

Diomedes and Nestor are exactly the kind of superstitious cowards Lucretius is admonishing his readers not to be. On the other, the fact that the thunderbolt actually misses Diomedes—who, we may remember, wounded Aphrodite and Ares on the previous day—cannot but prove that it was not sent by Zeus: with characteristic irony, Lucretius thus obtains an argument against Homer from Homer himself.¹⁰ Virgil, in turn, may be seen to be disputing him when he refers at *Aen.* 1.44 to Locrian Ajax as being struck by Athena's thunderbolt, in a clear imitation of the Lucretian passage (cf. above).¹¹

Textual critics usually ask, before accepting a conjecture, whether we can be certain that the transmitted reading is corrupt; it may be more honest, especially in the case of texts whose tradition is demonstrably unreliable, to ask, before accepting a transmitted reading, whether we can be certain that it is intact. In the case of *Lucr.* 6.391 *fulguris*, I admit that the answer to the former question may not be positive; at the same time, especially if we consider the alternative *sulpuris*, I cannot see how the answer to the latter question can be positive either.

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LUCRETIAN DIDO: A STICHOMETRIC ALLUSION*

ABSTRACT

In the fourth line of her first speech in Book 1, to Ilioneus and the Trojan castaways, Dido quotes the first word of the first line of Lucretius' De rerum natura, and in the fourth line of her second speech, to Aeneas, she quotes the first words of the second line of the De rerum natura. This is not a coincidence but a signal of the importance of Lucretius and Epicureanism for the characterization of Dido in the Aeneid.

Keywords: Virgil; *Aeneid*; Dido; Lucretius; Epicureanism; intertextuality

That Dido in the *Aeneid* is characterized as a proto-Epicurean was recognized long ago. A.S. Pease, developing hints already present in Servius, was perhaps the first to deal with the matter in these terms in an article from 1927 and in the introduction to his

¹⁰ On Lucretius' practice of turning against his opponents their own *ipsissima verba*, cf. P.H. De Lacy, 'Lucretius and Plato', in *Συζήτησις: Studi sull'epicureismo greco e romano offerti a Marcello Gigante* (Naples, 1983), 291–307, at 291, observing that Lucretius 'not only rejected Platonism but even derived anti-Platonic arguments from the *Dialogues*, thus turning Plato against himself'.

¹¹ The matters are further complicated by Accius' fragment that already referred to Ajax' death by a thunderbolt, to which Lucretius appears to be alluding (see n. 3 above); Lucretius may be seen to be correcting Accius, since in the Homeric account Ajax drowns (*Od.* 4.510)—or perhaps simply silencing him (after all, even in Homer Ajax' death is brought about by Athena's and Poseidon's actions)?

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commentary on *Aeneid* Book 4.¹ Two excellent articles developed the theme: Julia Dyson (now Hejduk) collected and acutely interpreted all of Dido's 'Epicureanizing' passages, showing that 'Virgil's Lucretian language, sentiments, and images in the Dido episode, far from being isolated moments or incidental reminiscences, form a consistent pattern'; Patricia Gordon brought into the discussion the ancient identification of Phaeacia as a land of proto-Epicureans—Phaeacia, that is, one of the main Homeric models for Virgilian Carthage.² The main way in which Dido's 'Epicureanism' (as well as that of her sister Anna, and above all that of the bard of the Carthaginian court, Iopas) manifests itself in the text of the *Aeneid* is through the use of Lucretian language.³ This is evident in the passage which is perhaps the most important for the characterization of Dido as a proto-Epicurean, 4.376–80. As Servius already notes, the sentence *scilicet is superis labor est, ea cura quietos | sollicitat* (4.379–80) introduces a clearly Epicurean element into Dido's angry speech.

In light of the evident Epicureanism of Dido's words to Aeneas at 4.379–80 we can retrace the Virgilian characterization of Dido from the very beginning, starting with the first words she utters in the poem. When Dido, in the temple of Juno, welcomes the Trojan castaways led by Ilioneus, she addresses them with these words: *soluite corde metum, Teucrici, secludite curas* (1.562). The first words spoken by Dido in the poem characterize her as inspired by Epicurean wisdom.⁴ This line is interwoven with references to Lucretian ataraxia: see, in particular, from the preface to the second book of the *De rerum natura* (= *DRN*) which began significantly with the Epicurean sage looking impassively at a ship struck by a storm—a symbol of men's anxieties and fears (here the Trojans have just experienced a storm and are prey to anxieties and fears)—lines 16–19, 45–6 and 48; cf. furthermore *Lucr.* 4.908.

