

Dryden and the Consolations of Philosophy

The translations which Dryden contributed to *Sylvae: or, the Second Part of Poetical Miscellanies* (1685) occupy a pivotal position in the prevailing understanding of his mentality and career. Commentators seeking to counter the impression, derived from coarse readings of the ‘public’ poems, that his works are ‘closely tied to the immediate circumstances in which they were written’, by assigning greater importance to his translations from the classics, have singled out those in *Sylvae* as the site of his ‘spiritual reorientation’ or ‘metamorphosis’ into a poet capable of ‘sustainedly free-standing’ or ‘philosophical work[s] about Man and Life’.¹ Dryden’s disillusionment with his role as the spokesman for the Restoration court, together with the recent deaths of a number of his friends, notably the young satirist and translator John Oldham, had induced in him, it is said, a ‘crisis ... both professional and private’ which made him sharply receptive to the philosophical consolations he found in Lucretius and Horace.² His translations from those poets, the masterpieces of *Sylvae*, bespeak his personal commitment to the Epicurean ideal of ‘*ataraxia* ... freedom from disturbance, perfect equanimity’.³ This thesis stands in need of qualification, not least because it is out of step with Dryden’s own repeated professions of ‘scepticism’:⁴ the view that there is ‘no last word, no privileged viewpoint’ in his best work has been explored in connection with *Fables Ancient and Modern* (1700),⁵ but recent writing on *Sylvae* has accorded such pre-eminent status to the Epicurean voice discerned in the translations from Lucretius and Horace. Indeed, their ‘triumphantly self-possessed tone’ has sometimes been made to sound like the keynote of Dryden’s temperament and poetry throughout his later years, of his ‘ability to rise, with remarkable rapidity and ease, above the difficulties and disappointments which followed the collapse of his official career in 1689’, the ‘mellow ... Epicureanism’ of his old age.⁶ It is the aim of this essay to show that, though Dryden was powerfully attracted to the ideal of ‘freedom from disturbance, perfect equanimity’ – perhaps because he was – he did subject that ideal to sceptical scrutiny. He may have been prompted to do

so by the broad dissemination within English culture throughout the 1670s and early 1680s of scepticism about those classical philosophies – principally Stoicism and Epicureanism⁷ – which taught withdrawal from public life and control of the passions as the path to happiness. I reconstruct the contexts in which that scepticism circulated in the first section of the essay, before moving on, in the second, to show how Dryden used the miscellany format of *Sylvae* to shape his own multi-faceted response to the consoling pretensions of classical philosophy. If he was in the toils of a ‘crisis’ at that time, it did not induce him to reach uninquiringly for the gratifications of philosophical wisdom. If *Sylvae* marks a watershed in Dryden’s career, it shows that he suspected abandoning the public idioms of his earlier writing for the lofty rhetoric of ‘*ataraxia*’ might involve as much loss as gain.

I

There was a thriving market for consolation in England throughout Dryden’s lifetime. The chops and changes of allegiance required of English men and women during the Civil War and the Interregnum, the intermittent simmering unrest of the Restoration, and the constitutional upheavals surrounding the ‘Glorious Revolution’, impressed upon Dryden’s contemporaries the instability of fortune, and deepened their yearning for the ‘quiet’ or ‘peace of mind’ which he several times describes in *Sylvae*. Booksellers were quick to cater for that yearning. Between the beginning of Dryden’s career and the publication of *Sylvae* manuals on the ‘art of contentment’ poured from the presses, promising to teach readers how ‘safely to behold from shore / The rolling ship’ of state ‘and hear the tempest’ of civil dissension ‘roar’⁸ (‘Lucretius: The Beginning of the Second Book’, 1–2; *Poems*, II, 312). They were written in the main by churchmen and constructed on homiletic lines;⁹ packaged as pocket-sized duodecimos, they seem to have sold impressively:¹⁰ *Autarkeia; or the Art of Divine Contentment* by one Thomas Watson, pastor of St Stephen’s Walbrook, went through eleven editions between 1653 and 1682. What makes them relevant to Dryden and *Sylvae* is the fact that their authors were not above borrowing consoling maxims from non-Christian sources: the title-page of Watson’s *Autarkeia* includes mottoes from Euripides and from Seneca (‘*Beatus est qui suis contentus est*’) alongside the one from scripture (1 Timothy 6: 6). Indeed, it was not uncommon for them to remark that the ethical teachings of the pagans put those of the Christians to shame, as, for instance, Richard Allestree did (referring, like Watson, to Seneca) in the appendix to the 1684 edition of his *Art of Contentment*:

I am abash’d to hear a Pagan, though no vulgar one, say: Whatsoever is brought to pass, a wise man thinks, ought to be so done; neither goes about to rebuke Nature: but finds it best to suffer what he cannot alter: And shall we Christians repine at those seemingly harsh Events, which we see fall out in God’s Church, whilst we are ignorant of his Designs?¹¹

And they invoked not only the philosophers but also the poets of the pre-Christian world, turning in many cases to passages which Dryden would later translate for *Sylvae*, or close analogues of them: the beginning of the Second Book of the *De Rerum Natura*; Horace's *Odes*; Juvenal's Tenth Satire.¹²

This is not in itself remarkable. The idea that 'a habit of reading the Bible alongside and in the light of classical ethics' had taken hold in the Restoration church is a familiar one.¹³ But it was not a habit which all Restoration churchmen wished equally to encourage, so that to read a spread of their views on how to achieve contentment is to observe Stoicism and Epicureanism being drawn into the internecine debate about the theological character of the Church of England, between those whose primary concern was to maintain the transcendental purity of her doctrines – the stauncher Calvinists, broadly speaking – and those – of what might be thought a 'Latitudinarian' bent¹⁴ – who sought to preserve her unity by minimising the corpus of her exclusive dogma.¹⁵ Like other intellectual conflicts involving institutional power, this one was sometimes fought dirty; and much of the mud which was flung stuck to the Stoics and Epicureans.¹⁶ Robert Sanderson, 'Calvinist conformist' and Restoration bishop of Lincoln, may have limited himself to establishing that they 'could never reach that solid contentment they levelled at' since

the topics from whence they draw their persuasions are of too flat and low an elevation; as being taken from the dignity of man, from the baseness of outward things, from the mutability of fortune, from the shortness and uncertainty of life, and such-like other considerations as come within their own sphere; useful, indeed, in their kind, but unable to bear such a pile and roof as they would build thereupon.¹⁷

