with that which is *fas*.[18] In addition to engaging in particularly savage rites (Luc. 6.507–68, 667–774),[19] Erictho has developed an intimate and near-unparalleled knowledge of the underworld, a realm which should remain undisturbed: *coetus audire silentum, | nosse domos Stygias arcanaque Ditis operti | non superi, non vita vetat* (Luc. 6.513–15).[20] Lucan's use of *nosse* here indicates that this insight has been gained 'first-hand',[21] positioning Erictho's far-reaching powers in stark opposition to Virgil's polite request to speak of the underworld (*Aen*. 6.264–7).[22] Not only does Erictho reveal the underworld's secrets without permission – she shares detailed insights into various underworld figures, their histories, and their weaknesses throughout the necromantic process (Luc. 6.695–718, 722–3, 730–49)[23] – but

[14] For *vates* and necromancy, see Finkmann (2020) 750. On *vates* more broadly, see Newman (1986); Santangelo (2015) 178–9; Sanderson (2020) 26–30.
[15] Newman (1986) 8, 51–2; O'Hara (1990) 177–8. Cf. Sanderson (2020) 26–30, 42–57, 133.
[16] For an overview of such comparisons, see Sanderson (2020) 4–5, 31 (n. 38).
[17] Ahl (1976) 148; O'Higgins (1988) 217; Masters (1992) 205; Pinkham (2020) 25–7.
[18] For *fari, fas*, and *nefas*, see Feeney (1991) 276–83; Bettini (2008) 329–32.
[19] Santangelo (2015) 181–4; McClellan (2019) 159–60. Cf. Martindale (1980) 364–5; Gordon (1987) 239.
[20] Sanderson (2020) 37–8. Tesoriero (2000) 184 notes the emphatic use of *opertus* here to stress the "special relationship" Erictho enjoys with the unnamed underworld god. Cf. Finiello (2005) 164; Pinkham (2020) 29.
[21] For other examples of *nosse* in this sense, see Tesoriero (2000) 133.
[22] Tesoriero (2000) 133. For discussion of Virgil's appeal, see Horsfall (2013) 230–3. Cf. Sanderson (2020) 37.
[23] Ogden (2001) 177.

we are told that she defies chthonic laws to raise entire armies from the dead (Luc. 6.633–6), even before we witness her put these skills to work at Sextus' request.[24]

The corpse which Erictho reanimates to deliver Sextus' civil war prophecy – identified as a *vates* along with its creator (Luc. 6.628–9) – also demonstrates comparable disregard for underworldly protocols and engages with the underworld in a similarly irreverent manner.[25] Being only recently deceased, the corpse was unable to enter the underworld proper (Luc. 6.777–8).[26] Nonetheless, he gathered relevant information from other shades (*quod tamen e cunctis mihi noscere contigit umbris*: "but what it did befall me to get to know from all the shades", Luc. 6.789), knowledge which *noscere* here suggests was gathered 'first-hand'.[27] In fact, as the corpse's underworld description unfolds, he indicates that he himself *saw* much of what he is relaying, *vidi … vidi* (Luc. 6.785, 795).[28] The affirmative and personal tone of the utterance's opening line (*tristia non equidem Parcarum stamina … aspexi*: "I did not indeed see the gloomy threads of the Parcae", Luc. 6.777–8), as well as the use of *contingere* in relation to this reconnaissance (*quod tamen e cunctis mihi noscere contigit umbris*, Luc. 6.779), suggests that the corpse engaged actively and personally with the underworld in order to acquire this knowledge. This candid interaction with the chthonic realm mirrors the necromantic methods by which Erictho exercises her vatic powers. Both Erictho and the corpse can access the underworld's secrets (Luc. 6.513–15, 777–8), communicate with its inhabitants (Luc. 6.565–8, 695–718, 730–49, 779), and construct 'fated' utterances based on what they have learned (Luc. 6.527–8, 780–820). As such, the corpse's account of the situation in the underworld constitutes a kind of 'necromancy within the necromancy', replaying his creator's daring approach to the underworld and effectively returning the dead to the upperworld through his detailed descriptions.

Such a reading of Lucan's Erictho holds as long as we focus primarily upon references to the Sibyl's claims to piety. While Virgil's Deiphobe is apparently well-certified in this area, her credentials are stressed time and again, perhaps a little *too* emphatically. Nonetheless, there are certain ambiguities around her character, powers, and actions which cast a shadow of ambivalence over her and thus complicate a simplistic interpretation of Erictho as merely the tarnished inversion of her Virgilian counterpart. The dynamics of the Sibyl's

[24] On Erictho's offer of an actual *katabasis* at Luc. 6.662–6 and her status as "the embodiment of a supernatural and underworldly worldview", see Masters (1992) 190; Reitz (2020) 453; Heil (2022) 78.

[25] On the limited vatic powers of the reanimated corpse, see Finkmann (2020) 790; Pinkman (2020) 33; Sanderson (2020) 150–62.

[26] Finkmann (2020) 781–2. Cf. Heath (2005) 396–7; Martin (2014) 8–9.

[27] Masters (1992) 198–9; Tesoriero (2000) 245; Finkmann (2020) 790. Cf. Heil (2022) 143.

[28] Tesoriero (2000) 246; Heil (2022) 139–42. For eyewitness accounts and historical autopsy, see, for example, Thucydides 1.22.2–3; Polybius 12.27.7; Marincola (1997) 63–86; Morgan (2000) 51–69.

connection with the goddess Hecate, her power to bend the laws of the underworld, her ability to 'speak the unspeakable' to Aeneas, and the 'hands on' approach she takes to her autopsy of Tartarus, force us to reconsider whether there really is "nothing unauthorized, destructive, wicked, or deceitful about her".[29] Even though we are told that Deiphobe is a priestess of Apollo and Diana (*Aen.* 6.35), as well as a prophetic vessel for the former (*Aen.* 6.9–12, 56–97), Virgil's Sibyl is, as Ogden has observed, "to some extent assimilated to a witch": she is *horrenda* (*Aen.* 6.10), a priestess of Hecate-Trivia (*Aen.* 6.35), and a guide for the epic's central figure to consult the underworld.[30] After Aeneas has acquired the golden bough and dealt with the body of Misenus – an episode to which we will turn shortly – the Sibyl offers a sacrifice to Hecate (*Aen.* 6.247) as part of a wider ritual to allow their passage into the underworld (*Aen.* 6.236–63). Horsfall notes that here Hecate is "clearly viewed as a principal deity of the underworld", despite her broader powers and association with witches.[31] While this may be the case on the surface, given the extensive prior and contemporary traditions relating to Hecate, witches, and witchcraft, it is impossible to entirely set aside the potentially transgressive undertones of this connection.

This is especially significant when we consider Hecate's connection with the horrible and *un*speakable activities of witches.[32] For example, Apollonius Rhodius dreads to specify the sacrifices Medea and the Argonauts make to Hecate: ...καὶ δὴ τὰ μέν, ὅσσα θυηλὴν | κούρη πορσανέουσα τιτύσκετο – μήτε τις ἴστωρ | εἴη μήτ᾽ ἐμὲ θυμὸς ἐποτρύνειεν ἀείδειν – | ἄζομαι αὐδῆσαι ("I stand in dread of telling all the things that the girl made ready in preparing the sacrifice: let no-one be acquainted with it, and let my heart not urge me to sing of it", Ap. Rhod. 4.247–50), details of which should not be known by mankind.[33] Horace implies that Canidia – who invokes Hecate and Tisiphone during her magical activities (Horace, *Sat.* 1.8.33–4) – makes no distinction between what should and should not be said and presumably speaks the unspeakable (*quid dixit aut quid tacuit?* Horace, *Epod.* 5.49), while preparing to harvest a child's body parts for a love potion.[34] Deiphobe is framed as a *vates*, a purveyor of *fas* – of things which are divinely permitted to be spoken.[35] However, Virgil also tells us that her links to Hecate go far beyond the sacrifice scene: guardianship of

[29] Ogden (2001) 147. For the challenges and impossibilities of underworld autopsy in ancient epic, see Heil (2022) 33–7, 138–9.

[30] Ogden (2001) 146. See *ibid.* xxvii, xxix on the Cumaean Sibyl's long-standing association with necromancy.

[31] Horsfall (2013) 140. For Hecate-Trivia as one of the patron goddesses of Avernus, see Ogden (2001) 69.

[32] For Hecate and witches more broadly, see Ogden (2002) 112, 116, 273. On Hecate, witches, and disturbance of the dead, see, for example, Theocritus, *Id.* 2.10–16; Horace, *Sat.* 1.8.25–45.

[33] Duncan (2001) 49. There is also a tantalising element of Hecate's own 'un-*see*-ability' at Ap. Rhod. 3.1194–220.

[34] Mankin (1995) 125.

[35] For a summary of discussions of *fas*, *fari*, *nefas* and (un)speakability, see Bettini (2008); Sanderson (2020) 27–8, 38,

the groves of Avernus was granted to her by Hecate personally (*Aen.* 6.118, 564),[36] who also granted her privileged knowledge of the underworld's darkest corners (*Aen.* 6.565). It becomes clear that Deiphobe has a particularly close and fruitful relationship with the very goddess who oversees and perhaps even facilitates acts of *nefas*.[37] While by no means as overtly threatening or repulsive as, say, Horace's Canidia or Lucan's Erictho, the nature of her connection with the goddess Hecate – and the chthonic autopsy she is able to carry out as a result of it – nonetheless casts a shadow over her identification by Aeneas as an entirely *sanctissima vates* ("most holy prophetess", *Aen.* 6.65).

The ambivalent implications of this contradiction become even more apparent when we consider just what Hecate's underworldly mentoring has allowed the Sibyl to understand as she describes *impia Tartara* to Aeneas (*Aen.* 6.535–627). This is the only section of the underworld described by the Sibyl rather than seen through Aeneas' eyes.[38] Although the chaste are explicitly forbidden from entering this realm (*nulli fas casto sceleratum insistere limen*, *Aen.* 6.563),[39] the Sibyl has attained an unparalleled understanding of its occupants and torments. Deiphobe warns Aeneas against asking for additional details (*ne quaere doceri | quam poenam, aut quae forma viros fortunave mersit*, *Aen.* 6.614–15), and ends her account by claiming that she would be unable to detail them all: *non, mihi si linguae centum sint oraque centum, | ferrea vox, omnis scelerum comprendere formas, | omnia poenarum percurrere nomina possim* ("Had I a hundred tongues and a hundred mouths, a voice of iron, I could not encompass all the forms of wickedness, nor run through all the varieties of punishment", *Aen.* 6.625–7).[40] This is perhaps to be expected, given that those punished here have committed the most heinous of crimes (*ausi omnes immane nefas ausoque potiti*, *Aen.* 6.624).[41] Tartarus and its inhabitants would seem, therefore, to be unknowable (*ne quaere doceri*), uncontainable and incomprehensible (*non … comprendere*),[42] and ultimately *un*speakable

[36] For parallels between Aeneas' rationale for choosing the Sibyl as his guide and Aristaeus' need for Proteus to help regain his bees at *Geo*. 4.447–9, see Crabbe (1978) 21–2.

[37] For Hecate as an "exceptionally distinguished" teacher here, qualified to give a *full* account of Tartarus, see Horsfall (2013) 398.

[38] Zetzel (1989) 265. On the "confusion and problems" of this account of punishments in Tartarus, see O'Hara (2007) 92. On the "grandiose style" of this subject matter, see Reitz (2020) 446.

[39] Horsfall (2013) 398; Heil (2022) 76–7. Cf. O'Hara (2007) 92.

[40] We are perhaps even set up to anticipate the excursus' sudden ending – Deiphobe falters slightly in her revelation, asking whether she should mention the fates of the Lapiths, Ixion, and Pirithous: *quid memorem Lapithas, Ixiona Pirithoumque?* (*Aen.* 6.601). On the "hundred mouths" motif here, see Gowers (2005); Horsfall (2013) 432–4.

[41] On comparison with other instances of *nefas* in the *Aeneid* here, see Horsfall (2013) 432. The criteria for punishment here (*Aen.* 6.608–14) recall some of the stock themes and elements of civil strife, including kin-conflict, an issue we will turn to in the final section of this piece.

[42] *OLD* s.v. 11.

(*non… percurrere*).[43] Here, we cannot help but recall Virgil's own earlier anxiety of revealing unpermitted aspects of the underworld (*Aen.* 6.266–7).

However, despite these content warnings, the Sibyl delivers a detailed and lengthy account of Tartarus' various judgements, punishments, and occupants (*Aen.* 6.566–624). Now, while she tells us that she is privy to such insights only via Hecate's careful instruction, *ipsa deum poenas docuit perque omnia duxit* ("she herself taught me the gods' punishments and guided me through everything", *Aen.* 6.565),[44] the terminology used here of this instruction and later of her perception of Tartarus demands some further examination. First, Deiphobe suggests that she has taken a 'hands on' (or at least 'eyes on') approach to understanding Tartarus, claiming to have *seen* elements of the region and its occupants: *hic et Aloidas geminos immania vidi | corpora* ("Here too I saw the twin Aloidae, vast figures", *Aen.* 6.582–3); *vidi et crudelis dantem Salmonea poenas* ("I saw also Salmoneus, paying a cruel penalty", *Aen.* 6.585); *nec non et Tityon … cernere erat* ("And Tityos too could be seen", *Aen.* 6.595–6).[45] Horsfall summarises attempts to sanitise the striking inconsistency of this passage: the repetition of this language of seeing (*cernere*, *videre*) could be understood as nothing more than an imitation of Homer's recurring ἰδών in the *nekyia* of *Odyssey* 11 (55, 87), a major model for this episode;[46] alternatively, we could take these terms as indicators of "seeing through Hecate's eyes or in the eye of the imagination".[47] Such interpretations may go some way in momentarily reassuring us of the Sibyl's propriety, but leave two crucial issues unaddressed: the nature of the terminology she uses to engage Aeneas' attention throughout this passage and the distinction between sharing insights gathered by personal autopsy as opposed to those acquired through hearsay.

In addition to indicating that she somehow *saw* these Tartarean secrets, Deiphobe also encourages Aeneas to *look at* and *perceive* elements of Tartarus' exterior (*cernis custodia qualis | vestibulo sedeat, facies quae limina servet?*: "Do you see what kind of sentry sits in the doorway, what shape guards the threshold?", *Aen.* 6.574–5), after outlining the judgements that take place prior to entry (*Aen.* 6.566–74). Since, as Horsfall reminds us, *cernis* here is "not simply synonymous with *vides*",[48] we are perhaps to infer a degree of discernment rather than passive observation here. This encouragement to Aeneas to look *and* comprehend

[43] *OLD* s.v. 5. On the Sibyl's professions of speechlessness here, see Gowers (2005) 178.

[44] Horsfall (2013) 397. For a summary of inconsistencies surrounding and readings of this detail in and beyond antiquity, see Weber (2012); Heil (2022) 68–9, 77.

[45] On the *ekphrastic* quality of this passage signalled by this vocabulary of sight, see Gowers (2005) 177.

[46] Horsfall (2013) 399. On autopsy in Homer's underworld, see Heil (2022) 34–5. Cf. Knauer (1964); Bright (1981).

[47] Horsfall (2013) 397–8. For Virgil's exploitation of existing Homeric ambiguities ("warts and all"), see Weber (2012) 176–7. Cf. Heil (2022) 74.

[48] Horsfall (2013) 404. Cf. Heil (2022) 84.

functions as a segue into the Sibyl's own Tartarean sightseeing and personal autopsy (*Aen.* 6.576–624):[49] both are shown to engage in a kind of active inquiry into a region which is full of *unspeakable* things. The ambivalent dynamics of this engagement with Tartarus force us to re-examine Aeneas' initial request to the Sibyl: *doceas iter et sacra ostia pandas* ("teach me the way and open the hallowed portals", *Aen.* 6.109).[50] Here, Aeneas asks the Sibyl for guidance, instruction, and revelation, and in doing so anticipates her own training by Hecate (*ipsa deum poenas docuit perque omnia duxit*, *Aen.* 6.565),[51] as well as her guided tour of elements of Tartarus: *tum demum horrisono stridentes cardine sacrae | panduntur portae* ("Then at last, grating on their raucous hinge, the hallowed gates are opened", *Aen.* 6.573–4). The repetition of *docere* (*Aen.* 6.109, 565), the simultaneous sense of opening and disclosure conveyed by *pandere* (*Aen.* 6.109, 574), and the hallowed nature of what is (asked to be) laid bare (*sacra*) mean that we cannot read Deiphobe's fulfilment of Aeneas' appeal without also thinking about her own instruction in this area. While Virgil's Sibyl stops short of revealing the full horrors of Tartarus, she perhaps says too much to leave us convinced of her status as *sanctissima vates*. In describing the region so comprehensively even thus far, in indicating the ambiguous means by which she became acquainted with this region and then instructing Aeneas to conduct the same kind of active autopsy, she has permitted the "chaste" to gain knowledge and access in defiance of the laws of the underworld (*Aen.* 6.563).

The question of autopsy leads us to the question of what sort of privileged insights can and should be shared more widely. As we have already noted, Virgil expresses concern over which underworld elements he might sing of, and requests divine permission for this endeavour: *sit mihi fas audita loqui, sit numine vestro | pandere res alta terra et caligine mersas* ("let it be permitted to me to speak what I have heard; by your divine dispensation let me open up things plunged in the depths of the earth and in darkness", *Aen.* 6.266–7). As Gowers has shown, Virgil's narrative here is "consciously pitched at the level of partial revelation" and is framed as a "secondary account" based on earlier "hearsay".[52] Luck highlights an important qualification in Virgil's declaration: that he insists on revealing specifically those things which have been *heard* (*audita*).[53] In the context of mystery religions – which Luck cites as a significant influence on Virgil's underworld episode – sharing details acquired second-hand by hearsay (*audita*) was significantly less dangerous than divulging information gathered first-hand by observation and perception (*visa*), and thus did not break the

[49] Heil (2022) 33.
[50] On instruction, revelation, and mystery cults more broadly, see Luck (1973).
[51] On the pedagogical sense of *ducere per*, see Weber (2012) 173.
[52] Gowers (2005) 176.
[53] Luck (1973) 160.

privileges of initiation.[54] Whether we actually take Virgil as an initiate of the Eleusinian mysteries matters not: we can still see a striking disjunction between what the poet himself frames as acceptable conduct in this sphere and what his apparently pious Sibyl actually enacts. Reading Lucan's Erictho as a mere inversion of Virgil's Sibyl only works if Deiphobe is entirely chaste, pious, and unproblematic. As we have just seen, this is not entirely true. Deiphobe's witchy dynamic, her connection with Hecate, disruption of underworld laws, and revelation of forbidden knowledge not only complicate her status as a vatic prophetess, but also foreshadow the qualities of Lucan's Erictho. Rather than perverting the image of her Virgilian counterpart, the *BC*'s *Thessala vates* augments and intensifies the Sibyl's ambivalent qualities and associations, bringing the *Aeneid*'s ambiguities into the light.

2. Corpses and Rituals: Accessing the Underworld

Lucan's Erictho delights in the dead, *hominum mors omnis in usu est* ("every human death is put to her use", Luc. 6.560): she harvests their body parts, mutilates their corpses, and plunders their bones and ashes (Luc. 6.525–6, 529–68, 581–7). During the necromancy episode, Erictho selects the corpse of an unknown fallen soldier (Luc. 6.627–31), drags it back to her liminal abode (Luc. 6.636–41), prepares and bolsters the body with a range of fantastical ingredients (Luc. 6.667–84),[55] calls on and threatens the underworld powers to release the shade to reoccupy its former body (Luc. 6.685–774),[56] and demands a prophecy in exchange for a proper burial (Luc. 6.762–74).[57] Erictho's treatment of the corpse is visceral and boldly creative, and leads to a kind of life returning to its chilly frame, which warms, quivers, leaps upright, and is finally granted the power of speech (Luc. 6.750–62, 776–820). Some key connections between this part of Lucan's necromancy episode and the underworld encounters of Virgil's Aeneas have been noted: first, in both instances an unburied body must be located and handled – in the case of Aeneas, the body of Misenus (Virgil, *Aen*. 6.156–235), in the case of Sextus, Erictho carefully selects a corpse to function as a prophetic vessel (Luc. 6.628–9) – in order to gain access to the underworld;[58] second, Erictho's ritual could be seen as a reversal of the order of Homeric and Virgilian chthonic consultations, since she provides a burial to the unburied corpse only once her objectives

[54] Luck (1973) 161.
[55] On the technical and professional precision with which Erictho carries out these tasks, see Sanderson (2020) 108–11; Heil (2022) 132–8. Cf. McClellan (2019) 160.
[56] On difficulties in communicating with and interpreting underworld entities more broadly, see Heath (2005) 392.
[57] Finkmann (2020) 760.
[58] Finkmann (2020) 760.

have been achieved (Luc. 6.820–5) in contrast to the experiences of Elpenor (Homer, *Od.* 10.51–89) and Misenus (Virgil, *Aen.* 6.156–82).[59]

O'Hogan has also demonstrated Lucan's close engagement with Virgil's account of Misenus' burial when detailing Pompey's meagre funeral on the shores of Egypt (Luc. 8.712–822).[60] Given the echoes of Misenus elsewhere in the *BC* and the broad parallels between his burial and elements of Erictho's necromancy, it makes sense to probe the Thessalian ritual a little more deeply. In doing so, we find that although Lucan is drawing upon Virgil's Misenus here, he is not simply inverting a straightforwardly pious Virgilian episode to underscore the *im*piety of his *Thessala vates* (Luc. 6.651). Rather, he draws out ambiguities already present in Virgil's verses, ambiguities which cast a distinctly uncomfortable tone over the burial rites, and forces them to stand centre stage. (Re)reading Virgil in light of Lucan's epic allows us to (re)consider the quasi-necromantic undertones of the burial rites the Sibyl orders Aeneas and the Trojans to perform for Misenus (*Aen.* 6.156–82) – particularly when read alongside the details of the subsequent sacrifice to Hecate and the underworld gods (*Aen.* 6.236–63). These undertones further desanitise Deiphobe as the instructor of a necromantic ritual,[61] and also leave lingering suggestions that *pius Aeneas* has taken an active role in a ritual which has hallmarks of both a necromantic reanimation *and* a human sacrifice.[62]

Let us begin with the framing of Misenus' body on the pyre. The Trojan band then rush to execute the Sibyl's orders and start to construct a pyre for Misenus: *tum iussa Sibyllae,* | *haud mora, festinant flentes aramque sepulcri* | *congerere arboribus caeloque educere certant* ("Then, without delay, in tears they quickly fulfil the Sibyl's orders, and compete to heap up an altar for the tomb from trees and raise it up to heaven", *Aen.* 6.176–8).[63] We find a rather disconcerting image in *aramque sepulcri*: although this convergence of terms for altar and tomb is not unique to this passage,[64] the phrase seems almost to set Misenus up as a part of the subsequent sacrificial package to enable access to the underworld. Aeneas and his comrades may appear to play by respectful ritualistic rules in their recovery and treatment of Misenus' body. However, all of this is performed not solely out of pious duty or obligation to a fallen companion, but as a means to a personal end: Aeneas' descent into

59 Finkmann (2020) 760; Heil (2022) 45.
60 O'Hogan (2021). Cf. Mayer (1982) *ad loc.*
61 Finkmann (2020) 754.
62 Aeneas will, of course, go on to engage in a voluntary human sacrifice of his own (*Aen.* 10.518–20) during a fit of rage following Turnus' killing of Pallas (*Aen.* 10.426–509). On undertones of human sacrifice in Virgil more broadly, see Dyson (1996).
63 On tree felling and funerary contexts within the epic tradition, see O'Hogan (2021) 139–40.
64 Horsfall (2013) 182.

the underworld. This is just one of the tasks Deiphobe outlines for him to complete before his request can be fulfilled (*Aen.* 6.142–55, 236), and we are reminded that these activities happen only because of her instructions: *tum iussa Sibyllae,* | *haud mora*… (*Aen.* 6.176–7). With the pyre constructed (*Aen.* 6.214–17),[65] the Trojans wash and anoint Misenus' body (*Aen.* 6.218–19). On the surface, this process recalls the step-by-step preparation of Patroclus' body (Homer, *Il.* 18.343–53), in which Achilles' comrades boil water, cleanse the dried blood from Patroclus' wounds, anoint him with oil, and place his robed body on a couch.[66] Homer notes the heat of the water used – θέρμετο δ᾽ ὕδωρ· | αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δὴ ζέσσεν ὕδωρ ἐνὶ ἤνοπι χαλκῷ ("…and the water was heated; but when the water boiled in the shining bronze cauldron…", *Il.* 18.348–9) – but passes over the contrasting temperature of Patroclus' body, mentioning only his wounds and the crusty gore which covers him (*Il.* 18.344–5, 351).[67] Virgil comments on the chilly quality of Misenus' body as well as the temperature of the water heated by the Trojans: *pars calidos latices et aena undantia flammis* | *expediunt, corpusque lavant frigentis et unguunt* ("Some of them get ready hot water and bronze cauldrons bubbling in the flames, and they wash and anoint the cold man's body", *Aen.* 6.218–19). A clear contrast is drawn between the water and cauldrons and the frigid body to which they are applied, and by extension we cannot help but imagine the gradual return of quasi-lifelike warmth to Misenus' body during this process.

Closer inspection shows that the specific terminology used of the cleansing of the corpse (Virgil, *Aen.* 6.218–19) and its arrangement on the pyre (*Aen.* 6.220–2) seems almost to return some life to the defunct limbs, and in some ways even anticipates the reanimation of Erictho's anonymous corpse. Once the shade is forced to reluctantly re-enter its former body, its dried-up blood warms, courses through the body, and re-ignites its organs and limbs: *caluit cruor atraque fovit* | *volnera et in venas extremaque membra cucurrit*. | *Percussae gelido trepidant sub pectore fibrae* ("the blood grew hot and warmed the blackened wounds and ran into the veins and the extremities. The fibres in the frozen heart were struck and quivered", Luc. 6.750–2). The change in temperature (*caluit … fovit*) is the first indicator of this process, and the shift in agency from the newly (re)flowing blood in the first phrase to the *percussae fibrae* in the second indicates that life-giving power has begun transferring to the body's muscles, limbs, and sinews: *et nova desuetis subrepens vita medullis* | *miscetur morti* ("and new life, creeping into the unaccustomed marrow, mingles with death", Luc. 6.753–4). Movement then returns quickly as the limbs become active, *tunc omnis palpitat artus,* | *tenduntur nervi* ("Then he quivers in every limb, and the sinews are stretched", Luc.

[65] For echoes of Dido's pyre at *Aen.* 4.630–705, see Horsfall (2013) 204.
[66] Coray (2018) 145–8.
[67] Note Coray (2018) 147, here on ὠτειλὰς.

6.754–5), and the whole body suddenly springs up from the ground: *nec se tellure cadaver | paulatim per membra levat, terraque repulsum est | erectumque semel* ("and not gradually does the corpse raise itself limb by limb from the earth, but it rebounds from the ground and is at once upright", Luc. 6.755–7).[68] Something similar also happens to Misenus. Once he is positioned on the pyre, the implicit suggestion of cold deceased limbs regaining quasi-lifelike warmth gains further credence as he (at least apparently) experiences a loosening of his limbs. With some warmth presumably restored to his stiff and cold body, Misenus can then be arranged and clothed in his usual garb prior to cremation (*Aen.* 6.220–2). The phrase *tum ... toro ... reponunt* ("then they lay ... on the couch") appears innocuous at first glance: after all, *reponere* can denote a placing or putting into place, particularly of a body.[69] However, the verb also conveys a sense of bending or laying backwards.[70] Although the Trojans are clearly the ones manipulating the *membra ... defleta*, this action nonetheless grants Misenus' corpse a kind of uncanny movement, almost as if it is still alive, autonomous, and mobile.

Virgil's scene features more than just Homeric echoes. In Book 3 of Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*, Jason prepares to offer a sacrifice to Hecate by washing and dressing *himself* appropriately for the act (Ap. Rhod. 3.1203–6):

> ἔνθ᾽ ἤτοι πάμπρωτα λοέσσατο μὲν ποταμοῖο
> εὐαγέως θείοιο τέρεν δέμας, ἀμφὶ δὲ φᾶρος
> ἕσσατο κυάνεον, τὸ μέν οἱ πάρος ἐγγυάλιξεν
> Λημνιὰς Ὑψιπύλη, ἀδινῆς μνημήιον εὐνῆς.

> Then indeed first of all he washed his smooth body piously in the divine river, and around him he cast a dark robe, which Lemnian Hypsipyle had previously given him, as a memorial of their frequent union.

Given the *Argonautica*'s broader significance as an epic model for Virgil,[71] the epic's contribution to the wider Hecate tradition with which the *Aeneid* closely engages, and the parallels between Jason's self-ablutions and the Trojans' treatment of Misenus' corpse, and between Jason's motivations for cleansing himself in the first place and Aeneas' motivations

[68] For this sudden up-righting as a reversal of traditional representations of death, see Tesoriero (2000) 234; Sanderson (2020) 113.
[69] *OLD* s.v. 10, 10b.
[70] *OLD* s.v. 7.
[71] Nelis (2001). Cf. Reitz (2020) 441–2.

for seeking out and handling Misenus in this way, we ought to consider the implications of this scene for our reading of the burial of Misenus. Apollonius tells us that Jason is acting εὐαγέως ("piously", 3.1204) here and seeking to purify himself in a divine river (λοέσσατο ... ποταμοῖο ... θείοιο) before engaging in ritual practice. However, we know that he is sacrificing to a goddess associated with the underworld and witchcraft, in order to activate the power of the magic charms received from Medea (Ap. Rhod. 3.737–9, 1012–14) and thus complete his labours (Ap. Rhod. 3.1026–62, 1246–407).[72] Jason's cleansing is only the first stage of these rites (πάμπρωτα): it precedes the offering and invocation (3.1207–12) and the terrifying appearance of Hecate herself (3.1212–20). If we understand this as a crucial component of Jason's sacrifice proper, this has implications for our reading of Virgil's Misenus. Misenus is also subject to a comparable cleaning process with similar overtones of piety (*Aen.* 6.218–19), a ritual which is part of a larger activity intended to help achieve an individual's aim. The details of Jason's sacrifice itself – to which we will turn below – demand that we understand this Apollonian episode as an important precedent for Aeneas' means of engagement with the underworld. If we *do* accept this, we then have to read the cleansing element of Misenus' burial as an equivalent of Jason's self-purification, since Aeneas goes straight from Misenus to offering sacrifices to Hecate without performing any such ablutions: *his actis propere exsequitur praecepta Sibyllae* ("After completing these rites, he hurriedly carries out the Sibyl's instructions", *Aen*. 6.236). If Jason's dip in the river constituted one stage of an overarching sacrificial process, then the preparation of Misenus' body occupies a parallel position in Aeneas' series of tasks leading up to his entry into the underworld.

The necromantic undertones of Aeneas' access to the underworld are particularly striking in the final stage in this elaborate process: the sacrifice to Hecate. Lucan's Erictho does not offer a sacrifice to engage with the chthonic realm – she is content to address and threaten the underworld powers with her voice alone.[73] The sacrifice takes place in a deep cave (Virgil, *Aen.* 6.236–41), and Deiphobe begins proceedings by anointing black heifers with wine and sprinkling their hairs on a sacred fire (*Aen.* 6.243–6), while the victims' throats are cut and their blood drained (*Aen.* 6.248–9). Aeneas sacrifices a black lamb to Night and Earth and a sterile heifer to Persephone (*Aen*. 6.249–51), then burns bull carcasses for the Stygian ruler (*Aen.* 6.252–4). The sacrifice's success becomes clear as the natural world trembles and recoils at Hecate's approach (*Aen.* 6.255–8), and the Sibyl launches herself into the underworld with Aeneas following in her wake (*Aen.* 6.262–3). Although it ultimately

[72] On Jason's assistance from Hecate and Artemis (with her Hecatean qualities), see Nelis (1991) 102–3.
[73] Sanderson (2020) 37, 63, 113, 138.

enables Aeneas' *descent* into the chthonic realm, this sacrifice fits neatly within a wider tradition of – and contains all the hallmarks of – evocation rituals which share a specific goal: drawing something (or someone) *up* from the underworld.[74]

Aeneas' sacrifice largely follows the broad requirements of traditional evocation rites and recalls two major epic models:[75] Odysseus' consultation of underworld shades in Homer's *Odyssey* (11.23–50) and Jason's sacrifice to Hecate in Apollonius' *Argonautica* (3.1194–216), which we have already touched upon. Ogden and Finkmann both cite Homer's *Odyssey* as the earliest and most enduringly influential account of this kind of (ghost) evocation technology,[76] and the Apollonian scene follows this tradition closely despite ultimately evoking Hecate rather than a shade.[77] In both cases, the protagonist follows the instructions of a witch (Homer, *Od.* 10.503–45; Ap. Rhod. 3.1026–62), gathers his victims and offerings and digs a pit (Homer, *Od.* 11.23–8; Ap. Rhod. 3.1199–2001), sacrifices his victims and deposits their blood in the pit (Homer, *Od.* 11.34–6; Ap. Rhod. 1207–10),[78] and achieves his desired audience with the entity summoned (Homer, *Od.* 11.36–7, 44–50; Ap. Rhod. 3.1210–20). While we do get an infamous shift of narrative perspective as the episode unfolds which seems to suggest that Odysseus has himself ended up in the underworld (*Od.* 11.55, 87), Homer nonetheless indicates that the ghosts have made an ascent into the world of the living through the preposition ὑπὲξ: αἱ δ' ἀγέροντο | ψυχαὶ ὑπὲξ Ἐρέβευς νεκύων κατατεθνηώτων ("and the souls of the perished dead gathered up out of Erebus", 11.36–7). We encounter something very similar during Jason's sacrifice to Hecate, who appears κευθμῶν ἐξ ὑπάτων ("from the furthest depths", Ap. Rhod. 3.1213).

There is even another Virgilian precedent for this kind of sacrifice serving to raise something from the underworld which bears a close resemblance to Aeneas' sacrifice to enter the underworld, and thus lends further credence to the necromantic – at the very least, the

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[74] On the preference for above-ground interactions with the dead as opposed to formal *katabasis* in early Imperial epic, see Heil (2022) 18–24.

[75] Ogden (2001) 179. On the liminality of necromantic spaces, see Finkmann (2020) 748; Heil (2022) 50. For an overview of blood sacrifice as an essential element of engagement and communication with the dead, see Heath (2005); Martin (2014) 1–3. Even though he doesn't dig a pit to receive the sacrificial blood which is retained in bowls without further details given of its use, the cave's depth and deathly qualities maybe go some way in compensating for this omission since Aeneas and Deiphobe are perhaps already partly on their way to the underworld.

[76] Ogden (2002) 87; Finkmann (2020) 758. On Virgil's engagement with this Homeric material, see Bright (1981); Knauer (1964); Solmsen (1972). For Lucan's underworld and necromantic debts to Homer, see Heil (2022) 130–1. Cf. Baertschi (2013) 54–5.

[77] For these parallels at Ap. Rhod. 3.1026–62, 1191–224, see Ogden (2001) 142 and (2002) 87. On wider parallels, overlaps, and tensions between religious and magical activities, see Gordon (1999) 163, 191–2, 210–15.

[78] Odysseus also pledges to make further sacrifices – a barren heifer and ram – upon his return home (Homer, *Od.* 11.29–33), the very animals Aeneas offers (Virgil, *Aen.* 6.249–51).

nekyia-mantic – character of this scene.[79] In *Georgics* 4, Aristaeus sacrifices to Orpheus following his mother's instructions (*Geo.* 4.531–47) in order to regain his lost bees *haud mora* (*Geo.* 4.548–58).[80] Crabbe has already noted the close parallels between these two episodes, namely the killing of bulls and construction of altars (*Geo.* 4.541–3, 550–1; *Aen.* 6.243–4),[81] the inclusion of specific offerings for given individuals (*Geo.* 4.547, 553; *Aen.* 6.250–4),[82] and the protagonist's eventual engagement with a strange new state of things (*Geo.* 4.554; *Aen.* 6.268–9).[83] Aristaeus does not participate in a *katabasis*, nor are we explicitly told that the bees themselves arise from the underworld.[84] If anything, this can be taken as a moment of renewal and (re)generation, rather than of resurrection.[85] However, the bees *do* emerge from a place of death, specifically the rotting carcasses of cows and bulls: *liquefacta boum per viscera toto | stridere apes utero et ruptis effervere costis* ("bees buzzing through the putrid flesh of the oxen from the whole belly and swarming out of the burst sides", *Geo.* 4.555–6).[86] The bees exit the rotting viscera via an opening in the cows' flanks on an upward trajectory, rising from the ground to settle on a treetop (*Geo.* 4.557–8).

As we have seen, the sacrifice Aeneas and the Sibyl make prior to their descent into the underworld follows the key elements of traditional ghost evocation rites.[87] All that is missing is the upward movement of shades into the world of the living. We could be forgiven for assuming that this change in direction goes some way in at least muting the broadly necromantic associations of the preceding rites. But this is not the case. Aeneas and Deiphobe sacrificed to Hecate to obtain her favour for their entry into the underworld (*Aen.* 6.247), and although we do not get to *see* her – the Sibyl's exclamation and her departure with Aeneas move the scene along promptly (*Aen.* 6.258–63) – the disturbances in the surrounding environment indicate Hecate's arrival (*Aen.* 6.255–8):

> ecce autem primi sub limina solis et ortus
> sub pedibus mugire solum et iuga coepta moveri

[79] Indeed, this also continues in the post-Virgilian (and post-Lucanian) epic tradition, such as at Valerius Flaccus 1.730–850; Statius, *Theb.* 4.443–578; Silius, *Pun.* 13.381–895. Cf. Reitz (1982); Finkmann (2020) 756.

[80] On links between the underworld in Orpheus' story in the *Georgics* (4.453–527) and Aeneas' descent, see Crabbe (1978) 31 (n. 19).

[81] On complexities around the function of cattle carcasses at *Geo.* 4.538–53, see Thomas (1991) 213–14.

[82] Crabbe (1978) 23. Cf. Habinek (1990) 212.

[83] Crabbe (1978) 24.

[84] For clarification that this is in fact a new hive of bees, rather than the resurrection of dead bees, see Johnston (1977) 167 (n. 11).

[85] Johnston (1977) 162; Habinek (1990).

[86] Virgil also describes the generation of bees from a dead cow (this time contained and heavily putrefied) at *Geo.* 4.281–314. Cf. Dyson (1996) 280–1; Habinek (1990) 209.

[87] Ogden (2002) 179.

> silvarum, visaeque canes ululare per umbram
> adventante dea…
>
> But look – at the earliest sun's entrance and rising the earth groaned underfoot and the ridges of the woods began to shake, and dogs seemed to howl through the shade at the goddess' arrival…

The ground and woods tremble at her approach (*mugire … moveri*), and the apparent baying of dogs (*canes ululare*) indicates that the arriving goddess is Hecate herself.[88] These details recall Hecate's emergence following Jason's sacrifice in Apollonius' *Argonautica*, at which point the goddess *does* make an appearance:[89] she rises from the depths at the paling of the sky (Ap. Rhod. 3.1212–13, 1223–4), the meadows quake (Ap. Rhod. 3.1218–20), and hell-hounds howl (Ap. Rhod. 3.1216–17). Overcome by fear, Jason cannot look upon her (Ap. Rhod. 3.1221–3). So too in the *Aeneid* we are denied the chance to witness Hecate in the flesh. Virgil's *ecce autem* ("But look…") here serves not only as an "energetic pointer to a new turn in the action" following the conclusion of the sacrifice itself,[90] but also as a call to 'observe' the successful result of the evocation before Aeneas and Deiphobe advance to the underworld. Since the scenes leading up to Aeneas' descent into the underworld bear such remarkable structural similarities to other literary accounts of (ghost) evocation, we should not deny their status as part of a *nekyia*. The darker magical undertones are only compounded and highlighted by the sacrificial and necromantic details and descriptions in the preparation and treatment of Misenus' body, which cast a troubling shadow over this apparent display of loyalty and piety. Given the darker ambiguous qualities of Virgil's Sibyl which we have already examined, we ought not to be surprised that the rites she instructs and supervises should have a similarly ambivalent character. Lucan's Erictho may perform the most "horrific and overblown" necromancy in the ancient literary tradition in her attempts to bend the underworld to her will, but as Virgil's Aeneas and Deiphobe have shown us, this *modus operandi* is not wholly without precedent.