A few lines later, Dido continues to express herself in Lucretian language, when she says to the Trojans: 1.565–6 *quis genus Aeneadam, quis Troiae nesciat urbem, | uirtutesque uirosque aut tanti incendia belli?* As Dyson notes, *genus* (meaning 'an order of living creatures, kind, race', *OLD* s.v. 4) + genitive plural is a typical Lucretian construct (19 times in the *DRN*, 8 times in the *Aeneid*),⁵ and here the genitive plural is

¹ A.S. Pease, 'Some aspects of the character of Dido', *CJ* 22 (1927), 243–52, at 246–8; A.S. Pease, *Publi Vergili Maronis Aeneidos liber quartus* (Cambridge, MA, 1935), 36. After Pease, and before the publication of the articles cited in the following note, see also E.A. Hahn, 'Pietas versus uiolentia in the *Aeneid*', *CW* 25 (1931), 9–21, at 19; V. Mellinghoff-Bourgerie, *Les incertitudes de Virgile: Contributions épiciuriennes à la théologie de l'Énéide* (Brussels, 1990), *passim*; D.C. Feeney, *The Gods in Epic: Poets and Critics of the Classical Tradition* (Oxford, 1991), 172–3 with n. 177; R.O.A.M. Lyne, 'Virgil's *Aeneid*: subversion by intertextuality. *Catullus* 66.39–40 and other examples', *G&R* 41 (1994), 187–204, at 195–6.

² J.T. Dyson, 'Dido the Epicurean', *CA* 15 (1996), 203–21, at 205; P. Gordon, 'Phaeacian Dido: lost pleasures of an Epicurean intertext', *CA* 17 (1998), 188–211 (cf. P. Gordon, *The Invention and Gendering of Epicurus* [Ann Arbor, 2021], 60–8). See also E. Adler, *Vergil's Empire: Political Thought in the Aeneid* (Lanham, MD, 2003), especially 3–133 and, most recently, M.M. Gorey, *Atomism in the Aeneid: Physics, Politics, and Cosmological Disorder* (Oxford, 2021), especially 88–92.

³ For Anna, cf. 4.34 *id cinerem aut manis credis curare sepultos?* (with Serv. ad loc.); see Dyson (n. 2), 214–15. For Iopas, cf. 1.742–6; see Dyson (n. 2), 210–11; Adler (n. 2), 9–16; S. Casali, 'Didone come Luna', in L. Beltrami, L. Nicolini and L. Pagani (edd.), 'Fly me to the Moon': *La luna nell'immaginario umano* (Genoa, 2022), 127–46, at 140–3. It is only, if cruelly, appropriate that Dido's destructive passion, which a good Epicurean should have avoided, will be described in Lucretian terms, especially at the beginning of Book 4; see Dyson (n. 2), 209–10; Gordon (n. 2) [1998], 203–4.

⁴ See Dyson (n. 2), 205–6.

⁵ Dyson (n. 2), 206 n. 10, also noting that 'Virgil uses this construction in the beginning of the

Aeneadum, the first word of the *DRN* (see below);⁶ *tanti incendia belli* of the Trojan War recalls Lucr. 1.471–7, in particular 1.474–5 (*nec ignis Alexandri Phrygio sub pectore gliscens | clara accendisset saeui certamina belli*).⁷

Further on, Dido addresses Aeneas (1.615–30). This is the beginning: *quis te, nate dea, per tanta pericula casus | insequitur? quae uis immanibus applicat oris?* (1.615–16). Dido, while addressing Aeneas as *nate dea*, once again, in her second speech, reveals an Epicurean attitude in referring to Aeneas' troubles as caused not by some divinity but by *casus* and a generic *uis*.⁸

But above all I would like to draw attention—and with this we come to the point of this note—to a detail that indicates with what precision Virgil wants his reader to realize that his is a 'Lucretian' Dido: in her *first* speech at the *fourth* line Dido had quoted, emphatically marked at the caesura, the *first* word of the *first* line of the *DRN* (*Aen.* 1.562–5): *Aeneadum*:

soluite corde metum, Teucri, secludite curas.
res dura et regni nouitas me talia cogunt
moliri et late finis custode tueri.
quis genus **Aeneadum**, quis Troiae nesciat urbem ...

In her *second* speech, also at the *fourth* line, she quotes the *first* words of the *second* line of the *DRN* (*Aen.* 1.615–18): *alma Venus*:

quis te, nate dea, per tanta pericula casus
insequitur? quae uis immanibus applicat oris?
tunc ille Aeneas quem Dardanio Anchisae
alma Venus Phrygii genuit Simoentis ad undam?

I cannot believe these are coincidences. After Lucr. 1.1, *Aeneadum* next appears at *Aen.* 1.565 in extant Latin poetry. And in extant Latin poetry *alma Venus* next appears at *Aen.* 1.618 after its appearance at Lucr. 1.2. When Virgil introduces Dido into the narrative, making her speak for a first and second time, he signals to the reader the importance of the *DRN* for the ideological and philosophical characterization of the queen: her first speech opens with the expression of a benevolent wisdom of the Lucretian type (*soluite corde metus, Teucri, secludite curas*), and at the fourth line she quotes the first word of the *DRN*; her second speech opens with a rationalistic reading of the causes of Aeneas' wandering (*quis ... casus, | ... quae uis*), and at the fourth line she quotes the first words of the second line of the *DRN*.⁹ It will also be noted that, if,

metempsychosis passage (*inde hominum pecudumque genus uitaeque uolantum*, 6.728), generally regarded as his most Lucretian in language and least Lucretian in meaning; not by chance it also occurs in the first line of Iopas' 'Lucretian' song: 1.742 *unde hominum genus et pecudes (hominum genus* in this metrical position = Lucr. 3.307, 5.1430). Note that in Lucretius the construction first occurs in the *fourth* line of his proem, 1.4 *genus omne animantum*: see n. 9 below.