But others resorted to the lower tactics of slander and satire to defend their territory against the pagan interlopers. The 'moderate nonconformist' Henry Wilkinson,¹⁸ for instance, gleefully retails rumours of Seneca's hypocrisy in *The Doctrine of Contentment* (1671): 'though he wrote rare precepts and counsels for contempt of the world and for a contented mind, yet it is storied of him, that he was a great Usurer, and a greedy covetous man';¹⁹ while the Quaker Jeremiah Burroughes, author of *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*, which was published in the same year as *Sylvae*, casts the sages of antiquity as quacks and mountebanks, so many Subtles and Faces: 'This Art some Philosophers of old pretended themselves Masters of, and to instruct others in through the assistance of Natural and Moral Elements ... but in vain: the Chymistry in this kind being able to produce no more but a sullen obstinacy and obdurateness of mind.'²⁰

What specific knowledge Dryden had of these clerical wrangles over classical ethics it is not possible to say. But they were whipped to a high pitch by the negotiations over comprehension and toleration, between the late 1660s and the early 1680s, years he spent in the thick of public affairs. If he did not

follow the arguments in print, he would have had difficulty avoiding them when he went to church, to judge from the *Fifteen Sermons upon Contentment* by Simon Patrick, and the five *Of Contentment, Patience and Resignation* by Isaac Barrow, which were collected together for publication after their deaths.²¹ A fascinating passage from one of the latter, which were published in the same year as *Sylvae*, suggests how ambivalent even those apparently rationalist churchmen²² with whom Dryden had most affinity²³ could be about the consolatory techniques of the classical philosophers:

Look first upon the world, as it is commonly managed, and ordered by men: thou perhaps art displeas'd, that thou dost not prosper and thrive therein, that thou dost not share in the goods of it; that its accommodations and preferments are all snapt from thee. But if thou art wise, thou shouldst not wonder; if thou art good, thou shouldst not be vexed hereat: for thou hast not, perhaps, any capacity for this world; thy temper and disposition are not fram'd to suite with its way; thy principles and rules do clash with it, thy resolutions and designs do not well comport with prosperity here; thou canst not, or wilt not use the means needfull to compass worldly ends: thou perhaps hast a meek, quiet, modest, sincere, steady disposition; thou canst not be pragmatik and boisterous, eager and fierce, importunately troublesome, intolerably confident, unaccountably versatile and various: thou hast a spice of silly generosity, which maketh divers profitable ways of acting (such as forging and feigning, supplanting others by detraction and calumny, soothing and flattering people) to be below thee, and unworthy of thee.²⁴

The Latinate vocabulary used here to describe the shifts and palters of the worldly – ‘versatile and various’; ‘supplanting’; ‘detraction and calumny’ – attests to Barrow’s familiarity with those passages of classical philosophy and poetry which treat the abasements and compromises of public life.²⁵ But his deployment of the ancient consoling contrast between the corruptions of the *vita activa* and the virtues of the *vita contemplativa* is significantly overwritten. With its solicitous perhapses (‘for thou hast not, perhaps, any capacity for this world’), its brazen overkills (‘a meek, quiet, modest, sincere, steady disposition’), its tendency to adapt itself to the intonational contours of its audience’s pride (‘thou canst not, or wilt not use the means needfull to compass worldly ends’ asks for self-righteous italics on ‘wilt not’; and ‘thou hast a spice of silly generosity’ for ‘silly’ to be sneered in contempt at those who would apply it to ‘generosity’), the passage seems to be imploring us to see through its coarse repertoire of flattery, whilst knowing that not many of us will for long, human vanity being what it is, and this old philosophical tune one of its favourite gratifications. Barrow exaggerates his rhetoric almost to the point of undoing it, out of a shameful sense that to employ the consolations of classical philosophy as a means of inculcating ‘Resignation to the Will of God’ may be to teach not humility but vanity, not self-sacrifice but self-love.

It was not only churchmen who suspected that the consolatory wisdoms of the Stoics and Epicureans appealed to the interests rather than the reason of

Restoration English men and women ‘muddled in Fortune’s mood’.²⁶ Lay writers of the period did too. This ought to come as no surprise: Restoration England was a culture obsessed with discrepancies between the real and the ideal, a culture with a ‘pervasive sense of irony and contingency’.²⁷ That sense is as evident in contemporary responses to the consolations of classical philosophy as it is in attitudes towards the doctrines of Christianity or high genres of literature.²⁸ A striking example is a book which saw only one edition and is nowadays little-known: *Epictetus Junior, Or Maximes of Modern Morality* (1670). The title is somewhat misleading: Epictetus was a favourite source of philosophical consolations in Latitudinarian contentment manuals (Richard Allestree and Simon Patrick both make enthusiastic use of his sayings),²⁹ so that the book at first sight appears to be one more such manual. In fact, it is a translation not of Epictetus but of La Rochefoucauld’s *Maximes*, the first into English. Put together by John Davies of Kidwelly, a disciple of Hobbes who was well-connected ‘in the anticlerical circles’ of Restoration London,³⁰ it contains the 188 maxims from the first, unsigned edition, printed at The Hague in 1664, supplemented with some of Davies’s own invention to make up a round ‘two centuries’.³¹ An unwary reader, who bought it on a cursory inspection, would have received a nasty shock when he settled down to read it, anticipating the usual Stoic pieties about retirement and self-possession. For it was La Rochefoucauld’s scorching contempt for those pieties, his involvement in ‘those intellectual movements – especially skepticism, but also various forms of Augustinianism – that wished to attack the intellectual pretensions of philosophers or other practitioners of the *vita contemplativa*, especially those influenced by Renaissance classicism’,³² which made him congenial to John Davies. The frontispiece of the first, authorised edition of the *Maximes*, published in Paris in 1665, pictures La Rochefoucauld ripping away the mask of virtue from Seneca’s face to reveal the philosopher’s true countenance, scarred and pitted with the lesions of vice; and Davies’s translation does nothing to obviate that fierce assault. One by one, in comparably implacable English, *Epictetus Junior* unmasks the consolatory ideals of classical philosophy as sublimations of ‘Interest ... the Master-spring, which sets all sorts of persons in motion; it makes them act all parts, even to that of a disinterested person’.³³ The moderation of desires advocated by Epicurus is the subject of a particularly brutal triptych:

Moderation in Prosperity is either a dreadful apprehension of losing what a man is possess’d of, or a fear of that shame which attends extravagance and excess. It may also be said, that a moderate person is one whose humours are in a certain indisturbance, as being becalm’d by the satisfaction of his mind.