3. Underworld Figures: Inconvenient Truths?

We have uncovered striking ambivalences in the methods by which Aeneas accesses the underworld – details which demonstrate that Lucan enriches and extrapolates from existing

[88] On the symptoms of Hecate's arrival and conventional indications of epiphany, see Horsfall (2013) 225. On the association between Hecate and dogs, see Ogden (2002) 118–19.
[89] Horsfall (2013) 225 notes Virgil's debt to Apollonius here.
[90] Horsfall (2013) 224.

darkness in the *Aeneid* rather than simply inverting his epic predecessor. I will now finish by considering a further instance of Virgilian ambiguity within the underworld itself, which is then amplified by Lucan. After an extensive reanimation process, Erictho's chosen corpse shares information regarding the state of the underworld which has been disrupted by the chaos of civil war in the world above (Luc. 6.776–85). As we have already seen, the recently deceased and unburied corpse is unable to access the underworld proper, and so has to rely on hearsay from other shades in addition to his personal autopsy to fulfil this request.[91] As such, he is unable to offer comprehensive insights into the future of the Pompeian cause (Luc. 6.777–8, 812–17). The entire necromantic endeavour might thus appear "ineffectual", since the corpse ultimately "falls into the same 'silence' which characterised other … forms of prophecy", forms which Sextus rejected due to this deficiency (Luc. 6.430, 813).[92] Furthermore, the detailed aspects of the corpse's utterance would have been "incomprehensible to Sextus",[93] but still reveal elements of Lucan's engagement with his epic predecessors.

As part of this excursus, the corpse lists the souls of the blessed who lament the violence of the conflict (Luc. 6.783–92), the shades of the damned who delight in this destruction (Luc. 6.795–9), and the punishments that await the conflict's victor (Luc. 6.799–802).[94] These catalogues have been read as twisted imitations of Virgil's 'parade of heroes' (*Aen.* 6.752–885) with which Anchises inspires a (clueless) Aeneas to continue on his journey which will ultimately secure this Roman future.[95] Virgil concealed the participants of some Roman civil wars in darkness, and Anchises appeals (vainly) to Caesar and Pompey to avoid civil bloodshed (*Aen.* 6.826–35).[96] In Lucan's underworld, individuals such as the Drusi and Gracchi who reside in Virgil's Elysium (*Aen.* 6.842) are condemned to Tartarus (Luc. 6.795–6), while the bloodthirsty Sulla is granted a seat in Elysium (Luc. 6.787).[97] Furthermore, in identifying a spot in Tartarus for Caesar – and by extension, his successors (Luc. 6.799–802) – the corpse questions the glory and deification of Rome's future Caesars and so "severs" the connection Augustus had sought to highlight between himself

[91] Cf. Heil (2022) 33–4.
[92] Masters (1992) 200–3.
[93] O'Higgins (1988) 229. In this way, Sextus parallels Aeneas, who would have been unaware of the future Romans who appear on his shield (Virgil, *Aen.* 8.626–731).
[94] Sanderson (2020) 151–62; Heil (2022) 144–5.
[95] Ahl (1976) 144. For exemplary catalogues and their influence on Lucan's 'black parade', see Tesoriero (2000) 249.
[96] For *Aeneid* 6 as a reflection on moral, religious, and eschatological values and frameworks, see Zetzel (1989) 264. For the broader commentary on forgetting violence suggested by Anchises' discussion of the transmigration of souls, see Quint (1982) 37–8. Cf. Zetzel (1996) 312; Fucecchi (2018) 27.
[97] Ahl (1976) 139, 144; Bernstein (2011) 264; Sanderson (2020) 152.

and the legacy of the Republic (Dio 66.34) by distancing the Imperial line from the "noble inhabitants of Elysium".[98]

In contrast with Virgil's underworld arrangement (*Aen.* 6.824–5, 842–3), Lucan locates the Drusi and the Gracchi in Tartarus. The two families are acknowledged alongside their rash reforms and daring endeavours respectively, and are effectively grouped together by the two charges listed which, while grammatically separate, are applicable to both families:[99] *vidi ego laetantis, popularia nomina, Drusos | legibus inmodicos ausosque ingentia Gracchos* ("I saw the Drusi, names with popular favour, rejoicing, extravagant in their laws, and the Gracchi who dared enormous undertakings", Luc. 6.795–6). Although Lucan does not name the Drusi explicitly elsewhere as he does the Gracchi (Luc. 1.266–7),[100] the details of the charges applied to both groups encourage us to relate their mention here to the *BC*'s wider discussions of 'popular' matters and 'excessive' actions.[101] The Drusi's *popularia nomina* link the family to other 'dangerous' Roman revolutionaries, and, by extension, to the distinctly 'popular' cause of Lucan's Caesar.[102] Likewise, *inmodicos* ("extravagant", Luc. 6.796) encourages us to consider their deeds in relation to other ideologically charged examples of futile or unseemly excess in the *BC,* such as Cornelia's grief for her murdered husband (Luc. 8.71), Pompey's career-long acquisition of wealth (Luc. 9.197), and Cleopatra's beautification for Caesar (Luc. 10.137). Furthermore, the association of the Drusi and the Gracchi with the tribuneship invites comparison with Lucan's other tribunes who, with the exception of Metellus who resists Caesar's plundering of the state treasury (Luc. 3.114–53),[103] remain anonymous and oppose the Senate and Republican cause (Luc. 1.266).[104]

We could also read this reorganisation of underworld figures as a sophisticated acknowledgement of the darker tones already present in Virgil's underworld, where the Scipios are connected with the Gracchi – *quis Gracchi genus aut geminos, duo fulmina belli, | Scipiadas, cladem Libyae* ("who [would pass over] the race of Gracchus or the twin scions of Scipio, two thunderbolts of war, the bane of Libya", *Aen.* 6.842–3)[105] – and the legacies of those credited with the destruction of Carthage are fused with those associated with civil discord.[106]

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98 O'Higgins (1988) 221. Cf. Luc. 7.457–9 for further hostility of this kind.

99 Tesoriero (2000) 259; Sanderson (2020) 160.

100 For the imagery of a city divided into two factions evoked by *ancipiti … urbe,* see e.g. Lucan 2.447–8; Valerius Flaccus 3.46; Roche (2009) 236.

101 On civil war partisanship in Lucan, see Fucecchi (2011).

102 Tesoriero (2000) 259.

103 Similarly, Curio was tribune in 50 BC (Appian, *BCiv* 2.27; Cicero, *Fam.* 8.6; Dio 40.60.4–61.3; Plutarch, *Caes.* 30.1–2) and is aligned with the 'popular' cause within the *BC* (Luc. 4.689–92).

104 Sanderson (2020) 160–1.

105 Within the *BC*, *fulmen* takes on problematic undertones given its association with power-hungry individuals (Luc. 1.143–57, 10.34).

106 Ahl (1976) 141.

Although the Gracchi were related to the Scipios on their maternal side (Plutarch, *Tib. Gracc.* 8.5), this pairing is nonetheless odd, and perhaps goes so far as to tarnish the Scipios' glowing reference here as Virgil turns some names into other bearers of the same name.[107] Virgil's application of Tarquin's traditional epithet *superbus* to Lucius Brutus, *vis et Tarquinios reges animamque superbam | ultoris Bruti fascisque videre receptos?* ("Do you want to see also the Tarquin kings and the proud soul of Brutus the avenger and the fasces recovered?", *Aen.* 6.817–18), "create[s] a puzzle in the reader's mind" by transferring characteristic qualities between individuals.[108] While Virgil's *Gracchi genus* metonymically incorporates the entire family of Gracchi – including Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus – it is difficult *not* to recall the violence and discord associated with the two infamous brothers, despite Virgil not mentioning them by individual name. Virgil lists the Drusi alongside ardent protectors of the Roman state: *quin Decios Drusosque procul saevumque securi | aspice Torquatum et referentem signa Camillum* ("Moreover, see the Decii and Drusi far off, and Torquatus cruel with his axe, and Camillus bringing back the standards", *Aen.* 6.824–5).[109] This is perhaps understandable given their connection to Augustus through his wife Livia. Yet the *genus* also included the "notorious plebeian tribune" M. Livius Drusus, whose legislative reforms and murder became short-term causes of the Social War.[110] While their listing alongside the Decii, Torquatus, and Camillus might encourage their alignment with noble deeds and causes, the Drusi are – like the Gracchi – unable to shake the bad reputation of some of their kin. Against this murkier reading of the individuals featured in Virgil's underworld, the distribution of Republican figures across Elysium and Tartarus and the qualities assigned to these figures in Lucan's underworld may not seem quite so jarring, and instead appear as a sophisticated negotiation of the subtleties of Virgil's narrative. Lucan's plurals *Drusos* and *Gracchos* (Luc. 6.795–6) leave some ambiguity as to which member(s) of the family this is referring to and could function as an inversion of other pluralisations, which group together families according to their merits (Luc. 7.358–60, 583–5).[111] By pluralising the two families, placing them together in Tartarus, and uniting them with the same charges of 'popularity' and rashness, Lucan appears to tar the Drusi and the Gracchi with the brushes of their most problematic kinsmen, confirming the ambivalence already present in their representation in Virgil's Elysium.[112]

[107] Ahl (1976) 141. On the praiseworthy conduct of Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi, see Augoustakis (2011) 190.
[108] Ahl (1976) 172–3; Horsfall (2013) 557–8.
[109] See, e.g., Cicero, *Sest.* 143; Virgil, *Geo.* 2.169; Manilius 1.789; Lucan 6.785–6; Juvenal 8.254. On the Decii and *devotio*, see, e.g., Cicero, *Fin.* 2.60; Livy 8.8.19–8.11.1, 10.28.12–10.30.10; Valerius Maximus 5.6.5–6; Virgil, *Aen.* 11.440–2; Leigh (1993).
[110] Horsfall (2013) 562–3.
[111] Sanderson (2020) 160.
[112] Sanderson (2020) 160.

Virgil offers plenty of opportunities to reflect upon uncomfortable elements of Roman history, from the bleak discussion of the impact of land confiscations in *Eclogues* 1 and 9 to details of the horrors of civil war in the *Georgics* (*Geo.* 1.489–97), and from Aeneas' notorious murder of Turnus at the epic's close (*Aen.* 12.887–952) to broader acknowledgements of the bloody cost of war and the death of the young within the *Aeneid* itself.[113] A key example of this kind of pragmatic negotiation of challenging parts of history comes during the *ekphrasis* of the shield of Aeneas (*Aen.* 8.626–728).[114] As Quint and Rossi have shown, this pictorial narrative links Roman potential with civil war throughout Roman history,[115] beginning with recollections of Romulus and Remus which inevitably allude to Rome's original fratricide (*Aen.* 8.630–41),[116] and continuing through the rape of the Sabines and the war with Alba (*Aen.* 8.635–45) – two conflicts which raise questions of kinship and ultimately resulted in the incorporation of these peoples into the Roman race[117] – and finally the battle of Actium, an internal martial climax disguised as a *bellum externum* through the 'othering' of Antony's forces (*Aen.* 8.671–713).[118] Just in case we missed the internecine undertones in these episodes, the presence of Discordia – the traditional personification of civil strife – in the depiction of Actium (*scissa gaudens vadit Discordia palla*: "Discordia advances rejoicing in her torn robe", *Aen.* 8.702) reminds us that we are watching scenes of *civil* conflict.[119] The intertwining of these 'foundational' examples of civil war within a wider narrative of Roman history and development thus presents a "dramatic historical paradox" which shows Rome's potential for expansion to be "inextricably connected with internecine conflict",[120] and suggests that civil war is something that Rome will have to navigate and negotiate again and again.[121] Given this broader willingness to engage with inconvenient truths of Roman history, we should not be so

[113] See, e.g., *Aen*. 1.1–49, 9.367–459, 10.426–509, 10.755–832, 11.768–835.

[114] Quint (1993) 23. For the relationship between the shields of Aeneas and Achilles (Homer, *Il.* 18.483–608), see Gransden (1976) 161–3. Bartsch (1998) 337 highlights parallels between Aeneas' viewing of Juno's Carthaginian temple (*Aen.* 1.464–93) and Roman readers' "viewing" of recent history on the shield. For ambiguities of right and wrong on the shield, see O'Hara (1990) 173–5.

[115] On the "fine irony in the fact that the epic's most influential statement of the imperialist project should disguise the reality of internecine conflict", see Quint (1993) 23. Cf. Hardie (1986) 348, 358–62; Fucecchi (2018) 27; Feldherr (2014) 301.

[116] Rossi (2010) 147. Cf. Gransden (1976) 163–4; Hardie (1986) 349–50.

[117] Rossi (2010) 147–9 contrasts this with Livy 1.13.5, 1.30.1. For allusions to the social war and Roman/Italian relations in the *Aeneid,* see Marincola (2010) 183–204.

[118] Gransden (1976) 174–82; Hardie (1986) 98–100; Quint (1993) 24–31, 62. Cf. Propertius 4.6; Hardie (1986) 353–8; Bartsch (1998) 332.

[119] Zeitlin (1971) 79. Cf. Gransden (1976) 181, on *Aen.* 10.6–15.

[120] Rossi (2010) 149. For Virgil's "balancing" between displaying Roman and Italian history on the shield, see Hardie (1986) 347–8. Cf. Bond (2010) 32.

[121] Sanderson (2020) 8–9.

quick to pass over ambiguities pertaining to periods of civil conflict within the underworld excursus.

Nor should we be so quick to brand Lucan as an ardent and irreverent rebel against Virgil's *Aeneid*. Erictho lacks respect for conventional Olympian deities, performs and creates frightening and fantastical magical rites, and even subverts the laws of the underworld with confidence. Yet we have seen that her description and actions – far from being an unprecedented departure from the conventions of earlier epic – recall traditional evocation scenes from Homer, Apollonius, and Virgil, and take up, embolden, and exaggerate the ambivalent qualities of the Virgilian Sibyl, her past and present deeds, and the tasks she assigns to grant Aeneas access to the underworld. Since Casali has demonstrated that Lucan engages *constructively* with Virgil more broadly to build upon the work of his predecessor,[122] we should thus follow Narducci's warning that it is excessively short-sighted to see Lucan in opposition to Virgil,[123] and accept Masters' thesis that "Lucan ... is laying bare the ambiguities inherent in Virgil", determined that "what is worrying in Virgil's vision should not be left in shadow".[124] To condemn Lucan as an anti-Virgilian maverick is to take a blinkered approach to the *BC*'s own epic artistry and majesty. Furthermore, such an attitude ultimately does a disservice to Virgil himself, to the *Aeneid*'s fluctuating gradation between optimism and pessimism, and to the troubling and ambivalent details which challenge us to interrogate the poem's nuance and pragmatism even as they glint out at us from the darkness.

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[122] Casali (2011) 85.
[123] Narducci (1979) 35.
[124] Masters (1992) 194.

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Rac(ializ)ing Dido

*Revised from a paper given to the Virgil Society on 20 March 2021**

Scholarship on the *Aeneid* has rarely touched upon 'race' as such, even though a large portion of work that could have fallen under this umbrella has been variously coated in adjacent and less incendiary concepts such as 'ethnicity', 'otherness', 'difference', and the like.[1] Even in the wake of an eventual reckoning with the historical amnesia connected to the refusal to engage with 'race' in studies of premodern Western societies,[2] Virgilian scholars, with the notable exception of Shelley Haley, continue to seem uninterested in the analytical tools provided by theories and philosophies of race, especially critical race theory.[3] The present article argues that such tools can give us instead significant insights into implied hierarchies, structures of differentiation, and interpersonal dynamics at work in a poem like the *Aeneid*, regardless of whether we conclude that 'race' is an actual dynamic in premodern literatures and societies or else a productive anachronism to work with.

The bulk of this contribution is a re-interpretation of Virgil's Dido in light of a renewed appreciation of how race theories transform our understanding of the dynamics between different people mentioned or implied in the course of the Libyan episode of the *Aeneid*. But before I start this discussion, it is worth explaining how I interpret the concept of 'race' and related terms ('racism', 'racialization', 'racecraft') and why I believe that a maximalist

* This article originated from a paper delivered online to the Virgil Society on 20 March 2021 (incidentally, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination). It was then presented at Wake Forest University, SNS Pisa, Regent's Park College, Oxford, and Humboldt Universität, Berlin. I owe sincere thanks to all the colleagues and students who engaged with this piece on these various occasions, as well as to my own students at the University of Warwick, for keeping me on my toes in thinking about race and Africa in Greco-Roman antiquity. I also owe a sincere debt of gratitude to John Henderson, Fiachra Mac Góráin, and Alessandro Schiesaro for reading the piece and offering feedback, and to my co-editors Rosa Andújar and Jackie Murray, who greatly shaped my thinking about race and ancient literature over many conversations. This article is dedicated to all students of ancient Mediterranean literature who have pushed back to their advisors when being told that 'race' is not relevant to the ancient world.

1 See, among others, Syed (2005); Reed (2007); Wimperis (forthcoming); Giusti (2018), specifically on Carthaginians.

2 For Geraldine Heng (2021) 4, not naming 'race' means "to sustain the reproduction of a certain kind of past, while keeping the doors shut to tools, analyses, and resources that can name the past differently".

3 Haley (2009) and (2021). The *Symposium Cumanum* 2021 included several contributions on 'race', albeit on Virgil's reception.

position on the relevance of 'race' for the study of Greco-Roman antiquity can open up new avenues in the interpretation of ancient literature. Some familiarity with the theories that I shall be drawing upon (especially critical race theory) is already presupposed in this article's title, which a) invokes the truism that 'race' is a verb (a process, an event, a performance) rather than – or before becoming – a noun;[4] b) posits the verb 'to race' as an equivalent of 'to racialize'; and c) assumes that race as a concept cannot exist – nor can human races exist – without the actions and processes of racism.

What I offer here is not a study on the 'ethnicity' or 'identity' of Dido – terms that possess equally complex and potentially anachronistic baggage and that will at any rate come into question in the course of the discussion –, but on the ways in which the *Aeneid* presents Dido as implicated in processes by which arbitrarily selected differences among human beings are hypostatized and classified in hierarchies of power in such a way as to provide justification for differential and unequal treatment. As alluded to by the ambiguity as to whether to interpret the 'Dido' of this article's title as grammatical subject or direct object,[5] I wish to spotlight her simultaneously passive and active role in such processes of racialization, which I explore in two separate sections: it will emerge from this discussion that Dido in the *Aeneid* is both the victim of the Romans' racializing of Phoenicians and Carthaginians, and herself an actor of the Phoenicians' racializing of autochthonous people in North Africa.

1. Race, Racism, Racialization

It has been commonly accepted since the early twentieth century that 'race' as a biological category has no scientific basis: namely, that perceptible physical characteristics commonly associated with 'race' cannot be attributed to discrete lines of genetic descent.[6] Thus, what we talk about when we talk about 'race' is generally recognized to be a sociological and cultural rather than a biological or scientific phenomenon.[7] The term stands for "the conception or the doctrine that nature produced humankind in distinct groups"[8] – which is an illusion, of course, and a product of false consciousness, but the fact that it bears very concrete

[4] Fields and Fields (2012) 96–7 speak of the substitution of 'race' for 'racism' as "the great evasion of American historical literature … disguised as race, racism becomes something Afro-Americans are, rather than something racists do".

[5] A nod to Desmond (1994).

[6] James and Burgos (2022).

[7] Cf. Fields and Fields (2012) 100–2, warning that "race is a social construction" can become a "trite formula" that "domesticates" the monstrosity of racism.

[8] Fields and Fields (2012) 16.

consequences in the world means that we cannot entirely divest it of reality.[9] Thus, while 'race' is an ideological structure of thought,[10] it is also a "social and historical process",[11] connected in a two-way causal relation with the tangible phenomenon of 'racism'.

The relationship between 'race' and 'racism' exemplifies a kind of 'chicken-and-egg' causality dilemma: on the one hand, we may say that 'racism' is the practice and the acting upon the ideology of 'race' (in other words, the belief in the ideology of 'race' gives rise to practices of 'racism'), and yet it is also true that it is in turn the practice of 'racism' that reifies 'race' and bestows reality upon it as a social phenomenon. This process of validating 'race' through the practice of 'racism' has been variously defined as 'racial formation', 'racialization', or 'racecraft'. The latter term, which has enjoyed a certain popularity even among classicists,[12] was coined by sociologist Karen Fields and her sister historian Barbara Fields in continuity with 'witchcraft': both terms highlight "the ability of pre- or non-scientific modes of thought to hijack the minds of the scientifically literate"[13] with very tangible, and very violent, historical consequences.

Emphasis on 'racial formation' or 'racialization' turns the spotlight onto the processual and social aspects of 'race', attempting a shift away from the idea that the term may indicate any recognizable lines of genetic descent in specific groups of humans. A similar shift is also encouraged by the necessary jettisoning of a subdivision of humans into 'races', and the adoption of the terminology of 'racialized groups' or 'racialized communities' instead. These are groups that become separated within societies on account of differences "that are selectively essentialized as absolute and fundamental, in order to distribute positions and powers differentially".[14] For Falguni Sheth, the production of such sets of differences, which compel society to think in terms of 'races', is a consequence of sovereign power attempting to tame potential threats against the current political order from specific groups of people. 'Race' does not simply 'divide' and 'separate' populations, but it also causes them to be "hypostatized into self-cohering wholes who are to be despised, vilified, and if not cast outside the gates of the city, then at least subordinated and exploited, if not physically or psychically managed".[15]

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[9] See Omi and Winant (2015) 110, reacting against the position of racial 'eliminativism', on which see James and Burgos (2022); cf. also Fields and Fields (2012) 193, "there is nothing 'mere' about a social construct".

[10] Cf. McCoskey (2012) 2: "at its most basic, race is an ideological structure that organizes and classifies perceived human variation". Sheth (2009) reads race as a 'technology' in a Foucauldian framework, "a way of organizing and managing populations" (22), emphasizing its 'causal' rather than 'descriptive' essence.

[11] Omi and Winant (2015) 110.

[12] See Padilla Peralta (2021); Murray (2021); Derbew (2021) and (2022).

[13] Fields and Fields (2012) 5–6.

[14] Heng (2018) 27.

[15] Sheth (2009) 39.

Traditionally, racial classification is thought of as based upon differences that can be perceived as phenotypical, and such visual and bodily dimension has been seen as crucial in maintaining the working of 'race' in societies, as well as in separating it from other forms of classification, such as 'ethnicity'.[16] As Michael Omi and Howard Winant put it, 'race' "*symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies*" and it is precisely because "race is located on the body [that] it has proved a convenient means of rule, a political technology through which power can be both exercised and naturalized".[17] Thus, when thinking about 'race', most people in contemporary Western societies would think about somatic characteristics, specifically about skin colour as the primary marker used for racial classification, and about the racial separation that sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois aptly called "the color line", specifying however that such division is arbitrary and historically constituted.[18] However, many race theorists have contested excessive emphasis on the phenotypical dimension of race, pointing out that somatic traits are only one of the ways in which human beings are socially and historically racialized, with others being cultural, linguistic, geographical, historical, religious.[19] The development of such conceptualizations of race beyond a classification solely based on phenotypical characteristics allows us to explore with a renewed freedom whether comparable mechanisms of oppression could have been at work in antiquity.

Another contested misconception of racial classification, as discussed below in relation to the work of Benjamin Isaac, is the idea that the traits upon which racial classification is based should be inheritable and unchangeable, given that a belief in the inheritability of core-traits is only characteristic of what is known as 'racial essentialism' and not of racial thought as a whole.[20] Indeed, racist structures of thought can operate on the assumption that racialized groups may 'assimilate' into different groups or cultures and thus lose their specificities, and such structures are no less racist for admitting the possibility of assimilation. In contemporary Western societies, we can think for example of requests for cultural and religious minorities to adopt Western cultural traits to 'integrate' with majoritarian groups,

[16] 'Race' and 'ethnicity' are often used in conjunction, but the terms have a different history and draw on different sets of theories (Fenton 2010). Mac Sweeney (2021) tentatively interprets 'race' as classifying people according to phenotypical characteristics and 'ethnicity' according to ideas about ancestry, granting that there remains an inevitable overlap between the two.

[17] Omi and Winant (2015) 110 and 247 (their emphasis).

[18] Du Bois (2015 [originally 1903]) 7: "the problem of the color line is the problem of the Twentieth Century". Cf. Omi and Winant (2015) 110: "although the concept of race invokes biologically based human characteristics (so-called 'phenotypes'), selection of these particular human features for purposes of racial signification is always and necessarily a social and historical process".

[19] Already Sheth (2009); see also Lentin (2020); Törngren and Suyemoto (2022).

[20] See Samuels (2015) 730: "anti-essentialism is not inherently anti-racist". But cf. Ndiaye (2022) 6, on how 'heredity' keeps 'race' distinct from other types of oppression, such as gender.

and of how such requests may be based on presumptions of cultural and racial superiority that end up upholding structural racisms rather than undermining them.

When we come to the study of antiquity, these last two aspects of racial formation (namely, the formation of racialized groups based on human characteristics that are not necessarily phenotypical, and the possibility for racialization to be at work even without a belief in the inheritability of racial difference) become key points of contention in discussions about the applicability of 'race' to the ancient Mediterranean world. It is generally agreed, since the seminal work of Frank Snowden, Jr., that ancient Greeks and Romans did not differentiate on the basis of skin colour, nor generally on the basis of physical appearance, and that they did not coherently subscribe to a belief in the inheritability of core-traits.[21] Thus, scholars of the ancient Mediterranean whose understanding of race aligns with an essentialist view, as well as scholars treating "skin colour as a transhistorical signifier of racial identity rather than merely its modern guise",[22] have often been, and continue to be, wary of talking about 'race' in Greco-Roman societies, and have instead preferred to speak of 'ethnicity' (a concept which does not by itself entail hierarchy or oppression),[23] or 'ethnic' or 'xenophobic' 'prejudice' rather than 'racism'.[24] Ultimately, the choice is justified if we adopt a definition of 'race' as dependent upon both heredity and body type. If by 'race' we mean something along the lines of 'a classification of human groups into discrete and hereditary biological categories according to perceptible human variation', then this is indeed a phenomenon whose origin may be backdated, at the very earliest, to the late Middle Ages, but which in any case becomes pervasive in Europe only as the product of colonial encounters and in the wake of the transatlantic slave trade.[25]

That Greeks and Romans were quite able to essentialize selected human beings into distinguished categories for the purpose of oppression or differential treatment is not in

[21] Snowden (1970) and (1983); see also Thompson (1989); Derbew (2022). These basic views are shared by McCoskey (2012) and (2021), and Isaac (2004). Yet, while skin colour may not have been a primary marker of racial difference, it may be too hasty to underestimate the significance of somatic difference in the Greco-Roman world: see Samuels (2015), Patterson (1982) 177–9 and MacDonald (2002) 26–7 on the dangers of imagining a colourblind Greco-Roman antiquity.

[22] McCoskey (2021) 18; see also Derbew (2021).

[23] Murji and Solomos (2015) 8: "there is no equivalent term to *racism* in relation to ethnicity". On 'race' and 'ethnicity' cf. n. 16.

[24] Isaac (2004), discussed below, coins the possibility of 'proto-racism'; Gruen (2011) 3 excludes Greeks and Romans even from 'xenophobia' and 'ethnocentrism'; see the criticism of McCoskey (2021) 18, building on McCoskey (2006). Cf. also Skinner (2021) for a defence of a more capacious definition of 'racism' in the ancient world.

[25] See Heng (2018) on the emergence of the concept in mid-fifteenth-century Spain; cf. Hochman (2020). Derbew (2021) and (2022) 16–21 tentatively accepts the concept of 'race' (unrelated to physiognomy) in the ancient world, but vehemently denies the applicability of 'racism' to antiquity ([2021] 27 and [2022] 21). Without its connection to 'racism', however, it remains unclear how 'race' differs from mere recognition of difference.

question. But what has prevented scholars from labelling such differentiations or oppressions as forms of 'racism' is the observation that such differentiations do not depend upon physical appearance and are only at times attributable to ideas of heredity; it also doesn't help that the Greco-Roman world does not present a coherent or unified set of thoughts on the matter. Thus, Benjamin Isaac, in his search for continuity between antiquity and modernity in the history of racism,[26] labelled some ancient forms of human classification as 'proto-racist', but only in those cases when classification depends upon characteristics considered to be 'unalterable' because of 'heredity' or 'exterior influences'.[27] In doing so, he indicated as the main distinction between "racism and ethnic and other group prejudices… that such prejudices do not deny the possibility of change at an individual or collective level in principle".[28]

Isaac illustrates this rule by discussing Roman prejudice against Carthaginians, which finally brings us closer to Dido. In a passage of *De Lege Agraria*, Cicero praises the Roman ancestors for understanding that human character is engendered not by heredity but by the nature of the territory in which people are brought up (*Leg. Agr.* 2.95):

> non ingenerantur hominibus mores tam a stirpe generis ac seminis quam ex iis rebus, quae ab ipsa natura nobis ad vitae consuetudinem suppeditantur, quibus alimur et vivimus. Carthaginienses fraudulenti et mendaces non genere, sed natura loci…
>
> Customs are not implanted in humans so much from their family stock or their genes as by those things that are supplied to us by nature itself to form our habit of living, and by which we nourish ourselves and we live. Carthaginians are deceitful and mendacious not due to their ancestry, but to the nature of their territory…

Cicero's passage is quite exemplary of the messiness of Greco-Roman thought when it comes to ascribing prejudice to natural causes. It showcases a form of environmental or geographical determinism that Isaac disjoins from 'racism' precisely because of the lack of emphasis on heredity, even though Cicero's use of *tam … quam* in the passage seems to imply that "family stock or genes" (*stirps generis ac seminis*) also matter, to an extent. *Punica fides*, Cicero goes on to explain, originated in Carthage's maritime setting, which caused

[26] A potentially dangerous operation, as warned by Derbew (2021) 27: "his mapping of a prototype of 'racism' onto the past lends historical legitimacy to the violent acts that racist perpetrators committed against Black people from the fifteenth century onwards".

[27] Isaac (2004) 37–8.

[28] Isaac (2004) 24.

the Carthaginians to be exposed to trade, greed, and "love of cheating" (*studium fallendi*). For Isaac, this is the ultimate example that Romans did not show racial prejudice but rather "ethnic prejudice together with elements of geographical determinism".[29] Similarly, Erich Gruen, while admitting that this, and other Ciceronian passages, "certainly seem to imply a racial failing", exonerates Cicero from his racism on the basis of the explanation adduced in its support.[30] And yet, according to the framework that I have previously outlined, the decision as to whether racialization is at work in a given context can only be made upon examining its consequences: it is not tied to the reasons for the classification of people into clear-cut 'races' in the first place. When it comes to racism, ancient sources are held to a different standard from modernity: in contemporary Western societies, we would not be so quick to exonerate a racist comment about people belonging to a certain nationality on the basis that the commentator thought that their propensities depend on 'nurture, not nature'.[31]

It is precisely because the ancients did not differentiate coherently on the basis of supposed genetic origins that we need a different understanding of how racialization worked in the ancient world.[32] For Isaac, the main point of differentiation between ethnic and racial prejudice is whether the cause for differentiation lies within 'human control' or not.[33] But it seems to me faulty to presume that humans have more control over their nurture than they have over their nature: Carthaginian character may not depend upon bloodline, but this does not mean that if an individual Carthaginian moves away from Carthage they will be exempt from stereotyping and vilification. This is laid bare in Plautus' *Poenulus*, where Punic stereotypes are applied to Hanno, a Carthaginian who has travelled to Calydon, but not to his nephew Agorastocles, who was abducted from Carthage in his infancy and brought up in Calydon. Neither has control over their upbringing, and Hanno's change of location does not exonerate him from the stereotypes that the soldier Antamynides applies to his whole *genus* (*sane genus hoc mulierosumst tunicis demissiciis*: "clearly this is a race of sex addicts – this kind, with their tunics hanging down", *Poen.* 1303).[34]

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[29] Isaac (2004) 89.

[30] Gruen (2013) 12–13; cf. also Gruen (2011) 132.

[31] Gruen (2013) 13. Cf. Skinner (2021) 39: "the contrast between our willingness to 'call out' racism in contemporary society … and the sort of special pleading which takes place on behalf of the Greeks could not be starker".

[32] See Haley (2009) 30: "it is anachronistic to insist that [the Greeks and Romans] had a race as we understand it. Instead, we must search out and analyze *their* construct of race" (her emphasis).

[33] Isaac (2004) 37–8 and *passim*.

[34] See Giusti (forthcoming, a) on how Plautus' *Poenulus* shows racialization depending upon language and culture (especially clothing and accessories) rather than somatic traits. On Punic stereotypes in the *Poenulus* see, among others, Franko (1996); Starks (2000); Giusti (2018) 75–87.

What is also problematic is the way in which Isaac underplays the assimilationist message implied in geographical determinism, which exempts non-[Greco-]Roman people from racism only in so far as they assimilate into [Greco-]Roman culture and come to be brought up in [Greco-]Roman territory.[35] Both Cicero and Plautus show evidence of racialization not because of the reasons for racial classification, but because of the racist outcomes that such classification engenders in terms of hierarchies and power dynamics between groups of people that cannot otherwise be explained with other axes of oppression, such as social status or gender. That Cicero is interested in retention of Roman power (and land) is uncontroversial in the context of *De Lege Agraria*: Carthaginians are a means to an end, serving to racialize Campanians with equally damning characteristics of arrogance – characteristics that geographical determinism conveniently allows to become contagious, so that Cicero can predict the future wickedness of the colonists whose settling in Campania he is opposing in this portion of the speech (*Leg. Agr.* 2.97). It is not by chance that Cicero presents his view of geographical determinism as handed down to us by the Roman ancestors (*maiores*), whom "we ought to venerate and worship among the immortal gods" (*in deorum immortalium numero venerandos a nobis et colendos*, *Leg. Agr.* 2.95). At the forefront, and as backbone, of his argument is the moral superiority of the Roman people (incidentally handed down to contemporary Romans by both bloodline and nurture), which becomes a justification for retention of sovereign power against other groups, such as Carthaginians, who we can say are 'racialized' in view of their fabricated moral inferiority, regardless of the causes for such fabrication. In other words, Cicero and Plautus are engaged in the racialization of Carthaginians not just because they demarcate Carthaginians who were brought up in Carthage as fundamentally different and morally inferior to the Romans, but because the fabrication of such moral inferiority becomes a justification for the Romans' domination of Carthage, and for an unequal distribution of power in the Mediterranean between these two selectively hypostatized groups of humans.

2. Racialized Dido

Virgil's Dido has long been interpreted in terms of Roman anti-Carthaginian prejudice, even though such prejudice has never been read against an explicitly 'racial' framework of structural and historical oppression. In a paper read to the Virgil Society in 1973, Nicholas Horsfall presented her as a stereotypically threatening Carthaginian, displaying "violence,

[35] Samuels (2015) 730.

greed, duplicity and hatred".[36] Although there is some evidence to suggest that already Homer's *Odyssey* presents a prejudiced, if not racialized, portrait of Phoenicians as greedy and untrustworthy merchants,[37] and although Horsfall himself does not downplay the model of Apollonius' Medea in *Aeneid* 4, he anchors his anti-Carthaginian reading of Dido in "Roman history and Roman prejudice".[38] Following Horsfall's cue, in the 1990s and early 2000s critics such as Sergio Casali and Alessandro Schiesaro have analyzed how intertextual networks can be explored to further highlight Dido's threat and unpredictability.[39] Others have instead turned *Punica fides* on its head, arguing that the very stereotype is used by Virgil in a collapsing of the Self-Other dialectic to single out the untrustworthiness and greed of Aeneas and the Trojans, who are in turn orientalized at significant junctures in the poem, especially in Book 4.[40]

As Sergio Casali pointed out,[41] we can observe this ambiguity of impiety at work in the "impious deeds" (*facta impia*) that "touch" Dido in one of her monologues: *infelix Dido, nunc te facta impia tangunt?* ("Wretched Dido, now you are touched by [his/your] wicked actions?", *Aen*. 4.596). The ambiguity of *facta impia* reflects a broader difficulty in attributing untrustworthiness to Dido or to Aeneas: Dido may be referring to Aeneas' breach of what she considered a marriage, a betrayal that can also be conflated with his abandonment of Creusa and, according to a tradition to which the *Aeneid* does not fail to allude, with his betrayal of Troy in exchange for his family's survival.[42] Yet she may be equally alluding to her own unfaithfulness to her dead husband Sychaeus (*non servata fides cineri promissa Sychaeo*: "I have not kept my promise to the ashes of Sychaeus", *Aen*. 4.552), and Horsfall suggests that despite Virgil eliciting mixed feelings about her, such "breach of *fides*" would have sounded "shocking to herself and to a Roman" as well as "ironically fitting for the first queen of Carthage".[43]

There clearly is an incoherence in suggesting that infidelity in widowhood would both "shock" Carthaginian Dido and at the same time adhere to the cultural standards expected from her people. More crucially, it is difficult to find anything specifically Carthaginian about Dido's rejection of the *univira* model, when public Roman *matronae* such as Augustus' sister Octavia could even forgo the customary mourning period in order to remarry for political

36 Horsfall (1973–4) 12.
37 See Winter (1995) and Giusti (forthcoming, a).
38 Horsfall (1973–4) 8. Cf. Isaac (2004) 324–55 and Gruen (2011) 115–40 on anti-Punic stereotypes.
39 Casali (2004–5) and (2019); Schiesaro (2005) and (2008). See Giusti (forthcoming, b) on the predominance of intertextual readings in scholarship on Dido.
40 Starks (1999); Reed (2007); Giusti (2018).
41 Casali (1999).
42 See Casali (1999); Scafoglio (2013); Cianciosi (forthcoming).
43 Horsfall (1973–4) 6.

reasons,[44] and Livia herself was still pregnant with the child of her divorced husband when she was remarried to Octavian.[45] Nor is there anything specifically Carthaginian in Dido's murderous wishes that she had torn Aeneas apart and scattered his limbs into the sea (*Aen*. 4.600–1) or slaughtered Ascanius to feed him to his father (4.601–2): these fantasies of revenge align her with the Theban Bacchae and Colchian Medea as much as with Athenian Procne,[46] and do not need to rely upon the idea that Carthaginians practised child sacrifice – something that suspicious critics have also seen at work in Dido's wish that Aeneas had left her with a child.[47] More to the point are Horsfall's observations of an aetiological transformation of Dido's "hatred" against Aeneas into the historical arch-enmity, and clear-cut division, between Carthaginians and Romans, a transformation that is indeed at work in her curse.[48] But I would not follow Horsfall in taking this historical "hatred" as characteristic of Carthaginians, all the more so since Livy himself reminds us, at the beginning of the third decade, not only that Hamilcar's hatred, inherited by Hannibal, had a point,[49] but that *odium* in the second Punic War was in fact reciprocal in both parties.[50]

It is beyond the purposes of this article to indict or absolve Dido of her supposed (Carthaginian) threat in the poem. What interests me is the process that allows her to be perceived as what Falguni Sheth theorized as the "unruly", namely "the element that is intuited as threatening to a political order ... because it signifies some immediate fact of difference that must be harnessed and located or categorized or classified in such a way so as not to challenge the ongoing political order".[51] This is, however, no easy task in an epic of variable and polyvalent focalization, and it is furthermore complicated by the way in which Dido's gender contributes to her othering and threat,[52] as well as by the possibility of racialization and orientalism at work for the Trojans themselves. Horsfall persuasively

[44] Plutarch, *Ant.* 31.

[45] Dio 48.44.

[46] Although arguably Procne's actions may be interpreted as responding to Tereus' 'barbaric' Thracian brutality. See Schiesaro (2005) and (2008) on these intertexts.

[47] *Aen.* 4.327–30, with Davidson (1998); Casali (2004–5) 149–50; Schiesaro (2005) 91–2. On Carthaginians practising child sacrifice, see already Ennius, fr. 214 Sk.