⁶ In the rest of the *Aeneid*, the form *Aeneadum* occurs three more times, without particular Lucretian resonances (9.180, 10.120, 11.503), but the important thing here is that '[t]he form *Aeneadum* occurs only once in extant Latin literature before Virgil: as the first word, and hence in the title, of Lucretius' poem': Dyson (n. 2), 206 n. 10.

⁷ Dyson (n. 2), 206 n. 10, who also convincingly points out a Lucretian flavour in the phrase *res dura et regni nouitas*, comparing Lucr. 5.925–6, 5.943–4.

⁸ See Mellinghoff-Bourgerie (n. 1), 136–7 (citing Lucr. 6.31 *seu casu seu ui*); Adler (n. 2), 35.

⁹ A hypothesis: perhaps Virgil has placed *Aeneadum* in the *fourth* line because in the *fourth* line of the *DRN* there is the *first* occurrence of the (very Lucretian) construction *genus* + genitive plural (see n. 6 above) in Lucretius' poem: Lucr. 1.4 *genus omne animantum*. In a sense, therefore, *genus*

following the intertextual hints, and with hindsight, we attribute a Lucretian orientation to Dido, the very reference to Venus as the Lucretian *alma Venus* could suggest the ambivalence of the proto-Epicurean Dido towards mythological matters (she who will say that she does not believe that the gods care about human affairs seems to believe here that Aeneas could really be the son of Venus), which reproduces the famous Lucretian ambivalence which is manifested, in fact, in the hymn to Venus that opens the *DRN*.¹⁰

That Virgilian allusions can be corroborated by stichometric considerations is a well-known fact: 'Virgil presently seems the earliest and most copious practitioner of stichometric allusion', says Dunstan Lowe in an article on the subject. However, he distinguishes between actual stichometric allusions (as in the correspondence in book and line numbers, which he illustrates by the reference to Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 4.386 at *Aen.* 4.386) and 'the separate, though related phenomenon of corresponding numbers of lines in parallel passages', recalling that 'G. Knauer, *Die Aeneis und Homer* (Göttingen, 1964) suggests several examples of such correspondence between Homer and Virgil, especially in speeches.'¹¹ Even in these latter cases, however, as in the example just proposed concerning Lucretian Dido, it is a question of correspondences between Virgilian citations which presuppose a careful counting of the number of lines of the model, so that I believe we can speak of 'stichometric allusions', in broad sense, for this phenomenon as well.

Noticing the two quotations from the first two lines of the preface of the *DRN* present in the fourth line of the first and of the second of Dido's speeches in the *Aeneid*, on the one hand reaffirms Virgil's interest in the use of counting the number of verses in order to underline the significance of certain allusions, and on the other hand signals to the attentive reader the 'programmatic' importance of Lucretius as inspirer of the philosophical orientation of the queen of Carthage.

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Aeneadum in 1.565, the fourth line of Dido's speech, would allude at the same time to *Lucretius* 1.1 *Aeneadum* and to *Lucretius* 1.4 *genus ... animantum*.

¹⁰ Dido's 'doctrinal' position is notoriously inconsistent, as already noticed by Servius on 4.365, according to whom there she speaks *secundum Epicureos*, at 4.382 *secundum [Stoicos]*, and after him by many. On Dido's ambivalence, see Lyne (n. 1), 203 n. 28; Dyson (n. 2), 216. Given Dido's Epicurean attitude, however, it cannot be ruled out that the question *tunc ille Aeneas ...?* is less rhetorical than it may seem, and even slightly ironic. Misplaced irony: Dido does not know how important it is to her that Aeneas is really the son of Venus.

¹¹ D. Lowe, 'Women scorned: a new stichometric allusion in the *Aeneid*', *CQ* 63 (2013), 442–5, at 444 and 443 (Lowe's emphasis); bibliography on the subject at 443 nn. 1–3. See also D. Lowe, 'A stichometric allusion to Catullus 64 in the *Culex*', *CQ* 64 (2014), 862–5. The term 'stichometric intertextuality' was credited by the late D.P. Fowler to L. Morgan, according to S. Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Latin Poetry* (Cambridge, 1998), 92 n. 80; see L. Morgan, *Patterns of Redemption in Virgil's 'Georgics'* (Cambridge, 1999), 26–7 (cf. 223–9).