We may further give this Character of Moderation, that it is a fear of disparagement and contempt, which attends those who are besotted with their own felicity. It is a vain Ostentation of a resolute mind. In fine, to give it yet a more pertinent definition, we may affirm, that the moderation of men in their highest advancements is Ambition of seeming greater, than those things whereby they are advanc’d.

How can a man forbear laughing at this Virtue, and the opinion generally conceived of it? How fondly is it imagined, that Ambition is oppos'd, and in a manner reduc'd to a certain mediocrity by Moderation, when they never meet together, the latter being truly but a certain Sloth, demission of Spirit, and a defect of Courage? So that it may justly be said, that Moderation is a certain depression of the Soul, as Ambition is the elevation of it.³⁴

I shall return to the last of these, in relation to Dryden's supposed Epicureanism, at the end of the essay.

The year in which *Epictetus Junior, Or Maximes of Modern Morality* was first published, 1670, also saw the second edition of *Epicurus's Morals* by Walter Charleton. It is generally accepted that Dryden knew the latter – Charleton was one of his friends, and reminiscences of its argument have been detected in his comments about Lucretius³⁵ – whereas there is nothing to show that he knew the former: the most that can be alleged is that a comparison he draws between characters in a drama and 'the rational creatures of the Almighty Poet, who walk at liberty, in their own opinion, because their fetters are invisible; when, indeed, the prison of their will is the more sure for being large', in the dedication of *The Rival Ladies* (1664),³⁶ may indicate some acquaintance with the unauthorised edition of Hobbes's *Of Liberty and Necessity* (1654) whose flagrantly anticlerical preface Davies wrote and signed. Yet to read a book, even one written by a friend, is not necessarily to endorse its sentiments; and it seems to me that much of *Epicurus's Morals* would have struck Dryden as naïve,³⁷ in particular its closing hymn to the Epicurean 'sapiens', who having 'so reasoned concerning the end of Nature, or the highest of Goods, as fully to understand that it may be attained with the greatest facility imaginable', 'live[s] like a Deity among men',³⁸ and so bears a more than passing resemblance to the type of Stoic ridiculed by Dryden in the Dedication to *Don Sebastian* (1690) for his 'silly affectation of being a God'.³⁹ By contrast, the sceptical ethos of *Epictetus Junior* overlaps substantially with that of the 'heroic' plays Dryden was writing at about this time, which have been said to dramatise 'the force of the body's passions, the way in which men and women are bound by their physical selves, even while mind and spirit may aspire to lofty ideals or may attempt to impose moral and social duties which are at odds with the raw urgency of desire.'⁴⁰

But I want to end this survey of sceptical Restoration responses to the consolations of Stoicism and Epicureanism with a work, published not long before *Sylvae*, which is influenced by the reductive Rochefoucauldian analysis, and of which it is safe to assume that Dryden would have had knowledge. *Seneca's Morals Abstracted* (1678) proved popular – or at least its author, Roger L'Estrange, the licenser of the press with whom Dryden cooperated closely in the propaganda machine of the court interest during the Exclusion Crisis,⁴¹ saw to it that it was reissued seven times in the next twenty years. Like John Davies, L'Estrange regarded the consolations of classical

philosophy as so many ‘pretences ... we disguise our afflictions withal’, which are ‘but the effects of Interest and Vanity’,⁴² but for him this was the source of their value. Born propagandist that he was, he realised that Seneca could help the Tories re-brand their doctrines of passive obedience and non-resistance,⁴³ which cut so poor a dash next to the Whig rhetoric of self-confident Protestant citizenship.⁴⁴ In *Seneca’s Morals Abstracted*, L’Estrange set out to transmute the passive Tory subject into the retired Senecan sage ‘unshaken by whatever fortune bestows or denies’,⁴⁵ the dust of docility into the gold of disinterest. Exploiting the privilege of the author of an abstract ‘to digest and Commonplace’, he concentrated exclusively on those passages in Seneca’s writings which recommend abstention from politics and the cultivation of virtue in private;⁴⁶ and from among them he gave special weight to ones which idolise or deify the ‘*sapiens*’ who follows these recommendations. So, for instance, he finds room in his selection from the ‘*epistulae morales*’ for:

That Man that employes his Privacy upon Thoughts Divine, and Precious, is more sensible of the Comfort of that Freedom, than he that bends his Meditations an Ill Way. For, he considers all the Benefits of his Exemption from Common Duties, he enjoys himself with Infinite Delight, and makes his Gratitude Answerable to his Obligations. He is the best of Subjects, and the Happiest of Men.⁴⁷

This is a reprise of Barrow’s exaggerated consolatory rhetoric – only without the tincture of shame. L’Estrange offers the reader a bargain: the right to vaunt himself as a member of a philosophical elite, one whose mind is on higher things (‘Thoughts Divine, and Precious’), one serenely beyond the smoke and stir of ‘Common Duties’ (a phrase ripe for the curled lip of superiority), in exchange – as the last sentence is not embarrassed to make plain – for the right to participate in the conduct of political affairs.

In *The Medal* (1682), one of Dryden’s last major poems before *Sylvae*, the Whigs offer Charles II a similar Faustian bargain:

Perhaps not wholly to melt down the King,
But clip his regal rights within the ring;
From thence t’assume the power of peace and war,
And ease him by degrees of public care.