[48] *Aen.* 4.622–9; see Giusti (2018) 231–5.

[49] See Livy 21.1 and Polybius 3.9-10 on the seizure of Sicilia and Sardinia following the first Punic War, with Giusti (2018) 186–9.

[50] Livy 21.1: *odiis etiam prope maioribus certarunt quam viribus* ("they both fought with hatred greater than their strength").

[51] Sheth (2009) 26, drawing upon the process of the formation of the Enemy theorized by Carl Schmitt (1996). This is not altogether dissimilar from my previous analysis of Dido and Carthage as the Enemy in Schmittian terms in Giusti (2016) and (2018), but the racial framework adds a very different emphasis on the oppressive nature, and the violent consequences, of the process.

[52] See Haley (2009) and (2021) on the importance of maintaining an intersectional lens. On the threat that Dido poses to "the Roman cultural order", see especially Keith (2000) 115 and *passim*.

shows Virgil toying with a horizon of expectations predicated upon anti-Carthaginian sentiment, and such sentiment can be said to be based upon an historical racialization of Carthaginians from the viewpoint of Roman domination; yet we have seen that Virgil both exposes and subverts anti-Carthaginian prejudice without ever fully endorsing it. Still, what is brought to light by reading 'racialization' as intimately bound up with discourses of power and domination is that the only places in which Virgil *seems* to be endorsing it are crucially focalized not by the narrator, nor by Trojan Aeneas, but by the gods who support and further the cause of the Roman empire, and who may be deemed to embody an expression of sovereign power in the poem. I have mentioned that for the Fields sisters 'racecraft' is inseparable from the practice of racism as an act of violent aggression: originating "in human action and imagination", racecraft is "a kind of fingerprint evidence that *racism* has been on the scene".[53] In the *Aeneid*, it is telling that the only passages that explicitly apply racial stereotypes of untrustworthiness, greed and variability to Dido and her people are actually focalized through the pro-Roman divinities that simultaneously assault her: Venus and Mercury as Jupiter's messenger.

A relatively uncontroversial example of how the *Aeneid* relies upon the racialization of Carthaginians can be observed towards the end of Book 1, where the narrator tells us that Venus "clearly fears this untrustworthy household and the two-tongued Tyrians" (*quippe domum timet ambiguam Tyriosque bilinguis*, *Aen.* 1.661). The word *bilinguis* (which indicates both bilingualism or plurilingualism and treacherous character) can also be used as a slur, comparable to a line of Plautus' *Poenulus* where the slave Milphio describes polyglot Carthaginian Hanno as possessing "a two-forked tongue like a creeping beast" (*bisulci lingua quasi proserpens bestia*, *Poen.* 1034).[54] When we consider the context of Virgil's line, which is meant to provide an explanation for Venus' decision deceitfully to assault Dido by substituting Ascanius with Cupid,[55] the emphatic use of the explanatory *quippe* ("*for of course* she fears Carthaginian treachery...") is telling of the existence of 'racecraft' at the ideological level: *quippe* provides a racist justification for Venus' act of aggression, and at the same time appeals to the readers' racial prejudice for such defence to be upheld and understood.

A comparable but less explicit mechanism had already been at work in Mercury's first intervention in the city, which caused the Carthaginians to put aside their "fierce hearts" so that Dido could offer hospitality to the Trojans (*Aen*. 1.302–4):

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[53] Fields and Fields (2012) 19.

[54] See Giusti (2018) 79–81, 202. Cf. Servius *ad Aen.* 4.262 on Aeneas' need to be wary among "unknown and ambiguous people" (*ignotas et bilingues... gentes*).

[55] *Aen*. 1.658–60.

> et iam iussa facit, ponuntque ferocia Poeni
> corda volente deo; in primis regina quietum
> accipit in Teucros animum mentemque benignam.
>
> At once he carries out the commands, and the Punics
> put their fierce hearts aside, at the will of the god. Most of all
> the queen welcomes a serene spirit and a benevolent mind
> towards the Teucrians.

There is room for discussion as to whether *ferox* indicates savagery, as Horsfall would seem to want it,[56] or else a "warlike" and "courageous" spirit:[57] after all, Venus is described as *ferox* at *Aen.* 10.610 and for Harrison *ferocia* can be "a positive and Roman military virtue",[58] even though the fact that such "virtue" can be applied to the Romans does not mean that it loses its brutality. What is interesting, however, in terms of thinking about the ways in which racialization is inextricably tied to acts of violence, is that Mercury in this scene is making a similarly aggressive intervention to Venus' in making Dido welcoming towards the Trojans. Whatever change has been at work here, the rationale for this intervention was the presumption that Dido and the Carthaginians wouldn't receive the Trojans favourably, even though such protectiveness towards their borders need not imply *Punica fides*. Yet Mercury's suspicious attitude towards Dido, both Carthaginian and a woman in her untrustworthiness and variability, will surface again in Book 4, where he will be the one deity suggesting to Aeneas that unpredictable Dido is stirring up deceit in her heart (*illa dolos dirumque nefas in pectore versat*, 4.563) and planning stealthily to set the ships on fire (4.566–8).[59]

A final passage that seems to capitalize on Carthaginian (or better Phoenician) stereotyping, if not racialization, is Venus' telling of Dido's background story (*Aen.* 1.336–68). This speech contains no small amount of disingenuousness and cunning, given that Venus utters it while deceiving her own son under the false pretence of being a Tyrian huntress, and it is representative of how stereotypes can vary in conjunction with other axes of othering and oppression. According to Horsfall, Venus' subtle but repeated emphasis on the role of wealth and gold in this story is meant to single out greed, in line with the stereotypical Roman portrayal of Phoenicians and Carthaginians as "a great merchant people, with an

[56] See Horsfall (1973–4) 4 on "typically brutish Punic behaviour", although without glossing *ferocia*.
[57] See Henry (1873) 588.
[58] Harrison (1991) 222, with reference to Livy 9.6.13, *Romanam virtutem ferociamque*.
[59] On Mercury's role in this scene see Giusti (forthcoming, b).

unpleasant reputation for sharp dealing":[60] Sychaeus is said to be "very rich in gold" (*ditissimus auri*, 1.343),[61] Dido's brother Pygmalion kills him because he was "blinded by love of gold" (*auri caecus amore*, 1.349), and Dido leaves Tyre with "an incalculable weight of silver and gold" (*ignotum argenti pondus et auri*, 1.359) with which her comrades "load" the ships (*onerant … auro*, 1.363). When recalling Dido's oxhide feat, Venus specifies that the soil was "bought" (*mercatique solum*, 1.367), downplaying the extent to which it was conquered with cunning, and thus preferring to emphasize Phoenician wealth and trading practice rather than hinting at Dido's potentially treacherous character. This is in line with Venus' minimization of Dido's cunning and agency throughout this narrative: a domestication of her character meant to make her more appealing to Aeneas, since it is after all in Venus' interests that the two join in their contested 'marriage', so that Carthage can be destroyed from within.

This downplaying of Dido's cunning in obtaining Carthage's soil is only one of the ways in which Venus limits Dido's autonomy in comparison to the tradition narrated by Pompeius Trogus, as epitomized by Justin (Just. 18.4.1–6.8). In Venus' speech, Dido is "given" by her father to Sychaeus "still untouched", as if she were a gift (*cui pater intactam dederat*, *Aen*. 1.345).[62] In Trogus, her father Mutto,[63] upon dying, makes her heir to the throne together with her nine-year-old brother Pygmalion (*filio Pygmalione et Elissa filia… heredibus institutis*, Just. 18.3.4), but the Tyrians prefer to confer the kingdom upon the male heir, however young (*sed populus Pygmalioni, admodum puero, regnum tradidit*, Just. 18.4.4). It would not be a stretch to read her subsequent marriage to her uncle Acherbas (Just. 18.4.5), high priest of Melqart and second in power only to the king, as a calculated political move on Dido's part. Trogus-Justin also writes of Dido actively deceiving Pygmalion "with guile" (*fratrem dolo adgreditur*, Just. 18.4.10), an episode that Venus substitutes with Dido following the orders of her dead husband's ghost (*Aen*. 1.353–60), just like Aeneas left Troy under the instructions of dead Hector (*Aen*. 2.270–97). If Dido in Trogus prepared and loaded the ships, tricking Pygmalion and his servants into believing that she had tossed Sychaeus' treasure into the sea (Just. 18.4.10–15), in the *Aeneid* the ships with which Dido sets sail just "happen to be ready by chance" (*navis quae forte paratae*, *Aen*. 1.362), and the treasure

[60] Horsfall (1973–4) 6.

[61] *auri* is Huet's emendation for *agri*, which was felt to be inappropriate for a commercial and maritime people: see Conington (1863) 65. Mynors (1969) 113 accepts it; Horsfall (1973–4) 6 is doubtful. Conte (2019) 13 retains *agri* (the same clausula returns at *Aen*. 10.563), as does Stöckinger (2016) 181, arguing that it anticipates Dido's digging the treasure from the earth.

[62] Paschalis (1997) 49 suggests a pun on Dido and Greek *didōmi* ('to give').

[63] Probably Phoenician Mattan I, Mattenus in Josephus, Mettes in Servius (*ad Aen.* 1.343). Virgil calls him Belus (*Aen*. 1.621) and makes him homonymous with a Phoenician ancestor (*Aen*. 1.729); see below.

"is carried across the sea" in the passive voice (*portantur … opes pelago*, *Aen.* 1.363–4), with as little emphasis as possible on Dido's agency in the enterprise.

Venus' narrative shows that racialization need not be consistent in its application of character (or even somatic) traits, especially when working alongside other axes of oppression such as gender or social status. In Plautus' *Poenulus*, a somatic trait such as dark skin colour is noted only for the Carthaginian women of the play, arguably in conjunction with their sexualization;[64] conversely, orientalist traits of slavishness are only applied to the men who serve as Hanno's attendants, but not to Hanno himself, who is of high Carthaginian status.[65] Similarly, racialization in Venus' speech relies heavily upon her simultaneous gendering of the narrative: male Phoenicians may be characterized as rich, greedy, and untrustworthy, but Dido herself is represented in her passivity and innocence, so that Venus can make her enticing for Aeneas, while at the same time emphasizing the shockingly extraordinary circumstances that led to female leadership in this enterprise.[66]

So far, I have been focusing on the dynamics of Dido's possible racialization in the *Aeneid*, with an eye to the consequences that these may bring about in terms of justifying Roman rule in the Mediterranean against a people that was collectively presupposed to be treacherous, greedy, and wicked. What I have not yet dealt with is the question of whether there are discernible parameters, in the *Aeneid*, for attributing Carthaginians collectively to a category of less morally sound people, and for recognizing them as such. In this respect, the poem reflects the larger issues pertaining to racialization in Greco-Roman antiquity: Virgil offers no evidence as to whether Carthaginians would be recognizable by specific somatic traits, although there seems to be a possibility of characterization via clothing and accessories comparable to that presented by Plautus in the *Poenulus*.[67] Dido also doesn't seem to show specific hereditary traits, but the issue of her originally Argive bloodline matters to the extent that it joins Carthaginians and Greeks as enemies of the Trojans/Romans.

The *Aeneid* has very little to say on the somatic traits of either Dido and the Carthaginians or the local Africans.[68] With characteristically epic sketching, Virgil gives only a few details about Dido's appearance, though repeatedly emphasizing her beauty (*forma pulcherrima Dido,* 1.496; *pulcherrima Dido*, 4.60; *pulchra Dido*, 4.192). After she has died, in a passage filtered through Ascanius' recollection of her affection, we find a reference to *candida Dido* (5.571), but it is clearly forced to interpret this as a reference to fair complexion rather than

[64] Milphio describes the nurse Giddenis as "dark skinned" and beautiful (*Poen.* 1112–13); Antamynides jokes on the black skin of one of Hanno's daughters (*Poen.* 1289–91); see Giusti (forthcoming, a).

[65] *Poen.* 978–80, see Giusti (forthcoming, a).

[66] Servius *ad Aen.* 1.363 (*dux femina facti*): *pronuntiandum quasi mirum* ("it must be proclaimed as if incredible").

[67] On which see Giusti (forthcoming, a).

[68] Cf. Ethiopian Memnon on the temple scenes, who is said to be "black" (*nigri Memnonis*, 1.489).

purity of character,[69] and even if one were to take it as a reference to skin tone, it is crucial not to conflate it with contemporary ideas of 'whiteness'.[70] The only other reference to her skin tone, when Dido appears "pale at the prospect of oncoming death" (*pallida morte futura*, 4.644), makes it quite clear that this is the characteristic pallor of the dying (as well as lovers), and the adjective is indeed used in connection to the dead or the underworld in most other Virgilian references.[71] The phrase is re-echoed in the description of Cleopatra on Aeneas' shield (*pallentem morte futura*, 8.709), another character whose racialization in antiquity is not dependent upon skin colour.[72]

When Dido is agonizing, Virgil mentions her "fine breast" (*pectus … decorum*, *Aen.* 4.589) and "blond" hair (*flaventis … comas*, 4.590), also specified when Iris cuts a "blond" lock from her head after her death (*flavum … crinem*, 4.698). Dido's supposed blondness, albeit characteristic of epic beauty, has appeared suspicious to Virgilian commentators since antiquity: for Servius, the detail is meant to highlight her shameless morals, since well-respected matrons were supposed to be brunettes.[73] DServius, on the contrary, suggests that Dido may be a fake blonde, adducing as proof a passage from Cato on matrons "anointing" their hair "with blond ashes in order to make them shine" (*flavo cinere unctitabant ut rutili essent*, DServ. *ad Aen.* 4.698).[74] The suggestion that Dido's blondness may be artificial is also put forward by Shelley Haley, who reads a significant difference between the adjectival participle *flavens* at 4.590 and the adjective *flavus* at 4.698, with the former suggesting that Dido may have made her hair golden by artificial means during the meeting with the Massylian priestess.[75] What is at any rate certain is that both denote brightness rather than colour, a detail steeped in poetic intertextuality: we are clearly meant to recall the lock of

[69] Ogle (1925) 269–70 refers it to the honesty of Dido's affection (cf. Horace, *Sat*. 1.5.41); Pease (1935) 473 is unconvinced. Cf. Edgeworth (1992) 114–16.

[70] Cf. Haley (2009) on translating *candidus* as "bright brown" and *niger* as "bright black" with reference to *CIL* 4.1520, on which cf. Spal (2016) 97–8. Virgil contrasts *candidus* and *niger* as skin tones at *Ecl.* 2.16, but the point is that Menalcas works outdoors while Alexis works indoors.

[71] *Pallidus* and *pallens* modify the dead (*Aen*. 1.354, 8.197) or dying (*Aen*. 10.822), ghosts and shadows (*Geo*. 1.477, 3.357; *Aen*. 4.26, 4.243, 6.480; 6.275 on *Morbi*), Orcus and the underworld (*Geo*. 1.277, *Aen*. 8.245). *Pallidus* is also applied to Tisiphone (*Geo*. 3.552; *Aen*. 10.761), the Harpies (*Aen*. 3.217), the dawn (*Geo*. 1.446); *pallens* in the *Eclogues* seems reserved for the natural world (*Ecl.* 2.47, 3.39, 5.16, 6.54). Dido's *pallor* returns at *Aen.* 4.499 in the scene with the Massylian priestess. Cf. also Turnus' *pallor*, highlighting his oncoming death, at *Aen*. 12.221.

[72] See especially Haley (1993) 27–30 and (2009) 29–30, and MacDonald (2002) 21–44.

[73] Servius *ad Aen.* 4.698: *matronis numquam flava coma dabatur, sed nigra … huic ergo dat quasi turpi* ("matrons were never given blond hair, but black … thus Virgil gives it to Dido as if to someone dishonourable"), with Juvenal 6.120 as evidence; see Rivoltella (2019) 221–2.

[74] See Rivoltella (2019) 221–2, suggesting that *rutilus* denotes artificial blondness.

[75] Haley (2009) 38–9 goes on to compare the scene with Yoruban practices of ritualistic dousing of worshippers with ochre mud, arguing that Virgil may show familiarity with ancient African rites.

another Libyan queen, Berenice, which described itself in Catullus as the "dedicated spoils from a blond head" (*devotae flavi verticis exuviae*, Cat. 66.62), perhaps in competition with equally blonde Ariadne (*non flavo retinens subtilem vertice mitram*, Cat. 64.63), and which was "blond" because it had to shine in the firmament (*sed nos quoque fulgeremus*, 66.61–2).[76] That the lock of Berenice is a relevant intertext for Dido is confirmed by Aeneas' reference to Catullus' version of the poem when encountering Dido in the underworld and enigmatically placing himself in the position of the lock.[77]

Other aspects of Dido's visual characterization comment directly on gender rather than on ethnicity or race. Massimo Rivoltella argues that Anna's reference to Dido's *iuventa* (*Aen*. 4.32), to be translated as "mature age" rather than "youth", is atypically ascribed to a woman, and meant to highlight how Dido's lifespan is gendered as male, in accordance with the typically masculine public and political role that she fulfils.[78] When we first meet "very beautiful Dido" (*forma pulcherrima Dido*, 1.496), in a passage where male gaze may or may not be at work,[79] she is compared, in an extended simile, to the goddess Diana, who stands out in height from her retinue of nymphs (*gradiensque deas supereminet omnes*: "and as she walks, she is the tallest of all the goddesses", 1.501). The main term of comparison, in a surprising alteration of its Homeric model, is the solemn gait of both leaders.[80] Yet we also get the impression that Dido similarly stands out from her retinue, whose gender is left unspecified (*magna iuvenum stipante caterva*: "with a great crowd of youth thronging around her", 1.497), even though she is later said to walk among the people in the (collective) masculine (*per medios*, 1.504). It may be that the correspondence with the narrative has to be sought instead in the scene immediately following: once inside the temple, Dido places herself where we would expect an icon of Juno-Tanit,[81] seated "high on an elevated throne, surrounded by arms" (*saepta armis, solioque alte subnixa resedit*, 1.506). For David West, the expedient of specifying the height of Dido's throne is needed because "it would be unbecoming if Dido were taller than her warriors".[82] The (male) scholars' need to disconnect Dido from these arms and transform her unspecified company of youths into a retinue of male bodyguards of the queen speaks loudly to their discomfort with the gender dynamics of this passage, and of Dido's Carthage as a whole: it ends up telling us more about

[76] Cf. Callimachus, *Hymn to Apollo* 2.86 on "blond Libyans" (ξανθῇσι Λιβύσσαις).

[77] See *Aen*. 6.460, *invitus regina tuo de litore cessi*, and Cat. 66.39, *invita, o regina, tuo de vertice cessi*. The allusion has attracted more scholarship than I can reference here: see Johnston (1987) and Drew Griffith (1995) with further bibliography.

[78] Rivoltella (2019) 209–12.

[79] See Starnone (2020) and (2021a) 157–213.

[80] See Rivoltella (2019) 212–15 also on the model of *Odyssey* 6.102–9 (Nausicaa compared to Artemis).

[81] See Austin (1971) 169.

[82] West (1969) 44.

the commentators' mental representation of Dido's body than the image that is actually projected by the text.[83]

To sum up, none of the references in the *Aeneid* to Dido's somatic traits contributes to a specific characterization of Dido as Carthaginian, although all of them speak to her gendered differentiation as a female leader. It is only in the specifications of clothing that the two aspects may converge. In her meeting with Aeneas, Venus says that Tyrian girls are recognizable by their custom of "carrying the quiver and wearing purple boots with a high ankle binding" (*virginibus Tyriis mos est gestare pharetram, | purpureoque alte suras vincire coturno*, *Aen*. 1.336–7). This is the typical dress of huntresses, with a line closely repeated from a projected image of Diana in the *Eclogues* (*Ecl.* 7.32); yet the "purple" here also stands for a stock luxury product of Phoenicians, reminding us of their characteristic wealth and stereotypical greed just before Venus gives her potentially damning speech. Luxurious Phoenician clothing also returns in the hunting scene, first in the purple and golden ornaments of Dido's horse (*ostro … insignis et auro*, *Aen*. 4.134), and then in Dido's purple dress (*purpuream … vestem*, 4.139), which she wears below a recognizably "Sidonian" cloak (*Sidoniam … chlamydem*, 4.137). In lines that are once again an evocation of Artemis/Diana, as presented in Callimachus' *Hymn to Artemis* (110–12), Dido showcases an excess of gold: from her golden quiver (*pharetra ex auro*, 4.138) to the clasp or band tying her (equally golden) hair (*crines nodantur in aurum*, 4.138),[84] up to the golden brooch fastening her purple dress (*aurea … fibula*, 4.139).

Recognizably Phoenician clothing will also be what risks turning Aeneas into a stereotypical Carthaginian: it is when Mercury sees him with "a sword studded with yellow stars of jasper" (*stellatus iaspide fulva | ensis*, 4.261–2) and "a cloak glowing with Tyrian purple" (*Tyrio … ardebat murice laena*, 4.262),[85] with "a fine thread of gold" interwoven by Dido herself (*tenui telas discreverat auro*, 4.264), that he decides that this territory, and people, have infected him with lust, loss of manliness, and idleness. Mercury accuses Aeneas of dissipating time in Libya (*Libycis teris otia terris*, 4.271) and addresses him as *uxorius* (4.266): the word is comparable to Antamynides' use of *mulierosus* at *Poen.* 1303 in denoting excessive fondness for women (and thus a tendency to obey them, with a loss of masculinity) in a passage where the Carthaginians' loose clothing (*tunicis demissiciis*, *Poen.* 1303) becomes visually symbolic of their loose morals and unrestrained sexuality.[86] It is tempting to read

[83] See Starnone (2020) 164–5 on Otto Friedrich Gruppe's proposal, in 1859, to expunge the entire simile, because he was so disturbed by the idea that Aeneas could be seduced by a sort of 'gigantessa' overtowering a crowd of men.

[84] For Servius *ad loc.* this could be a *retiolum*: see Rivoltella (2019) 218.

[85] Morgan (2020) suggests association between this *laena* and the flaminate.

[86] Cf. the specification of the Tiber as *uxorius* at Horace, *Carm*. 1.2.19–20, contributing to the characterization of the river as out of control.

an echo of this stereotype in the loose "hanging down" of Aeneas' cloak on his shoulders (*laena | demissa ex umeris*, 4.262–3),[87] and similar associations may be implied for the *discincti Afri* on the shield (8.724) and in Dido's loosening of her girdle before her death (*in veste recincta*, 4.518).

If we finally turn to look at Dido's bloodline, the *Aeneid* seems to hide more than reveal, although it arguably leaves clues for readers to find out that Dido's heritage matters for her people's future hostility to the Romans. As critics have long recognized, since Dido descends from Agenor (*Aen*. 1.338), her heritage can be traced back to Inachus and is ultimately Argive: this makes her a distant relative of Turnus, which may suggest that the conflict portrayed in the *Aeneid* could ultimately be read as a strife between the two strains of Inachus and Dardanus over control of Italy and the Mediterranean.[88] The *Aeneid* also refers to an ancestor called "Belus" when Dido brings to the banquet a bowl from which "Belus used to drink, and all those descended from him" (*pateram, quam Belus et omnes | a Belo soliti*, 1.729–30). It is clear that this cannot be Dido's homonymous father (mentioned at 1.621), but it is also problematic to identify him with Agenor's brother, who was the progenitor of another strain of the Inachid family, from which Turnus descended instead.[89]

On the one hand, the mention of Agenor and Belus serves to evoke Dido's originally Argive descent and to cast the Carthaginians as enemies of the Trojans/Romans; on the other, since the twin brothers were the sons of Libya, it may also suggest that Dido and her people believe in a matrilineal claim to the African land broadly comparable to the one that the Trojans have to Italy on the basis of their ancestor Dardanus. Yet since Libya is not, unlike Dardanus, the (male) originator of the line, we could also imagine that the *Aeneid* underwrites this potential claim, thereby showing that the Phoenicians/Carthaginians have no right of birth to the land that the Romans will end up conquering and annexing to their territory. Venus, who has a stake in downplaying Dido's leadership and in portraying her as disconnected from the land that Aeneas' descendants will end up conquering, undermines any potential claim of Dido to the land when saying that Carthage is "the city of Agenor" (*Agenoris urbem*, *Aen.* 1.338), but that "the borders are of the Libyans, a 'race' impossible to handle in war" (*sed fines Libyci, genus intractabile bello*, 1.339). In this way, she relegates Libya to the African borders of a city that she attempts to fashion as wholly Phoenician, while introducing neat boundaries between (urban) Phoenicians and (nomad)

[87] Starks (1999) 273–4; cf. Morgan (2020) 196 with further interpretations of the phrase at 201–3.

[88] Agenor was son of Libya, daughter of Epaphus, son of Io, daughter of Inachus; see Mackie (1993); Gale (1997); Brent (2004).

[89] It may be preferable to follow Servius *ad loc.* and interpret him as a Levantine monarch/deity equivalent to Semitic Ba'al: cf. Brent (2004) 146.

Africans that will continue to play an important and divisive role in the *Aeneid*, as I shall shortly discuss.

Yet the same erasure of Dido's female ancestry and of her matrilineal claim returns elsewhere in the poem, with the effect of highlighting her isolation and queerness as *femina dux*. When Aeneas asks Dido about her parents (1.606), she mentions her father Belus (*genitor … Belus*, 1.621), but keeps silent about her mother, who must have featured in Trogus (Just. 18.5.6–7) as the one who dissuaded Pygmalion from chasing Dido in Africa and waging war against her, a menace that remains alive in the *Aeneid* (4.43–4). Clearly enough, Dido's line is presented as a fully patrilineal one, where the "strong deeds of the fathers" (*fortia facta patrum*, *Aen.* 1.641) are embossed in gold and displayed in the palace, in "a very long series of feats traced through many male warriors from the ancient origin of the family line" (*series longissima rerum | per tot ducta viros antiqua ab origine gentis*, 1.641–2), even though that family line is most famous for its women: Io, Libya, Europa, the Danaids.[90] The *Aeneid*'s elision of these women in Dido's *genus* alienates her and excludes her from *both* the poem's focus on fathers *and* from the history of her own people.[91]

In sum, if we are looking for any major sign of ethnic or cultural difference as embodied by Virgil's Carthaginians, then we need look no further than their being ruled by a woman: in a sense, it is precisely the possibility of matrilinearity and female leadership that turns Carthage into 'the unruly', a threat not just to the Trojans but to the poem's political order, and which also becomes a catalyst for racial difference. In a necessarily intersectional reading, Dido's racialization becomes eventually indistinguishable from her gendering in Mercury's famous verdict on the untrustworthiness and mutability of her (Punic) femininity: *varium et mutabile semper | femina* ("a variable and changeable thing always | the woman", *Aen.* 4.569–70).[92]

3. Racializing Dido

Thus far, I have explored the possibility of Dido's racialization as a Phoenician and Carthaginian; yet, despite not being born and raised in Africa, Dido is also, in many

[90] On the ecphrasis of Io on Turnus' shield see Gale (1997); on the Danaids on Pallas' *balteus* see Spence (1991); Putnam (1994); Harrison (1998). Brent (2004) 153 notices a wordplay connecting Dido's silverware and Turnus' shield through evocation of their common Argive descent (*Aen*. 1.640, *inGENS ARGentum*, and 7.791, *ARGumentum inGENS*).

[91] Toll (1997) 42 notes that Aeneas' epithet *pater*, used thirty-one times in the poem, may be of even greater thematic importance than *pius*. For a comparable elision of Dido's line in Marlowe's *Dido* see Hendricks (1992) 174–6.

[92] Cf. Giusti (forthcoming, b), also on the universalizing power of *semper*. It bears repeating that the term 'intersectionality' was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989).

respects, an African queen, both to the extent that the Carthaginians were considered by the Romans an African people, and also because the Romans' reliance upon environmental and geographical determinism makes it so that Dido's character would inevitably be shaped by the territory into which she has moved. This possible racialization of Dido as African in the *Aeneid* has been proposed by Shelley Haley in conjunction with that of other African queens such as Cleopatra and Sophonisba.[93] In particular, Haley reads Dido's 'passion' as "a cultural stereotype projected upon Africans by Romans and Greeks"[94] which, together with her threatening destructive drive and her stereotypical foreign seductiveness, makes her "foreshadow later stereotypes of women of color, particularly of black women".[95] Moreover, she interprets Dido's desire for motherhood not as a wicked Carthaginian desire for child slaughter but as an expression of African "matrifocality"[96] and suggests an African background for the rituals that she performs with the Massylian priestess.[97] In what follows, I take my cue from Haley in thinking about Dido as an African character, but I suggest that her 'Africanization' develops progressively through the course of Book 4, and that it is complicated by the fact that as a Phoenician settler Dido can be accused of racializing the indigenous Africans in turn, both in the *Aeneid* and in the tradition preserved by Justin.[98]

It should not be forgotten that Dido, a future model for Queen Elizabeth I, is a colonizer, and a rather violent one at that.[99] In Justin, we read of an otherwise unknown episode according to which she abducts eighty virgins from the island of Cyprus and gives them in marriage to Tyrian youths, in order to ensure an offspring for her future settlement (Just. 18.5.4–5). It could be that Cyprus in this account was at the time Phoenician territory, especially because Dido in the *Aeneid* refers to her father Belus' "devastation" of this "rich" island, which "he conquered and kept under his rule" (*genitor tum Belus opimam | vastabat Cyprum, et victor dicione tenebat*, *Aen.* 1.621–2).[100] The historical Dido follows in her father's footsteps in her ruthless plundering of Cyprus' human wealth, which allows her retrospectively to buttress Carthage's (Cypriot-)Phoenician pedigree, projecting the illusion that Carthaginians shared no blood with the indigenous Africans.

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[93] See Haley (2009) and (2021). On Sophonisba see also Haley (1989) and (1990).
[94] Haley (2009) 35.
[95] Haley (2009) 40.
[96] Haley (2009) 35–7.
[97] Haley (2009) 35, 38–9.
[98] The distinction between Dido and the Africans will be stressed in explicitly racist terms in early modern European renditions, where the latter become the Muslim Moors on the stage of colonialist Europe, on which see Ndiaye (2022). For specific instances, cf. e.g. Giovanni Battista Lalli's 1634 *L'Eneide travestita*, 4.128; Marlowe's *Dido* 4.4.62–3; and generally the readings by Hendricks (1992) and MacDonald (2002) 73–4.
[99] On Dido's associations with Elizabeth see Cheney (1997) 99–114; Kallendorf (2007) 112–14.
[100] Brent (2004) 145 reads Belus' plundering of an island sacred to Venus as a further hint of the enmity between (Argive) Carthaginians and Trojans (proto-Romans).

Yet Justin's summary seems to suggest that there may have been an historical ambiguity in Trogus between, on the one hand, the plausible mixture of Phoenicians and Africans in the foundation of Carthage and, on the other, the projection of a city and people ethnically unrelated to local African communities. In one passage, we read that many of the neighbouring people came to Carthage for trading (Just. 18.5.10) and eventually settled there before the city's official foundation (*sedesque ibi statuentibus ex frequentia hominum velut instar civitatis effectum est*: "and then they decided to settle there, and so the gathering of people started to take the semblance of a state", Just. 18.5.11). And yet, in the episode of Dido turning down with her suicide the marriage proposal of a local African king (Just. 18.6), Trogus-Justin seems to rely on a clear-cut separation between the Carthaginians and the local Africans. The passage exacerbates differences between, and stereotypical portrayals of, both Punic and African people: both Dido and the Phoenicians who approach her "with Punic mind", or "guile" (*Punico … ingenio*, Just. 18.6.1), are stigmatized as treacherous and deceitful, while the Africans are presented as 'uncultivated' or 'uncivilised', since the Phoenicians report that a certain African king is asking them for someone to teach him and his people "a more civilized way of life" (*cultiores victus*, Just. 18.2, which literally refers to cultivation, the measure of 'civilization' in antiquity), but that they cannot find anyone in the city who would wish to go among "barbarian people, who live like wild beasts" (*barbaros et ferarum more viventes,* Just. 18.6.3).

Virgil's *Aeneid* reflects this ambiguous tension between Phoenicians and local Africans, as well as Dido's ambiguous fluctuation between a Phoenician and an African identity, which we may even see at work when comparing the characterization of the local inhabitants in Justin with her wish to live "like a wild beast" (*more ferae*, *Aen.* 4.551).[101] We have seen that Dido and the Carthaginians were imagined to be naturally protective of their borders (*Aen*. 1.299–300);[102] it is because of Mercury's intervention that Dido treats the Trojans "with no discrimination" (*nullo discrimine*, *Aen.* 1.574), but there may instead be *discrimen* between the Tyrians and the local inhabitants from whom she has stolen the land with the trick of the oxhide. In her speech, Venus clearly differentiates the borders between Tyrians and 'Libyans', conflating different African people into a single bellicose "race" (*sed fines Libyci, genus intractabile bello*: "but the bordering land is Libyan, a race impossible to handle in war", 1.339).[103] Dido herself, when talking to Ilioneus (1.616), refers to the Libyan shores as *immanes* ("monstrous", "frightful", "savage"), probably ascribing atrocity to the indigenous.[104]

[101] On Dido's regressive and even "primitive" drive see Schiesaro (2005) 97–103.
[102] Cf. the expulsion of drones from the beehive in the simile of *Aen*. 1.430–6, which is chock-full of military imagery, with Giusti (2014).
[103] On how borders serve purposes of racialization, cf. Mbembe (2019).
[104] See also Hesekamp (2021) 100; *contra* Austin (1971) 190 refers the adjective to the Carthaginians.

At the beginning of Book 4, Dido's sister Anna is keen to distinguish Carthage from its surroundings, but the similarities between her sister and the Africans become ironically obvious to the readers even as she speaks (*Aen*. 4.40–3):

> hinc Gaetulae urbes, genus insuperabile bello,
> et Numidae infreni cingunt et inhospita Syrtis;
> hinc deserta siti regio lateque furentes
> Barcaei.
>
> On this side the cities of the Gaetulians surround you, a race
> unconquerable in war,
> and the unbridled Numidians, and the inhospitable Syrtis;
> on this other, a waterless desert, and the Barcaei roam furiously
> on a vast tract of land.

In picturing themselves as isolated in the bastion of Carthage and surrounded by inimical nations, Anna echoes Venus' previous words (1.339), but she distinguishes between different African people. The "race unconquerable in war" is now that of the Gaetulians, joined in their hostility by Numidians and Barcaei, and by the hostile and desert landscape of Africa east and south-west of Carthage.[105] Anna's viewpoint here may be considered as in line with that of the Phoenicians as expressed in Justin. In the *Bellum Jugurthinum*, Sallust also pictured the Gaetulians as more warlike than the Libyans (*Libyes quam Gaetuli minus bellicosi*, *BJ* 18.12), just after specifying that both were "rough" and "uncivilized" (*Gaetuli et Libyes, asperi incultique*, *BJ* 18.1) insofar as they did not cultivate the land and lived off the meat of wild animals and fodder from the soil, while also having no laws, no customs, no authority and no settled homes. Just like Virgil, Sallust is at least presenting his description of the local Africans as originating from a Punic perspective, whether or not we believe his claim that this digression is based on the "Punic books" of King Hiempsal (*ex libris Punicis, qui regis Hiempsalis dicebantur, interpretatum nobis est*, *BJ* 17).[106]

Yet readers attentive to Virgil's dramatic irony will not fail to pick up on how the lines between Dido and the locals easily begin to blur. There seems to be an ironic slip in Anna's

[105] Hesekamp (2021) 92–3 speaks here of a "social gap" (*soziales Gefälle*) in Anna's perception of the locals as 'uncivilized', rather than racial difference.

[106] We should probably identify the king with Hiempsal II, king of Numidia between 80 and 60 BCE, although the Latin leaves it ambiguous whether the books were authored or possessed by him. Oniga (1995) 59–68 suggests that this would have been Hellenized rather than originally Punic scholarship.

application to the Numidians and the Barcaei of the same characteristics that will end up causing Dido's and Carthage's downfall: Anna's Numidians are "unbridled" (*infreni*, 4.41), technically because they practise bareback horse riding, but there may be a hint at their "unrestrained" sexuality,[107] while the *Barcaei* are specified as "widely furious" (*late … furentes*, 4.42), an adjective ironically apt to describe Dido's irrational passion in *Aeneid* 4.[108] Anna pictures Dido as isolated in her territory, surrounded by hostile people, and the "deserts" of Libya (*deserta siti regio*, 4.42) that Aeneas also claimed to be roaming (*Libyae deserta peragro*, 1.384) resurface in Dido's unconscious representation of this land when she dreams of chasing her fellow Tyrians in a "desert land" (*Tyrios deserta quaerere terra*, 4.468).[109] The wasteland evoked in this dream also comments on her own situation, since she has previously described herself as "captured and deserted" (*capta ac deserta*, 4.330; *deserta*, 4.677): in her unconscious, Dido becomes one and the same with the feminized, colonizable, and malleable landscape of Virgil's Africa.

There are other places in the poem that suggest that Carthage's borders may be as permeable to the local Africans as they are to Aeneas. Massylian cavalry guards Dido's palace before the hunt (4.132), and there may be good reason to believe that the court singer Iopas was a local African rather than a Phoenician. Servius tells us that Iopas was "an African king, one of Dido's suitors", invoking "Punic history" as his source (*Iopas vero rex Afrorum, unus de procis Didonis, ut Punica testatur historia*, Servius *ad Aen*. 1.738). He may be confusing Iopas with Iarbas,[110] but Alexander McKay has proposed an intriguing identification with Juba II (Greek Ἰόβας), the philosopher-king installed as king of Mauretania in around 23 BCE and especially interested, among other disciplines, in musicology.[111] For McKay, the allusion is flagged by Iopas' epithet *crinitus* at 1.740 (evoking the Latin *juba*, used for the flowing mane of animals) and by an evocation of Juba's wife Cleopatra Selene, daughter of Mark Antony and Cleopatra, in the "wandering moon" of his song (*errantem lunam*, 1.742). Yet this is also a clear evocation of Dido, explicitly compared to the wandering moon at *Aen*. 6.452–4 (and to Diana, a moon goddess, at 1.498–504), and whose name 'Dido', according to Timaeus, was what the local Africans called her, because of her many "wanderings" (ὑπὸ τῶν Λιβύων διὰ τὴν πολλὴν αὐτῆς πλάνην Δειδὼ προσηγορεύθη ἐπιχωρίως, *BNJ* 566 F82). Whether or not the etymology of 'Dido' is Semitic in origin rather than

[107] Cf. Livy on Syphax' and Massinissa's lack of sexual restraint as a characteristic proper to all Numidians (29.23.4; 30.12.18), with Haley (1990) 375–81; Fabre-Serris (2021) 98–100; Hesekamp (2021) 91 n. 269.
[108] See Haley (2009) 35.
[109] See Hesekamp (2021) 73–4; 100–3 on the characters' perception of the deserted African space underscoring an "identity crisis".
[110] Conington (1863) 103.
[111] McKay (2004). On Juba II and Cleopatra Selene, see Roller (2003).