(*The Medal*, 228–31; *Poems*, II, 28)

The last line drops into ‘free indirect speech’: to recover the Whigs’ actual words to Charles we must translate it back into the semi-technical Latin philosophical diction from which it derives, so that ‘ease’ yields ‘quies’ (Lucretius’s favourite word for the Epicurean ideal of ‘*ataraxia*’) and ‘care’ ‘*cura*’ (his favourite word for its opposite).⁴⁸ Shaftesbury and his henchmen are flattering the king towards obsolescence, tempting him to swap his kingly power for a gratifying image of himself as an Epicurean ‘*sapiens*’, who ‘know[ing] the world not worth his care’, retires to ‘study nature well, and nature’s laws’ (‘Lucretius: Against the Fear of Death’, 294, 296; *Poems*, II,

330). The brilliant economy of the effect shows that Dryden was well-acquainted with the range of roles performed by the consolations of classical philosophy within Restoration culture, that he knew his way around the contexts I have been attempting to outline, in which the ideals of ‘freedom from disturbance, perfect equanimity’ assumed shifting kinds of strategic religious and political importance in the years immediately preceding the publication of *Sylvae*. It remains to show how that knowledge, acting in concert with Dryden’s ‘natural ... scepticism’, helped shape his translations for the volume.

II

Of Dryden as a love poet Samuel Johnson remarked:

Love, as it subsists in itself, with no tendency but to the person loved and wishing only for correspondent kindness, such love as shuts out all other interest, the Love of the Golden Age, was too soft and subtle to put his faculties in motion. He hardly conceived it but in its turbulent effervescence with some other desires: when it was inflamed by rivalry or obstructed by difficulties; when it invigorated ambition or exasperated revenge.⁴⁹

The same may be said of him as a poet of philosophical consolation. To begin with an obvious example: Dryden did not omit from his version of ‘Horace, Epod. 2d’ the celebrated surprise ending which reveals that the poem is spoken by a moneylender, ‘Alfius’, and so brings its Epicurean vision of ‘humble poverty’ and ‘a quiet country life’ into ‘turbulent effervescence’ with acquisitive urban ‘desires’. Previous English translators, notably Cowley, had done so, ‘shutting out’ Alfius’s ignoble ‘interests’.⁵⁰ The end of a poem is of course not its be-all-and-end-all: the seven lines Dryden devotes to the epode’s concluding *volte-face* cannot erase the memory of the preceding ninety-five, which have been shown to engage richly and intricately with Horace’s vision of contentment.⁵¹ Then again, he placed ‘Horace, Epod. 2d’ last in the sequence of classical translations he contributed to *Sylvae*,⁵² so that the disillusion of its ending is the final note left resonating in the mind of the reader.⁵³ What is needed is an approach which can accommodate both Dryden’s desire to be consoled by Horace’s poem, and his refusal to shield that desire against the chill blast of the poem’s closing lines. One might compare Keats’s determination to include in the last stanza of ‘The Eve of St Agnes’ an emphasis on gross fleshly realities, without which the poem’s ecstatic raptures would have been ‘smokeable’, proof of his ‘inexperience of live [*sic*], and simplicity of knowledge in it’.⁵⁴ I have argued that Restoration readers were practised at smoking out the various forms of interest which can underlie professions of Stoic or Epicurean principle, and that Dryden knew as much. It may be because he recognised how ‘smokeable’ praise for ‘The

Happy Man' who 'court and state ... wisely shuns, / Nor bribed with hopes nor dared with awe / To servile salutations runs' (15–17; *Poems*, II, 380)⁵⁵ would be coming from him in particular, the author of poems like 'To my Lady Castlemaine' and *The Medal*,⁵⁶ that he transformed 'Alfius' into 'Morecraft', a London merchant in a play of Beaumont and Fletcher's which had lately been revived on the Restoration stage,⁵⁷ the place which, by the time *Sylvae* was published, had begun to symbolise for him (and for his enemies)⁵⁸ the shameful accommodations of his public writing.

In that case, the opportunity to examine a longing for 'ataraxia' 'in turbulent effervescence' with 'other desires' fell into Dryden's hands. But his series of passages from Lucretius, the other 'philosophical poet'⁵⁹ he translated for *Sylvae*, ends on a similarly sceptical note; and this time the scepticism is more clearly Dryden's. 'From Lucretius: Book the Fifth' is a short piece, and commentators have generally given it short shrift.⁶⁰ Yet it is in a sense almost an original work, for Dryden interpolated a significant proportion of its few lines – four out of eighteen, including two of the first six:

Thus like a sailor by the tempest hurled
Ashore, the babe is shipwrecked on the world:
Naked he lies, and ready to expire,
Helpless of all that human wants require;
Exposed upon unhospitable earth
From the first moment of his hapless birth.
(Poems, II, 345)

These lines were dark enough in the original: they conclude the opening section of book five of the *De Rerum Natura*, a list of faults in the design of the world, offered as proof that it was not created with a purpose. But Dryden's interpolations colour them yet darker. The first – 'ready to expire' – is doubly equivocal, 'ready' meaning both 'about to' and 'prepared to', 'expire' both 'breathe' and 'die',⁶¹ so that the phrase as a whole imagines the newborn baby hoping its first breath will be its last, seeking, like the 'infant of Saguntum', to make its 'mother's womb [its] urn'.⁶² That sanctuary is denied, however, Dryden having cut out Lucretius's phrase 'ex alvo matris' ('from his mother's womb'). He replaced it with the second of his interpolations – 'Exposed upon unhospitable earth' – which, with its passive verb and preference for 'unhospitable' (the mere unmotivated absence of hospitality) over 'inhospitable' (a willed refusal of it), withholds from the baby even the minimal comfort Lucretius provides of interaction with its enemy ('natura').⁶³ To philosophise may be to learn how to die, but it sounds from these lines as if life is not worth living. Dryden's Lucretius seems to have forgotten his own earlier lesson about 'know[ing] to live' ('Lucretius: Against the Fear of Death', 128; *Poems*, II, 322), delighting in life as something to 'be felt and relished in every fibre of the body'.⁶⁴ He appears in need of a reminder from Walter Charleton's Epicurus that 'most of all foolish and ridiculous is he,

who saith, it is good either not to be born at all, or to die as soon as born. For, if he speak this in good earnest, why doth he not presently rid himself of life, it being very easy for him to do so, in case he hath well deliberated on the matter beforehand?⁶⁵