African,[112] it could be that Virgil himself believed Timaeus, since he has it alluded to by Iarbas, the only indigenous African who gets to speak in the *Aeneid*, when he refers to her as a "woman … *wandering* in our territory" (*femina quae nostris errans in finibus*, 4.211).[113]

Anna may picture Carthage as an isolated bastion of Phoenician purity – tellingly so when she is stressing Dido's own faithfulness to her deceased Phoenician husband and diverting Dido's sex drive and fury onto the local Africans. Yet it would be entirely reasonable to imagine it as a city open for local populations to live and trade in, with a court open to the assiduous frequentations of local kings. If we follow Servius and McKay in imagining Iopas as a local Numidian king, we may also wonder whether another historical allusion may be at work for Iarbas too, and if Virgil may be inviting his readers to think of historical African leaders attempting to control North African territory as lurking behind Dido's fictional suitors. This may be reflected in Virgil's specification of Iarbas as a Gaetulian (*Gaetulus Iarbas*, 4.326), which is not reported in any other source. Justin called him the leader of the "Maxitani" (Just. 18.6.1), quite certainly the Muxitani – that is, an historical African tribe whose name has been found in the Roman era in a suburb of Carthage, and must have been in control of the territory north of the Bagrada river.[114] Cato the Elder called him Iapon[115] and may have identified him with the king of the Zavecians or Zauekes, an ancient North African people who gave Libya the name of Zeugitana, and of whom we know little except that their women were chariot-drivers.[116] By making Iarbas a Gaetulian, Virgil may have had in mind a homonymous African prince Hiarbas who in the first century BCE led a revolt against the king of Numidia Hiempsal II, father of Juba I and grandfather of Juba II.[117]

Although Iarbas is referred to as a Gaetulian by Dido, the geographical co-ordinates of his scene in Book 4 show him instead as mixing elements of various African people. He is said to be the son of Jupiter Ammon and a Garamantian nymph (4.198), with the Garamantes being a Berber tribe that occupied today's Fezzan region, mentioned by Lucan as either sun-burned or black-skinned (*Garamante perusto*, Luc. 4.670); Lucan made them fight in the army of Juba I, and in the year of Virgil's death Cornelius Balbus (of Punic origin) celebrated a triumph over them in an expedition against Africa ordained by Augustus.[118] Yet

[112] As argued by Honeyman (1947).
[113] Cf. also Venus' reference to "fleeing Dido" at 1.340–1 (*Dido… fugiens*), and Dido's wandering in the underworld at 6.450–1 (*Dido* | *errabat*).
[114] Desanges (2010).
[115] Quoted in Solinus Polyhistor 27.10.
[116] Herodotus 4.193.
[117] See Roller (2003) 26–7.
[118] Herodotus already referred to the Garamantians as "a great nation" (ἔθνος μέγα, Herodotus 4.183; cf. 4.174–5). On Balbus' campaigns and triumph see Pliny, *NH* 5.35–7 with Desanges (1957). Virgil imagines the Romans' triumph over them at *Aen*. 6.794.

Iarbas also refers to his people as Maurusian = Mauretanian (*Maurusia … gens*, 4.206–7), another dark-skinned population, as the name betrays (μαυρός, "dark"),[119] living instead on the west side of Africa, near the Atlantic Ocean.[120] Iarbas is thus pictured as king of a vast North African territory, spreading from the oracle of Jupiter Ammon (in the Oasis of Siwah, at the border between Egypt and Libya), through the territory of the Garamantes in Fezzan, up to the territory of the Mauretanians and the Atlantic Ocean.[121] Just like Aeneas', his *genus* too is *ab Iove summo* (1.380).

Virgil specifies that Iarbas is a son of rape (*rapta Garamantide nympha*, 4.198), and the placing of this detail at his very introduction may lend some credit to those critics who have seen him as characterized by a violent attitude against women in general, and against Dido in particular.[122] And yet this characterization of Iarbas as a "primitive, barbarian despot … representative for other African chiefs"[123] does not stand the test of scrutiny. Yes, Dido refers to the Numidian kings (possibly including Iarbas) as "tyrants" (*tyranni*, 4.320), but so was her own brother (1.361).[124] It is true that Iarbas' use of *femina* (4.211) is contemptuous, and that it reduces Dido to her female and marriable status, denying her the leadership and role that she has achieved, but so was Venus' use of the term (1.364), and so will soon be Mercury's (4.570). Surprisingly for a character who is supposed to be characterized as 'primitive', Iarbas is engaged in quite sophisticated wordplay when he condescendingly says that he has provided Dido with a strip of land to cultivate (*litus arandum*, 4.212), which he deems worthless (playing on the expression *litus arare*, "wasting pains").[125] Iarbas is at most guilty of racializing the Trojans in turn, when describing "that Paris with his retinue of half men" (*ille Paris cum semiviro comitatu*, 4.215) according to proto-orientalist stereotypes, but there is little in the text to agree with Austin's statement that "fierce barbarian despot as he is, he regards Dido as a chattel, a woman to whose love he has a natural right; his attitude to Jupiter is childlike and naïve, and Virgil has drawn a subtle picture of primitive mentality".[126] As often happens with Greco-Roman texts,

[119] Lucan 4.678–9, *concolor Indo | Maurus*; cf. Manilius 4.729–30; Isidore, *Orig.* 14.5.10. Ovid makes Iarbas Maurusian (*maurus Iarba*, *Fast*. 3.552).
[120] DServ. *ad Aen*. 4.206.
[121] Cf. the list of people Iarbas reigns over in Silius (*Pun*. 2.56–64).
[122] See Hesekamp (2021) 94–6 following Austin (1955). Cf. Pease (1935) 225 on Iarbas and Turnus, "each a person of vigorous, not to say violent, disposition".
[123] Hesekamp (2021) 96, "das Bild eines primitiven, barbarischen Despoten … repräsentativ für die übrigen afrikanischen Stammesfürsten"; see also 91 n. 269 with Sallust, *BJ* 80 on Numidians and Moors holding women of little value.
[124] Austin (1955) 102 takes it merely as "rulers" and believes that Iarbas is meant. For Hesekamp (2021) 93 the word is evocative of brutality and violence.
[125] Pease (1935) 229–30; Austin (1955) 77; Hesekamp (2021) 95 n. 278.
[126] Austin (1955) 75.

the expectations of the modern scholar racialize the ancient character more than the text actually does.

I have argued that in Book 4 Dido seems to progressively mingle with the local Africans, despite instances where the text also suggests the non-permeability of Carthage's borders. There is a final portion of the poem that I believe elucidates Dido's progressive Africanization, while also maintaining an ambiguity in showing Dido's resistance to this very process. This is the double scene where Dido narrates to Anna her encounter with a Massylian priestess (*Aen*. 4.478–98) and goes on to perform the rites that the priestess supposedly instructs (4.504–21). In accordance with her reading of Dido as an African character, Haley argues for an African origin of these rituals, which makes them "familiar and comforting to Dido", against their common interpretation as highlighting her "deepening descent into madness and irrationality".[127] Here, I am less interested in probing any actual Africanness of these rituals than I am in thinking about how this episode epitomizes the multifocal and multi-directional ways in which racialization functions for and against Dido in the poem. On the one hand, we may argue that Dido attempts to racialize the indigenous priestess and thus divert onto *her* the witchcraft and irrationality that she is engaging with, just as we have seen Anna attempting to divert Dido's unrestrained lust and fury away onto the Numidians and the Barcaei. On the other hand, the final effect that the text would have on its Roman readers is a racialization of Dido herself as a type of barbarian witch, a racialization which is of course inseparable from the poem's misogynistic discourse.

The geography of the scene is interesting in thinking about both Carthage and Dido as merging with Africa at this point in the poem. When attempting to make Anna accept the idea that she has decided to approach magic rituals to keep Aeneas at her side, Dido takes her sister through a tortuous ecphrasis to the very edges of Africa and the known world, further and below Mauretania, where the territory of the Western Ethiopians meets the Atlantic Ocean (4.480–2). This is a land that the Romans will transform into a desert for their imagination of the marvellous, and that the Elder Pliny will populate with one-eyed, dog-headed, or four-legged people (*NH* 6.195).[128] From here came a priestess who was somehow introduced to Dido, although Dido is extremely reticent in telling Anna how this came about, claiming only that she "was shown" to her (*hinc mihi Massylae gentis monstrata sacerdos*, 4.483). Dido specifies that the priestess is Massylian, which means that she originally came not from the land of the Ethiopians but from the east of Numidia, at the very borders of Carthage, but at the time of this introduction she had just returned

[127] Haley (2009) 38.

[128] On this tradition see especially Evans (1999); Mudimbe (1988) 70–1 sees a continuity between Pliny's (and others') "geography of monstrosity" and later European ideas of Africa.

from western Ethiopia, where she used to guard the temple of the Hesperides and feed the serpent who in turn guarded the golden apples (4.484–5). Dido makes it clear to Anna that she is going to engage in magic against her will (*magicas invitam accingier artis*, 4.493), casting full responsibility onto this priestess (*monstratque sacerdos*: "it is the priestess who advises me", 4.498).

There is at least one inconsistency in the background story that Dido tells us about this priestess. This is the curious detail that the priestess sprinkles "narcotic poppy" (*soporiferum … papaver*, 4.486), when surely her task should have been to keep the serpent awake in his guard.[129] Dido seems here to evoke two different episodes from Apollonius' *Argonautica*: Hercules' killing of the serpent guarding the golden apples, which the Argonauts learn *post factum* (*Arg.* 4.1393–460), and Medea lulling to sleep the dragon guarding the golden fleece (*Arg.* 4.156–61). If this priestess had any responsibility in the demise of this serpent, then it is telling that she appears to combine two characters who comment on different aspects of Dido: Hercules as proto-colonizer of Africa, and Medea as scorned lover and potentially threatening barbarian sorceress. Indeed, Dido's ambiguous identification with the priestess becomes explicit during the actual rites, where the passage from the *regina* setting up the pyre (*at regina…*, 4.504) to the dishevelled priestess invoking the infernal gods (*crinis effusa sacerdos | ter centum tonat ore deos*, 4.509–10) and then back to Dido herself carrying the *mola* to the altars (*ipsa mola manibusque piis altaria iuxta…*, 4.517) does not necessarily imply a change of subject. Virgil's placing of the *sacerdos* as surrounded by the "altars" (*stant arae circum*, 4.509) and his later representation of Dido as "next to the altars" (*altaria iuxta*, 4.517) further underscores the identification between the two, with the effect that the reader will wonder whether "the priestess" at line 509 may in fact be none other than Dido herself "*as* priestess". The half line that hangs in between the two figures (*et matri praereptus amor*: "and the love snatched away from the mother", 4.516, a reference to the *hippomanes*) speaks to Dido as a painful reminder of her failed motherhood and of her failure to play an active genetic role in the Carthaginian line – which is, as Mairéad McAuley has emphasized, a great part of the tragedy of *infelix Dido*, with *infelix* standing for her as "sterile" and "unfruitful".[130] Whether, and how, the Carthaginian line will mix with the Africans rather than with the Trojans, Virgil never explicitly says: Dido dies childless, and the line of the Carthaginians springs from death in a sort of necromancy, with Hannibal invoked as a vindictive tragic demon, asked to rise from her bones (*exoriare aliquis nostris ex ossibus ultor*, 4.625) in order to exact vengeance from the "entire future offspring and race"

[129] See already Servius *ad loc.*; Pease (1935) 396–8; Austin (1955) 144–5.
[130] McAuley (2016) 60. On the *hippomanes* see Starnone (2021b) with bibliography.

(*stirpem et genus omne futurum*, 4.622) that she wished had been hers.[131] Filling in this gap left by the *Aeneid*, both Ovid (*Fast*. 3.551–2) and Silius (*Pun*. 8.54–6) will explicitly claim that Iarbas and the Numidians chase the kingdom after Dido's death. In superimposing Dido with this autochthonous African priestess, Virgil seems to hint at this future history of Dido's originally Argive line.

To conclude, the scene of Dido as Massylian priestess conveys the hybridity of Dido as both racialized and racializing subject: it condenses her Punic-African racialization and the ambiguous ethnic status of her city, while also reminding us of her own attempts to divert her irrationality onto the indigenous inhabitants. That these attempts have at least deceived her modern critics, if not her sister, may be evidenced by Austin's reading of the scene, when he comments that "in contrast with … the witch and her horrid mumbo-jumbo, Dido seems calm and collected".[132] The scene stages racecraft and witchcraft as processes of irrational and intimate imagination, able to bring about real-life consequences both in the poem and in the world. To quote the Fields sisters, they are both "imagined, acted upon, and re-imagined, the action and imagining inextricably intertwined".[133] It is up to us to try in turn to imagine racecraft "outside or beyond the belief" as "a thing in itself worth scrutiny" in its formation.[134] To close with a caveat that they direct at contemporary Western societies, "it is impossible to understand what 'post-racial' might be without first understanding more profoundly than we do at present just what 'racial' is".[135] The same, we may add, holds true for the 'pre-' or 'proto-racial' in the study of the ancient world.

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[131] Cf. Giusti (2018) 232.
[132] Austin (1955) 155.
[133] Fields and Fields (2012) 19.
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Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* as a Supplement to the *Aeneid*

*Revised from a paper given to the Virgil Society on 15 May 2021**

When Propertius foresaw the birth of something greater than the *Iliad* (Prop. 2.34.65–6), he was not only expressing his personal appreciation for Virgil's anticipated heroic epic, but also the expectations of a whole era for the creation of a national epic which, alongside its other aims, would also satisfy both the need and the demand for the enhancement of Roman pride vis-à-vis Greek culture. The appearance of the *Aeneid* met all of the above expectations and, as a result, jumped immediately to the top of the literary canon, sealing the fate of the course of the Roman epic, as well as of later Latin literature in general. Inevitably, the presence of such a cornerstone of epic poetry constituted a constant challenge and source of anxiety for later epic poets, who attempted to find a poetic outlet whilst bearing the awareness of their epigonic status. In many of his works, especially in his seminal *The Epic Successors of Virgil: A Study in the Dynamics of a Tradition*, Philip Hardie has convincingly demonstrated that the post-Virgilian epic poets imitate the *Aeneid* in a complex way that allows them to rewrite, comment upon and interpret their sources.[1] Thus, Ovid is measured against his predecessor, stripping of heroic grandeur his *Metamorphoses,* a poem that refuses any clear genre classification, although it meets many of the external criteria for an heroic epic (e.g. length, hexameter verse, mythological material) and has been considered an anti-epic or mock epic.[2] Lucan deconstructs Virgil's political vision and transforms his *De Bello Civili* into an anti-*Aeneid* reversing many of the archetypal episodes.[3] The epic poets of the Flavian period (Silius Italicus, Statius, Valerius Flaccus) do not follow Lucan's revolutionary approach and return to the Virgilian model with greater respect, attempting to

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1 Hardie (1989) and (1993); see also Dietrich (2004) esp. 1.

2 Cf. Galinsky (1975) 41; Farrell (1992) 235–40; Harrison (2002) 87–9. For the *Metamorphoses* as the first anti-*Aeneid*, see Hardie (1990).

3 See e.g. Narducci (1979) and (2002) esp. 75–87; Casali (2011).

achieve originality by more imaginative means. It is such a case that will claim our attention in this paper. More specifically, we shall examine how Valerius Flaccus is in dialogue with the *Aeneid* in his own epic in conjunction with his own poetic ambitions and how, with this very dialogue, he pays homage to his predecessor, while all the while complementing his model in a way that reveals remarkable creativity. Thus, as I shall try to demonstrate in due course, in his *Argonautica* Valerius Flaccus treats some episodes in a way that could be interpreted as a commentary on relevant passages of Virgil's *Aeneid*. More particularly, I shall focus on passages which are presented as prequels to the *Aeneid* and I shall argue that this is a strategy that allows Valerius to safeguard his originality and at the same time reinforces his suggestion (with metaliterary implications) that Argo is the first ship.

As a *genus grande* or *magnum* in subject and scale, epic was a reasonable starting point and a source of inspiration for many later writers who sought their material in themes already treated or alluded to in such long poems. This is especially evident in Greco-Roman epic, since in many cases a later epicist builds his poem as a continuation of a previous epic through prequels, sequels, and retellings. Having cited Aristotle's *Poetics* 1456a12, where epic is called *polymython*, i.e. a genre "replete with stories", Robert Simms, in his introduction to a volume that explores "the variety of ways that heroic epic narratives have been continued in the Greco-Roman and western classical traditions through prequels, sequels, and retellings", eloquently notes: "Epic is capable of containing several stories, a feature that facilitates an extensive 'additive' program, such that the enterprise itself is prone to incompleteness and indefiniteness".[4]

As I shall argue, Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* is an interesting case of such serialisation of epic, since although it retells a myth already treated by at least two predecessors (Apollonius Rhodius and Varro Atacinus), at the same time it fills in gaps of the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*, epics that treat different subjects, and presents itself as a prequel to them.[5] As is known, in his incomplete work of eight books, the Flavian poet explores his subject, the myth of the Argonauts, using as his main model Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*; Virgilian overtones, however, abound in the work, and the poet often approaches his subject through the lens of Virgil's *Aeneid*,[6] thus connecting it with the poem of his Roman epic predecessor. These overtones in the Valerian epic are apparent on the level not only of diction, but also of structure. For example, the Roman *Argonautica* is divided into two halves, of which the first describes

[4] Simms (2018) 1. See also Hinds (1998) esp. 91–122 and cf. the notion of "future reflexive" described by Barchiesi (1993).

[5] Thus, it seems that Valerius takes up the famous phrase of *Odyssey* 12.70, Ἀργὼ πᾶσι μέλουσα ("the Argo is known to everyone"), for which see Harrison (2017) 240.

[6] See e.g. Hardie (1989) esp. 5–9; Korn (1991); Schimann (1998); Baier (2001) 45–59; Liberman (2003^2) xxxii–xlvi; Clare (2004); Galli (2007) 19–23; Zissos (2008) esp. xxxiv–xxxvi; Ganiban (2014); Nordera (2016); Nelis (2020). For a brief review of the recent bibliography on this subject, see Manuwald (2014) 87–90.

the sea voyage and the second the military adventures, just like in the *Aeneid*, while in both epics the second proem is not placed exactly at the start of the second half, as in Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*, but a little later (*Aen*. 7.37–45; Val. Fl. 5.217–24).[7] Furthermore, whereas Apollonius begins his poem with the god Phoebus (Ἀρχόμενος σέο, Φοῖβε: "Beginning with you, Phoebus", Ap. Rhod. 1.1), Valerius postpones the invocation to the god to line 1.5 (*Phoebe, mone*: "Phoebus, be you my guide"), thus evoking the *Aeneid*, where the Muse occurs after the proem, in *Aen*. 1.8: *Musa, mihi causas memora* ("Tell me, O Muse, the cause").[8]

Moreover, the fact that Valerius is well versed in the *Aeneid* and can interpret it exceptionally well is obvious both from the creative application in his work of some of the concepts, allegories and connections that are found throughout Virgil's epic, as well as from the skilful manner in which he attempts to complete his predecessor's epic, despite the thematic difference of the two works. As we shall see in due course, this attempt at a complementary work moves primarily in the direction of the development of themes or elements that would logically precede the *Aeneid*'s descriptions, leading to the paradox that the later work is presented as a forerunner of Virgil's epic.

Other scholars have also suggested similar views: for example, Michael von Albrecht sees Valerius' poem "as a prelude to Roman history",[9] while Alain Deremetz interprets it as "a meta- and an archi-epic potentially encompassing all the others".[10] Building on these views, I investigate indicative cases of Valerius' attempt to present his work not only as a prelude to Roman history but also as a prequel to the *Aeneid*, and I include this attempt in his broader literary programme that aims at suggesting his poem's status as the first in a long serial. I comment on the multiple ways Valerius fulfils this aim, and examine various consequences this poetic strategy has for the character and the originality of his *Argonautica*, as it allows him to revivify a hackneyed myth. I suggest that the Flavian poet does what Virgil had already done with Apollonius' *Argonautica*, and I argue that by commenting on, interpreting or

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7 See e.g. Taliercio (1992) 11–15; Manuwald (2015) 18; Davis (2020) 3.

8 See, for instance, Davis (1989) 46. All translations of Virgil, Valerius Flaccus, Lucan, Horace, Homer and Statius are from the Loeb Classical Library (slightly revised).

9 Albrecht (1997) 941, who succinctly notes: "Valerius tried to interpret the myth of the Argonauts as a prelude to Roman history, as a piece of an 'Old Testament' foreshadowing Greco-Roman culture. Thus he was led to measure the myth of the Argonauts against the *Aeneid*. What is important is not 'imitation' as such but the act of referring a mythical subject matter to the Roman empire and creating a new continuity in both space and time. As if in a 'stage on the stage', the Argonauts are viewed as a link in a development leading to Rome. Rather than a mere arsenal of epic technique, the *Aeneid* in the hands of Valerius became an instrument of integrating Greek myth into a contemporary and Roman view of history".

10 Deremetz (2014) 61–2: "Although Valerius' epic is chronologically an Aristotelian τέλος, it presents itself as an ἀρχή, and at this point we should recall the fact that the first word of the poem is *prima*, a word announcing its inaugural value. In fact, more than a single epic, the *Argonautica* is presented as *the* epic among epics, at the same time a meta- and an archi-epic potentially encompassing all the others. Valerius thus presents the *Argonautica* in relation to the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid* by means of a device that Barchiesi has called 'allusion in the future tense' [Barchiesi (1993)], as if it were the 'late proto-text' [Zissos (2008) xli]"; cf. Mac Góráin (2015) 250–1.

correcting Virgil's poem Valerius serves as an early ancient scholiast on the *Aeneid*, while in some cases he implicitly provides alternative histories to his predecessor's narratives. Finally, I discuss possible political reflections in this poetic strategy.

As the sea voyage and the important role of the ship are dominant themes in Valerius' epic poem, the poet skilfully exploits the established presence of similar metaphors in ancient literary criticism, where poetic endeavour is likened to a sea voyage, the ship is a frequent allegory for the poem, and the open seas are often symbolic of the epic genre.[11] Within this context, many of the sea images found in Valerius' work allow for poetological interpretations and could be read as auto-referential comments.[12] Consequently, at a metapoetic level, Valerius' frequent suggestion that the Argo was the first ship[13] reflects his intention to establish the primacy and novelty of his poem and implies its originality. One of the means by which this aim is fulfilled is the artful crafting of episodes as prequels to the *Aeneid*.

This strategy of Valerius is evident already in the proem, which starts with the word *prima* and underlines the fact that the sea voyage described in this epic poem is the first in the history of the human race (1.1–4):

> Prima deum magnis canimus freta pervia natis
> fatidicamque ratem, Scythici quae Phasidis oras
> ausa sequi mediosque inter iuga concita cursus
> rumpere, flammifero tandem consedit Olympo.
>
> My song is of the straits first navigated by the mighty sons of gods, of the prophetic ship that dared to seek the shores of Scythian Phasis, that burst unswerving through the clashing rocks, to sink at length to rest in the starry firmament.

It is clear that Valerius' proem resonates with echoes of the *Aeneid*'s proem; cf. e.g. *prima* ~ *primus*, *canimus* ~ *cano* (a verb that receives two objects in both proems), *oras* ~ *oris*, the common use of a relative clause (*quae Phasidis …* ~ *qui primus …*), *Scythici … Phasidis* ~ *Troiae* (in both cases with the postponement of the relative pronoun), *Olympo* ~ *Romae* (at the very end):[14]

[11] On this allegory, see especially Harrison (2007).

[12] Indicative of this is the *ecphrasis* of the Argo's construction (1.121–9), described by Valerius in a way that reveals aspects of the aesthetic principles operative in his epic project as well as the generic enrichment of the *Argonautica*. See Stover (2010); Tzounakas (2012).

[13] See, for instance, Davis (1989); Hershkowitz (1998) 35–8; Mac Góráin (2015) 250–1. Of course, Catullus 64 (another part of the epic tradition) must play a role here.

[14] On the various echoes and allusions in Val. Fl. 1.1–4, see Lefèvre (1971) 11–16; Davis (1989); Spaltenstein (2002) 23–6; Kleywegt (2005) 5–10; Zissos (2008) 71–9; Deremetz (2014) 52–4.

Arma virumque cano, Troiae qui primus ab oris
Italiam fato profugus Laviniaque venit
litora – multum ille et terris iactatus et alto
vi superum, saevae memorem Iunonis ob iram,
multa quoque et bello passus, dum conderet urbem
inferretque deos Latio; genus unde Latinum
Albanique patres atque altae moenia Romae.

Arms and the man I sing, who first from the coasts of Troy, exiled by fate, came to Italy and Lavine shores; much buffeted on sea and land by violence from above, through cruel Juno's unforgiving wrath, and much enduring in war also, till he should build a city and bring his gods to Latium; whence came the Latin race, the lords of Alba, and the lofty walls of Rome.

Valerius' allusions, however, to the *Aeneid*'s proem, and the similarities in diction and structure in the two proems do not simply constitute superficial requirements of the epic genre, or an homage to a respected predecessor, but also an attempt to discourse with him. Thus, whilst Aeneas is sung about as the first to reach Italy from Troy, in Valerius' *Argonautica* those sung about are the first to cross the sea, skilfully implying that it was they who established navigation, making Aeneas' later journey from Troy to Italy possible.

Valerius' attempt to present his *Argonautica* as the *Aeneid*'s prequel becomes even more apparent in the conversation between Jupiter and Sol in the first book of his epic (1.505–67). It is an episode structured according to the Virgilian model, as it recalls the conversation between Jupiter and Venus and the famous prophecy of the former in the first book of the *Aeneid*.[15] In the words of Venus (*Aen*. 1.234–7) and the response of Jupiter (esp. *Aen*. 1.278–90) it is foretold that the eternal reign of Rome is predetermined by fate and that nothing can change the predestined course of the future. In Jupiter's prophecy to Sol in Valerius' passage, Rome's predetermined long reign is again foretold, although in an implicit way (1.555–60), but here the poet lays greater emphasis on the predestined, earlier supremacy of the Greeks and completes the divine plan by presenting all that precedes Roman dominance (1.536–60).

More specifically, the Flavian poet highlights the decline of the East and gradual

[15] See e.g. Kleywegt (2005) 289–90; Galli (2007) 271, 282; Zissos (2008) xxxv and 305, who also notes (316) that the occurrence of *repetam* in 1.536 makes it easier for the reader to see "a metaliterary sense of repetition" in Valerius' words as a replay of the Virgilian model; Ganiban (2014). More generally, for Valerius' narrative repetitions of mythological models, see Schmitz (2009); cf. Fuhrer (1998).

ascendancy of the West with the arrival of Greek dominance (1.542–3, 551–4),[16] which, however, shall have an end,[17] thus mirroring the Roman conquest of Greece and the East as seen in *Aeneid* 1 and 6; he also presents (1.546–54) causes that led to conflict between Greece and Asia (e.g. the seizing of the golden fleece, the abduction of Medea, the abduction of Helen and the Trojan War). With this choice Valerius ensures that Jupiter's prophecy in the *Aeneid* is placed within a greater context, that the Διὸς βουλή ("will of Zeus", *Iliad* 1.5) as well as the choice of *immota fata* is more fully presented, that a sense of historical continuity is established and that Aeneas' adventures are better interpreted, occurring, as they do, during a period when the grandeur of his generation was yet to be predicted. At the same time, events are given a causal connection, as the expedition of the Argonauts and the abduction of Medea are placed within the greater context of the conflict between Greece and the East,[18] with the predestined dominance of the former, later episodes of which are the abduction of Helen, the Trojan War, and the adventures of Aeneas.

This conception and, more generally, Valerius' skilful attempt to present his work as a prequel to the *Aeneid* in the context of a predetermined unfolding of events,[19] is reinforced by the apt portrayal of Medea as a character in the rest of his epic. Of special interest is the case of the exceptionally evocative connection of Medea and Helen in 8.395–9, which appears to be moving in the direction of Jupiter's prophecy:

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[16] Valerius' *adcelerat sed summa dies* ("But now her last day is hastening on", 1.542), which predicts the fall of Asia, skilfully anticipates *Aen*. 2.324, *venit summa dies*, where it is stated that the time of Troy is over, a phrase that reappears in Lucan (7.195) in relation to the battle of Pharsalus; see Barnes (1981) 360; Spaltenstein (2002) 219; Zissos (2008) 316–17; Stover (2012) 33–7; Ganiban (2014) 257.

[17] At Val. Fl. 1.555–6, *hinc Danaum de fine sedet gentesque fovebo | mox alias* ("Thereafter am I resolved upon the end of the Danai, and shortly will take other nations into my care"), the Flavian poet presents the end of the Greek supremacy in words that easily recall Jupiter's prediction of Rome's everlasting empire at *Aen*. 1.279–82: *imperium sine fine dedi. quin aspera Iuno, | quae mare nunc terrasque metu caelumque fatigat, | consilia in melius referet, mecumque fovebit | Romanos rerum dominos gentemque togatam* ("but [I] have given empire without end. Spiteful Juno, who now in her fear troubles sea and earth and sky, shall change to better counsels and with me cherish the Romans, lords of the world, and the nation of the toga"); cf. Barich (1982) 135; Zissos (2008) 321. On the process of the *translatio imperii* described by both poets, see also Bernstein (2016) 405–6. On Jupiter's *Weltenplan*, see Adamietz (1976) 21–4; Schubert (1984) 22–44; Feeney (1991) 318–34; Wacht (1991); Manuwald (2004); Stover (2012) 27–77; Bernstein (2014) 159–61; Ganiban (2014).

[18] This thought echoes the start of Herodotus (1.1–5) and gives the passage a historiographical dimension: see e.g. Zissos (2002) 85–7 and (2008) 314–15, 318–19; Bernstein (2014) 160. Herodotus, however, begins with Io, then speaks about Europa, and only then introduces Medea and Helen. Thus, it is possible that Valerius' mention of Io in Book 4 has something to do with her figuring as the first victim of the East-West feud in Herodotus; cf. Clauss (2014) 103.

[19] Cf. also Val. Fl. 2.570–3, *namque bis Herculeis deberi Pergama telis | audierat. Priami sed quis iam avertere regnis | fata queat? manet immotis nox Dorica lustris | et genus Aeneadum et Troiae melioris honores* ("for he had heard that twice must Troy fall victim to the shafts of Hercules. But who now can change the destiny of Priam's kingdom? Fixed in the unstirred ages stands the night of the Dorians, the race of the Aeneadae and the glories of a better Troy"), where the fall of Troy and, as Harper Smith (1987) 245 notes, "all the events of the *Aeneid*" are recalled and foreshadowed.

quemque suas sinat ire domos, nec Marte cruento 395
Europam atque Asiam **prima** haec committat **Erinys**.
namque datum hoc fatis, trepidus supplexque canebat
Mopsus, ut in seros irent magis ista nepotes,
atque alius lueret tam dira incendia raptor.

Let him suffer each to seek his home, nor let this Fury first pit Europe against Asia in bloody war. For this was what the Fates decreed, as Mopsus sang in supplication and fear, that that quarrel should rather pass to their latest offspring and another ravisher expiate so dire a conflagration.

Here, the poet, apparently conveying the thoughts of the Argonauts as they are pursued by the Colchians, but, in reality, presenting his own literary designs, presents the abduction of Medea by Jason as the beginning of the bloody clashes between Europe and Asia and as a harbinger of the abduction of Helen by Paris,[20] which will in turn lead to a series of horrific fires, thus alluding to the burning of Troy. This direct connection between Medea and Helen and the Trojan War allows Valerius to present the events he is describing as the prehistory of the *Iliad* and of the *Aeneid*, as the cause of future developments, as the first episode of a series. It should be noted that this aim is already mirrored in 2.445–6, *Thessala Dardaniis* ***tunc primum*** *puppis harenis* | *appulit et fatis Sigeo litore sedit* ("Then for the first time a Thessalian ship put in to the Dardanian strand, and at fate's bidding rested on the shore of Sigeum"), where the arrival of the Argonauts at the Troad foreshadows the subsequent Trojan expedition.[21] In this literary aim, the presence of the phrase *prima … Erinys*,

[20] This constitutes an additional link with the start of Herodotus. For Medea as Helen, see e.g. Hershkowitz (1998) 97–8, 236–41; Zissos (2002) 86–7; Spaltenstein (2002) 221 and (2005) 445, 457, 466–7; Schmitz (2009) 134–9; Pellucchi (2012) 390–1, 408; Davis (2014) 198. Medea's association with Helen is further facilitated by Jason's correspondence to Paris through his characterisation as *adulter* by Styrus at Val. Fl. 8.338, *Haemonius nobis succedet adulter?* ("Shall a Haemonian adulterer supplant me?"), which echoes Juno's words at *Aen*. 10.92, *me duce Dardanius Spartam expugnavit adulter?* ("Was it I that led the Dardan adulterer to ravage Sparta?"; cf. Ovid, *Ep*. 19.177: *ut semel Idaeus Lacedaemona venit adulter* ["As soon as the adulterer from Ida came to Sparta"]). On this correspondence, see Barnes (1981) 369; Spaltenstein (2005) 457; Schmitz (2009) 137; Pellucchi (2012) 365–6.

[21] On the proleptic value of this passage, see Barnes (1981) 366; Harper Smith (1987) 190–1; Poortvliet (1991) 243–4; Spaltenstein (2002) 432–3; Manuwald (2004); Zissos (2008) xlii, who also notes: "Among other proleptic touches in this passage are an allusion to the later Greek camp at the siege of Troy, and the oblique mention of a young Priam. As a culminating gesture, the episode closes with an overt reference to the later sack of the city (2.572 *manet immotis nox Dorica lustris*)". Another interesting similar case is that of Valerius' catalogue of the Argonauts (1.350–483) in which, in contrast to Apollonius, the Trojan war is repeatedly foreshadowed; cf. Hershkowitz (1998) 41–3; Zissos (2002) 81–3 and (2008) xli–xlii, 240–1, 252, 262–3; Deremetz (2014) 62, 65. More generally, for allusions to the *Iliad* in Valerius' *Argonautica*, apart from Barnes (1981), Manuwald (2004), Zissos (2002) and (2008) *passim*, see also Zissos (1999) and (2014); Davis (2014) 196–9; Manuwald (2014) 85–6. As is argued by Parkes (2009), in turn, Statius' *Achilleid* figures the Valerian *Argonautica* as a prequel to its story.

attributed to Medea, is particularly effective, as it recalls the portrayal of Helen as *Erinys* at *Aen*. 2.573, *Troiae et patriae communis Erinys* ("she, common Fury of Troy and her motherland").[22] Medea's connection with *furor* and, by extension, with the *Furiae*, is evident in various parts of the epic, as, for example, a few lines later, when, concluding her speech to Jason (8.444–50), she is described as *furiata mente* (8.445) and is likened to a Thyiad;[23] it is also worth turning our attention to 7.461–2, *Inde ubi facta nocens et non revocabilis umquam | cessit ab ore pudor propiorque implevit Erinys* ("Then, when she was made guilty and irrevocable shame had gone for ever from her cheeks and the Fury's nearer influence mastered her"), where, in her love, she is described as being possessed by the Erinys. The term *prima,* however, presents even greater interest, as it gives the heroine the quality of chronological precedence in relation to Helen, and the *Argonautica* the quality of a prequel in relation to the *Aeneid*.

Furthermore, the fact that the term *Erinys* is also used by another of Valerius' predecessors, Lucan, this time in connection to Cleopatra, allows the Flavian epic poet to proceed with further intimations (Luc. 10.59–62):

> dedecus Aegypti, Latii feralis Erinys,
> Romano non casta malo. quantum inpulit Argos
> Iliacasque domos facie Spartana nocenti,
> Hesperios auxit tantum Cleopatra furores.
>
> Cleopatra, the shame of Egypt, the fatal Fury of Latium, whose unchastity cost Rome dear. As the dangerous beauty of the Spartan queen overthrew Argos and Troy town, in like measure Cleopatra fanned the frenzy of Italy.

Aware of Virgil's precedent, Lucan describes Cleopatra as *Latii feralis Erinys*, directly connects her to the idea of *furor*, and compares her to Helen, insinuating that she engaged in activity similarly destructive to that of the Spartan woman. With the phrase *prima … Erinys* Valerius gives his own Medea archetypal qualities which he implies will later be reproduced in Helen and Cleopatra. In other words, while Lucan sees Cleopatra as the Virgilian Helen's successor, Valerius sees Medea as the Virgilian Helen's predecessor. Thus, on the one hand he is subtly stating his heroine's significant role in historical – but also,

[22] On this intertextual allusion, see Barnes (1981) 369; Hershkowitz (1998) 236; Spaltenstein (2005) 466; Pellucchi (2012) 409; Corrigan (2013) 251–2; Davis (2014) 198. However, it should be mentioned that the authenticity of the Helen episode in the *Aeneid* is disputable: see e.g. Horsfall (2006–7).

[23] This is also one of the many ways in which she parallels Dido (cf. e.g. *Aen*. 4.300–3).

by extension, literary – developments, whilst, on the other hand, he is indirectly justifying his choice of the particular subject for his epic work, as he is presenting it as having great historic implications that extend as far as the works of Virgil and Lucan.

The fact that the daughter of Aeetes is depicted in a way that sometimes recalls the *Aeneid*'s Dido is a topic which has already caught the attention of scholars[24] and I do not think it needs to be further discussed at present. It would suffice to mention the description of Medea as *regina* (7.444, 8.47), which recalls the term frequently used to describe the Carthaginian queen in the *Aeneid* (cf. e.g. *Aen*. 4.1), or her characterisation as *infelix* (6.490, 7.296, 371), the exact adjective often used to describe Dido in the *Aeneid* (cf. e.g. *Aen*. 1.712, 749, 4.68, 450, 529, 596).[25] It is worth noting, however, that this connection contributes to the portrayal of the *Argonautica* as a prelude to the *Aeneid*, and this not only because the separation of Aeneas and Dido and the latter's curses foreshadow another war between continents modelled on the wars that were started by Medea.

When Valerius describes the arrival of a hero in a foreign country, the assistance he receives from a woman and the love affair that ensues between them, he of course has in his mind the Virgilian description of the hospitality Dido extends to Aeneas and their own romantic adventure. Thus, just like in his model, Valerius describes Jason as *hospes* (e.g. 6.676; 7.1, 13, 68, 80),[26] the help he received from a foreign queen is described as a benefaction (7.501; cf. *Aen*. 4.335), and, overall, he meticulously highlights a multitude of similarities between the two stories. In this way, given his decision to explore a subject which mythologically precedes the Trojan expedition and the myth of Aeneas, Valerius attempts to establish the theme of the epic hero's romantic adventure with a foreign queen, so that the affair between Aeneas and Dido is shown to be not a model, but a repetition of the affair between Jason and Medea. Of course, given Virgil's exploitation of Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*, in the *Aeneid* also this affair is, to a certain extent, a repetition.

The same objective also seems to be achieved during the episode of the Argonauts' visit to Lemnos and Jason's affair with Hypsipyle.[27] The banquet held by Hypsipyle for the

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[24] Cf., for instance, Wright (1998) 54–123; Hershkowitz (1998) 99–100.

[25] See e.g. Hershkowitz (1998) 99; Wijsman (2000) 192; Bernstein (2008) 35 with n. 24; Davis (2020) 15–16. In my view, especially interesting and revealing is the case of *Aen*. 4.78–9, *Iliacosque iterum demens audire labores | exposcit pendetque iterum narrantis ab ore* ("again in her madness craves to hear the sorrows of Ilium and again hangs on the speaker's lips") and Val. Fl. 7.12–13, *quos ego cur iterum demens iterumque recordor | tam magno discreta mari?* ("What madness makes me recall it again and yet again, though oceans lie between us?") (a parallel already mentioned by Hershkowitz [1998] 99 n. 246 and Davis [2020] 96), given the possible metaliterary function of the words *iterum* and *recordor*.

[26] Cf. Davis (2020) 16.

[27] For the influence of Virgil's Dido on Valerius' Hypsipyle, see e.g. Hershkowitz (1998) 138–46; Dietrich (2004) *passim*; Heerink (2020) 194–6; cf. also Zissos (2017).

Argonauts (Val. Fl. 2.346–9) is similar to that held by Dido for Aeneas (*Aen*. 1.697ff.), even though in Valerius' work the corresponding description is significantly shorter. In both cases, conversations extend into the night, both queens desire to learn more about their guests and gradually fall in love with them (cf. Val. Fl. 2.349–56 and *Aen*. 1.748ff.), while storms, which facilitate the development of the affairs, further reinforce the connection between the two episodes (cf. Val. Fl. 2.357–74, 403–8 and *Aen*. 4.160–8). The similarities continue as in both poems another character reminds the hero that he must take his leave (Mercury in Virgil, Hercules in Valerius) and the preparation of the ships for departure is described. Just like Dido, so too does Hypsipyle complain about the sudden departure of her lover, but her reaction differs from Dido's rage, as the queen of Lemnos gives Jason gifts to accompany him and, offering him her father's sword, says (2.419–24):

> 'accipe' ait, 'bellis mediaeque ut pulvere pugnae
> sim comes, Aetnaei genitor quae flammea gessit
> dona dei, nunc digna tuis adiungier armis.
> i, **memor** i terrae, quae vos amplexa quieto
> **prima** sinu; refer et domitis a Colchidos oris
> vela per hunc utero quem linquis Iasona nostro.'