‘From Lucretius: Book the Fifth’ illustrates La Rochefoucauld’s maxim that

As in Nature there is an eternal generation, and that the corruption of one thing is always the production of another; in like manner is there in the heart of man a perpetual generation, or repullulation of Passions, so that the expiration of one is always the re-establishment of another.⁶⁶

In his determination to free Memmius from the fearful conviction that the world is in the grip of the gods, Dryden’s Lucretius risks causing a desperate conviction of the insignificance of humanity to pullulate in his patron’s heart. The attempt to extirpate one form of harmful passion leads not to ‘freedom from disturbance, perfect equanimity’ but to the establishment of another form of harmful passion. This sceptical insight is central to Dryden’s conception of Lucretius, as is suggested by his decision to extend the original description of the baby as ‘ut saevis proiectus ab undis / navita’ (‘like a sailor cast forth by the cruel waves’) into ‘like a sailor by the tempest hurled / Ashore’, thereby bringing that dispiriting analogy into ‘turbulent effervescence’ with a crucial image of disinterest from ‘Lucretius: The Beginning of the Second Book’: ‘Tis pleasant safely to behold from shore / The rolling ship, and hear the tempest roar’ (1–2; *Poems*, II, 312). Indeed, though the case cannot be made at length here, it might be argued that Dryden’s remarks about Lucretius in the preface to *Sylvae* indicate that he was generally alert to the potential for such ironies. Those remarks focus in particular on the ‘distinguishing character’ of Lucretius’s poetic voice,⁶⁷ that ‘fiery temper’ of ‘argumentation’ (*Poems*, II, 247) which jars somewhat with his ambition to persuade Memmius of the merits of ‘quiet of mind’.⁶⁸ It has long been recognised that Dryden was peculiarly responsive to the impassioned form of the *De Rerum Natura*,⁶⁹ but to date there has been no discussion of the possible conflict between his attunement to the style of the poem and his regard for its philosophical content. Such discussion might begin by noting the link between Dryden’s description of Lucretius’s verse as a ‘perpetual torrent’ (*Poems*, II, 247) and his friend Charleton’s reference to the anxieties and disturbances which the Epicurean must banish from his mind as ‘a Torrent or rapid River’.⁷⁰

I want to turn now to the pieces Dryden translated for *Sylvae* which are not explicitly philosophical and consolatory – briefly to one of the three *Idylls* from Theocritus, and then, at greater length, to the pair of episodes from the *Aeneid*. The former have in general been ignored,⁷¹ and even the latter have attracted considerably less comment than the selections from Lucretius and Horace.⁷² Yet the Epicurean commitments of the Horatian and Lucretian passages are significantly qualified – refracted and reconfigured –

through contact with their apparently unphilosophical neighbours. These processes of sceptical adjustment are more sustained in the extracts from Virgil than in those from Theocritus; but it may be said in passing that 'Idyllium the 23d The Despairing Lover' further explores the links between disinterest and despair which are uncovered in 'From Lucretius: Book the Fifth'. Theocritus's trite tale of the 'inauspicious love' of a 'wretched swain' for 'the fairest nymph of all the plain' becomes, in Dryden's translation, a pastoral-philosophical tragi-comedy. Elements of diction connect his 'nymph' to the Epicurean '*sapiens*', in particular 'disdain' and 'disdainful' (46, 10; *Poems*, II, 354, 352) which catch into earshot the observation in the preface to *Sylvae* that 'Lucretius ... seems to disdain all manner of replies' (*Poems*, II, 246) and Nature's 'disdain' for the 'wretch' who prays for longevity in 'Lucretius: Against the Fear of Death' (147; *Poems*, II, 323), so that she comes to seem not just unmoved by her particular suitor, but immune to the disturbances of passion in general.⁷³ And the terms Dryden attaches to her unfortunate lover identify him as a variant of the Epicurean 'fool', 'The Unhappy Man': by interpolating the line 'But so my love, and so my fate required' (40; *Poems*, II, 353), Dryden makes him deny the 'Arbitrary Freedom of our Will' which Epicurus insists 'is the congenial praerogative of our Nature';⁷⁴ and by developing the neutral observation in the original that the 'swain' finds the 'nymph'⁷⁵ attractive even when she is angry into a miniature psychology of desire – 'His love still dressed her in a pleasing shape' (22; *Poems*, II, p. 353) – Dryden has him exemplify Epicurus's 'General Axiom ... that Discontent of Mind is not grounded upon Nature, but upon meer Opinion of Evil'.⁷⁶ If we put all these verbal reminiscences together, a grotesque philosophical fable emerges from within 'Idyllium the 23d': the series of cruel rejections endured by 'the wretched swain', which provoke him to 'despair' and then suicide, are necessary stages in a course of Epicurean therapy;⁷⁷ he is 'wretched' because (like the 'wretch' derided by Lucretius's personified Nature) he is epistemologically misguided; and he should therefore be grateful to the *sapiens* / nymph for teaching him, in Dryden's savagely equivocal phrase, 'happily to lose [his] long desires' (51; *Poems*, II, 354) – by hanging himself.

Similar vestiges of philosophical implication can be detected in the two Virgilian episodes which stand at the head of Dryden's contributions to *Sylvae*, but in these more substantial cases their final effect is more complicated. 'The entire episode of Mezentius and Lausus, translated out of the Tenth Book of Virgil's *Aeneids*' has at its heart a figure – Mezentius – who brings to mind both 'The Happy Man' and his opposite. Like the latter he believes in 'inexorable Fate' (168 – an interpolated line; *Poems*, II, 297), and is prey to disturbing passions, so that, for instance, as he rides back to the fray to confront Aeneas, in a passage which considerably expands on Virgil's phrase '*aestuat ingens / Uno in corde pudor mixtoque insania luctu*'⁷⁸ [in that one heart boils a huge shame, mixed with madness and grief],

Love, anguish, wrath, and grief to madness wrought,
 Despair, and secret shame, and conscious thought
 Of inborn worth, his labouring soul oppressed,
 Rolled in his eyes, and raged within his breast.