> "Take it," she said, "that I may be by your side in wartime and in the dust where the battle is thickest, the flaming gift of Aetna's god that my father bore; worthy to be worn now along with your own arms. Go now, go, but forget not the land that first folded you to its peaceful bosom; and from Colchis' conquered shores bring back here your sails, I pray you, by this Jason whom you leave in my womb."

These words must be read in conjunction with the Dido episode and should be interpreted as an indirect comment on that. When Hypsipyle asks Jason to return to Lemnos for the sake of his son whom she is carrying inside her, Valerius has in mind *Aen*. 4.327–30, *saltem si qua mihi de te suscepta fuisset | ante fugam suboles, si quis mihi parvulus aula | luderet Aeneas, qui te tamen ore referret, | non equidem omnino capta ac deserta viderer* ("At least, if before your flight a child of yours had been born to me, if in my hall a baby Aeneas were playing, whose face, in spite of all, would bring back yours, I should not think myself utterly vanquished and forlorn"),[28] where Dido claims that had she had a son by Aeneas she would not have felt completely abandoned. By adding the detail of

[28] Cf. Harper Smith (1987) 183; Poortvliet (1991) 230; Spaltenstein (2002) 425; Dietrich (2004) 16–17.

Hypsipyle's pregnancy, which is not found in Apollonius Rhodius where the fruit of the affair exists only in the realm of possibility and wishful thinking (1.904–9),[29] the Flavian epic poet offers a reasonable explanation for the mild reaction of the Lemnian queen to the departure of her lover and confirms Dido's case with a relevant example.[30] Thus, the impression is given that Valerius skilfully complements the Virgilian passage, letting it be implied that Dido could have followed the particular hypothetical thought process with Hypsipyle's stance in mind, the latter preceding her. Within this context, maybe the use of the word *memor* in 2.422 and of *prima* in the next line is no coincidence: while the first is a common *topos* in scenes depicting the parting of lovers[31] and recalls a similar plea in Apollonius Rhodius' narrative (μνώεο, 1.896), it also appears to facilitate Valerius' effort to lend his passage a quality of literary memory[32] and to imply the need for one to keep Hypsipyle's plea in mind when attempting to interpret similar situations, such as Dido's. The second word seems to favour such an interpretation even more, as it implies the chronological precedence of the episode in Lemnos and skilfully reinforces the impression that it should be read as the prototype on which all similar episodes are based, such as the one featuring Medea later on in the *Argonautica*, or Dido in the *Aeneid*. The reference to the sword in both episodes is also of great interest, leading to suggestive comparisons: while in Valerius' description Hypsipyle gives Jason her father's sword to take with him on his military campaigns and add to his weapons, in Virgil's *Aeneid* it is Aeneas who gives his sword to Dido, who turns it on herself to take her own life.[33] On a semantic level, Hypsipyle's action carries symbolism of continuity and future potential, while Dido's signifies the sense of an ending and a suicide from Greek tragedy (famously imitating Ajax to kill herself with a donated Trojan sword).

As is logical, in Valerius' attempt to present his epic as a prequel to the *Aeneid* the use of the adjective *primus* in conjunction with his Virgilian intertext is extremely important. Thus, for example, having given his work the appearance of chronological precedence in relation to the *Aeneid* and having asserted the causal connection of the Argonautic expedition with later events, Valerius portrays Aeetes as regarding the arrival of Phrixus at Colchis, and the

[29] For a comparison between Apollonius' and Valerius' version, see e.g. Church (1911) esp. 78–9; Poortvliet (1991) 230; Hershkowitz (1998) 144; Spaltenstein (2002) 425–6; Clare (2004) 144; Zissos (2017) 217–18.

[30] It is worth noting that a similar idea also occurs at Val. Fl. 3.316–19, where Clite, the wife of Cyzicus, believes that the existence of offspring would be a small consolation for her to elude her grief at the death of her husband. For the similarity of this passage with Hypsipyle's and Dido's words, see Manuwald (2015) 149; Zissos (2017) 223–4.

[31] See e.g. Harper Smith (1987) 182; Poortvliet (1991) 229–30.

[32] On the notion of literary memory in Latin literature, see Conte (1986); Miller (1993); Hinds (1998); Faber (2017).

[33] See Hershkowitz (1998) 143; Zissos (2017) 218.

marriage of the latter to his daughter Chalciope, as the start of all his troubles, wishing that he had never met the Greeks (7.37–42):

> tu **prima malorum**
> **causa** mihi, tu, Phrixe gener. non te aequore mersum
> quo soror! ut **felix** nullos nunc nomine Graios
> **nossem** ego! quis regum Pelias, quis Thessalus aut quae
> Graecia? quodnam hominum cerno genus? aut ubi cautes
> Cyaneae? venit Scythicas en hospes in oras.

> "You Phrixus, my son-in-law, were the prime cause of ill for me. Alas! that you were not drowned in the same sea as your sister! that so I might be happy, knowing to-day no Grecian name! Who is King Pelias, who the Thessalian, what is Greece? what race of men do I here behold? or where are the Cyanean rocks? Look! a stranger has come to Scythian shores!"

It is obvious that here Valerius has modelled his passage on *Aen*. 4.169–70,[34] where, following the *conubium* of Dido and Aeneas, Virgil declares: *ille dies* ***primus*** *leti* ***primusque malorum*** | ***causa*** *fuit* ("That day the first of death, the first of calamity was cause"). With his allusion to these lines, Valerius appears to be passing comment on and correcting Virgil, placing the beginning of the troubles not at the *conubium* of Dido and Aeneas but much earlier, at the wedding of Phrixus with the daughter of Aeetes. Furthermore, Aeetes' words, and especially his statement about his happiness if he would know no Greeks by name, correspond to Dido's words in *Aen*. 4.657–8,[35] where the Carthaginian queen claims that she would have been perfectly happy had the Trojan ships never reached her shores: ***felix,*** *heu! nimium* ***felix,*** *si litora tantum* | *numquam Dardaniae* ***tetigissent*** *nostra carinae!* ("happy, too happy, had but the Dardan keels never touched our shores!").[36]

We therefore observe that traits of the Virgilian Dido are not only found in Medea and Hypsipyle, but also in Aeetes. Both figures feel that their happiness was destroyed with the

[34] See Taliercio (1992) 86; Davis (2020) 104.

[35] Cf. Stadler (1993) 33–4.

[36] Cf. Catullus 64.171–2 (quoted by Macrobius, *Sat*. 6.1.42 and compared by him with *Aen*. 4.657–8): *Iuppiter omnipotens, utinam ne tempore primo* | *Cnosia Cecropiae tetigissent litora puppes* – which, in turn, refers to the beginning of Ennius' (and Euripides') *Medea*; through this chain of literary allusions, we come back to Colchis. And, what is more, it seems that Valerius, while writing 7.37–42, alludes also to Ennius, *Trag*. 207–9 R.^{2} = 255–7 W. = 210–12 J.: *neve inde navis inchoandi exordium* | *coepisset* [which pleonastically also describes *prima malorum causa*], *quae nunc nominatur nomine* | *Argo* [both traits are absent from Euripides' *Medea*]. I owe this remark to Jakub Pigoń.

arrival of a foreigner (*hospes*) at their home, are infuriated[37] with him, and turn against him with great hostility. In fact, Aeetes' military forces persecute Jason following the latter's flight (Val. Fl. 8.259ff.), putting into practice one of the choices Dido considers following the flight of Aeneas (*Aen*. 4.544–6, 590–4). The similarities between Aeetes and Dido are further reinforced by the fact that both refer to Jason and Aeneas respectively as *hospes*, a characterisation used to refer to Phrixus when Medea asks her sister Chalciope about him in Val. Fl. 7.119–20: *quaerit, ut Aeaeis* ***hospes*** *consederit oris* | *Phrixus, ut aligeri Circen rapuere dracones* ("asks her how Phrixus came from abroad to settle in the Aeaean land, how Circe was borne away by winged serpents"). The strong presence of the term *hospes* in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* and the fact that it is used to refer both to Jason and to his kinsman Phrixus facilitate an intertextual dialogue with the *Aeneid* and a comparison of these figures to Aeneas. In the light, however, of the emphasis Valerius places on the chronological precedence of the events he is describing, the parallel examination of the two epics leads to a new reading of Dido's words in *Aen*. 4.10, *quis* ***novus*** *hic nostris* ***successit*** *sedibus* ***hospes*** ("Who is this new guest who has entered our home?"), as the presence of the adjective *novus* in this line allows the Flavian poet to allude to his own work as a prequel and the *hospites* he describes as precursors of Aeneas, thus making Virgil's narrative appear as a repetition of an earlier story. Perhaps Valerius' reinterpretation is also facilitated by *successit*, which further reinforces the sense of succession.

As a rule, any reference to a mythological character that is also mentioned in the *Aeneid* is exploited by Valerius, thus highlighting the chronological precedence of his own narrative in relation to the narrative time of Virgil's epic. As we shall see, an important part in this is played by the use of time adverbs. At the same time, the parallel examination of the relevant passages sheds further light on, and often allows for a reinterpretation of, the two texts.

An interesting case is that of the sea-storm at Val. Fl. 1.574–692, where the Flavian epic poet reworks his Virgilian model from *Aen*. 1.50–156.[38] In particular, especially when describing the island of Aeolus and the incarceration of the winds, Valerius, once again, appropriates Virgilian material, but through apposite time adverbs he implies the temporal priority of his own sea-storm and gives the prehistory of Virgil's account at *Aen*. 1.52–63:

> hic vasto rex Aeolus antro
> luctantis ventos tempestatesque sonoras
> imperio premit ac vinclis et carcere frenat.

[37] Cf. Aeetes' and Dido's *ira* in Val. Fl. 7.34 and *Aen*. 4.532, 564 respectively.

[38] On this Valerian episode and its models, see e.g. Spaltenstein (2002) 228–62; Kleywegt (2005) 339–402; Zissos (2005); Galli (2007) 302–55; Zissos (2008) xxxv, 328–67 with a rich bibliography.

illi indignantes magno cum murmure montis
circum claustra fremunt; celsa sedet Aeolus arce
sceptra tenens, mollitque animos et temperat iras;
ni faciat, maria ac terras caelumque profundum
quippe ferant rapidi secum verrantque per auras.
sed pater omnipotens speluncis abdidit atris,
hoc metuens, molemque et montis insuper altos
imposuit regemque dedit, qui foedere certo
et premere et laxas sciret dare iussus habenas.

Here in his vast cavern, Aeolus, their king, keeps under his sway and with prison bonds curbs the struggling winds and the roaring gales. They, to the mountain's mighty moans, chafe blustering around the barriers. In his lofty citadel sits Aeolus, sceptre in hand, taming their passions and soothing their rage; did he not so, they would surely bear off with them in wild flight seas and lands and the vault of heaven, sweeping them through space. But, fearful of this, the father omnipotent hid them in gloomy caverns, and over them piled high mountain masses and gave them a king who, under fixed covenant, should be skilled to tighten and loosen the reins at command.

In Virgil's passage we read that Jupiter appointed Aeolus as the king of the struggling winds, who has them imprisoned in his vast cavern in order to avoid a cosmic disorder. Valerius follows this account (sometimes with striking verbal similarities even in the same metrical *sedes*: cf. e.g. *vinclis et carcere*, *regemque dedit*),[39] but at the same time he supplements his model by adding events from the period before Aeolus' appointment as the king of the winds and by giving examples of cosmic disorder before the winds had been brought under control (Val. Fl. 1.584–607):

has nimbi ventique domos et naufraga servat
tempestas; hinc in terras latumque profundum
est iter, hinc **olim** soliti miscere polumque
infelixque fretum (**neque** enim **tunc** Aeolus illis
rector erat, Libya cum rumperet advena Calpen
Oceanus, cum flens Siculos Oenotria fines

[39] See Zissos (2005) 87 and (2008) 335, 338.

perderet et mediis intrarent montibus undae),
intonuit donec pavidis ex aethere ventis
omnipotens regemque dedit, quem iussa vereri
saeva cohors: in monte chalybs iterataque muris
saxa domant Euros. cum iam cohibere frementum
ora nequit, rex tunc aditus et claustra refringit
ipse volens placatque data fera murmura porta.
nuntius hunc solio Boreas proturbat ab alto.
'Pangaea quod ab arce nefas' ait, 'Aeole, vidi!
Graia novam ferro molem commenta iuventus
pergit et ingenti gaudens domat aequora velo,
nec mihi libertas imis freta tollere harenis,
qualis eram **nondum** vinclis et carcere clausus
hinc animi structaeque viris fiducia puppis,
quod Borean sub rege vident. da mergere Graios
insanamque ratem: nil me mea pignora tangunt.
tantum hominum compesce minas, dum litora iuxta
Thessala **necdum** aliae viderunt carbasa terrae.'

...the latter is the home of squalls and winds and shipwrecking storms; from here they pass to the lands and over the wide ocean, from here in bygone days would they spread turmoil in the heavens and in the disastrous sea – for at that time no Aeolus was their master, when the intruding sea broke Calpe off from Libya, when Oenotria to her sorrow lost the lands of Sicily and the waters burst into the heart of the mountains – until the All-powerful thundered from the sky upon the trembling blasts and appointed them a king, whom the fierce band were bidden to revere: iron and a twofold wall of rocks quell the East winds within the mountain. When this king can no longer curb their roaring mouths, then of his own will he unbars the doors and by granting egress lulls their savage complaints. Boreas now with these tidings drives him from his lofty throne: "Ah! what monstrous deed, Aeolus, have I spied from the heights of Pangaeus! Grecian heroes have devised a strange engine with the axe, and now go forward triumphing joyously over the seas with a huge sail, nor have I power of myself to stir up the sea from its sandy depths, as I had or ever I was fettered and imprisoned. This it is that gives them courage and confidence in the vessel they have built, that they see Boreas ruled by a king. Grant me to

> overwhelm the Greeks with their mad bark: the thought of my children moves me not, only do you quench these threats of mortal man, while still the shores of Thessaly and as yet no other lands have seen their sails."

In this way Valerius elaborates on Virgil's conditional sentence in *Aen*. 1.58–9 by indicating what had already happened in a previous era in such a case (Val. Fl. 1.586–94), and thus he confirms Virgil's statement. Moreover, Boreas' reference to Argo as *novam … molem* at 1.599, where *novam* "speaks to Argo's strangeness to Boreas as first ship",[40] and his plea to Aeolus to destroy the ship, and by extension to quench the threat of the seafaring, when the ship is still near Thessaly and as yet no other lands have seen it (1.606–7), underline the temporal priority of Valerius' narrative and further contribute to his attempt to present his work as prequel to the *Aeneid*.

At times Valerius' attempt to present his poem as a supplement to the *Aeneid* is achieved when he develops a theme in depth which in the *Aeneid* has only been mentioned briefly and in passing, and which precedes the events mentioned in the latter work. Let us take a look at a characteristic example: when Dido wonders whether or not she should join Aeneas as he flees to Italy, she holds back, considering the deception of Laomedon's race: ***nescis**, heu! perdita, **necdum** | Laomedonteae **sentis** periuria gentis?* ("Ah! lost one, do you not yet understand nor perceive the treason of Laomedon's race?", *Aen*. 4.541–2). Valerius highlights Laomedon's perfidy skilfully. The Flavian poet introduces in his epic the episode of Hercules' rescue of Hesione, and of the reward he is due to receive from her father Laomedon, even though it is a subject that does not feature in his main model, Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*. Describing, later, Hercules' encounter with Laomedon and the latter's intention not only to deceive the hero, but to murder him unscrupulously in his sleep so as to avoid fulfilling his promises to him (Val. Fl. 2.550–78), the poet draws attention to Laomedon's perfidy and treacherousness and thus offers proof of the Trojans' *periuria*. Reading this description in conjunction with Dido's words above, the reader feels that he is learning aspects of the story that are absent from Virgil's account which better support the mythological allusion of the Virgilian heroine. By shedding light on the particular event, Valerius expertly implies that Dido (and any reader of the *Aeneid*) cannot, indeed, ignore Laomedon's *periuria* and thus gives, retrospectively, characteristics of an Alexandrian footnote to *nescis* and the question of the Virgilian passage.

What is also interesting in this framework is that Valerius' episode of the rescue of Hesione gives the prehistory of Virgil's lines at *Aen*. 8.154–9, where Evander informs Aeneas that he had met Anchises and Priam when they visited Hesione in her realm in Salamis:

[40] Zissos (2008) 337.

ut te, fortissime Teucrum,
accipio **agnoscoque** libens! ut verba parentis
et vocem Anchisae magni vultumque **recordor**!
nam **memini** Hesionae visentem regna sororis
Laomedontiaden Priamum Salamina petentem
protinus Arcadiae gelidos invisere finis.

"Bravest of the Teucrians, how gladly I receive and recognise you! How I recall your father's words, and the voice and features of great Anchises! For I remember how Priam, Laomedon's son, when on his way to Salamis he came to see the realm of his sister Hesione, passed on to visit Arcadia's cold borders."

Once again, the Flavian poet develops a theme briefly mentioned in the *Aeneid* and adds what preceded its account. The accumulation of words that point to memory in Virgil's passage (*agnosco*, *recordor*, *memini*)[41] seems to be adroitly exploited by Valerius, who complements his predecessor's story with what is missing from it and thus implicitly reminds Virgil's readers of what they should remember in order to better understand Virgil's mythological allusion.

At other times, Valerius' attempt to offer a work that can complement the *Aeneid* is much more complex and is based on his ability to identify some of the connections Virgil makes in his epic and to reinforce them using additional material so as to support (or 'correct') them more effectively. A good example of this, which shows that Valerius was an assiduous reader and interpreter of Virgil's work, can be found in the way the poet sometimes portrays Hercules in his epic. As is well known, even though explicit references to Hercules in the *Aeneid* do not abound (the most extensive is Evander's description of the Hercules and Cacus episode in 8.193–267 and the song performed by the Salii priests in Hercules' honour directly afterward, in 8.285–305), his implicit presence in the work is extremely important and can be found in many other instances.[42] Juno's hostility towards Aeneas, for example, which is predominant throughout, from the proem to the very last book of the epic, brings to mind the well-known hostility Juno felt towards Hercules, which is explicitly mentioned in 8.288ff.; Aeneas' *katabasis* into the Underworld does not only recall Odysseus' *katabasis* in

[41] Cf. Fratantuono and Smith (2018) 280–2.

[42] Galinsky (1972) 131–49 remains a seminal work on this subject; other useful resources include Gilmartin (1968); Zarker (1972); Feeney (1986); Newman (2002); Secci (2013); Miller (2014); Loar (2017). For Hercules' explicit or implicit presence in Virgilian and post-Virgilian epic, especially as regards the centrality of the beast–man–god series in Roman epic, see also Hardie (1993) 65–71.

the famous *Nekyia* of the *Odyssey*, but also that of Hercules which is commemorated in the hymn of the Salii (8.296–7), while it is also mentioned by Aeneas himself (6.122–3). Another parallel is drawn between Aeneas' transfer to Evander's humble home and Hercules' earlier visit to the same abode. The emphasis on Aeneas' *labores* constitutes a further connection between Aeneas and Hercules and the latter's own Labours.[43] Thus, we observe that Virgil intends to present Hercules as one of his models for his portrayal of Aeneas, despite the fact that he does not fail to highlight the differences between the two heroes.[44]

Apart from its contribution to the depiction of Aeneas' character, however, Hercules' persona deftly facilitates the desired depiction of Augustus in the *Aeneid*. At this point it should be noted that, as Mark Antony claimed that he was a descendant of Hercules, the connection between Augustus and the mythical hero, at least during the time around the battle of Actium, could not easily constitute a direct strategic aim and deserved special attention; however, when Mark Antony's image had begun to fade, Augustus began increasingly to exploit the multiple positive qualities associated with Hercules, such as his service to mankind which had been saved from the monsters, and his apotheosis.[45]

Let us consider some interesting passages. During his laudatory presentation by Anchises in the Underworld (*Aen.* 6.788–807), the Roman emperor is compared to Hercules, whom he appears to surpass in the distance he travelled. Thus, the comparison is favourable for Augustus as he is shown to be better than Hercules (6.801–3):

> nec vero Alcides tantum telluris obivit,
> fixerit aeripedem cervam licet, aut Erymanthi
> pacarit nemora et Lernam tremefecerit arcu.
>
> Not even Hercules traversed so much of earth's extent, though he pierced the stag of brazen foot, quieted the woods of Erymanthus, and made Lerna tremble at his bow.

The choice of the verb *pacarit* ("quieted") in 6.803 facilitates the allusion to the *Pax Romana* and to Augustus' achievements, while the reference to the monsters of which Hercules rid the world is often interpreted as an allegorical allusion to Augustus' victories against the

[43] See e.g. Galinsky (1972) 132–5.
[44] Cf. Gilmartin (1968); Putnam (1995) 256–7.
[45] See Zarker (1972) 35–6. For Augustus 'appropriating' Hercules from Mark Antony, cf. also Galinsky (1996) 222–4.

barbarians.[46] Moreover, the choice of Atlas in the reference to the expansion of the Roman Empire during Augustus' reign a few lines earlier (*iacet extra sidera tellus, | extra anni solisque vias, ubi caelifer Atlas | axem umero torquet stellis ardentibus aptum*: "to a land which lies beyond our stars, beyond the path of year and sun, where sky-bearing Atlas wheels on his shoulders the blazing star-studded sphere", 6.795–7) also recalls Hercules, as the specific toponym is strongly associated with him in the myth of the homonymous Titan holding up the world, hinted at by *umero* ("on his shoulders"). An attempt at connecting Hercules with both Aeneas and Augustus can also be found in the eighth book,[47] in the depiction of the battle of Actium on Aeneas' shield. Here, the dolphins which are described at the beginning of the particular episode (8.671–4) bring to mind the dolphins depicted on Hercules' shield in this pseudo-Hesiodic *Aspis* (207–15),[48] which together with the description of Achilles' shield in the *Iliad* constituted one of Virgil's main models in this instance.

Valerius seems to be aware of Virgil's intention to present Aeneas and Augustus as Hercules figures and, as Hercules has an extensive and significant presence in the myth the poet is exploring,[49] he carefully presents him in a way that reinforces these Virgilian connections. For example, starting from the very first book, Valerius shows Juno's hostility towards Hercules (1.111–19; cf. also 3.510–20), even though he makes it clear that it is aimed specifically at Hercules and not the rest of the Argonautic expedition, providing an equivalent for Juno's hatred of Aeneas and her speeches in the *Aeneid* (cf. *Aen*. 1.37–49, 7.331–40).[50] Juno's intention to send a storm against Hercules in the event that he boarded the Argo alone, without the other Argonauts (Val. Fl. 1.113–16), further reinforces the similarities between the two scenes, as the statement recalls the storm brought upon Aeneas by the goddess in the first book of the *Aeneid* (*Aen*. 1.34–156). Moreover, the term *magnanimus* that characterises Hercules in the first book of Valerius' *Argonautica* (*magnanimus spectat pharetras et inutile robur | Amphitryoniades*: "Amphitryon's great-hearted son gazes on his quivers and his oak-club, useless now", 1.634–5) strengthens his association with Aeneas even more, as the latter is also described with the same term in the first book of the *Aeneid*

[46] Cf. Gilmartin (1968) 47 n. 20; Galinsky (1972) 136.

[47] Book 8 is crucial for building connections between Hercules, Aeneas and Augustus. For example, Aeneas pays Evander a visit on August 12 (the annual ceremony at the Ara Maxima, a shrine in honour of Hercules) – which was also the day of Octavian's arrival in Rome in 29 BC before beginning his triple triumph on the following day: see e.g. Miller (2014) 457; Loar (2017) 45–6.

[48] Cf. Fratantuono and Smith (2018) 691.

[49] For Hercules' presence in Valerius' *Argonautica*, see the bibliography discussed by Manuwald (2014) 61; cf. also Heerink (2015) 113–43; Manuwald (2021).

[50] For Juno's speeches in the *Aeneid* as Valerius' model here, see e.g. Adamietz (1976) 9–10; Eigler (1988) 32–9; Kleywegt (2005) 81; Galli (2007) 102–4; Zissos (2002) 76–7 and (2008) 145–9 with a relevant bibliography, who also notes (146) "a metaliterary sense of repetition" in the words *solitos* and *novat* at Val. Fl. 1.112: *solitosque novat Saturnia questus* ("and [Juno] breaks again into her old complainings").

(*sublimemque feres ad sidera caeli* | *magnanimum Aenean*: "and great-souled Aeneas you will raise on high to the starry heaven", *Aen*. 1.259–60).

Regarding Valerius' intention to present Hercules as Augustus' precursor[51] according to the Virgilian model, let us take a look at the episode of Hesione and, more specifically, the fight between the demigod and the monster which has threatened to devour Laomedon's daughter, an episode which, as mentioned earlier, does not feature in the narrative of Apollonius Rhodius. Even though it is the equivalent episode in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (11.194–220) and the episode of Perseus and Andromeda in the *Metamorphoses* (4.663–764) or in Manilius' *Astronomica* (5.538–618) that should be considered to be Valerius' main models in this instance,[52] Virgilian undertones are still present. Scholars have already laconically referred to the similarities between Valerius' passage and both the episode of Laocoon and the snakes that attack him (*Aen*. 2.199–227)[53] and that of the fight between Hercules and Cacus (*Aen*. 8.193–267).[54] Of special interest for the purposes of this paper are certain similarities between Hercules' fight with the sea monster and the Virgilian description of the battle of Actium on Aeneas' shield. These similarities lead us to consider the fact that, just like Virgil in the *Aeneid* portrays Augustus as another Hercules, so Valerius in his *Argonautica* portrays Hercules as a precursor of Augustus, thus giving his narrative characteristics of a prequel to the *Aeneid*.

Hercules' fight with a monster (cf. *belua,* ***monstrum*** *ingens*: "a beast, of monstrous bulk", Val. Fl. 2.479) corresponds to the conflict between the Augustus-friendly Olympian gods and the monstrous deities of Egypt in the *Aeneid* (*omnigenumque deum* ***monstra*** *et latrator Anubis* | *contra Neptunum et Venerem contraque Minervam* | *tela tenent*: "Monstrous gods of every form and barking Anubis wield weapons against Neptune and Venus and against Minerva", *Aen*. 8.698–700).[55] The emphasis given to these theriomorphic Egyptian deities is also evident in other texts that mention Augustus' rhetoric before the battle of Actium, and appears to have been an important part of his propaganda.[56] Moreover, let us not forget

[51] Taylor (1994) 222–6 suggests the idea that in Valerius' *Argonautica* Hercules represents Augustus, while Jason symbolises Vespasian, and argues that "[t]he closeness of the relationship between Jason and Hercules … can be understood to allude to Vespasian's clear desire to model himself upon Augustus" (226). As is evident, her interpretation goes in a different direction from that discussed in my paper, as she focuses on the process of the dynastic succession: "The intention of the above discussion was to illustrate that there is a symbolic level of meaning in the *Argonautica* pertaining to dynastic succession" (228).

[52] Cf. Frank (1971); Burck (1976); Harper Smith (1987) 193–6; Poortvliet (1991) 240–1; Stadler (1991) 183–4; Hershkowitz (1998) 72–6; Spaltenstein (2002) 432.

[53] Cf. Poortvliet (1991) 242; Stadler (1991) 184–6, 190; Hershkowitz (1998) 76; Spaltenstein (2002) 432.

[54] Cf. Poortvliet (1991) 242; Stadler (1991) 190; Hershkowitz (1998) 76–8.

[55] Moreover, it is worth noting that in Book 8 *monstrum* is used twice in reference to beasts defeated by Hercules (*Aen*. 8.198, 289).

[56] Cf. e.g. Dio Cassius 50.24.6 and see Tzounakas (2018) 141.

the famous description of Cleopatra as *fatale monstrum* in Horace's Cleopatra ode (*Carm*. 1.37.21)[57] or the frequent references to the Egyptians as *monstra* in Lucan's *De Bello Civili*.[58]

The fact that before his confrontation with the monster Hercules prays to his father, the gods of the sea, and his weapons (*ille patrem pelagique deos suaque arma precatus | insiluit scopulo*: "But he, with a prayer to his father and the gods of the sea and his own weapons, leapt upon a rock", Val. Fl. 2.512–13) demonstrates the hero's piety,[59] further facilitating his connection with Augustus. In the depiction of the battle of Actium on Aeneas' shield, Augustus is shown to be accompanied by the gods of home and the 'mighty gods' (*hinc Augustus agens Italos in proelia Caesar | cum patribus populoque, penatibus et magnis dis | stans celsa in puppi*: "On the one side Augustus Caesar stands on the lofty stern, leading Italians to strife, with Senate and People, the Penates of the state, and all the mighty gods", *Aen*. 8.678–80); he has, among that of other gods, the support of Neptune, the god of the sea (*omnigenumque deum monstra et latrator Anubis | contra Neptunum et Venerem contraque Minervam | tela tenent*: "Monstrous gods of every form and barking Anubis wield weapons against Neptune and Venus and against Minerva", 8.698–700); also he is supported by his deified father, Julius Caesar, whose star dawns over Augustus' crest (*geminas cui tempora flammas | laeta vomunt patriumque aperitur vertice sidus*: "his auspicious brows shoot forth a double flame, and on his head dawns his father's star", 8.680–1).

Another common point is that in both narratives the confrontations described assume alarming proportions and are likened to mountains clashing. Thus, in the *Aeneid* we read *pelago **credas** innare revulsas | Cycladas aut montis concurrere montibus altos, | tanta mole viri **turritis** puppibus instant* ("you would think that the Cyclades, uprooted, were floating on the main, or that high mountains were clashing with mountains: in such huge ships the seamen attack the towered sterns", 8.691–3), while in Valerius' *Argonautica* we read *intremere Iden | inlidique **putes** pronasque resurgere **turres*** ("one would think all Ida trembled and was being dashed in pieces and that towers overthrown rose up again", 2.519–20).[60]

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[57] Cf. Luce (1963) 254, who notes that by describing Cleopatra as *fatale monstrum* Horace evokes the abnormal monsters of Greek mythology; underlines the similarity of this phrase with Horace, *Epist*. 2.1.11, *notaque fatali portenta labore subegit* ("and laid low with fated toil the monsters of story"), where the labours of Hercules are described; and suggests that there "Hercules is a prototype of Augustus". On the phrase *fatale monstrum*, see also, among others, Mench (1972); Simone (2019).

[58] Cf. e.g. Luc. 8.474, 548, 613.

[59] At the same time, however, the fact that he is also praying to his weapons calls to mind, disquietingly, such *contemptores divum* as Mezentius (*Aen*. 10.773–4) and Capaneus (*Theb*. 3.615–16); cf. also Aeschylus, *Septem* 529–30 (Parthenopaeus).

[60] For Homer, *Il*. 20.59–60, πάντες δ' ἐσσείοντο πόδες πολυπίδακος Ἴδης | καὶ κορυφαί, Τρώων τε πόλις καὶ νῆες Ἀχαιῶν ("All the roots of many-fountained Ida were shaken, and all her peaks, and the city of the Trojans, and the ships of the Achaeans"), as a possible model for Valerius here, see Harper Smith (1987) 225.

The potential subjunctives in both passages (*credas* and *putes*[61]) make the likelihood of an intentional allusion even stronger, while the same aim seems to be achieved by the use of the tower imagery (*turritis* and *turres*), also common to both passages.

During the confrontation Hercules is described in a way that also bears similarities to the way Augustus is described. More specifically, we see Hercules standing, raised high, in the middle of the sea (*stat mediis elatus aquis*: "High in the midst of the waters stands Hercules", Val. Fl. 2.532), just as Augustus is standing, raised high on the lofty stern of his ship (*stans celsa in puppi*: "stands on the lofty stern", *Aen*. 8.680).[62] In Valerius' *Argonautica*, after Hercules prevails, he walks along the safe shores triumphantly (*superabat* ***ovanti*** | *litora tuta gradu*: "with triumphant steps he passes across the safe shore", 2.545–6), an image which also recalls the Virgilian passage describing Augustus' triumph (*At Caesar, triplici invectus Romana* ***triumpho*** | *moenia…*: "But Caesar, entering the walls of Rome in triple triumph…", *Aen.* 8.714–15).[63]

The similarities between the two episodes continue in the description of the response of the others following the cessation of the confrontations, although Virgil focuses on the celebratory atmosphere that has swept over the victors (*laetitia ludisque viae plausuque fremebant;* | *omnibus in templis* ***matrum chorus****, omnibus arae;* | *ante aras terram caesi stravere iuvenci*: "The streets were ringing with gladness and games and shouting; in all the temples was a band of matrons, in all were altars, and before the altars slain steers covered the ground", *Aen*. 8.717–19), while Valerius focuses more on the reaction of those mourning for the extermination of the monster and less on those pleased with the event (*Idaeaque* ***mater*** | *et* ***chorus*** *et summis ululārunt collibus amnes.* | *protinus e scopulis et opaca valle resurgunt* | *pastores magnisque petunt clamoribus urbem*: "the Idaean mother with her votaries and the rivers from the hill-tops raise lament. Straightway the shepherds rise up from the crags and out of the shade of the valley, and with loud shouts make towards the city", Val. Fl. 2.536–9).

However, despite the similarities of the two episodes overall, Hercules, who lays down his weapons and fights the monster with nothing but a club and rocks, much like the Cyclops Polyphemus in the *Odyssey,* is portrayed as a brutal creature, primitive,[64] skilfully reinforcing Virgil's suggestion that Augustus was a better Hercules. Thus, once again, Valerius' account serves as an apposite 'commentary' on his predecessor's text and subtly elucidates the political implications activated there.

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[61] This is the conjecture of Loehbach, adopted by Mozley (1934); the manuscripts read *rates*.

[62] Cf. *Aen*. 10.261, where the same phrase is used of Aeneas, who in this very moment is raising his shield.

[63] Cf. also the reference to the Roman triumphs at the start of the whole *ecphrasis*, in *Aen*. 8.626–8: *Illic res Italas Romanorumque triumphos* | *haud vatum ignarus venturique inscius aevi* | *fecerat ignipotens* ("There the story of Italy and the triumphs of Rome had the Lord of Fire fashioned, not unversed in prophecy or unknowing of the age to come").

[64] See Spaltenstein (2002) 455–6.

Let us now move on to the description of another shield in the *Aeneid*, that of Turnus,[65] on which Io is depicted transformed into a cow and elements of her myth are presented in the space of four lines (*Aen*. 7.789–92):

> at levem clipeum sublatis cornibus Io
> auro insignibat, iam saetis obsita, iam bos,
> argumentum ingens, et custos virginis Argus,
> caelataque amnem fundens pater Inachus urna.
>
> But on his polished shield Io with uplifted horns was emblazoned in gold —Io, wondrous device, already covered with bristles, already a heifer—and Argus, the maiden's warder, and father Inachus pouring his stream from an embossed urn.

As is known, the same myth is presented extensively in Valerius' *Argonautica* (4.344–421), when Orpheus sings of Io as the Argonauts approach Bosporus.[66] Thus, we observe yet again that Valerius expertly develops a theme which Virgil only briefly touches upon,[67] just like earlier with Laomedon's deception. Despite the fact that in this instance Valerius' main model is the Io episode in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (*Met*. 1.583–747), the Flavian epic poet includes significant expansions and additions (especially as regards the roles of Tisiphone and the Nile and Io's actual crossing of the Nile) (Val. Fl. 4.344–7, 4.407–21):[68]

> Iamque dies auraeque vocant, rursusque capessunt
> aequora, qua rigidos eructat Bosporos amnes.
> illos, Nile, tuis nondum dea gentibus Io
> transierat fluctus, unde haec data nomina ponto.
>
> And now day and the breezes call them, and once more they take to the seas, where Bosporus spews forth its frozen streams. These very waves Io, not yet a goddess to your folk, O Nile, had crossed, whence the strait had its name.

[65] On the shield of Turnus, see e.g. Breen (1986); Gale (1997); Horsfall (2000) 507–13.

[66] On this episode, see e.g. Albrecht (1977); Aricò (1998); Hershkowitz (1998) 68–72, 199–201; Landolfi (2002); Spaltenstein (2004) 291–309; Murgatroyd (2006) and (2009) 177–210; Gärtner (2008) 267–74; Davis (2009); Castelletti (2014) 59–67.

[67] The connection between the two texts is further supported by verbal similarities. For example, it is possible that Valerius' *celsis procul ipsa refulget | cornibus* ("with high horns she gleams afar", 4.405–6) serves to draw the reader's attention to Virgil's description of Io on Turnus' shield: *sublatis cornibus Io* ("Io with uplifted horns", *Aen.* 7.789). Moreover, the component *re-* in Valerius' *refulget* could imply repetition.

[68] See Murgatroyd (2009) 178–9.

ast Erebi virgo ditem volat aethere Memphin
praecipere et Pharia venientem pellere terra.
contra Nilus adest et toto gurgite torquens
Tisiphonen agit atque imis inlidit harenis
Ditis opem ac saevi clamantem numina regni;
apparent sparsaeque faces disiectaque longe
verbera et abruptis excussi crinibus hydri.
nec Iovis interea cessat manus; intonat alto
insurgens caelo genitor curamque fatetur,
atque ipsa imperium Iuno pavet. haec procul Io
spectat ab arce Phari iam divis addita iamque
aspide cincta comas et ovanti persona sistro.
Bosporon hinc veteres errantis nomine divae
vulgavere; iuvet nostros nunc ipsa labores
immissisque ratem sua per freta provehat Euris.

But the maid of Erebus flies through the air to rich Memphis to be beforehand and repel the new-comer from the Pharian land. But Nile withstands Tisiphone and driving her with all his eddying flood plunges her to the depths of his sandy bed, calling for help to Dis and all the powers of that cruel realm; here and there are seen her brands and whips far scattered, and the serpents shaken from her dishevelled hair. Nor meanwhile is Jove's hand idle; the Father arising thunders from high heaven and makes his anger known, and Juno herself quails before his word. All this from Pharos' height afar Io beholds, now added to the gods with snake-girt hair and loud triumphant sistrum. Hence was it that men of old spread abroad the story of Bosporus, so called from the wandering goddess; may she herself now help our toils, and sending winds to aid us urge our vessel through her own strait.

The emphasis Valerius places on the ending of Io's story, which includes her journey to Egypt, her reception by the Nile and her transformation into the goddess Isis, provides elements that are absent from the Virgilian passage and complement it in a way that also allows for interesting re-readings and re-interpretations. Thus, by acquiring connections with Egypt and Isis, Io's depiction on the shield of Turnus leads to justifiable associations and to probable connections with historical events recent for Virgil. As Io is the precursor of Egyptian Isis, Turnus is implicitly presented as the precursor of the defeated side at Actium,

as, respectively, with the depiction of the battle of Actium on the shield of Aeneas, the latter is implicitly presented as a precursor of Augustus.[69] In other words, the depictions on the shields of the two adversaries and Aeneas' victory over Turnus can be read as a prospective allegory of Augustus' victory over Mark Antony and Cleopatra, who was closely identified with the Egyptian goddess Isis.[70] Valerius' passage greatly facilitates the reinforcement of such a concept, as it portrays Io/Isis in a way that recalls Cleopatra in Virgil's *Aeneid*, but at the same time the Flavian poet rewrites and 'corrects' his model. More specifically, the personified Nile who is protecting the persecuted Io corresponds to the image of the personified Nile who is protecting the defeated Cleopatra in *Aen*. 8.711–13: *contra autem magno maerentem corpore Nilum | pandentemque sinus et tota veste vocantem | caeruleum in gremium latebrosaque flumina victos* ("while over against her was the mourning Nile, of massive body, opening wide his folds and with all his raiment welcoming the vanquished to his azure lap and sheltering streams").[71] The reference to the asp in Isis' hair (*aspide cincta comas*) corresponds to the twin snakes behind Cleopatra at *Aen*. 8.697, *necdum etiam geminos a tergo respicit anguis* ("not yet does she cast back a glance at the twin snakes behind"), while the reference to Isis' sistrum (*et ovanti persona sistro*), an instrument used in devotional rituals of the goddess, corresponds to *Aen*. 8.696, *regina in mediis patrio vocat agmina sistro* ("In the midst the queen calls upon her hosts with their native sistrum"), where Cleopatra calls the troops to arms. One can thus deduce that by substantiating Io's connection with Isis and Egypt, Valerius appears to be passing comment on, and interpreting the symbolism of, the depiction on Turnus' shield and its implications in a way that foresees future events and thus, yet again, presents his work as a supplement to the *Aeneid*. However, at the same time, in the *Argonautica* there is a significant divergence: here Io's plight is presented favourably; she is an innocent victim of Juno's anger. At the end of her story, she receives strong support from Jupiter. Orpheus addresses her as a goddess and asks her to help the Argonauts in their crossing of the Bosphorus. All this is very far from Cleopatra, and thus Valerius subtly dissociates Io/Isis from the Egyptian queen.[72] He has good reasons to do so: as Clauss astutely remarks, Isis' worship enjoyed a significant presence in Flavian Rome, as the goddess was thought to have "assisted the acquisition of imperial power by the Flavians" and her story provided a

[69] Cf. Kirichenko (2013) 84.