(178–81; *Poems*, II, 298)

But elsewhere he seems to attain a form of freedom from such disturbances; moments earlier, for instance, when he calls for his horse Rhaebus, with ‘a mind resolved, and unappalled / With pains or perils’ (155–6; *Poems*, II, 296), as Dryden puts it, pushing Virgil’s curt epithet ‘haud deiectus’⁷⁹ [undismayed] to the limit of its philosophical suggestion; or as he lies dying at the feet of Aeneas,⁸⁰ when, in another interpolated phrase, he declares himself ‘secure of death’ (224; *Poems*, II, 300), which is to say, in an ironic sense, like the Horatian husbandman, ‘secure of what [he] cannot lose’ (‘Horace. Ode 29. Book 3’, 98; *Poems*, II, 376), and so able, like him, to ‘puff the prostitute’ Fortune ‘away’ when ‘she shakes her wings, and will not stay’ (‘Horace. Ode 29. Book 3’, 81–4; *Poems*, II, 375) with these serenely paralleled – and, once again, interpolated – words to her latest favourite: ‘As I had used my fortune, use thou thine’ (228; *Poems*, II, 301). The cumulative tendency of these alterations and additions to Virgil’s text is to pull Mezentius in two opposite directions at once; to stretch the range of constructions which can be put on his behaviour both upwards into the most ethereal keys of philosophical disinterest and downwards to the earthiest notes of heroic passion. The result is an outlandish hybrid: an Epicurean-cum-Stoic ‘*sapiens*’ grafted on to one of those ‘Athletick Brutes’ that, as Dryden later observed in the Dedication of *Fables* (1700), ‘undeservedly we call Heroes’.⁸¹

Like the cross-breeds of mock-heroic, Dryden’s Mezentius is adapted to suggest congruities between things which are commonly presumed to be incongruous; in this case, to provoke inquiry into the relations between philosophical and heroic claims to know how to die. The focus of that inquiry is the noun ‘disdain’ and its cognates, whose capacity to equivocate between impassioned and dispassionate states of mind, hinted at in ‘Idyllium the 23d The Despairing Lover’, comes to fruition in ‘The entire episode of Mezentius and Lausus’. Dryden applies the word to Mezentius at crucial junctures: he first appears ‘with a proud disdain, / Brandish[ing] his spear, and rush[ing] into the plain’ (11–12; *Poems*, II, 288), where Virgil has only ‘ingentem quatiens ... hastem’ [shaking his mighty spear]; just before killing him Aeneas mockingly asks: ‘where [is] the fierce disdain / Of proud Mezentius, and the lofty strain?’ (219–20; *Poems*, II, 300); and his death is described with a famous clinch of verbal wit (for which there is no warrant in Virgil):⁸²

The crimson stream distained his arms around,
 And the disdainful soul came rushing through the wound.

(240–1; *Poems*, II, 301)

The words which qualify or rhyme with ‘disdain’ at these moments stage a miniature debate about its meaning. Aeneas treats Mezentius’s ‘disdain’ as synonymous with pride and ferocity, the marks of ‘a meer *Ajax*, a Man-killing Ideot’;⁸³ when he refers to it as a ‘lofty strain’, he is being sarcastic. But Dryden is not so sure, as appears from the imbalanced rhythm he confers on Aeneas’s question, which makes its final clause into a puzzled second thought on the matter. We should share that doubt, since, in the central passage of the episode, Mezentius’s lament over the corpse of his son Lausus, Dryden does construe his ‘disdain’ as ‘lofty’, directed not so much at his particular enemies as at the arbitrary dispositions of fortune in general. In Virgil this lament starts with an apostrophe – ‘tantane me tenuit vivendi, nate, voluptas / ut pro me hostili paterer succedere dextrae’ [O my son! Did such delight in life possess me, that I allowed you to confront the enemy in my place] – but Dryden holds back the vocative (‘nate’) for a couplet, in order to lend philosophical reach to Mezentius’s words:

What joys, alas, could this frail being give,
That I have been so covetous to live?
To see my son, and such a son, resign
His life a ransom for preserving mine!

(137–40; *Poems*, II, 295–6)

These lines are kin to the moment in ‘Lucretius: Against the Fear of Death’ when ‘a wretch ... oppressed by fate’, seeking to ‘prolong his date’, is told by a personified Epicurean ‘Nature’: ‘Be still thou martyr fool, thou covetous of pain’. Unlike the ‘wretch’, however, Dryden’s Mezentius has learnt his Epicurean lesson: he does not ‘ask ... life’ (227 – an interpolation; *Poems*, II, 301) of Aeneas.

Dryden’s translation of ‘The entire episode of Mezentius and Lausus’ shows that he recognised, with John Davies’s *La Rochefoucauld*, ‘that among the Passions, some many times beget such as are contrary to them’. It prompts a suspicion that, as ‘Avarice does sometimes produce Liberality ... and boldness may proceed from Timidity’,⁸⁴ so ‘perfect equanimity’ may stem from ferocious self-assertion. ‘The entire episode of Nisus and Euryalus, translated from the Fifth and Ninth Books of Virgil’s *Aeneids*’ also studies the appeal of ‘*ataraxia*’ from the sceptical perspective of a Rochefoucauldian ‘unmasking psychology’; and in this last case, I am going to suggest, it was in a sense the ‘*plis et replis*’ of his own heart that Dryden was exploring.⁸⁵ It has been argued, in line with the prevailing critical account of *Sylvae*, that he saw the story of Nisus and Euryalus as a philosophical parable in a Lucretian or Horatian vein: his two young Trojans are seduced to their deaths by the ‘call of Fortuna-Occasio’, ‘the casual and irrational element in life’, when they allow themselves to be diverted from their mission to deliver a message to Aeneas by the opportunity of wreaking some cheap havoc among the sleeping Rutulians; in death,