[70] For Cleopatra VII's representation as Isis and her title of Νέα Ἶσις, see e.g. Griffiths (1961) esp. 113.

[71] Cf. Spaltenstein (2004) 307.

[72] The fact that in Valerius' text Tisiphone is buried in the sands of the Nile, is also depicted with snakes, and calls for the help of Dis and other deities of Hades, creates a link between Egypt and the Fury which could be further exploited in the case of Cleopatra, who, in Virgil's depiction of the battle of Actium, is helped by Anubis (*Aen*. 8.698), a god related to Hades. In Latin poetry the Egyptian queen is associated not only with Isis, but also with the Fury, as we have seen in Lucan's *Latii feralis Erinys* (Luc. 10.59), discussed above. So, Valerius' account could urge his readers to see Cleopatra through Lucan's lens as a revivified Fury rather than as Isis.

parallel to it.[73] I believe that an additional reason lies in Isis' status as a protecting goddess of navigation, which corresponds to Vespasian's similar role (1.17–21), as described by the poet in his invocation to the emperor, thus reinforcing the analogies between the two figures.

Without doubt, Valerius' decision to treat the myth of the Argonautic expedition automatically limited his scope for originality, given the antecedents of Apollonius Rhodius and Varro Atacinus. Both Statius in his *Genethliacon Lucani* and Juvenal in his first satire condemn this particular subject as tired and unoriginal.[74] At the same time, the existence of the Homeric epics, and most importantly the existence of the *Aeneid*, could not be ignored. The latter cast a heavy shadow on later epic poets and, as a result, indirect discourse with the work was inevitable. Thus, although the epic poets of the Flavian period explore different themes, they cannot but attempt to connect them somehow to the *Aeneid*. Of these poets, the only one who clearly refers to Virgil's heroic epic is Statius, who near the end of his *Thebaid* urges his poem: *nec tu divinam Aeneida tempta, | sed longe* ***sequere*** *et* ***vestigia*** *semper adora* ("and essay not the divine *Aeneid*, but ever follow her footsteps from afar in adoration", *Theb*. 12.816–17).

Silius Italicus prefers to connect his *Punica* with the *Aeneid* by giving his work features that make it appear as a sequel to Virgil's epic. Thus, he emphasises the mythical background to the Punic Wars through allusions to Virgil's Dido and connects the hatred between Carthage and Rome to the rage (*ira*) of the abandoned *regina*, making Hannibal appear as the embodiment of Dido's curses (*dirae*). What is even more interesting in Silius' case is the fact that in his eighth book (8.50–201) he describes the flight of Anna, Dido's sister, from Carthage to Italy, where she encounters Aeneas and recounts to him what befell her sister following his departure from Africa, while later the poet tells of Anna's fate in Italy, where she was worshipped as a goddess.[75] Here we have a typical example of the completion of a classical model with the addition of elements that are either foreshadowed in it through the use of allusion or are completely absent from it, and allow the later work to appear as a sequel.

Contrary to Silius, Valerius, as we have seen, chooses to present his poem as a prequel to the *Aeneid* (sometimes even to the *Iliad*). By including the *Aeneid* as one of his models, he succeeds in enriching his subject, and, despite his belatedness, adds a new dimension to the

[73] Clauss (2016) 110–11, who concludes (111): "The inclusion of Io's story functions not merely as a reprise of Ovid's narrative of the same (*Met*. 1.588–747), it also provides a mythological parallel to the Augustan myth. Just as Juno harassed Aeneas in the *Aeneid*, in Orpheus' song Juno torments the young woman who would become a great goddess, one favouring and favoured by the Flavians, who similarly faced significant opposition on their path towards imperial domination and, in the case of Vespasian and Titus, eventual apotheosis".

[74] See Statius, *Silv*. 2.7.48–51, 77 with Newlands (2011) 235, 242, and Juvenal 1.7–13 with Braund (1996) 76–7; cf. also Martial 7.19 with Zissos (2004).

[75] Cf. also Ovid's story of Anna's flight to Italy in *Fasti* 3 and see Dietrich (2004) 2–7.

myth of the Argonauts, a myth already tired in his day. Besides, let us not forget that Virgil himself, who presented his epic poem as a sequel to the Homeric epics, enriches his work with his own skilful engagement with Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*.[76] Consequently, the Flavian poet demonstrates that he has full command of Virgil's epic techniques and follows in the latter's footsteps when in his *Argonautica* he absorbs Virgil's *Aeneid*, just as Virgil in his *Aeneid* had absorbed Apollonius' *Argonautica*.

Moreover, Valerius finds room for new creativity by exploiting both the chronological precedence of the myth he is recounting in relation to the *Aeneid* and the idea that Argo was the first ship, an idea far more frequent in Latin than in Greek literature.[77] In this way he artfully connects episodes of his epic with Virgil's poem, provides them with additional functional value as preludes to relevant episodes in the *Aeneid* and implies the significance of his own subject matter. At the same time, he illuminates, complements, passes comment on, interprets or 'corrects' points made by his predecessor, proving himself to be a creative reader of Virgil, not a mere imitator. Accordingly, in many cases he comes across like a scholiast on the *Aeneid*, as another Servius, as he provides his readers with significant information that helps them contextualise Virgil's epic within a larger framework. What is even more interesting is that sometimes Valerius implies an alternative possible development of an episode treated by Virgil. By giving us a glimpse of an 'alternative history'[78] he suggests different scenarios that could have altered the course of Virgil's narrative and excites the imagination of the reader.

Furthermore, with his conception, he offers a plausible response to the question regarding his originality, suggesting that his poetic journey is a new one, even if he is not the first to be handling the particular myth. Much like the Argo, on her journeys, discovers the existence of earlier ships – the battered one on Lemnos, for example, on which Hypsipyle hides her fleeing father (Val. Fl. 2.285–7, 292–3) – but does not allow the discovery to undermine the sense of her daring and pioneering undertaking, so Valerius discovers the existence of earlier, relevant texts,[79] but safeguards the novelty of his own poetic endeavour through his new treatment of the subject enriched by the absorption of Virgil's epic as well as of other poems. This form of innovation adds new directions to Valerius' poetic journey and transforms it into an original one that fulfils, inter alia, the great task of providing the prehistory of all other epics and of building causal connections with them.

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[76] For Apollonius Rhodius' presence in the *Aeneid*, see esp. Nelis (2001).

[77] Cf. Catullus 64, Virgil's *Eclogues* 4, Horace's *Carmen* 1.3, Ovid's *Heroides* 12, Seneca's *Medea*; and see Davis (1989) and Mac Góráin (2015).

[78] The frequent exploration of alternative histories by Tacitus, for which see e.g. O'Gorman (2006) and Ash (2007) 73, makes me think that Valerius is following a literary trend of his time.

[79] Cf. Malamud and McGuire (1993) 196–7; Mac Góráin (2015) 250–1.

Finally, Valerius' choice to present his *Argonautica* as a supplement to the *Aeneid* and his aspiration to originality could be related to the political context of his epic, which is implicitly reflected in the Argonautic expedition he describes,[80] as is suggested in the invocation to Vespasian in Val. Fl. 1.7–21. As Mac Góráin acutely observes, Valerius' rewriting of Apollonius and Virgil is attuned with Vespasian's "policy of refoundation and restoration, but in this he was preceded by Augustus".[81] Going one step further, I believe that by supplementing his predecessor's epic and absorbing it into a different myth, Valerius gives a sense of continuity and change to his own literary work; this sense, in turn, is in parallel with Vespasian's policy, a policy that is also characterised by the impression of continuity and change with regard to Augustus. Thus, it is implied that although in many cases Vespasian models himself upon Augustus and the policies of the two emperors share significant similarities, the outstanding achievements of the Flavian emperor (especially his opening of the sea) are unique and unprecedented and thus their novelty deserves to be compared with that of the pioneering achievements of the Argonauts. In addition to that, it is tempting to speculate that East-West politics could also be relevant here. Valerius' literary focus on a mythological expedition to the eastern part of the world and his interest in elements that complement the *Aeneid* and give its prehistory underline the significance of the East for the empire and correspond to the Flavian eastern policy[82] and, more generally, to the Roman imperialistic expansion in that period. At the same time, the fact that Vespasian was declared emperor while he was in the East, where he also received prophecies about his future,[83] highlights the symbolic role of the East even more and creates further parallels with Jason and Aeneas.

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[80] For an excellent discussion of Valerius' politics and poetics, see Stover (2012); cf. also Zissos (2009); Clauss (2014); Bernstein (2014); Buckley (2018).

[81] Mac Góráin (2015) 251, who cites Malamud and McGuire (1993) 197: "The Argo myth which seems at first glance to be about origins, exploration, and innovation, becomes in Valerius' hands a vehicle for exploring the endless repetitions and variations of a profoundly derivative literary world". See also Stover (2012) esp. 3, who underlines that "Valerius' epic takes us back to a new *beginning* – the sailing of the first ship, Argo – a moment characterized by the possibility of expansion into a new world of political and poetic possibilities".

[82] On the Flavian eastern policy, see e.g. Schieber (1975); Buckley (2018) 98 with further bibliography.

[83] On the portents and the prophecies in connection with Vespasian, see Lattimore (1934).

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Food for Thought: Eating in Virgil's *Eclogues*

*Revised from a paper given to the Virgil Society on 16 October 2021**

> 'Excellent, i'faith, of the chameleon's dish; I eat the air, promise-crammed.
> You cannot feed capons so.' (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* III.ii.95–6)

If we believe that Virgil's *Eclogues*, artificial and well-worked though they may be, remain rustic dramas that involve actual herdsmen and their lifestyle, then we must consider some of the more realistic elements that the poems evoke. Chief among these intrusions into the pastoral world is the necessity of food consumption, the tyranny of the belly. Studying this, one is led to a curious opposition between the conditions of the animals and their guardians. The former category seems always to be eating; the latter hardly ever are. The famous advice of Apollo in *Eclogue* 6 is to fatten up the sheep (*pascere oportet ovis*, 6.5), not for the poet himself to indulge. Likewise, the only phrase uttered by the god-like *iuvenis* in the telling of Tityrus is *pascite, ut ante, boves, pueri, submittite tauros* ("Feed your oxen as before, boys, bring up your bulls", *Ecl.* 1.45); in contrast, Meliboeus has been sick (*aeger* at 1.13), and Amaryllis has left the apples hanging on the trees (1.37). In contrast, apples, that well-known erotic fruit, are usually picked (3.70, 8.37; quinces at 2.51) or thrown (3.64), but not eaten.[1] And at the very end of the poetry-book the reference to the juniper tree, just before the goats are told to go home full, may well be derived from personal observation of the *ginepraio*, dense groupings of such trees, "a favorite food of goats".[2] Thus, the *Eclogues* do not reflect the passage of Homer that names a Bienor who has been seen as a precursor for the Bianor of *Eclogue* 9,[3] where, in the pastoral simile which describes the twilight

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1 Littlewood (1968) is the major study; cf. for example Felgentreu (1993); Harrison (2003) 90; Blythe (2018).

2 As observed by Fantazzi and Querbach (1985) 364 and endorsed by Clausen (1994) 311. See now Campbell (2023) 20–6 on the programmatic grazing of Virgil's goats.

3 Davis (2012) 58–60, drawing on Tracy (1982).

hour of his death in Agamemnon's *Iliad* 11 *aristeia*, "desire of sweet food seizes his [*sc.* the woodman's] mind" (*Il.* 11.89).

Few stones have previously been left unturned in the criticism of Virgil, and the seed for this article was sown by an important analysis of the underpinnings of Virgilian bucolic in responses to Sicilian landscapes and history.[4] It seems fundamentally relevant to the relative positioning, in *Eclogue* 2, of Corydon and his intended paramour Alexis, that Sicily was the site of numerous slave revolts, originating in endemic problems of inequity and vile treatment by landowners. In that context, it matters that Corydon's gift-offering for Alexis at 2.51–3 consists of domesticated and edible fruit and nuts (quinces, chestnuts, plums), in contrast to the bountiful but strictly ornamental flower bouquet gathered by the nymphs:[5] foraging for desirable sustenance opposed to mere aesthetic pleasures. In what follows, I will endeavour to track the reality principle in food form through several of the *Eclogues*, while keeping an eye on their literary affiliations. Liquids, too, will hold our attention, especially milk – even if we avoid dwelling much on the supposed water-wine debate which involves Callimachean poses and criticism[6] – but note that the four overt references to actual drinking either involve animals again (*potum … iuvenci*, 7.11; *cum canibus … ad pocula dammae*, 8.28) or faraway lands remote from the rustic idyll (*Ararim Parthus bibet*, 1.62; *nec si … Hebrumque bibamus*, 10.65). In contrast, the prize of *Eclogue* 3, the cups, is stored away and has not been drunk from: Menalcas says, "I have not yet touched my lips to them" (*necdum illis labra admovi*, 3.43, repeated verbatim by Damoetas).[7]

The first example of this article is actually something inedible in the middle of the *Eclogue* book: the staff which Mopsus offers to Menalcas as a gift at the poem's end. We find here a parenthesis which identifies an Antigenes as having asked for and then been denied the staff, even though he was "worthy to be loved" (5.89). Normally, Antigenes' unique naming here is seen as a throwback to his cameo in Theocritus' *Idyll* 7.[8] But of clear relevance for my culinary concerns is Antigenes' appearance in an epigram by Philodemus, *AP* 9.412 (= 20 Gow-Page = 29 Sider):[9]

> Ἤδη καὶ ῥόδον ἐστί, καὶ ἀκμάζων ἐρέβινθος,
> καὶ καυλοὶ κράμβης, Σωσύλε, πρωτοτόμου,

[4] Leigh (2016), who rightly insists that we pay attention to accounts by such witnesses as Strabo of problems in historical Arcadia also.

[5] As suggested by Armstrong (2019) 241, more tentatively than this formulation.

[6] See Knox (1985), who closes by discussing Gallus by the Permessus in *Eclogue* 6.

[7] Oksanish (2017) 119–20. I do not engage with the problem of how many cups there are in this passage.

[8] Coleman (1977) 171. He's a poet too: Cucchiarelli (2012) 317.

[9] For a discussion of this poem, with bibliography, see Cairns (2016) 8–9, 399–403.

καὶ μαίνη †ζαλαγεῦσα, καὶ ἀρτιπαγὴς ἁλίτυρος,
καὶ θριδάκων οὔλων ἁβροφυῆ πέταλα.
ἡμεῖς δ᾽ οὔτ᾽ ἀκτῆς ἐπιβαίνομεν, οὔτ᾽ ἐν ἀπόψει
γινόμεθ᾽, ὡς αἰεί, Σωσύλε, τὸ πρότερον;
καὶ μὴν Ἀντιγένης καὶ Βάκχιος ἐχθὲς ἔπαιζον·
νῦν δ᾽ αὐτοὺς θάψαι σήμερον ἐκφέρομεν.

It is already the season of the rose, Sosylus, and of ripe chickpeas, and the first cut cabbages, and smelts, and freshly set salty cheese, and the tender leaves of curly lettuces. But do we neither go up to the lookout nor sit on the belvedere, Sosylus, as in the past? And yet Antigenes and Bacchius were fooling around only yesterday, and today we carry them to their graves to be buried.

This epigram was surely known to Virgil, in light of his likely appropriation of the "freshly set salty cheese" in the invitation to a consolatory meal that Tityrus extends to Meliboeus at the end of *Eclogue* 1 with its *pressi copia lactis* ("an abundance of freshly pressed cheese", 1.81).[10] Antigenes in the final couplet of the epigram is revealed to have died, as has Bacchius, whose name is a form of the divine name Bacchus – which in Virgil's *Eclogues* appears notably in *Eclogue* 5, in the songs of first Mopsus (5.30) and then Menalcas answering it (5.69).[11] Roses, as mentioned in the first line of the epigram, appear only once in the *Eclogues*,[12] here in Menalcas' polite flattery of Mopsus: the younger man is as much better than Amyntas as the rose-garden (*rosetis*) is to the Celtic nard (*saliunca*, 5.17). The adjective Menalcas uses to differentiate Mopsus from Amyntas, rose from nard, and olive from willow is *humilis* ("humble", 5.17). In view of the epigram's focus on a humble meal that includes chickpeas, sprats, cabbage-stalk and lettuce, Menalcas' decision to say that Mopsus, roses, and olive are not that (meaning, not an Epicurean invitee) is opaque and ironic.

Since Menalcas and Mopsus have been viewed as erotically involved,[13] and amatory affairs often demand gift-giving, we must continue by considering further comestible offerings in

[10] Thus Davis (2004) 67. Some think that Tityrus is offering milk, not cheese: Du Quesnay (1981) 93–4. Cairns (2015) claims that *premeretur* (1.34) and *pressi* (1.81) hint at an etymology of *caseus* from *cogere*.

[11] The close responsion between the two songs is almost explicit: Schafer (2017) 152–5, cf. Cucchiarelli (2011b), especially at 238–40 on Bacchus more specifically, with Cucchiarelli (2011a) 163–6 and Cucchiarelli (2012) 315. The only other explicit naming of Bacchus in the *Eclogues* is Silenus' *Iaccho* (6.15), which could form the standard metonymy for wine.

[12] I do not count *viburnum*, the "guelder-rose", which features in the simile about the uniqueness of the city at *Ecl.* 1.25. See Armstrong (2019) 241–2 for the implications of cultivation and exotic colour here, including the strangeness of the unique mention of *saliunca*.

[13] Cf. Breed (2006) 67.

the *Eclogues*. We have already seen one set of these, Corydon's offering to Alexis; the former's earlier boasting of his abundance of milk – *lac mihi non aestate novum, non frigore defit*, "new milk is not lacking for me in summer, nor does it fail me in winter" (2.22) – is famously an adaptation of a line from Theocritus, *Idyll* 11, where the Cyclops says: "And cheese is not absent, neither in summer nor in autumn, nor at the end of winter" (τυρὸς δ'οὐ λείπει μ'οὔτ' ἐν θέρει οὔτ'ἐν ὀπώρᾳ, | οὐ χειμῶνος ἄκρω, *Id.* 11.36–7).[14] Back in *Eclogue* 1, we realise that Tityrus' name can be derived from τυρός, the Greek word for cheese, and Galatea from γάλα, meaning milk.[15] (This is not to discount any of the other famous etymologies for 'Tityrus'.) The coalescence of dairy here has been analysed fully by Michael Paschalis, who observes that Tityrus is the only one in the *Eclogues* to make cheese: he takes the *pinguis caseus* to town to sell, but never comes back with much coin (1.34–5). We know that *pinguis*, "rich", is not a common adjective for cheese,[16] and the contrast with Tityrus' impecunious return is marked, whether that is because the city folk are miserly or because Galatea's demands form an expensive burden that overrides *cura peculi* (1.32).[17] But we have already seen Tityrus' generosity at the end of the poem where he offers Meliboeus the cheese (alongside ripe apples, *mitia poma*, and mealy chestnuts, *castaneae molles*, 1.80–1).[18] These are autumnal products, and the presence of cheese here adds clear Epicurean hints, in the intimation of a consolatory invitation.[19] Now, if we triangulate these two *Eclogue* 1 passages with the following poem's dairy material, we note easily that the adaptation of the *Idyll* 11 line in *Eclogue* 2 leaves out autumn and replaces cheese with milk. But the ending of Theocritus' poem is not usually adduced in the consideration of these passages: "So by singing Polyphemus shepherded his love, and it served him easier than if he'd paid a fee" (Οὕτω τοι Πολύφαμος ἐποίμαινεν τὸν ἔρωτα | μουσίσδων, ῥᾷον δὲ διᾶγ' ἢ εἰ χρυσὸν ἔδωκεν, 11.80–1). The mention of money there, while a commonplace joke intended for the addressee, Nicias, a doctor who charges for his services, can be compared with Tityrus' unsuccessful cheesemonger operations in *Eclogue* 1. Innocent and ineffectual, the amatory and poetic exchanges sit uneasily against harder economic transactions.[20]

So, too, Thestylis in *Eclogue* 2 provides a service, making a 'ploughman's lunch' for the labourers in the field (2.10–11):

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[14] See, e.g., Cucchiarelli (2012) 184–5.

[15] Paschalis (2008). On wordplay in Roman food situations, see Gowers (2021); already Boyd (1983), on the quinces (*cydonea mala* and the links between *malum*, apple, and *mala*, cheek), is a classic of the genre.

[16] Clausen (1994) 46, although his conclusion that *pinguis* goes with both *victima* and *caseus* is disputed by Cucchiarelli (2012) 152. See further Jaeger (2015) 73.

[17] On the question of whether or not this represents a bid for manumission, see now Xinyue (2021) 35.

[18] See Xinyue (2021) 41 on the question of who exactly the benefactor is here.

[19] For this see Davis (2012) 34–9, who usefully cites (36 n. 25) Epicurus' "little pot of cheese" (Diogenes Laertius 10.11) as an exemplar of the plain meal.

[20] Cf. Saunders (2008) 78–9 on comparing such trades and trade-offs.

Thestylis et rapido fessis messoribus aestu
alia serpyllumque herbas contundit olentis.

Thestylis pounds up, for the harvesters tired from the scorching heat, garlic and wild thyme and pungent herbs.

This recipe is surely a *moretum*, the same as the subject of the familiar pseudo-Virgilian poem. That supposedly slight work – which, like its namesake foodstuff, could be said to bely the effort of its production – has been subjected to criticism from various angles.[21] I recall here one aspect only, the dietary staple (as opposed to the complement, which is the *moretum* itself). Whereas substantial attention is paid there to the labour-intensive making of bread as a necessary accompaniment, here in the eclogue in Corydon's conception there is no such vehicle – not even a cracker – for the meal.[22] Nor does the Virgilian (as opposed to the pseudo-Virgilian) *moretum* have body to it: no cheese or oil, which we would add to a pesto. Instead, the mention of *serpyllum*, the wild thyme favoured not just by hungry workers but also by bees,[23] with its etymology from *serpere* ("to creep") as advertised by Varro (*R.* 1.35.2), neatly anticipates both Corydon's close stalking of Alexis' footsteps (*Ecl.* 2.12) and the interplay of the ivy and laurel in the poet's (be it Pollio's or Octavian's) crown, in the famous lines partly quoted by Quintilian (*Inst.* 10.1.92), *sine tempora circum | inter victricis hederam tibi serpere laurus* ("around the forehead allow the ivy to creep around your victor's laurels"): in a sense, she honours and elevates the workmen with the meal. Likewise, as with *pinguis* we saw earlier, the adjective *rapidus* that is applied to the sun's intense heat is ambiguous, as it could be applied, even if not strictly grammatically (since the adverb would be *rapide*), to the motion of Thestylis' pestle, which creates its own heat to make the herbs *olentes*. Of course, readers of both the *Moretum* and Horace's *Epode* 3 know, in literary terms, the heat of garlic.[24] Now, Thestylis had featured as the sidekick of Simaetha in Theocritus, *Idyll* 2, another model for the present poem, *Eclogue* 2: in the Greek work she was a servant who helped Simaetha in preparing a concoction

[21] See, e.g., Fitzgerald (1996) on the poem's world of work; Haley (2009) 41–8 focuses on Scybale and her often racist reception; Gowers (2021) 250–60 finds meaning in the poem's varied and linguistic processes. Francesca Bellei, on sexual resonances, and Tom Geue, on property and metaphor, both have important readings forthcoming.

[22] Ovid's *moretum* in the *Fasti*, an offering for the Magna Mater (*Fast.* 4.367–72), similarly does not come with the dietary staple; it becomes clear shortly after, in the discussion, on the occasion of the Cerealia, of how early humans' "bread" was "fresh greens" (4.395), that this is because the meal is an ancient, pre-agricultural one.

[23] Cf. Columella, *Rust.* 11.3.39, with Virgil, *Georgics* 4.31 and Armstrong (2019) 242–3.

[24] "Four heads" (*Mor.* 87) can be set alongside the special mention of *alia* in *Ecl.* 2; in turn, Horace, *Ep.* 3.4, *O dura ilia messorum* ("O the tough guts of harvesters"), refers back to the *Ecl.* 2 lines, as Gowers (1993) 289–90 notes. The heat of garlic reflects rageful iambic tendencies: Gowers (1993) 281, 284, 294–5, 297–8, 300.

for the purposes of love magic.[25] The juxtaposition reveals that Virgil's herbal meal should by rights be motivated by a *quid pro quo*: what does Thestylis get in return for her labour? Where is the love?[26]

We might look in this context to Theocritus, *Idyll* 10, where Milon ends by referring to "hungry love" (λιμηρὸν ἔρωτα, 10.57).[27] Just beforehand, he claimed to channel a culture-hero, inventor of agriculture, Lityerses, in singing one of his working-songs, which culminates in a recipe (10.54–5):

> Κάλλιον ὦ 'πιμελητὰ φιλάργυρε τὸν φακὸν ἕψειν·
> μή τι τάμῃς τὰν χεῖρα καταπρίων τὸ κύμινον.
>
> Better to boil up the lentil soup properly, stingy overseer; don't cut your hand while slicing the cumin seed.

From a cookery perspective, Thestylis' pesto is actually the opposite of this lentil recipe,[28] despite their seemingly mutual humility, and lack of delicacy, in *cucina povera*. The herb dip is quick and prepared to order; but in Theocritus the cook, who seems to be identical with the foreman, is enjoined not to stint on cooking time or on spicing, which is the import of the cumin seed advice, not to be mean.[29] Again, we wonder at the generosity of the food provision.[30] A little later in *Eclogue* 2, Corydon expands (2.40–4):

> praeterea duo – nec tuta mihi valle reperti –
> capreoli sparsis etiam nunc pellibus albo,
> bina die siccant ovis ubera; quos tibi servo.
> iam pridem a me illos abducere Thestylis orat;
> et faciet, quoniam sordent tibi munera nostra.

[25] Saunders (2008) 126–7 notes that Corydon has effectively positioned himself in a poetic landscape, while Cucchiarelli (2012) 180–1 comments that "garlic has its own magical potential".

[26] I have been tempted to read Simulus' use of "two fingers" (*Mor.* 114) in shaping the *moretum* – Kenney (1984) 50 provides a note pondering why not hands – as sexually suggestive.

[27] Campbell (2023) 33–41 places *Idyll* 10 at the heart of Virgil's generic engagement with Theocritus.

[28] Leigh (2016) 415 labels this "the bathetic if comforting reality of lentil soup".

[29] Hunter (1999) 213–14.

[30] Indeed, the use of the singular φακὸν alongside the singular κύμινον serves as comic diminution: not only is the overseer cutting up one cumin seed, but he is also boiling up just one lentil. This point is developed from an observation by Morgan (2007) 46 on a similar occurrence in the *Aesop Romance* (G 39), there linked to Theocritus' usage.

> Moreover, two roe-deer fawns – I found them in a dangerous valley – whose skins are sprinkled with white, dry up the udders of an ewe twice a day; these I keep for you. Now for a while Thestylis has been begging me to lead them away; and she'll do it, since my gifts mean little to you.

While this offering and then withdrawal of the gift of deer, which he risked his life to obtain, seems petulant,[31] the reappearance of Thestylis cues us to reconsider her earlier cookery: does she want them as pets or ingredients?[32] Should we dare to impute a grasping ambition to her, fostered perhaps by the abuse of her unpaid labour, like the greed of the assiduous young deer who themselves desire milk?

This appearance of udders, *ubera*, is one of three in the *Eclogues*, the others being those of goats in the Golden Age of *Eclogue* 4, which they "will bring home distended with milk all by themselves" (*ipsae lacte domum referent distenta capellae*, 4.21), and those of cows fed on clover which will swell (*sic cytiso pastae distendant ubera vaccae*, 9.31),[33] if Moeris, in Lycidas' account, begins to sing.[34] These full udders recall a particular food item, which is not in fact on the menu but referred to in another celebrated epigram by Philodemus, *AP* 11.44 (= 23 Gow-Page = 27 Sider):

> αὔριον εἰς λιτήν σε καλιάδα, φίλτατε Πείσων,
> ἐξ ἐνάτης ἕλκει μουσοφιλὴς ἕταρος
> εἰκάδα δειπνίζων ἐνιαύσιον· εἰ δ' ἀπολείψεις
> οὔθατα καὶ Βρομίου χιογενῆς πρόποσιν,
> ἀλλ' ἑτάρους ὄψει παναληθέας, ἀλλ' ἐπακούσῃ 5

[31] Cucchiarelli (2012) 193 rightly notes the goatish model (Theocritus, *Id*. 3.34–6) and the etymologising of Thestylis' name from θέσσομαι.

[32] We know from Varro, *R*. 3.12.1 (backed up by Pliny, *NH* 8.211) that Q. Fulvius Lippinus preserved deer for consumption, with other game animals such as boar and wild sheep, and indeed snails (*NH* 9.173), in his enclosure of forty *iugera*, by the time of the dramatic date of Varro [54 BCE, in the *communis opinio* as per Richardson (1983); 50, in the trenchant response of Linderski (1985)], "a little before the civil war involving Pompey the Great", in the words of Pliny in the snail passage. Cf. Starr (1992).

[33] I am indebted to Laurence Totelin for drawing my attention to the natural efficacy of *cytisus* in leading to the production of an abundant quantity of milk (Pliny, *NH* 13.131). On Roman milk in general, see Alcock (2000) and Déry (2000); on human milk in the context of taboos surrounding the female body, Lawrence (2021). While humans might be thought the only animals to drink others' milk, Bretin-Chabrol (2017) observes inter-species milk-consumption in the agronomists, where an ass foal made to suckle a mare will become a mule – though Virgil in the *Georgics* says little about asses or mules.

[34] The link between singing and happy cows producing milk is as miraculous as the revived Golden Age wonder where the ram changes his colour at will (*Ecl.* 4.43–5); Kania (2016) 86–7 is right to note the *Eclogue* speaker's "imaginative fiction" and "inventiveness" there; still, his n. 48 notes a plausible link with an Etruscan prophetic text (in Macrobius, *Sat.* 3.7.1–2) that cites coloured sheep as a favourable omen.

Φαιήκων γαίης πουλὺ μελιχρότερα·
ἢν δέ ποτε στρέψῃς καὶ ἐς ἡμέας ὄμματα, Πείσων,
ἄξομεν ἐκ λιτῆς εἰκάδα πιοτέρην.

Tomorrow, dearest Piso, your musical comrade will drag you to his modest place at 3 pm, feeding you on the annual visit for the Twentieth. If you will miss udders and Bromian wine bottled in Chios, still you will see faithful comrades, still you will hear things much sweeter than the land of the Phaeacians. And if you should ever turn your eyes to us, Piso, we shall lead out a richer feast, from a humbler.

Virgil was part of this Epicurean coterie on the Bay of Naples, as he reveals in his *sphragis* at the end of the *Georgics*, and this invitation poem participates – just like the *Eclogues* – in a negotiation of Greek and Roman cultures and norms. And we should not forget that several of the *Eclogues* are rather formal invitations to the exchange of songs, sometimes in competition but always in responsion. Thus, it stands to reason that, even though the dish is recorded as sow udders, *sumina*, and it was noteworthy for being expensive,[35] the fact that it was preferred by Romans rather than Greeks, and the insistence in the Virgilian examples on luxurious amplitude, solidify a connection to the pleasures of the table. Additionally, the reference in the epigram to the "land of the Phaeacians", which dovetails with the reference to Chios (the supposed birthplace of Homer),[36] can be matched with the allusion in *hinc usque ad sidera notus* ("known from here right to the stars", *Ecl.* 5.43) to Odysseus' declaration of his identity to the Phaeacians in *Odyssey* 9.[37]

But in that poem, *Eclogue* 5, we have a striking instance of animals not behaving as they ought (5.24–6):

non ulli pastos illis egere diebus
frigida, Daphni, boves ad flumina: nulla neque amnem
libavit quadrupes, nec graminis attigit herbam.

On those days, Daphnis, nobody drove the pastured oxen to the cold river; no four-footed beast drank from the stream or touched the grass of the meadow.

[35] Gowers (1993) 222; Sider (1997) 158 with references. Roman delicacy: Athenaeus 9.399c = 14.656e.
[36] See Bettenworth (2012).
[37] Cf. e.g. Du Quesnay (1976/7) 22.

These abstaining animals appear to be acting out the pathetic fallacy,[38] but they are also in sync with an historical event: the death of Julius Caesar, at whose death, Suetonius tells us, "the herds of horses which he had dedicated to the river Rubicon when he crossed it, and had let loose without a keeper, stubbornly refused to graze and wept copiously" (*Div. Iul.* 81.2). This is one of the points which has encouraged commentators to read Caesar into the eulogies for Daphnis delivered by Mopsus and Menalcas, the one a lament and the other a more positive apotheosis;[39] I accept the analogy and would add that food symbolism continues to exert an influence over the remainder of the poem. This occurs first in the promise of worshipping the deified Daphnis, whereby Menalcas will offer him annually two cups of milk and two bowls of olive oil, in a nod to Theocritus, *Idyll* 5's similar offerings. That ritualised feeding is followed up by the avowal that Daphnis' name will be glorified "as long as the bees feed on thyme and cicadas on dew" (*dumque thymo pascentur apes, dum rore cicadae*, 5.77). Given that bees and especially cicadas are figures for poets in antiquity,[40] it is striking that their eating habits are here troped as a model for collective memory,[41] albeit in tandem with the archaic milk (more so than the oil).[42]

Yet poetic memory speaks through allusion, and that reference earlier in *Eclogue* 5 to Odysseus' touching "fame has reached the stars" quotation has rightly been seen to include Lucretius in its purview.[43] Concerted argument about the niceties of the relative Epicurean positions of Lucretius, Philodemus, and Virgil is beyond the scope of this paper; that said, I want to focus on one more marked and highly literary instance of commensality. The didactic poet calls up a recollection of one of the most notorious of mythic feasts, that of Thyestes on his children served to him by his brother Atreus, when in his screed against the effects of fearing death he presents the breakdown of society (*DRN* 3.72–3):[44]

> crudeles gaudent in tristi funere fratris
> et consanguineum mensas odere timentque.
>
> Cruel, they rejoice in the sad death of a brother and hate and fear the tables of blood-kin.

[38] So Nauta (2006) 327.
[39] Notably Du Quesnay (1976/7) 30–4; Karakasis (2011) 168–72; Gale (2013) 279–86.
[40] See, e.g., Fitzgerald (2016b), with references at n. 21; Karakasis (2011) 175; Cucchiarelli (2012) 314.
[41] Cf. Meban (2009) 123.
[42] Déry (2000) 124, citing Romulus' milk-offerings at Pliny, *NH* 14.88. Cucchiarelli (2012) 311 notes the link of "fresh milk" with *Ecl.* 2.22, a line discussed above.
[43] Gale (2013) 280–2: the self-advertisement also recalls Lucr. 6.7–8.
[44] On this see Cowan (2013).

In Virgil, near the end of Silenus' mythic song (and note, he did not eat the crimson mulberries, merely had his face smeared with them), the narrator asks the question, why should he tell us about the following (*Ecl.* 6.78–81):

> ut mutatos Terei narraverit artus,
> quas illi Philomela dapes, quae dona pararit,
> quo cursu deserta petiverit, et quibus ante
> infelix sua tecta super volitaverit alis?

> how he recounted the story of Tereus' changed limbs, and the feasts and gifts Philomela prepared for him, in what way she sought the desert, and with what wings she flew, the unlucky one, above her own home.

These two family feasts (or feasts on family members) are closely related in the details of their horror, and in the obliqueness of their reference to the mythological paradigm; in the eclogue the time relations are severely out of joint. In view of the contemporary resonance in the Lucretian passage, which has referred only a few lines earlier to civil war, I would claim that these meals – and note that Virgil's is only told in summary – are in a sense apotropaic: they are brought up as a kind of corrective to the standard view, purveyed by such as Cicero (*Tusc.* 5.89), that Epicureans talked too much about food. We may compare Philomela, here noted to be *infelix*, with the other *infelix* of *Eclogue* 6, Pasiphae, who earlier had been portrayed pining for a bull who "chews up the pale grasses" (*pallentis ruminat herbas*, 6.54). This sequence is indebted to Calvus' *Io*, and the famous fragment *a virgo infelix, herbis pasceris amaris* ("Ah unhappy maiden, you feed on bitter grasses", 20 Hollis). Noting the brilliant detail, observed by careful readers,[45] that the grass is only bitter from a human point of view because it is typical fare for a cow, we again see a removal of the traces of human consumption in the eclogue. Indeed, we may speculate that thinking about eating the pastoral animals being cared for so assiduously is simply too much for everybody to handle.[46]

By way of conclusion, we can witness the afterlife of pastoral eating in Virgil's *Aeneid*. I will restrict myself to brief observations on the theme of satiety. First, in Aeneas' retelling his band of exiles, when they arrive at the Strophades, encounter and kill some livestock (*Aen.* 3.220–1):

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[45] Höschele (2013) 341, after Hollis (2007) 61.

[46] Little wonder that the vegetarian Pythagoras, as ventriloquised by Ovid in *Metamorphoses* 15, uses a concept lifted from the *Eclogues* in his meat-abjuring peroration, *ubera dent saturae manibus pressanda capellae* ("let the she-goats give full udders to be milked by your hands", *Met.* 15.472), shortly after his reference to "Thyestean tables" (15.462).

laeta boum passim campis armenta videmus 220
caprigenumque pecus nullo custode per herbas.

We see the happy herds of oxen all about the fields and the flock of goats amid the grasses with no guards.

These goats are clearly a pastoral addition to the Cattle of the Sun God from the passage's chief model in *Odyssey* 12.[47] But making them their food results again in dissatisfaction, owing to the party-crashing Harpies who attack the assorted crew and foul up the repast.[48] This is the opposite of being full and satisfied, which is the condition of the happier goats at the end of Virgil's *Eclogues* (*saturae … capellae*, 10.77). We can look also to the Carthaginian banquet at the end of *Aeneid* 1, where no edible material (unlike the wine) is explicitly mentioned – the servants are there "to heap up the tables with feasts" (*qui dapibus mensas onerent, Aen.* 1.706) – but Cupid, the fake Iulus, makes it such that Dido's "mind is unable to be filled" (*expleri mentem nequit*, 1.713), while he "filled out the great love of the tricked father Aeneas" (*magnum falsi implevit genitoris amorem*, 1.716).[49] It is no wonder, then, that in the very first sentence of *Aeneid* 4, which bears an ambiguous time relationship (*iamdudum*, 4.1) to that banquet, what Dido does is – literally – "feed her wound", *vulnus alit* (4.2). In view of Aeneas' reflection of Callimachus' Erysichthon – the paradigmatic overeater in the *Hymn to Demeter* – in the episodes where he disturbs trees, such as his discovery of the body of Polydorus in his own Book 3 banquet narration to Dido,[50] we again sense a tension between different modes and styles of consumption. Eating in the *Eclogues* thus finds its way to the heart of the matter in the epic *Aeneid*.

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[47] On the "archaic flourish" of *caprigenum*, with the lack of guards apparently non-pastoral and indebted to "Greek religious usage", which may recall the Arcadians whom Leigh (2016) observes at one remove from Virgil, see Horsfall (2006) 189–90.

[48] Gowers (2021) 247–50, 260–1 rereads the long aftermath of the Harpies' intervention, namely the fulfilment at *Aen.* 7.107–15 of Celaeno's 'pizza prophecy' at *Aen.* 3.255–7, as filled with puns and linguistic games, which could be construed as Lucretian and therefore Epicurean.