however, Dryden ‘translates the pair out of Fortune’s domain into very different philosophical territory’, ‘the company of ... those who find peace away from the chances and changes of the world.’⁸⁶ This reading has the merit of directing attention towards those items of philosophical diction which the episode shares with the passages from Horace and Lucretius which succeed it, for the presence of the Epicurean watchwords ‘quies’ and ‘contentus’ near the beginning and at the end of Virgil’s narrative may have been one reason why Dryden chose to translate it – as they stand watch together on the ramparts of the Trojan camp, Nisus tells Euryalus ‘mens agitat mihi, nec placida contenta quiete est’ [my heart is astir, not content with peace and quiet]; and when he flings himself in death on the body of his dead friend, we hear that ‘placidaque ibi demum morte quievit’ [there at last, in the peace of death, he found rest]. But if those keywords, meeting across the span of the narrative, offer to draw the moral that Nisus begins by ‘suffering from *tarakos*, disturbance of the soul, the opposite of ... the spiritual tranquillity produced by Epicurean *sapientia*’ and ends by acceding – albeit in death – to ‘*ataraxia*’, that is only half the story Dryden found in the episode.

Only under the terms of ‘a moral code far removed from that of the archaic warrior’,⁸⁷ of Nisus and Euryalus, is ‘*tarakos*’ to be deplored and ‘*ataraxia*’ to be cultivated. Modern scholarship has been attentive to the uses of ‘double perspective’ in the *Aeneid*, to Virgil’s habit of dividing his sympathies between an ancient and a contemporary time-frame.⁸⁸ Dryden was too. It has become so common to say of him that he was deeply ‘ambivalent’ about heroism, or even ‘anti-heroic’,⁸⁹ that it perhaps seems improbable now that he could enter imaginatively into the viewpoint of an ‘archaic warrior’. But in ‘The entire episode of Nisus and Euryalus’ he does; to such a degree, in fact, that an anti-Epicurean reading of the translation is quite possible. It would begin by noting the series of alterations and additions Dryden makes to the scene describing the nocturnal council in the Trojan camp:

Now every living thing lay void of care,
 And sleep, the common gift of nature, share.
 Meantime the Trojan peers in council sate,
 And called their chief commanders to debate
 The weighty business of th’ endangered state:
 What next was to be done, who to be sent
 T’ inform Aeneas of the foe’s intent.
 In midst of all the quiet camp they held
 Nocturnal council; each sustains a shield
 Which his o’erlaboured arm can hardly rear,
 And leans upon a long projected spear.

(177–87; *Poems*, II, 269)

‘Void of care’, a favourite formulation of his in Epicurean contexts,⁹⁰ shows that Dryden recognised the description of night which opens this passage,

and sets its tone, as borrowed from the *De Rerum Natura*. Whereas Virgil, like Lucretius, contrasts the sleeping ‘cetera ... animalia’ with the unnaturally wakeful ‘ductores Teucrum’, however, Dryden plays down that contrast by treating ‘cetera’ [every other – i.e. apart from the Trojan leaders] as if it were ‘omnia’ [every] and opting for the scarcely adversitive ‘Meantime’, with the result that his ‘Trojan peers’ are somewhat amalgamated into the general atmosphere of Epicurean ‘freedom from disturbance’. Rather than being awake when they should be asleep, they are (metaphorically) slumbering when they should be active: in Virgil they stand upright (‘stant’) and debate the affairs of state themselves (‘consilium ... regni de rebus habebant’), but Dryden says of them – perhaps finding the historic present tense to be inappropriately urgent – that they ‘sate’ like spectators and ‘called their chief commanders to debate’. The ‘business of th’ endangered state’,⁹¹ ‘summis’ in Virgil [most important], is ‘weighty’ in Dryden, a physical burden too heavy for the ‘Trojan peers’ to bear, whose aged arms are – in a pair of phrases deduced from Virgil’s one half-suggestion of frailty, ‘longis adnixi hastis’ [leaning on their long spears] – ‘o’erlaboured’, and ‘hardly’ able to ‘rear’ their ‘shield[s]’. Even before Nisus and Euryalus have been admitted to the council, we seem to be seeing the assembled Trojan elders through their impetuously heroic young eyes, to which being ‘void of care’ looks much like being ‘Slothful and Inactive’, as Walter Charleton feared Epicurean *sapientia* might to some of his contemporaries.⁹²

That is not the only place in the episode where Dryden’s commitment to the heroic point of view of Nisus and Euryalus entails anti-Epicurean insinuations. Indeed, it appears that the arguments used in Restoration attacks on Epicureanism provided him with his main imaginative route into the mentality of ‘an archaic warrior’. Whenever he wants to ‘focalise’ the narrative through that mentality, he drops into an anti-Epicurean tone. So, for example, when Nisus says to Euryalus that most of the Rutulians are ‘in sleep supine, / Dissolv’d in Ease’ (124–5; *Poems*, II, 266), and again when he reports of them to the ‘Trojan peers’ that ‘The foes securely drenched in sleep and wine / Their watch neglect’ (195–6; *Poems*, II, 269), Dryden puts into his mouth several of his own pet words for describing ‘freedom from disturbance, perfect equanimity’ – ‘supine’, ‘Dissolv’d’, ‘Ease’, ‘securely’⁹³ – but gives them pejorative connotations of hedonism and irresponsibility. All around them, within the Trojan camp and outside it, Dryden’s Nisus and Euryalus see the incipient extinction of magnanimity, and Dryden realises their sense of being besieged by the hero’s ‘enemy ... rest’ (120; *Poems*, II, 265) by surrounding them with ‘Epicures’. It is therefore unlikely that he meant the final scene of the episode, Nisus’s death, straightforwardly to exemplify the wisdom of Epicurus:

Dying he slew, and staggering on the plain
Sought for the body of his lover slain;

Then quietly on this dear breast he fell,
 Content in death to be revenged so well.
 (481–4; *Poems*, II, 286)

True, ‘quietly’ and ‘content’ have a place in ‘the lexis of seventeenth-century definitions of “The Happy Man”’;⁹⁴ but, as we have seen, this philosophical lexis competes with that of the ‘archaic warrior’ within Dryden’s ‘double perspective’ on the episode. If these lines ‘translate’ Nisus and Euryalus into a condition of Epicurean ‘*ataraxia*’, they also reflect on the rights and wrongs of doing so, on the potential invasiveness of their hindsight. For Nisus and Euryalus life was ‘*tarakos*’, and the only time to be ‘quietly ... Content’ was indeed ‘in death’; it might have been better for them if this had not been the case, but then, as Dryden observed in the Preface to *Ovid’s Epistles* (1680): ‘If the fancy of Ovid be luxuriant, ’tis his character to be so, and if I retrench it, he is no longer Ovid. It will be replied that he receives advantage by this lopping of his superfluous branches, but I rejoin that a translator has no such right’ (*Poems*, I, 389).