[49] Cf., e.g., Dyson (1996), esp. 212–14 on Dido "drinking deep of love" (*longumque bibebat amorem*, *Aen.* 1.749) as a reminiscence of Lucretius' honey on the cup of wormwood, whereas she had "barely touched the [actual] cup with her lips" (*summo tenus attigit ore*, 1.737); it is very familiar that Iopas' song accompanying the banquet is an Epicurean cosmogony centred on natural philosophy.

[50] For this, Thomas (1988) is an inspirational discussion.

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Philodemus, Parthenius, and Virgil, *Georgics* 1.436–7

*Revised from a paper given to the Virgil Society on 21 May 2022**

At the end of Virgil's treatment of weather signs given by the moon in *Georgics* 1 (427–37), we are presented with the image of sailors paying vows to sea deities on their safe return to shore (436–7):

> votaque servati solvent in litore nautae
> Glauco et Panopeae et Inoo Melicertae.
>
> ...and the sailors, kept safe, will pay their vows on the shore to Glaucus and Panopea and Ino's son Melicertes.

Lines 436–7 represent a striking departure from the technical meteorological exposition by Aratus upon which this section was based (*Phaen.* 778–818).[1] According to Gellius (*NA* 13.27.1–2), 1.437 is modelled on a verse by Parthenius of Nicaea (fr. 36 Lightfoot):[2]

> Γλαύκῳ καὶ Νηρῆι καὶ εἰναλίῳ Μελικέρτῃ
>
> To Glaukos and Nereus and sea-dwelling Melikertes.

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1 See Thomas (1988) and Mynors (1990) for Virgil's detailed adaptation of Aratus' weather signs in *Geo.* 1.427–37.

2 See Lightfoot (1999) 194–6, who connects this line with Parthenius' *Propemptikon*; cf. also Macrobius, *Sat.* 5.18, although the latter alters Parthenius' line-ending to Ἰνώῳ Μελικέρτῃ in imitation of Virgil's *Inoo Melicertae* (cf. Thomas [1988] *ad* 1.437). *Geo.* 1.437 is the only securely attested Virgilian adaptation of Parthenius. However, another poem by Parthenius (the *Delos*), which mentioned "Grynean Apollo" (Γρύνειος Ἀπόλλων), has been conjectured to lie behind Virgil's references to the Grynean Grove (*Grynei nemoris*) in *Ecl.* 6.72 and Grynean Apollo (*Gryneus Apollo*) in *Aen*. 4.345; see now Clausen (1964) 192 and Lightfoot (1999) 149–51.

Virgil has made two alterations to Parthenius' line – a change that Gellius considers "graceful" – substituting the nymph Panopea for her father, Nereus, and replacing Melicertes' epithet εἰναλίῳ ("sea-dwelling") with the Greek matronymic, *Inoo* ("Ino's son").[3]

The significance of Virgil's imitation of Parthenius, and of the sailors' prayer in 1.436–7 for his larger discussion of moon-signs, has not yet been investigated in detail, no doubt partly owing to the loss of the surrounding poetic context of Parthenius' line.[4] However, some progress might be achieved if we take into account a likely further allusion in lines 436–7 – to my knowledge not previously recognised in the scholarship – to an epigram by Parthenius' first-century BCE contemporary, the Epicurean philosopher and poet Philodemus of Gadara, consisting of a prayer to various sea deities:

votaque **servati** solvent **in litore** nautae
Glauco et **Panopeae** et **Inoo Melicertae**.

Geo. 1.436–7

Ἰνοῦς ὦ Μελικέρτα σύ τε **γλαυκὴ** μεδέουσα
Λευκοθέη πόντου δαῖμον ἀλεξίκακε
Νηρήδων τε **χοροὶ** καὶ Κύματα καὶ σύ, Πόσειδον,
καὶ θρήιξ Ἀνέμων πρηΰτατε Ζέφυρε,
ἵλαοί με φέροιτε διὰ πλατὺ κῦμα φυγόντα
σῷον ἐπὶ γλυκερὴν **ἠόνα** Πειραέως.

Philodemus, *AP* 6.349 (= 19 Gow-Page = 34 Sider)

Melikertes son of Ino, Leukothea the blue-green ruler of the open sea and divine averter of troubles,
choruses of Nereids, Waves, and you Poseidon, and Thracian Zephyros the gentlest of the Winds,

[3] Gellius elsewhere includes Parthenius among the poets of whose verses Virgil "carefully ... omits some things and renders others" (*Scite ergo et considerate Vergilius, cum aut Homeri aut Hesiodi aut Apollonii aut Parthenii aut Callimachi aut Theocriti aut quorundam aliorum locos effingeret, partem reliquit, alia expressit*, *NA* 9.9.3).

[4] Discussions of *Geo.* 1.436–7 have for the most part focused on the allusive technique involved in Virgil's imitation of Parthenius rather than on the content of the vignette and its broader contextual significance: see, e.g., Thomas (1988) *ad* 1.437; Farrell (1991) 65; Morgan (1999) 22–3.

graciously may you bear me safely across a calm sea in my flight to the sweet
shore of Peiraeus.[5]

The Virgilian phrase *servati … in litore* ("kept safe … on the shore", 1.436) evokes Philodemus' σῷον ἐπὶ … ἠόνα ("safely to the … shore", 6).[6] The names of Virgil's sea divinities, moreover, all find direct or close counterparts in the epigram. Thus, *Inoo Melicertae* at the end of 1.437 clearly echoes the opening invocation, Ἰνοῦς ὦ Μελικέρτα (1), while Glaucus picks up the etymologically related adjective γλαυκή (1) that Philodemus attributed to the goddess Λευκοθέη ("Leukothea", 2 = the deified Ino). Virgil's Nereid Panopea might also gesture towards Philodemus' Νηρήδων … χοροὶ ("choruses of Nereids", 3) and his poem's repeated evocation of the names of Nereids.[7]

The correspondences outlined above strongly suggest that *Geo.* 1.436–7 results from the conflation of Philodemean and Parthenian models.[8] In order to assess the significance of this double allusion, and of Virgil's choice of proper names in 1.437 in particular, it will first be helpful to examine the opening lines of this section of *Georgics* 1, which treat the weather signs given by the new moon (1.427–31):

luna *revertentis cum primum colligit ignis*,
si *nigrum* obscuro comprehenderit aëra cornu,
maximus agricolis pelagoque parabitur imber;

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[5] See Sider (1997) 187 for the text and translation (here lightly adapted). For discussion of *AP* 6.349, see Hopkinson (1988) 271; Gigante (1995) 49–52; Obbink (1995) 208–9; Sider (1997) 187–190. Gigante (1995) 49–52 argues that the epigram must have been composed before Philodemus' conversion to Epicureanism – specifically, on the eve of his voyage from Gadara to Athens to study under the Epicurean Zeno of Sidon – since an Epicurean would have known that the gods cannot be moved by prayer. However, prayers to the gods are in fact perfectly consistent with Epicureanism, as indicated by Philodemus himself in the treatise *On Piety* (cf. Asmis [1990] 2372 n. 11; Obbink [1995] 208–9). The narrating persona of Philodemus' epigrams also cannot be relied upon as a straightforward source of autobiographical information; see Sider (1997) 187–8 for some salutary remarks on this point in connection with *AP* 6.349. On the compatibility of Philodemus' poetic activity with his own and Epicurus' views on the composition and enjoyment of poetry, see Asmis (1995) and Sider (1997) 28–32.

[6] Though a conventional feature of such prayers, Virgil's *ventis … carebunt* (1.435) may also hint at Philodemus' gentle wind of Zephyros (θρήιξ Ἀνέμων πρηῢτατε Ζέφυρε, 4).

[7] Cf. Sider (1997) *ad AP* 6.349.6: "Several of the words of this poem recall the names of Nereids, as given by Hes. *Th.* 240 ff., along with their power to calm the sea: γλαυκή ≈ Γλαύκη (243), Γλαυκονόμη (256); πόντου ≈ Ποντοπόρεια (256); ἠόνα ≈ Ἠιόνη (255); σῷον ≈ Σαώ (243); and κύμα ≈ several names beginning with Κυμο-, esp. 252 ff.". Kyriakidis (2000) 270–1 has persuasively argued that Virgil draws on the same epigram for the catalogue of sea deities at *Aen.* 5.822–6, which features Glaucus, Panopea, and *Inous Palaemon* (Palaemon = the deified Melicertes), his adjective *Inous* an exact transliteration of Philodemus' matronymic Ἰνοῦς; cf. also Νηρήδων τε χοροὶ ("choruses of Nereids", 3) with *Glauci chorus* ("Glaucus' chorus", *Aen.* 5.823). See below on Virgil's Panopea as a possible punning allusion to the full moon.

[8] See Thomas (1986) 193–8 on Virgil's use of the technique of "conflation" or "multiple reference" in the *Georgics*.

at si virgineum suffuderit ore ruborem, 430
ventus erit: vento semper rubet *aurea* ***Phoebe***.

As soon as the moon gathers her returning fires, if she encloses black mist within her dim horns, a tremendous shower will be waiting ready for farmers and for the sea; but if she suffuses her face with a virginal blush, there will be wind: at wind golden Phoebe always blushes.

The reference to moonlight (*luna revertentis cum primum colligit ignis*, 1.427), the adjective *aurea* qualifying *Phoebe* (1.431), and Virgil's subsequent description of the full moon as *pura* (*pura neque obtunsis per caelum cornibus ibit*: "she goes through the sky clear, with horns undimmed", 1.433) together strongly hint at the etymological association between the name of the goddess *Phoebe* (deferred for emphasis to the end of line 431) and the Greek adjective φοίβη ("bright, pure, radiant") – one finds a similar play on *Phoebus*/φοῖβος in *Aen.* 8.720 (*ipse sedens niveo candentis limine Phoebi*: "He himself, sitting on the snowy-white threshold of radiant Phoebus").[9] This sequence of etymological wordplay connecting *Phoebe* with the light of the moon may be supplemented by a subtle bilingual gloss on the word *luna* at the beginning of line 427: the image of the moon gathering light (1.427) and the reference to obscuring "black" (*nigrum*) mist in the immediately following line 428 – another detail notably absent from the Aratean original – might in turn point up *e contrario* the connection between *luna* and the adjective λευκός ("white, bright, clear").[10] Virgil's etymologising play on the name *Phoebe* may in fact form part of a broader pattern of onomastic play in

[9] See O'Hara (2017) 216 on *Aen.* 8.720. As Michalopoulos (2001) 145–6 observes, "the Greek origin of *Phoebus/Phoebe* was widely known and … poets expected the learned members of their audience to appreciate the plays built on it". For Virgil's widespread use of etymologising wordplay, see especially Paschalis (1997; focusing on Virgil's etymologising of names in the *Aeneid*) and O'Hara (2017).

[10] Cf. Paschalis (1997) 4: "By far the most common form of etymological association from the time of Homer is the one in which the name is 'glossed' by a word or phrase of synonymous or opposite sense". For the relationship between *luna* and λευκός, see Ernout and Meillet (2001) s.v. *luna*. A play on *luna* and *niger*/λευκός would be consistent with the broader literary game of reversal identified in this passage by Ted Somerville (2010), who notes the reversed order of Aratus' weather signs in *Geo.* 1.427–35, itself incorporating Virgil's MA–VE–PU signature acrostic (1.429–33; discussed further below); on Somerville's reading ([2010] 208), the adjective *nigrum* (428) refers to its opposite on the same principle of reversal, gesturing in the process towards Homer's (unintentional) ΛΕΥΚΗ acrostic at *Iliad* 24.1–5. Virgil's didactic predecessor Lucretius indeed seems to have regularly engaged in bilingual etymological wordplay on λευκός/*luna* and its Latin cognates. Snyder (1980) 83 observes that Lucretian phrases such as *lunaque … lumina lustrans* (*DRN* 5.575) may "reflect knowledge of the relationship between the various words referring to light, such as *luna*, *luceo*, *lumen*, and *lustro*, all of which are derived from a common root, -leuk" (cf. Kronenberg [2019] 283); the connection between these words is acknowledged by several ancient commentators (e.g., *luna a lucendo nominata*, Cicero, *De nat. deor*. 2.68; see further Maltby [1991] s.v. *luna*). Like Lucretius, Virgil may play on the connection between *luna* and λευκός by repeatedly juxtaposing *luna* with *luceo*, *lumen*, or *lux* in the *Aeneid* (3.645, 4.80–1, 6.270, 6.725, 7.8–9, 8.22–3); cf. O'Hara (2017) 152.

these lines, which also contain the much-commented-on MA(ro)–VE(rgilius)–PU(blius) reversed signature acrostic (1.429–33)[11] and a possible pun on *Vergilius* and the adjective *virgineus* (1.430; note also the phrase *namque is certissimus auctor* in 1.432).[12]

With this in mind, Virgil's concluding catalogue of divine names in *Geo.* 1.437 could be read as a continuation of his game of bilingual etymological play on words relating to moonlight. Thus, the name Glaucus (< γλαυκός) may be rendered either as the colour "blue-green" (appropriate to the sea god), or, extending the pattern observed in *luna* and *Phoebe* above, as "gleaming"[13] in connection with the unobscured light of the full moon, which forms the subject of lines 432–7:

> sin ortu quarto (namque is certissimus auctor)
> pura neque obtunsis per caelum cornibus ibit,
> totus et ille dies et qui nascentur ab illo
> exactum ad mensem pluvia ventisque carebunt, 435
> votaque servati solvent in litore nautae
> Glauco et Panopeae et Inoo Melicertae.
>
> But if at her fourth rising (for that is the most certain authority) she goes through the sky clear, with horns undimmed, both that whole day and those that will proceed from it up to the month's end will be without rain and wind, and the sailors, kept safe, will pay their vows on the shore to Glaucus and Panopea and Ino's son Melicertes.

The reference to Ino, otherwise known as Leucothea – a name that also figured prominently in the Philodemean intertext (σύ τε γλαυκὴ μεδέουσα | **Λευκοθέη** πόντου δαῖμον ἀλεξίκακε: "Leukothea the blue-green ruler of the open sea and divine averter of troubles", 1–2) – may again

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[11] The acrostic was first identified by Edwin Brown: Brown (1963) 96–114, esp. 102–5. Although Brown's proposal was initially greeted with some scepticism, the MA–VE–PU acrostic has won increasing acceptance in recent decades as an intentional wordplay. See now Haslam (1992); Feeney and Nelis (2005); Katz (2008); Somerville (2010); Danielewicz (2013), with further bibliography.

[12] *virgineum* ("virginal") in 1.430 has been read alternatively as a bilingual pun on *Vergilius~virgineus* and παρθένος, alluding to Virgil's reported sobriquet 'Parthenias' (i.e., "the maidenlike": Donatus, *Vit. Verg.* 11); see, e.g., Thomas (1988) *ad* 1.427–37. The nickname has also been connected with Parthenius (i.e., "Parthenius' friend") in light of the Parthenian allusion in *Geo*. 1.437 and Macrobius' report of Virgil's personal association with the poet (discussed in n. 20 below); see now Hornstein (1957) and Klooster (2012) 313 n. 15. See Stok (2017) for a recent re-evaluation of the evidence for Virgil's nickname. In this context, however, one might even take the adjective *virgineus* as a direct translation of the name Παρθένιος.

[13] See *LSJ* s.v. γλαυκός I.

subtly invoke the connection between *luna* and λευκός.[14] There is perhaps even sufficient encouragement here to interpret the name *Panopea*, not present in the Philodemean or Parthenian models, as a straightforward play on the words παν- and ὄψ (i.e., "full face, full aspect").[15]

Since the poem from which Parthenius' verse originated is no longer extant, the full implication of Virgil's combined reference to Philodemus and Parthenius cannot be firmly established. However, a clue to the poet's intent may lie in the distinctly Hellenistic allusive background to this section of *Georgics* 1. As we have already seen, Virgil closely modelled lines 427–37 on Aratus' corresponding treatment of moon-signs in the *Phaenomena* (albeit with several conspicuous deviations). The MA–VE–PU acrostic (1.429–33) itself appears to respond to the famous ΛΕΠΤΗ acrostic – simultaneously proclaiming and illustrating the Hellenistic aesthetic ideal of λεπτότης ("refinement, subtlety") – found in the same Aratean passage (*Phaen.* 783–7).[16] Peter Bing has further proposed that Virgil's signature acrostic in fact results from the conflation of *two* Aratean word games, namely the ΛΕΠΤΗ acrostic and Aratus' own hidden signature in *Phaen.* 2, where the adjective ἄρρητον ("unmentioned") forms a clever pun on Ἄρητος;[17] in conflating the acrostic form and the play on the name, he suggests, Virgil may in turn respond to the epigrams in praise of Aratus by two other prominent Hellenistic poets, Callimachus (*AP* 9.507 = 56 Gow-Page = 27 Pf.) and Leonidas of Tarentum (*AP* 9.25 = 101 Gow-Page), each alluding to both Aratus' ΛΕΠΤΗ and his name-play.[18] The influence of Hellenistic poetry can also be detected in the numerous instances of etymological wordplay in these lines. As James O'Hara has demonstrated in detail, Virgil's learned etymologising was heavily informed by the practice of Alexandrian scholar-poets such as Callimachus, Apollonius, and Aratus.[19]

It may therefore be no coincidence that Philodemus and Parthenius – men with whom Virgil may indeed have been personally acquainted – were both also respected authors of

[14] Kronenberg (2018) 5 also highlights the possible reference to *Leuco*thea/λευκός (without taking into account Philodemus' epigram), but interprets it as a further allusion to Homer's ΛΕΥΚΗ acrostic (see n. 10 above).

[15] Note the reference to the moon's blushing face in line 430 (*si virgineum suffuderit ore ruborem*). The etymological play on Panopea may be complemented by a TOTaE telestic at the end of lines 433–6 – briefly remarked upon by Danielewicz (2013) 295 n. 32 – corresponding to the ΠΑΣΑ acrostic in Aratus' discussion of moon-signs (*Phaen.* 803–6) and signposted by the adjective *totus* at the start of 1.434. In addition, Haslam (1992) 203–4 has identified a possible name-play involving Aratus' epithet *Soleus* (referring to his hometown of Soli) in the lines immediately following Virgil's list of sea divinities: *Sol quoque et exoriens et cum se condet in undas | signa dabit; solem certissima signa sequentur* ("The sun [*sol/Soleus*] will also give signs, both as it rises and as it sets into the waves; most certain signs will follow the sun [*sol/Soleus*]", 1.438–9).

[16] Aratus' acrostic was (re)discovered by Jean-Marie Jacques in 1960. See Hanses (2014) 609 n. 2 for a useful overview of the extensive bibliography.

[17] See Levitan (1979) 68 n. 18; Kidd (1981) 355; Hopkinson (1988) 139; Bing (1990) 282–4.

[18] See Bing (1990) 282–5; on the contemporary recognition of Aratus' pun and acrostic, see further Cameron (1995) 322. Thomas (1988 *ad* 1.437) conjectures that *Panopea* and *Inoo* in *Geo*. 1.437 also allude to Callimachus.

[19] See O'Hara (2017) 21–42 and *passim*.

refined Greek verse in the Hellenistic fashion.[20] Cicero attests to the wit and sophistication of Philodemus' poems (*poema … facit ita festivum, ita concinnum, ita elegans, nihil ut fieri possit argutius*: "He is the author of poetry so delightful, so well put together, so elegant, that there could be nothing more clever", *In Pisonem* 70), as well as to their popularity (*a multis et lecta et audita*: "[poems] read and listened to by many", *ibid.* 71),[21] while Parthenius was an influential figure both as a scholar and as a poet in Roman literary circles in the first century BCE.[22] In light of this, Virgil's careful imitation of Philodemus and Parthenius in *Geo.* 1.436–7 might be viewed as an elegant poetic tribute to these two notable recent exponents of the Hellenistic style.

At the same time, we might consider the possible Epicurean resonance of Virgil's Philodemean source. As several scholars have pointed out, the "sweet" shore of Peiraeus (γλυκερὴν ἠόνα Πειραέως, 6) sought by Philodemus' narrator could be taken to allude to the anticipated pleasures of philosophy at the Epicurean school in Athens.[23] In the context of a prayer for safety at sea, the 'Epicurean' shore of Peiraeus here may also suggest the metaphorical safe harbour of philosophy, a motif that figures prominently in the surviving Epicurean literature (e.g., Lucretius' *suave mari magno turbantibus aequora ventis | e terra magnum alterius spectare laborem*: "Sweet it is to watch from land another's great toil on the mighty sea as the winds whip up the surface", *DRN* 2.1–2), including elsewhere in the

[20] For the evidence connecting Virgil with Philodemus and the Epicurean school on the Bay of Naples, see especially Gigante and Capasso (1989); Sider (1995) 42–4; Sider (1997) 19–21; Gigante (2004) 85–6. According to Macrobius, Parthenius was Virgil's *grammaticus in Graecis* (*Sat.* 5.17.18), the designation suggesting that "Parthenius acted as Virgil's consultant in matters of Greek mythology, poetry, (geographical) nomenclature" (Klooster [2012] 313), a notion supported by Parthenius' dedication of a compilation of love stories (the *Erotika Pathemata*) to the elegist Cornelius Gallus; for further discussion of Macrobius' comment, see Dyer (1996) and Francese (1999). The word παρθένιος interestingly appears (at col. v.19) in a later first-century CE list of epigram *incipits* (*P.Oxy.* 3724), many of which may belong to Philodemus. Sider ([1997] 217–18) proposes that παρθένιος – if taken as a proper name, rather than as a noun or adjective – here refers to Παρθένιος of Nicaea, "and hence someone known (if only by name) to Phil.", or else to Virgil's reported nickname 'Parthenias' (see n. 12 above).

[21] See Sider (1995) and (1997) 24–8 on Philodemus as a Hellenistic poet. For the reception of Philodemus' epigrams in Roman poetry of the late Republican and Augustan period, see the bibliography in Sider (1997) 239–42 and the subsequent discussions by Armstrong (2004) 4–5; Cairns (2011); Höschele (2011) 26–31; Booth (2011); Newlands (2016).

[22] Parthenius has been credited by some scholars as the catalyst for the so-called "neoteric" movement: see, e.g., Rostagni (1932–3); Alfonsi (1945) 56–72; Clausen (1964). For a more cautious assessment of Parthenius' influence on the development of Roman poetry, see Crowther (1976); Hinds (1998) 76–83; Lightfoot (1999) 54–76.

[23] See Gigante (1995) 49–52; Kyriakidis (2002) 281; Longo Auricchio (2004) 41. A striking parallel for Philodemus' poem can be found in Propertius 3.21, where the speaker plans a voyage from Rome to Athens to study (among other possible pursuits) Epicurean philosophy: he will pray to sea deities for safe passage (18), and, after reaching the port of Peiraeus (*inde ubi Piraei capient me litora portus*: "then, when the shores of the harbour of Peiraeus receive me", 23), will seek solace for his *amor* in the schools of Plato or Epicurus (*hortis, docte Epicure, tuis*: "in your gardens, learned Epicurus", 26). See Sider (1997) 188 for the suggestion that Propertius is drawing directly on Philodemus' epigram.

works of Philodemus himself.[24] In a self-referential passage containing a signature acrostic and a possible pun on *Vergilius*, and given Virgil's confirmed association with the Epicurean community in Naples,[25] might the echo of Philodemus in *Geo.* 1.436–7 in turn constitute a subtle allusion to the poet's own arrival at the harbour of Epicureanism? If Virgil is to be seen as one of the sailors (*nautae*) who have been "kept safe" (*servati*, 1.436), this may indicate that he has safely reached his Epicurean destination, successfully achieving the philosophical goal of *ataraxia* by avoiding the storms that disturb the souls of the unenlightened.[26]

A suggestive parallel is found in the *sphragis* to Book 4 of the *Georgics* (4.559–66), which contains an autobiographical portrait of Virgil as a young man in Naples (referred to by its original name Parthenope). Here the poet – now explicitly identified as *Vergilius* (4.563) – is said to enjoy "the studies of inglorious ease" (*studiis … ignobilis oti*, 4.564) in language that strongly evokes the katastematic pleasures of Epicureanism.[27] The *sphragis* itself contains several tantalising reminiscences of Philodemus' epigrams, including his prayer for a safe voyage: as Stratis Kyriakidis has observed, the epithet *dulcis* ("sweet") attributed to Naples/Parthenope (*Geo.* 4.563) corresponds to the adjective γλυκερός that Philodemus applied to the shore of Peiraeus (*AP* 6.349.6), hinting at the Epicurean pleasures of the Athenian Garden.[28] Intriguingly, the *incipits* (*P.Oxy.* 3724 col. iv 14, 15) of two poems that may also belong to Philodemus start with the name Parthenope, likewise found at the beginning of the verse in *Geo.* 4.564.[29] Virgil's review of his earlier life and poetic career in these lines (cf. *lusi … audax … iuventa*: "I who played … in the boldness of youth", 4.565) can be related to another Philodemean epigram (*AP* 5.112 = 18 Gow-Page = 5 Sider) in which the speaker renounces youthful dalliance (καὶ παίζειν ὅτε καιρός, ἐπαίξαμεν. ἡνικα καὶ νῦν | οὐκετι, λωϊτέρης φροντίδος ἀψόμεθα: "And when it was right to play we played; and since it is right no longer, we shall lay hold of loftier thoughts", 5–6), the verb ἐπαίξαμεν ("we played") alluding – like

[24] See Longo Auricchio (2004) on Philodemus' use of the metaphor in his treatise *On Rhetoric*.

[25] See n. 20 above.

[26] The harbour of philosophy also makes an appearance in *Catalepton* 5 (in all likelihood apocryphal) from the *Appendix Vergiliana*, where the speaker announces *nos ad beatos vela mittimus portus* ("we are spreading our sails for the blessed harbours", 8), referring to the Epicurean school of Philodemus' associate Siro. Here, he anticipates, *vitam … ab omni vindicabimus cura* ("we shall free our life from every care", 10). For discussion, see Longo Auricchio (2004) 40–1 and Peirano (2012) 111–16; for the association of Siro and Philodemus, see Cicero, *De finibus* 2.119.

[27] By contrast, the distinctly un-Epicurean figure of Octavian "thunders in war" (*fulminat … bello*, 4.561) by the Euphrates. For the Epicurean background to the *sphragis*, see, e.g., Kyriakidis (2002) 284–5; Gale (2003) 326–7; Freer (2019) 80–2.

[28] Kyriakidis (2002) 281.

[29] See Sider (1995) 43–4 and (1997) 18–19 and 212–14, who tentatively suggests that Virgil is alluding to these epigrams, which perhaps also described the "pleasurable ambience" of the Epicurean Garden in Naples (quotation from Sider [1995] 44).

Virgil's *lusi* – to his previous poetic activity.[30] Although the evidence for Virgil's engagement with Philodemus in the *sphragis* is by no means conclusive, the several points of contact with his discussion of moon-signs in Book 1 – which contained another apparent authorial signature and a Philodemean echo that may also gesture towards the poet's life in the Epicurean Garden of Naples – may suggest that Virgil repeatedly returned to Philodemus' epigrams as an important poetic resource for his autobiographical self-representation in the *Georgics*.

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[30] Text and translation by Sider (1997) 78. For the reminiscence of Philodemus' *AP* 5.112, see Fowler (1989) 84 n. 37 and Kyriakidis (2002) 282, the latter observing that Virgil's *sphragis* presents "the completion of the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics* in a similar fashion; a part of his poetic life has been fulfilled with these two works". The verb παίζω ("play"), it should be noted, also strongly suggests the composition of poetry in Philodemus, *AP* 9.412.7 (= 20.7 Gow-Page = 29.7 Sider).

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Looking at Infinity, Looking at the Sky: Virgil's *Eclogues* and Giacomo Leopardi's Bucolic Poems

*Revised from a paper given to the Virgil Society on 1 October 2022**

To speak of a 'bucolic Leopardi', and of Leopardi as a bucolic successor of Virgil's *Eclogues*, expresses both the simplest and the most daring of intentions.

On the one hand, it seems simple to attribute a bucolic label to the author of the most famous *Idylls* in the Italian poetical tradition. Nor does it seem difficult to identify more or less explicit references to Virgil in the work of a poet steeped in ancient poetry, who indeed made his relationship with the Greek and Latin worlds a presupposition of his own poetical and philosophical system, and who was certainly a voracious reader of Virgil, as well as a young translator of his poetry.[1]

Still, once the veil of these prominent appearances is lifted, one soon discovers that, in fact, it is challenging to call Leopardi a truly 'bucolic' poet, in as much as it is almost impossible to establish a specific connection between his poetry and Virgil's bucolic collection. Within a lifelong relationship with Virgil, marked by admiration sometimes mixed with criticism, based on the notes in the *Zibaldone* and poetic allusions in the *Canti*, the *Eclogues* seem to

* I would like to thank Fiachra Mac Góráin for generously reading these pages and for his valuable contribution to my work during the time I spent at University College London as a visiting research student.

Leopardi's texts are quoted from the following editions: *Poesie e prose*, 2 vols, ed. M. A. Rigoni and R. Damiani, Milan, 1987–8; *Zibaldone*, 3 vols, ed. R. Damiani, Milan, 1997. English translations from *Canti*, trans. J. Galassi, London, 2010; *Zibaldone,* ed. M. Caesar and F. D'Intino, New York, 2013. Translations from other works are my own. Virgil's texts are quoted from *Bucolica et Georgica*, ed. S. Ottaviano and G. B. Conte, Berlin / New York, 2013; English translations from *Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid I–VI*, trans. H. R. Fairclough, London / New York, 1916 (revised G. P. Goold, 1999).

[1] On Leopardi's translation of *Aeneid* 2 and its significance in his career as a poet, see Blasucci (1985) 9–30; Tixi (2012); Camarotto (2016) 123–42; La Rosa (2017) 245–73; Scafoglio (2018); Vallana (2021).

this day "the work of Virgil that Leopardi frequented least".[2] It is not easy to find textual allusions to the *Eclogues* in Leopardi's work. Even when detectable, the explicit references to bucolic Virgil barely seem relevant in his poems. However, it would be surprising if a poet who was so close to Virgil on many different levels did not have Virgil's *Eclogues* in mind while writing the poems that he entitled *Idylls* (*Idilli*).

Whereas the majority of bucolic poets show that they did keep Virgil in mind and often flaunt it to highlight their ability to go beyond that extremely authoritative model, in Leopardi's case we witness the opposite phenomenon. Bucolic Virgil is dissolved and wholly absorbed in a modern idyll with almost no memory of those ten eclogues that founded the western bucolic tradition.[3]

The research on Leopardi's reception of bucolic Virgil, then, turns out to be implicated in a more complex picture, and the study of a 'bucolic Leopardi' becomes a challenge to the scholar of reception, as well as an exciting chapter in the history of the versatile pastoral tradition. A question that might have seemed rhetorical – can one who knew Virgil in early childhood, translated his work, and had an ongoing dialogue with the Virgilian corpus, not remember the *Eclogues* when preparing to write his own idylls? – resolves itself into a much broader set of questions, which can be summed up as follows: what are the bucolic features of Leopardi's *Idylls*? How does Leopardi step into the pastoral discourse and elaborate his version of the pastoral mode?[4] This paper aims to look more deeply into this issue and to suggest some traces of Virgil's *Eclogues* in Leopardi's literary memory. A deeper investigation of the subject seems appropriate, or rather necessary, to shed new light on the interpretation of Leopardi's *Idylls* and, more widely, on the use of the pastoral repertoire throughout the Italian poet's *Canti*.

A methodological premise is in order. Textual echoes of bucolic Virgil are rare in Leopardi's *Canti*; there is no reason, then, to insist on finding any more, even if weak, just because of the prejudice that bucolic Virgil must be uncovered in Leopardi beyond what can be seen with the naked eye. I will proceed from a different assumption: a regulative idea of *literary genre* as a tool to interpret texts. In this sense, the fact that some of Leopardi's poems are called *Idylls*, by their author's choice, asks us to consider them in their 'bucolic dimension' – that is, to investigate how far their forms, contents, and mode are indebted to the tradition of bucolic poetry and how much can instead be attributed to an original interpretation by Leopardi.

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2 La Penna (1991) 257.

3 On Virgil's crucial role in the foundation of the pastoral genre, see Cucchiarelli (2021).

4 On this concept as related to Virgil's *Eclogues* as well as to the whole pastoral genre, see Alpers (1996), which relies on the theory of literary modes formulated by Frye (1969) 43–89.

Therefore, discovering a possible presence of Virgil's *Eclogues* will occur at this level. By considering Leopardi's *Idylls* through a bucolic lens and interpreting them according to the criteria of the pastoral tradition, we are necessarily impelled to measure their debt to Virgil, without whom that tradition would not exist. The same can be said of poems that, even though they are not explicitly called *Idylls*, contain elements of unquestionable relevance to the bucolic tradition, such as a shepherd who sings while tending his flock.

In this sense, I will bear in mind Charles Martindale's warning that "to have assigned a work to a genre does not *precede* interpretation, rather it is *already to have interpreted*".[5] I assume that these poems belong to the tradition of pastoral poetry because of the title their author chose for them, in addition to some components of theirs that are highly recognizable as pastoral. Therefore, I will interpret them consistently and verify how Leopardi's poems *work* if and as meant as bucolic poems.

I will work on this hypothesis by reading two of the most famous among Leopardi's poems, *L'infinito* and *Canto notturno di un pastore errante dell'Asia*.

But first, let's look at a line of Leopardi's *Disegni letterari* ("Literary projects"), which he wrote in 1828 and which is often quoted in discussions of what Leopardi meant by that problematic ancient word *idyll*: "Idilli esprimenti situazioni, affezioni, avventure storiche del mio animo" ("Idylls expressing situations, affections, historical adventures of my soul").[6] In this definition, there is something that Schiller would call "sentimental". The bucolic space of idylls – *locus amoenus*, *silvae*, *fontes* – is taken away from the description of actual space, as well as from the allegorical meaning and the aesthetic concerns it has been filled with across centuries of pastoral poetry, and is instead explicitly related to the poet's feelings. The idyll's new goal is to express those feelings and the adventures of a soul. Even though pastoral poetry had already gone through a long journey of transformation and innovation from its Greek and Latin origins, Leopardi's definition of idyll still contains something deeply original.[7]

L'infinito is the first in a series of poems that Leopardi published for the first time in 1825–6 with the title *Idylls*,[8] and it is probably the most striking example of the new lease of life that Leopardi gave to the idyll:

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5 Martindale (1993) 14 (original emphases).

6 *Disegni letterari* XII, 1218; cf. D'Intino et al. (2021) 211–22.

7 On this line from the *Disegni letterari*, the genesis of Leopardi's idylls, and possible modern sources (in particular, Goethe's *Werther*), see Blasucci (2017) 13–51; Lonardi (2017) 45–104. For a recent reading, see Zanon (2021).

8 These poems were initially six and were published with the title *Idilli* in two issues of the journal *Il Nuovo Ricoglitore* between 1825 and 1826. They were published under the same title in the volume *Versi* in 1826. This title disappeared starting from the first edition of the *Canti* in 1831. On the writing and the publication of the *Idylls*, see Italia (2016) 147–83; Blasucci (2017) 33–44.

Sempre caro mi fu quest'ermo colle,
E questa siepe, che da tanta parte
Dell'ultimo orizzonte il guardo esclude.
Ma **sedendo e mirando**, interminati
Spazi di là da quella, e sovrumani
Silenzi, e profondissima quiete
Io **nel pensier mi fingo**; ove per poco
Il cor non si spaura. E come il vento
Odo stormir tra queste piante, io quello
Infinito silenzio a questa voce
Vo comparando: e mi sovvien l'eterno,
E le morte stagioni, e la presente
E viva, e il suon di lei. Così tra questa
Immensità s'annega il pensier mio:
E il naufragar m'è dolce in questo mare.

This lonely hill was **always dear** to me,
and this hedgerow, which cuts off the view
of so much of the last horizon.
But **sitting** here and **gazing**, I can see
beyond, **in my mind's eye**, unending spaces,
and superhuman silences, and depthless calm,
till what I feel
is almost fear. And when I hear
the wind stir in these branches, I begin
comparing that endless stillness with this noise:
and the eternal comes to mind,
and the dead seasons, and the present
living one, and how it sounds.
So my mind sinks in this immensity:
and foundering is sweet in such a sea.

The poem starts with a statement of *consuetudo* (line 1). The place is well-known to the poet, who can connect his past, present, and future to the memory of the hill.[9] The same *consue-*

[9] The same sense of familiarity, connected to the hill, occurs again at the beginning of the idyll *Alla luna* ("To the moon"), lines 1–3: "O graziosa luna, io mi rammento | Che, or volge l'anno, sovra questo colle | Io venia pien d'angoscia a rimirarti" ("O graceful moon, I can remember, now | the year has turned, how, filled with anguish, | I came here to this hill to gaze at you").

tudo is one of the most emphasized features of the peaceful bucolic space of Tityrus in the description offered by the exiled Meliboeus: *non insueta gravis temptabunt pabula fetas, | nec mala vicini pecoris contagia laedent. | Fortunate senex, hic inter flumina nota | et fontis sacros frigus captabis opacum* ("Still, no strange herbage shall try your breeding ewes, no baneful infection from a neighbour's flock shall harm them. Happy old man! Here, amid familiar streams and sacred springs, you shall enjoy the cooling shade", *Ecl*. 1.49–52).[10] Following a suggestion by Nicola Gardini, the "siepe" (the hedge) and the "ultimo orizzonte" (the "last horizon") of lines 2–3 could also remind us of this celebrated description by Meliboeus of the *locus amoenus*: *hinc tibi quae semper vicino ab limite saepes* ("On this side, as of old, on your neighbour's border, the hedge...", *Ecl*. 1.53).[11]

After defining his space of habit and peace, the poet sits ("sedendo", line 4) in observation ("mirando"). For the first gesture, there is almost no need to mention how profoundly bucolic it is: the shepherd sitting on the grass and singing or watching his herd is an iconic image of the whole bucolic tradition, in the Greek poets as well as in Virgil. In Leopardi, this gesture occurs several times, often with intensely pastoral nuances, always related to some form of philosophical meditation.[12] The idea could have also been suggested by Servius: *sedet. non otiatur, sed curat; apud antiquos enim "sedet" considerat significabat* ("Sits: not he is at leisure, but he applies care; for among the ancients 'sits' used to denote 'considers'", Servius *ad Aen*. 1.56).

For the second verb – "mirare" ("gaze") – we may recall that Meliboeus in *Eclogue* 1 uses the same verb three times, encompassing present, past, and future (*miror*, 1.11; *mirabar*, 1.36; *mirabor*, 1.69), firstly to express his amazement at Tityrus' destiny and Amaryllis' sadness, then to deny himself any hope of coming back from exile.[13]

While sitting and gazing, the poet starts making up (as expressed by the Latin term *fingo*) "unending spaces, and superhuman silences, and depthless calm" with the power of his thought or, more precisely, of his *imagination*.

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[10] Cf. Gigante (1981) 68: "Poco importa se i *pabula* di Titiro siano *pinguia* o *laeta*, importa che siano gli stessi, i pascoli di sempre" ("It matters little whether the *pabula* of Tityrus are *pinguia* or *laeta*, it matters that they are the same, the pastures of always"). An early bucolic successor of Virgil, Calpurnius Siculus, significantly reverses the *consuetudo* implied in Tityrus' *locus amoenus*, by making the shepherd Corydon sit *insueta statione* (Calpurnius 4.3).

[11] Cf. Gardini (2008) 86.

[12] Twenty-three occurrences of this verb can be counted in the *Canti*: cf. Primo (2003) xxxvii–xxxix. On their relevance as bucolic hints and the Virgilian parallels, see Albonico (2013) 181–2. Significantly, this verb occurs twice in one of Leopardi's translations from Moschus (fr. 1 Gow) as an innovation introduced by the translator – that is, without a corresponding term in Moschus' idyll: cf. Natale (2016) 288–91.

[13] Davis (2012) 32–3 classifies this repetition of *miror* as a feature of the poor philosophical attitude of Meliboeus ("Virgil's contraposition of philosophical outlooks [sc. between Tityrus and Meliboeus] receives articulation through the repetition"). On the contrary, in Leopardi, this verb signals the start of philosophical meditation.

The bucolic construction of an alternative world through poetry, which started from the first line of Theocritus' *Idyll* 1,[14] is now repeated by Leopardi in a completely introspective way. The thought fashions – *fingit* – a reality beyond the boundary of the *saepes*, and the poet's heart almost gets scared by that. Intellectual process ("pensier", thought) overlaps with sentimental feeling ("cor", heart), clarifying how the idyll can be intended as a soul's "historical adventure". Moreover, it has been noted that the expression of fear in lines 7–8 ("ove per poco | il cor non si spaura") is connected with Leopardi's translation of *Aen.* 2.755 (*simul ipsa silentia terrent*) which reads "silenzio pur l'alma spaura".[15] Through the memory of that translation, such an essential stage in Leopardi's path towards becoming a poet, Virgil's epic voice creeps into Leopardi's poetry when he starts singing his idyllic song and constructing his own pastoral fictionality. We may wonder to what extent this can be said about Virgil's bucolic voice – or Virgil's pastoral mode.

In Leopardi's *L'infinito*, we have a shepherd-poet who imagines another world in his mind, trying to look beyond the hedge with the power of his imagination. It is not made explicit that he is a shepherd, but he is the main character of an idyll, and he sits on the grass in what seems to be his *locus amoenus*, the Arcadia of his heart. We can definitely say that Leopardi's idyll immerses us in the clearest possible "spiritual landscape", as is Virgil's Arcadia according to the definition given by Bruno Snell.[16] The real world and the imaginative-poetic world interact, in the middle of Leopardi's idyll, just as the unreal Arcadia of Virgil[17] interacts with the real world of war and exile.

This interplay is realized through another poetic tool which belongs to Virgil's pastoral mode: comparison through the bucolic use of deictics. In lines 9–11, the wind blowing through the trees seems to awaken the poet from his entirely imaginative world. But, instead of bringing him back to the actual world on this side of the hedge, it leads him to a startling comparison between 'here' and 'there', as if these two worlds were much more connected than they initially seemed to be. From the very beginning of the idyll ("quest'ermo colle": "this lonely hill") right up to its conclusion ("questo mare": "such a sea"), the piling up of demonstrative adjectives and pronouns mixes the concrete world of the experience ("this hill") and the fictional world of imagination ("that endless stillness").[18]

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[14] On fictionality as the main component of pastoral poetry, cf. Iser (1993) 22–86; Payne (2007); Kania (2016). For analysis see Martindale (2019) 177–8.

[15] Cf. Blasucci (2019) 318.

[16] Cf. Snell (1953) 281–309.

[17] I refer here to Virgil's bucolic world as "Arcadia", because of the suitability of the term to talk about the fictional-literary setting of the *Eclogues* as a whole. I am aware, however, that this name has given rise to controversies and debate: see especially Kennedy (1987); Jenkyns (1989); Connolly (2001).

[18] On Leopardi's employment of deictics, see Raimondi (1994) 507–21; Mengaldo (2006) 71–4; Zublena (2010); Mengaldo (2011) 71. On comparison as the key feature of *L'infinito*, cf. Cacciari (2021).

As readers of bucolic poetry know, the wide use of demonstrative adjectives and pronouns, as well as adverbs of place, is common in the bucolic language and generates an effect of immediacy that contributes to the construction of the pastoral space.[19] At the same time, the comparison (implicit or explicit) between the pastoral world and the reality outside of it is a remarkable component of Virgil's *Eclogues*. To stay within *Eclogue* 1, Tityrus' trip to Rome – that is, to the non-pastoral world – allows him to come back and enjoy the leisure admired by Meliboeus; in *Ecl.* 1.19–25, Tityrus admits his naiveté in comparing the small world of the shepherds with the magnificent reality of the city. On the other hand, Meliboeus' vision of the external world in *Ecl.* 1.64–6 takes the shape of a hyperbolic distance to which he, as an exile, is destined.[20] The eclogue concludes, then, with the invitation of Tityrus to spend one last night in the pastoral space, where the stress is again put on the opposition between *hic* ("here", *Ecl.* 1.79) and *procul* ("over there", 1.82).[21]

By comparing the close, tangible reality of the trees around him with the endless space imagined beyond the *limes* of the hedge, Leopardi implements the opposition between ontologically different worlds that informs Virgil's *Eclogues* from their very beginning. Moreover, he makes it happen through the careful use of bucolic deictics.

The ending of the idyll, with the ambiguous image of a "sweet shipwreck", could break the atmosphere of conciliation between the opposites we invoked. In an essay entitled *Idillio con naufragio* ("Idyll with shipwreck"), Gilberto Lonardi wrote that Leopardi takes the form of the idyll apart, depriving it of its ontological basis. In other words, the appearance of a quiet 'idyll' is presented at the beginning of Leopardi's poem to show its inconsistency and to generate an unexpected disorder within it.[22] If it is true that the final shipwreck of *L'infinito*, even though "sweet", does not suggest a full peace in the *locus amoenus* as much as a hint of anxiety, this would also be a Virgilian bucolic move. Virgil's Arcadia is by definition "impossible", as La Penna reminds us;[23] its construction reveals that its opposite is always immanent, and the poem keeps working on this contradiction without ever finding a permanent solution.

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[19] Significant examples in Theocritus, *Id.* 5.31–4, 5.45–6, 11.45–8; in Virgil, *Ecl.* 1.53–6, 1.70–2 (with pessimistic, rather than idealizing, tones), 7.49–51, 9.40–1, 9.60–2, 10.42–3. Cf. Putnam (1970) 46–7: "From the first eclogue to the last, the use of the word *hic* and its kindred *hinc* [...] signals the beginning of an idealized vision of the countryside".

[20] On the typological quality of the places described by Meliboeus here, see Flintoff (1974) 818: "It seems that in the citing of these places there is a considerable element of the typological. Not merely are they far away from the scene of the Bucolics they are also thought of as qualitatively unlike it – perhaps even diametrically opposite to it and possessing the evaluative associations, that are surely negative".

[21] On Virgil's construction of an imaginative-intellectual space in *Eclogue* 1 which contrasts with the cogent space of history, see Putnam (1982) 243–66; Leach (1988) 148–55.

[22] See Lonardi (2017) 73–104.

[23] See La Penna (2005) 3–66.

The "suspension" that informs the end of *Eclogue* 1, which Charles Segal identified as the most significant component of the atmosphere of Virgil's *Eclogues*,[24] is the same suspension on which Leopardi's idyll *L'infinito* concludes. Between the most profound peace and silence of an imaginary world and the blowing wind of actual reality there exists a form of communication, realized through the power of poetry and art. However, this connection finally results in a "sweet shipwreck" of thought, which cannot resolve the contradiction between these two worlds, and is probably not supposed to do so, either.

About ten years later, between 1829 and 1830, Leopardi wrote another bucolic poem, the *Canto notturno di un pastore errante dell'Asia*. First, we have to point out that this is not precisely an idyll, since it does not belong to the group of poems entitled *Idylls* by the author, all written between 1819 and 1821. However, a long critical tradition has attributed to this poem and five others the label of "Major Idylls", because of their affinity with the first group of *Idylls*. Whatever we want to call it, even if we do not use the term 'idyll' on the grounds that Leopardi never called it that, this poem inevitably draws our attention because of its prominent bucolic features. Indeed, the poem's protagonist is a shepherd, placed in a remote and desolate land of Asia, who sings to the moon and wonders about the destiny of human beings, comparing and opposing himself to his quiet flock, which sleeps without thought, utterly immune to boredom and unaware of sorrow.

Some years ago, Simone Albonico proposed an attempt to investigate the literary tradition behind Leopardi's shepherd.[25] As Albonico asserts, the immediate source from which Leopardi took the inspiration for his poem, the article by Meyendorff from the *Journal des Savans* about Kyrgyz shepherds singing to the moon in the remote lands of Asia,[26] has been for a long time in the foreground, so much so that it has almost obscured the literary components of the poem. Therefore, Albonico gives some valuable suggestions for work on the bucolic elements of the *Canto notturno*, with a focus on the echoes of Virgil's *Eclogues*.[27]

I will follow this lead and continue to concentrate on the Virgilian-bucolic components of Leopardi's *Canto notturno*. In particular, I will focus on the theme of a shepherd looking

[24] See Segal (1981) 278: "This atmosphere of suspension amid contraries, of rest amid disturbance, sets the tone for the *Eclogues*".

[25] See Albonico (2013).

[26] The importance of this reading in the genesis of the *Canto notturno* is indubitable. Leopardi explicitly quotes it in *Zib*. 4399–400 and then recalls those pages of the *Zibaldone* in the literary project of a "Canto notturno di un pastore dell'Asia centrale alla luna" (*Disegni letterari* XII, 1219). Finally, he wrote the passage again in a note on the autograph of the poem: see Bronzini (1979); Dionisotti (1988).

[27] De Robertis and Martelli (1972) 304–7 already suggested looking at the bucolic tradition to read the *Canto notturno*.

at the sky and singing to the moon which, at first sight, seems to be a step away from the tradition of ancient pastoral poetry. But in fact, we can collect several clues which suggest that ancient pastoral models played a crucial role in the birth of Leopardi's shepherd and that Virgil's *Eclogues* were central to this process.

In the first place, we should wonder about the poet's choice to put in the mouth of a shepherd philosophical questions – as well as some hurtful doubts – about human destiny and sorrow. In his essay on pastoral poetry, Paul Alpers suggested that shepherds became representative of humanity starting from Virgil's *Eclogues*, and that this is somehow the quintessence of Virgil's pastoral mode.[28] In this sense, Leopardi's choice to identify himself with a shepherd and declare through his voice the weakness of humanity when faced with the cosmos is indebted to the pastoral tradition as shaped by Virgil. But we will come back to this point later; now, let's take a closer look at the poem.

At the very beginning, the shepherd addresses his song to the moon, in an admirable *incipit* that sets the interrogative tone which will continue throughout the whole poem (lines 1–10):

Che fai tu, luna, in ciel? dimmi, che fai,
Silenziosa luna?
Sorgi la sera, e vai,
Contemplando i deserti; indi ti posi.
Ancor non sei tu paga
Di riandare i sempiterni calli?
Ancor non prendi a schivo, ancor sei vaga
Di mirar queste valli?
Somiglia alla tua vita
La vita del pastore.

What are you doing, moon, up in the sky;
what are you doing, tell me, silent moon?
You rise at night and go,
observing the deserts. Then you set.
Aren't you tired
of plying the eternal byways?
Aren't you bored? Do you still want

[28] See Alpers (1990) and (1996).

to look down on these valleys?
The shepherd's life
is like your life. 10

This "silent moon" is not a usual interlocutor for Virgil's bucolic shepherds, while it is, of course, a frequent point of reference for the poet Leopardi and almost a 'character' in the *Canti*. The bucolic overlap between the poet and the shepherd, the confusion which generates those shepherd-poets whose identity and meaning are among the great puzzles of the pastoral tradition, starts here from the very first line – that is, from the choice of addressee, which is the favourite one of the poet *and* the shepherd. It should be stressed, in other words, that while reading the article in the *Journal des Savans*, Leopardi found an overlap between his poetic favour for the moon and the Kyrgyz shepherds' songs in the Asian night. That overlap had a specific literary form that Leopardi – the author of *Idylls* – knew very well, namely bucolic poetry.

Luigi Blasucci recalls in his commentary a couple of precedents for the silence of the moon that may be relevant to our purpose.[29] On the Virgilian side, it is almost impossible not to think of an echo from *Aen.* 2.255, *tacitae per amica silentia lunae* ("amid the friendly silence of the peaceful moon"), a verse which certainly had impressed the young translator of Virgil. On the bucolic side, it reminds us of a line by Bion, which Leopardi translated "spargi tua luce tacita" ("you scatter your silent light"): τὺ δίδου φάος (Bion, fr. 11 Gow, line 5).

However, we should consider a longer line of bucolic references here. At the beginning of the fourth chapter of his *Saggio sopra gli errori popolari degli antichi* ("Essay on popular errors of the ancients", 1815), entitled "Della magia" ("On magic"), Leopardi dedicates a long section to the connection between magic and the moon. To start his exploration of this subject, conducted through a massive quantity of ancient sources (as is usual throughout the *Saggio*), Leopardi's first quotation is from Virgil, *Ecl.* 8.69–70: *carmina vel caelo possunt deducere lunam,* | *carminibus Circe socios mutavit Ulixi* ("Songs can even draw the moon down from heaven; by songs Circe changed the comrades of Ulysses").[30] A few lines later, Theocritus' *Idyll* 2 pops up in a double reference to lines 10–11 (ἀλλά, Σελάνα, | φαῖνε καλόν: "Nay, shine bright, O Moon") and to the bucolic refrain occurring several times from line 69 onwards (φράζεό μευ τὸν ἔρωθ'ὅθεν ἵκετο, πότνα Σελάνα: "Mark, Lady Moon, whence came my love").[31] On this refrain, it is remarkable that the translation of Theocritus' text

[29] See Blasucci (2021) 110.

[30] This passage of the *Eclogues* impressed Leopardi's imagination. In *Zib*. 158 he again quotes *Ecl*. 8.71 while contesting the idea that human songs can charm beasts.

[31] Text and translation from Gow (1952).

given by Leopardi reads "O santa luna, | *Intendi* l'amor mio perchè si accese", where the verb "intendi" ("understand") will significantly be referred to the moon again by the shepherd in the *Canto notturno*, lines 61–4: "Pur tu, solinga, eterna peregrina, | Che sì pensosa sei, tu forse *intendi*, | Questo viver terreno, | Il patir nostro, il sospirar, che sia" ("Yet you, eternal solitary wanderer, | you who are so pensive, | *understand* this life on earth, perhaps, | what our suffering and sighing is"). Furthermore, the metrical structure of the *Canto notturno*, its repetitive words and rhymes, which have been connected to the features of popular songs,[32] are revealed to be particularly indebted also to the bucolic mode of the refrain,[33] which marked both Theocritus' *Idyll* 2 and Virgil's *Eclogue* 8, and which is often related to magical powers too.

Thus, the double bucolic reference in the *Saggio sopra gli errori popolari degli antichi* points to a relationship between ancient pastoral and the moon in Leopardi's poetical imagery, in connection with the theme of magic as a fascinating "ancient error". But that is not all. Shepherds looking at the moon and stars are more relevant in Leopardi's bucolic poetry than one might think at first sight.

It is worth recalling, for instance, that in the poem *Odi, Melisso*, one of the *Idylls* written in 1819–21,[34] Leopardi really 'draws down' the moon, as Virgil suggested in *Ecl.* 8.69–70. Again, this happens through the voices of two shepherds, Alceta and Melisso. The former tells the latter about a scary dream he had,[35] in which the moon fell and landed on the lawn. We can detect here a significant memory of Theocritus' *Idyll* 21, which Leopardi quotes four times in the *Saggio*, in the fifth chapter "Dei sogni" ("On dreams"). However, while the dream in Theocritus' idyll was about marvellous fishing, Leopardi's shepherd's dream is much scarier and retrieves the image of a falling moon that had already been mentioned in the previous chapter of the *Saggio*, introduced through the quotation of Virgil's *Eclogue* 8.[36]

In the *Canto notturno*, we may suggest that Leopardi's shepherd is somehow applying a bucolic trick he learned from Virgil. Even more than in *Odi, Melisso*, indeed, the song of

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[32] See Fubini and Bigi (1964) 181; Savoca (1996).

[33] Cf. Martelli (1982).

[34] For analysis of this poem and its relationship with Greek models, see Peruzzi (1987) 75–138; Sandrini (2014) 119–33. The poem was first included in the original group of *Idylls* (see n. 8 above), then excluded from the first edition of the *Canti* in 1831, and finally reintegrated in the second edition of the *Canti* (1835) in a separate section entitled *Frammenti* ("Fragments"): see Pelosi (2013).

[35] The idyll was originally published with the title *Lo spavento notturno* ("Nocturnal fear"); the manuscript bears the title *Il sogno* ("The dream").

[36] All commentators on the idyll also recall the autobiographical background of this subject, attested by Leopardi's note "Luna caduta secondo il mio sogno" ("Fallen moon as in my dream"): see *Argomenti di idilli*, 636. The intersection and mixture of autobiographical and literary memories is a frequent and fascinating component of Leopardi's relationship with the ancients: cf. Peruzzi (1987).

the shepherd tries here to 'draw down' the moon by comparing its wanderings to his own life ("Somiglia alla tua vita | La vita del pastore": "The shepherd's life | is like your life", lines 9–10).[37] As the continuation of the poem will make clear, this bucolic charm will not be completely effective. The power of poetry will not erase the radical difference between the moon's and the shepherd's knowledge and destiny. However, imagination, the never-ending engine in Leopardi's poetry, is still working in this shepherd's song, at least at its beginning, and is playing again with daring comparisons between the eternal and the limited, as it already did in *L'infinito*.

Moreover, we can maintain that *Eclogue* 8 was particularly present in Leopardi's memory. Antonio La Penna has noted another passage from this eclogue, indeed, among Leopardi's reminiscences of bucolic Virgil, that again has to do with the sky and the stars. It is Damon's invocation to Lucifer in *Ecl*. 8.17 (*Nascere, praeque diem veniens age, Lucifer, almum*: "Rise, O morning star, heralding genial day"), which Leopardi probably recalled while writing *L'ultimo canto di Saffo*, which begins with a similar invocation to the "nunzio del giorno" ("herald of day").[38] On the one hand, this memory of the *Eclogues* belongs to a different area of the *Canti*, the *Canzoni* group written between 1818 and 1823, where Leopardi notably exploits a rich Virgilian repertoire.[39] On the other hand, this brings us back to Bion's idyll, translated by Leopardi, which was indeed addressed to Hesperus, the 'other face' of Lucifer,[40] and in which the moon, even if technically absent, ended up playing a crucial role in Leopardi's version of the idyll.[41] This is the poem that Blasucci recalls as one of the sources for the "silenziosa luna" of *Canto notturno*, line 2, and that we mentioned before.

We have gone from Bion to Theocritus to Virgil, and to Bion again. The shepherd looking at the moon in Leopardi's *Canto notturno* is definitely indebted to the complex texture of his bucolic ancestors. Still, there is more.

As Andrea Cucchiarelli recently suggested, Leopardi's *Canto notturno* could also be reminiscent of the atmosphere of Virgil's *Eclogue* 9, in particular the passage about *Caesaris astrum* in which the shepherd is described as *pura solum sub nocte canentem* ("singing alone beneath

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[37] On the poetical and philosophical assumptions of this comparison, see Ficara (1996) 91–114; Ficara (2018).

[38] *L'ultimo canto di Saffo*, line 4; cf. La Penna (1991) 331–4.

[39] As La Penna notes, in Leopardi's *Bruto minore*, lines 65–6, we find another allusion to (almost a translation of) a line of Damon's song (*Praeceps aërii specula de montis in undas | deferar*, *Ecl*. 8.59–60:): see La Penna (2005) 24. *Bruto minore* is always associated, for the affinity in themes and tones, with *L'ultimo canto di Saffo*.

[40] Lucifer and Hesperus, the morning and the evening stars, are actually the same *sidus,* Venus, as the ancients knew: see Pliny, *NH* 2.36.

[41] I have tried to bring it to light by analysing Leopardi's translation of this Greek idyll in a forthcoming contribution for the *Atti del XV Convegno Internazionale di Studi Leopardiani* (Recanati, 27–30 October 2021).

the cloudless night", *Ecl.* 9.44).[42] In the Virgilian context, the nocturnal setting of the scene is strictly connected with the celebration of Caesar – that is, of his star and the promises it brings to the (not only) pastoral world. If we read Virgil's lines in this light,[43] Leopardi's shepherd looks far away from that message of hope and triumph. On the other hand, Leopardi's poem is attuned to the melancholic tone that characterizes Virgil's *Eclogue* 9, where – despite the fragmentary attempts of Lycidas and Moeris – the pastoral song never comes to an actual start, and is finally forced into silence by *quod nunc instat* ("the task in hand", *Ecl.* 9.66). If the hopeful message of the *sidus Iulium* could not be of any interest to Leopardi (unless through an antiphrastic use), what Moeris asserts a few lines later about the irresistible power of time (*Omnia fert aetas, animum quoque*: "Time robs us of all, even of memory", *Ecl*. 9.51) surely was: Leopardi's shepherd echoes it in line 72 ("Del tacito, infinito andar del tempo": "and the silent, endless pace of time"), where the idea of time restlessly passing is joined to silence, as it was in Moeris' lament (*nunc oblita mihi tot carmina, vox quoque Moerin | iam fugit ipsa*: "Now I have forgotten all my songs. Even voice itself now fails Moeris", *Ecl*. 9.53–4).

In any case, even if the moon knew anything about the secret of silent time, Leopardi's shepherd concludes that he does not. As he does not know the answers, his questions get wider, and so does his gaze at the sky (lines 77–89):

Mille cose sai tu, mille discopri,
Che son celate al semplice pastore.
Spesso quand'io ti miro
Star così muta in sul deserto piano,
Che, in suo giro lontano, al ciel confina;
Ovver con la mia greggia
Seguirmi viaggiando a mano a mano;
E quando miro in cielo arder le stelle;
Dico fra me pensando:
A che tante facelle?
Che fa l'aria infinita, e quel profondo
Infinito seren? che vuol dir questa
Solitudine immensa? ed io che sono?

[42] See *Ecl.* 9.44–7; Cucchiarelli (2022). Cucchiarelli also points out another possible echo of *Ecl*. 9.65 (*ego hoc te fasce levabo*) in *Canto notturno*, line 23 ("Con gravissimo fascio in su le spalle": "with an enormous burden on his back").

[43] A more ironical and pessimistic reading would also be plausible, based on the echo of the exiled Meliboeus' words (*Ecl*. 1.73) in Moeris' song (*Ecl*. 9.50): cf. Putnam (1970) 319–21.

You know and understand a thousand things
that are hidden to a simple shepherd.
Often, when I watch you
standing still above the empty plain
whose last horizon closes with the sky,
or moving with me step by step
as I wander with my flock,
or when I see the stars burn up in heaven,
I ask myself:
Why all these lights?
What does the endless air do, and that deep
eternal blue? What is the meaning of
this huge solitude? And what am I?

Like an astronomer, Leopardi's shepherd is amazed by the immensity of the sky. Even in this case, the overlap between the bucolic character and the author is easy to see if we recall that in 1813, when he was fifteen, Leopardi wrote a *Storia dell'astronomia* ("History of astronomy").[44] The shepherd's (and Leopardi's) amazement is well summarized at the beginning of the tenth chapter of the *Saggio sopra gli errori* ("Sugli astri": "On stars"): "Lo spettacolo di un cielo stellato colpisce ogni uomo riflessivo. Esso avrà forse sorpresi e gettati in una dolce estasi i primi uomini" ("The spectacle of a starry sky strikes every thoughtful man. It may have surprised and thrown the first men into sweet ecstasy").[45]

Along with the range of bucolic and Virgilian references that we have detected so far, we could at least mention Virgil's *Eclogue* 3, which explicitly hints at astronomical content and which Leopardi quotes twice in the *Saggio* and once – even if implicitly – in the *Discorso sopra Mosco* ("Discourse on Moschus"), written in the same year.[46] With less lyrical potential, while more intertwined with scientific themes, this eclogue could have influenced, to some extent, the genesis of a shepherd who is both "simple" ("semplice pastore") and invested in substantial scientific and philosophical questions.

[44] On Leopardi's scientific knowledge, see Polizzi (2003). For an interesting reading of Leopardi's work by a scholar in astrophysics, see Bersanelli (2021).

[45] *Saggio sopra gli errori popolari degli antichi*, 737.

[46] Cf. *Saggio sopra gli errori popolari degli antichi*, 646, 823. In the *Discorso sopra Mosco* the memory of this eclogue is implied in an almost proverbial reference to Mevius and Bavius, taken for models of bad poetry as they were in *Ecl*. 3.90 (see *Discorso sopra Mosco*, 484). On astronomy in Virgil's *Eclogues*, see Dion (2006); Saunders (2008) 41–50. On the "cosmic inspiration" of the *Eclogues*, especially in the three central poems (4, 5, 6), see Scafoglio (2013). In considering Leopardi's imagery of shepherds looking at the sky, the pre-bucolic example of Homer, *Il.* 8.555–9 must always be borne in mind: cf. Peruzzi (1979) 35–7.

Some suggestions on how to enact an ancient shepherd in a modern version of pastoral undoubtedly came, however, from reading Alexander Pope's *Discourse on Pastoral Poetry* (1717), which Leopardi had read just a couple of years before writing the *Canto notturno*, in 1827.[47] While explaining that, in pastoral poetry, shepherds should not be represented as *actual* shepherds, but more as we can *imagine* they were at the beginning of time, Pope says that "[t]o carry this resemblance yet farther, it would not be amiss to give these shepherds some skill in astronomy, as far as it may be useful to that sort of life".[48] He then suggests creating variation within the eclogues "by frequent comparisons" and "by interrogations to things inanimate". The numbers "should be the smoothest, the most easy and flowing imaginable".[49]

In many ways, Leopardi's approach looks relatively consistent with Pope's instructions. As we have seen, his shepherd interrogates an inanimate thing (plus an animate one that still can't answer him, i.e. his flock in lines 105–32) and works with comparisons as with a sort of bucolic 'alphabet of analogies'. Furthermore, he shows an interest in astronomy that does not deny his simplicity. Simple rhymes and verbal repetitions try to make the song as smooth as possible, as a shepherd would be likelier to sing. The complexity of the contents is often translated into a flow of questions that make them seem much more straightforward than they are.

However, there is a point on which Leopardi's shepherd radically differs from Pope's ideal of pastoral, and indeed from most modern interpretations of bucolic poetry.[50] Pope says that "[w]e must [...] use some illusion to render a Pastoral delightful; and this consists in exposing the best side only of a shepherd's life, and in concealing its miseries".[51] This is not the case in Leopardi's *Canto notturno*, where the miseries of the shepherd are actually the core of his whole song. Of course, it has to be noticed that these miseries have very little to do with what we may expect from the harsh life in the countryside, and much more with the doubts and sufferings that can affect every human being. But the same can be said of the miseries that Virgil's shepherds suffer. The exile of Meliboeus (*Ecl.* 1), the pangs of love of Corydon (*Ecl.* 2), Damon (*Ecl.* 8), and Gallus (*Ecl.* 10), the melancholy of Moeris (*Ecl.* 9) all prove that sorrow is not at all banned from Virgil's pastoral world. Leopardi's shepherd inhabits the same bucolic environment as those characters of the *Eclogues*; his miseries are not "concealed" – as Pope would recommend – and firmly stand against the modern concept of pastoral as Golden Age or delicate description of rural leisure.

47 See *Elenchi di letture*, 1237.
48 Pope (1961) 25–6.
49 Pope (1961) 28–9.
50 To stay within what Leopardi certainly read, cf. the works of Fontenelle and Rapin, quoted in the *Discorso sopra Mosco,* who both recommended the description of an idealized version of shepherds' life in pastoral poetry.
51 Pope (1961) 27.

Speaking of sorrow, existential doubts, and philosophical issues, a very Virgilian-bucolic question comes to mind: who is speaking here? To what extent does the shepherd's voice overlap with Leopardi's?[52] As we noticed at the start of our reading of the *Canto notturno*, the confusion between shepherd and poet is an element of bucolic that Leopardi surely relies upon. However, just as in Virgil's *Eclogues* it is impossible to define if and where the author is concealed behind the bucolic mask,[53] so we find the same intermittent relationship between Leopardi and his shepherd. Indeed, Leopardi is not at all 'simple'. He is a nineteenth-century Italian poet who has assimilated an impressive amount of reading and knowledge. At the same time, a "simple shepherd" is exactly what he would have liked to be, ever since he was a young thinker who envied the illusions of the ancients, their possibility of living *away from the truth* that human reasoning had unveiled to the moderns.

The shepherd of the *Canto notturno* reflects a further stage of this theory. He represents, indeed, a more profound truth which is the truth of simple people, who know just a few things and in this way know the most, as Leopardi asserts in a page of the *Zibaldone* dated 31 March 1829 (*Zib*. 4478):

> Gli errori de' saggi, antichi e moderni, sono innumerabili. **Il popolo ha pochi errori, perchè poche cognizioni, con poca presunzion di conoscere**. Oltre che la natura, voglio dir la ragione semplice, vergine e incolta, giudica spessissime volte più rettamente che la sapienza, cioè la ragione coltivata e addottrinata. **E però non è raro che le genti del volgo e i fanciulli abbiano di molte cose opinioni migliori o più ragionevoli che i sapienti** [...]
>
> The errors of the wise, ancient and modern, are innumerable. **The people have few errors, because they know few things, with little presumption to know**. What is more, nature – by which I mean simple, virgin, and uncultivated reason – is very often a more reliable judge than wisdom, that is, cultivated and learned reason. **And therefore it is not uncommon that the opinions of ordinary people and children upon many matters are better or more reasonable than those of the wise** [...]

[52] On the problem of the "voice" in Virgil's *Eclogues*, see Breed (2006).

[53] Cf. the well-known note by Servius (*ad Ecl*. 1.1) on the allegorical reading of the *Eclogues* which should be used *tantum ubi exigit ratio* ("only where reason requires"). On the "intermittent mimetic element" in the *Eclogues*, which joins the intermittence of allegory, and generates a sort of "poetics of fragmentation" that finds its peak in *Eclogue* 9, see Martindale (2019) 187.

In other words, in Leopardi's view, the knowledge of the shepherd consists here in an open question that, even if unanswerable, still contains more truth than modern philosophers' answers do.[54] The highly learned man Giacomo Leopardi could not be a shepherd singing in an Asian land, so he could not completely identify with his character. Still, he could lend him some of his cosmic doubts, which would be emphasized and brought to the moon and the stars by the wonderful simplicity that was the privilege of bucolic shepherds.

It is worth remembering at this point that in 1828 Leopardi had ranked drama as the lowest kind of poetic genre because of the mediation and the affectation it entails, as opposed to the ὁρμή ("impetus") which characterizes lyric poetry.[55] Significantly, on the page of *Zibaldone* which immediately precedes the one with the information about Kyrgyz shepherds, we read (*Zib*. 4398–9):

> L'imitazione drammatica non può essere spontanea e veramente secondo natura, se non [...] in alcune scene, cioè in quelle che corrispondano alla situazione attuale dell'animo del poeta. Ma qui è sempre il poeta egli stesso che si dipinge, o piuttosto parla, sotto altro nome; **e quella non è veramente imitazione, ma quasi un travestimento**. [...] Del resto, tali scene, dove il poeta esprimesse i suoi sentimenti, passioni ec. attuali sotto nome di qualche personaggio storico, se si componessero staccate, potrebbero esser buona poesia: **il poeta può aver buone ragioni per nascondersi sotto nome altrui**; può trovarvisi, se non altro, più a suo agio; **ed è anche poetico in qualche modo quel rapporto trovato ed espresso fra la propria situazione attuale, e quella d'alcun personaggio storico** ec. (28. Sett. 1828)

> Dramatic imitation cannot be spontaneous and truly in accordance with nature, except [...] in certain scenes, namely in those which correspond to the actual situation of the poet's spirit. But here it is always the poet himself who portrays, or rather speaks, under another name; **and that is not true imitation, but almost a disguise**. [...] In any event, such scenes, in which the poet expressed his present feelings, emotions, etc., under the name of some historical figure, could be good poetry if they were composed as separate scenes: **the poet may have good reasons for hiding behind another name**; he may feel more comfortable, if nothing else; **and the relationship which he discovers and describes between his own situation and that of some other historical figure is, in a certain way, poetic**, etc. (28 Sept. 1828)

[54] Cf. Bigi (1967) 126–31; Ficara (2018) 9–10.
[55] Cf. *Zib*. 4357.

Looking at the *Canto notturno* and at the unquestionable form of mediation it implies between the character and his author, it seems that Leopardi found in the pastoral mode a convenient way to be hidden – and not to be so – behind a character: that is, behind a 'pastoral mask,' or a 'pastoral disguise'.[56] If pastoral corresponds to putting "the complex into the simple", according to Empson's incisive formula,[57] Leopardi stuck to this rule by putting the most complex questions about human destiny in the mouth of his "semplice pastore". If doing so through a shepherd who somehow becomes representative of all humanity is proper to the Virgilian pastoral mode, as Alpers suggests, then Leopardi's pastoral mode is indebted to Virgil too.

Moreover, it should be recalled that philosophical hints already appeared in the mouth of Virgil's shepherds. This is the case, for instance, with the two Epicurean statements by the *rusticus* Corydon in *Ecl*. 2.27 (*si numquam fallit imago*: "if the mirror never lies") and 2.65 (*trahit sua quemque voluptas*: "each is led by his liking"). The former line significantly substituted the superstitious gesture of Theocritus' Cyclops in *Id*. 6.39–40,[58] in an attempt to elevate the shepherd from his popular origin through a philosophical motto (with some irony, of course, towards this lover and his attempt to impress the urban Alexis).[59] The latter has been criticized starting from Servius' commentary, where it is noted that Virgil made his shepherd say something *supra bucolici carminis legem aut possibilitatem* ("beyond the rules of bucolic poetry or even of possibility", Servius *ad Ecl*. 2.65).

More than the cosmological and broadly philosophical themes within the *Eclogues*,[60] this subtle contrast between rusticity and philosophy in the song of *miser* Corydon probably drew Leopardi's attention.[61] Without any detectable irony between the lines of his song, the

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[56] It should not be overlooked that two of the few attempts at drama by the young Leopardi, probably designed in 1818–19, were pastoral dramas entitled *Erminia* and *Telesilla*: see Favaro (2007) 155–70. At that time, Leopardi still had not formulated his final ranking of poetic genres which would relegate drama to the lowest level. However, it is interesting that pastoral setting and themes already presented themselves to Leopardi's eyes as a good way of 'poetic mediation', strongly related, of course, to the Italian tradition of pastoral drama (first of all, Tasso's *Aminta* and Guarini's *Il pastor fido*).

[57] See Empson (1966) 25.

[58] "But to cheat the evil eye, thrice I spat into my bosom as the hag Cotyttaris taught me" (trans. Gow); cf. Cucchiarelli (2012) 188.

[59] On Epicureanism in the *Eclogues*, see Traina (1965); Rundin (2006); Davis (2012); Kronenberg (2016). The debate about Epicureanism and pastoral poetry was kickstarted by Rosenmeyer (1969). On *Ecl*. 2 and its connections with Theocritus' *Idylls*, see Du Quesnay (1979); the irony of this particular scene is highlighted by Clausen (1994) 74.

[60] See discussion in Braund (2019).

[61] The memory of this eclogue occurs in the *Saggio sopra gli errori popolari degli antichi*, at the beginning of the seventh chapter "Del meriggio" ("On midday"). Some clues make me think that Corydon's pangs of love were present in Leopardi's mind while writing another of the *Idylls* of 1819–21, *La sera del dì di festa*. A slight textual trace of this could be found in the underlining of the lack of hope, which characterizes both Corydon's and Leopardi's painful loves. See *La sera del dì di festa*, lines 19–21: "e quanti | Piacquero a te: non io, non già, ch'io speri, | Al pensier ti ricorro" ("and those who charmed you, too; but I don't come to mind, | not that I hoped to"); *Ecl*. 2.2: *…nec quid speraret habebat*.

shepherd in the *Canto notturno* also dares to conclude with a philosophical *sententia*, although it is tempered by a final, delicate doubt expressed by the adverb "forse", "maybe" (lines 139–43):

O forse erra dal vero,
Mirando all'altrui sorte, il mio pensiero:
Forse in qual forma, in quale
Stato che sia, dentro covile o cuna,
È funesto a chi nasce il dì natale.

Or maybe my mind's straying from the truth,
imagining the destinies of others.
Maybe in whatever form or state,
be it in stall or cradle,
the day we're born is cause for mourning.

A shepherd-poet, a shepherd-philosopher – but first and foremost, a "simple shepherd" whose song and thoughts are attuned to the primordial questions and reasonings of a man faced with the mysteries of the cosmos. In this sense, the pastoral disguise does not seem to Leopardi just an excuse to convey philosophical thoughts or to construct a more or less complex allegory, as was common in many Renaissance pastoral works.[62] On the contrary, the process Leopardi is engaged in is a form of regression, in which the poet learns from his character how to look at the world, and the sky, through a shepherd's eyes. Virgil's pastoral mode was an appropriate point of reference to reach this goal.

The inquiry into Virgil's *Eclogues* and Leopardi's poetry looks to be just at its beginning. For now, however, let us close with a final note and try to draw some provisional conclusions.

Almost at the end of the *Canti*, after *Il tramonto della luna* and *La ginestra*, Leopardi chose to put his translation of Antoine-Vincent Arnault's *La feuille*, with the title *Imitazione* ("Imitation"):

Lungi dal propio ramo,
Povera foglia frale,
Dove vai tu? **Dal faggio**
Là dov'io nacqui, mi divise il vento.

[62] There is criticism of Renaissance Italian poets' practice of describing shepherds who are no longer shepherds so much as philosophers and men of the court, in Fontenelle's *Discours sur la nature de l'églogue*, which Leopardi knew and quoted in the *Discorso sopra Mosco*.

Esso, tornando, a volo
Dal bosco alla campagna,
Dalla valle mi porta alla montagna.
Seco perpetuamente
Vo pellegrina, e tutto l'altro ignoro.
Vo dove ogni altra cosa,
Dove naturalmente
Va la foglia di rosa,
E la foglia d'alloro.

Where are you going,
tender little leaf,
so far from your bough?
The wind tore me away
from the beech where I was born.
Whirling as he flies, he spirits me
from wood to meadow
and from hill to valley.
I wander with him endlessly,
disregarding everything.
Where all else goes I go,
where by nature rose
and laurel leaf go, too.

The words that the poet addresses to the leaf, which must abandon her tree because the wind tore her away from the branch, and the answer of the leaf itself, follow with general faithfulness the original French text, in a delicate Italian version by Leopardi. However, a relevant detail draws our attention: the tree from which the leaf is parted is not the oak of Arnault's poem but a Virgilian *fagus*. So far, the reason for this modification has been found in prosodic and phonic effects,[63] or in the origin of the beech tree on high mountains, which would suggest distance and loneliness.[64] But for a reader of bucolic, who is also aware of the

[63] Cf. Monteverdi (1959) 59–74; Mengaldo (2011) 213.
[64] Cf. Bacchelli (1960) 91. De Robertis (1978) 491–2 underlines the literary connotation of the beech, mentioning Petrarch and (just in brackets) Virgil. Lonardi (2019) 236–7 analyses both the phonic and the symbolic reasons for this choice, noting Virgil's *Eclogue* 1 as an important literary precedent for the beech; however, in his view, the concrete connotations (an ordinary tree on the mountains) leave the literary ones in the background.

many Virgilian components that enrich Leopardi's poetry, the pastoral memory expressed by this choice cannot be ignored. In a short poem that tells the story of a leaf forced to leave her home and be delivered to the uncertainties of destiny, the memory of the dialogue between Tityrus and Meliboeus in *Eclogue* 1 suddenly appears as a Virgilian bucolic signature at the conclusion of the *Canti*.

This is a hidden signature, of course. But many hidden traces of the *Eclogues* in Leopardi's work may suggest that he did not neglect Virgil's bucolic collection as much as we have been accustomed to think. Virgil's shepherds and their unattainable Arcadia were so deeply assimilated in his poetical memory that they worked as tropes rather than within an interplay of textual allusions. Furthermore, the long history of the pastoral tradition after Virgil, and many interpretations of it which Leopardi had the chance to know, such as that of Pope, added new layers to his reading of the *Eclogues* and interacted with every reference he meant to make to the world of Tityrus and Meliboeus. Leopardi never forgot Virgil's bucolic lesson and, on the contrary, seems to have borne it well in mind whenever he wondered about human destiny and the impossibility of finding any real, peaceful Arcadia. Owing to the vastness of his literary concerns, he could not help but be reminded of the bucolic shepherds when looking at infinity, or at the sky. Therefore, gestures and thoughts that Virgil's shepherds had introduced into the bucolic world for the first time would become part of his own pastoral mode.

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