When he came to revise ‘The entire episode of Nisus and Euryalus’ for inclusion in his complete *Aeneis* (1697), Dryden scaled down its sympathy for their heroic point of view, reversing in particular many of the additions and alterations he had made to the council scene.⁹⁵ Whatever it was that drove him to recreate that point of view in such detail was apparently peculiar to his state of mind at the time he was preparing his contributions to *Sylvae*. This is confirmed by the fact that he demonstrates the same propensity to side imaginatively with the young in a poem written more or less concurrently with the Nisus and Euryalus episode, and often connected with it because of their shared concern with premature death:⁹⁶ ‘To the Memory of Mr Oldham’ (1684):

O early ripe! to thy abundant store
 What could advancing age have added more?
 It might (what Nature never gives the young)
 Have taught the numbers of thy native tongue;
 But satire needs not those, and wit will shine
 Through the harsh cadence of a rugged line:
 A noble error, and but seldom made,
 When poets are by too much force betrayed.
 Thy generous fruits, though gathered ere their prime
 Still showed a quickness; and maturing time
 But mellows what we write to the dull sweets of rhyme.
 (11–21; *Poems*, II, 231–3)

The personal note in these lines is unmistakable:⁹⁷ Dryden – now into his mid-fifties – weighs the benefits of experience against the qualities of youth, and the balance tips in favour of the latter. But ‘The entire episode of Nisus and Euryalus’ shows that he suspected a high regard for ‘*ataraxia*’ might

belong among the former. Like Oldham, Nisus and Euryalus 'are by too much force betrayed'; but in 1685 theirs seemed 'a noble error' to Dryden, and if part of him wanted to correct it, to 'mellow' the 'quickness' of their desires with Epicurean moderation, another part of him conceded that 'freedom from disturbance, perfect equanimity' were 'dull sweets', a taste acquired with 'advancing years'. More than their relations with despair, which he had explored in 'From Lucretius: Book the Fifth' and 'Idyllium the 23d', or their connections with pride, which he had addressed in 'From Horace, Epod. 2d' and 'The entire episode of Mezentius and Lausus', it is the capacity of these consoling Epicurean notions to mask what John Davies of Kidwelly called 'demission of Spirit, and defect of Courage', which takes us – I suspect – to the heart of Dryden's scepticism about them.

For Dryden's contemporaries commonly represented him as someone who suffered from such 'depression of the Soul'. The first words spoken by his alter-ego Bayes in *The Rehearsal* (1672) are 'Your most obsequious, and most observant, very servant, Sir', and then, on being asked to perform a favour, 'Sir, it is not within my small capacity to do favours, but receive 'em; especially from a person that does wear [an] honourable Title'.⁹⁸ Dryden seems, at some level, to have concurred, regularly casting himself in the prologues and epilogues he wrote in the first half of his career as the epitome of what *Annus Mirabilis* terms 'passive aptness' (564; *Poems*, I, 165) in the hands of an omnipotent audience, whether theatrical or academic. In the Prologue to *The Second Part of the Conquest of Granada* (1672), he 'fears [his] critics as his fate' (7; *Poems*, I, 240); in the Epilogue to *Oedipus* (1679), he and his collaborator Nathaniel Lee are 'Weak poets' who, 'as weak states each other's power assure, / ... by conjunction are secure.' (29–30; *Poems*, I, 359); in the 'Prologue to the University of Oxford' spoken in 1676, he supplicates on behalf of his fellow poets 'for adoption ... , / As nations sued to be made free of Rome: / Not in the suffragating tribes to stand, / But in your utmost, last, provincial band.' (29–32; *Poems*, I, 305); and in the Prologue to *Aureng-Zebe*, from the same year, he begs to be allowed like 'A losing gamester, [to] sneak away' (23; *Poems*, I, 298). And if Dryden needed any further prompting to wonder whether his attraction to the ideals of retirement and self-possession might not be a blind for a certain constitutional passivity, he could have received it from a writer whose work we know he was 'reading and reflecting on' in the years immediately preceding the publication of *Sylvae* – Montaigne.

Sylvae, it has been said, 'might almost be called a Montaigne volume'.⁹⁹ I agree; but if the *Essais* were an important source for Dryden's sense of 'Man's infinite capacity for self-delusion and unwarranted self-aggrandizement', and for his attraction to the idea 'that the true Good is to be found in the possession of an inner quiet which might make it possible for Man to accept the vicissitudes of life with equanimity', reading Montaigne would also have alerted him to the possibility that the latter might be evidence of

the former. That possibility is canvassed in relation to Epicurus in 'Of Glory', where Montaigne, quoting a letter which the philosopher dictated to his disciple Hermachus 'a little before his last gasp', finds in it 'marks of the recommendation of his name, and of that humour he had decryed by his own Precepts'.¹⁰⁰ But it is the passages of the *Essais* which canvass it in relation to Montaigne himself which would have been closest to the bone for Dryden; this one from 'On the Inconvenience of Greatness', for instance:

It never befell me to wish for either Empire or Royalty, for the Eminency of those high and commanding Fortunes. I do not aim that way, I love my self too well. When I think to grow greater, 'tis but very moderately, and by a compell'd and timorous Advancement, such as is proper for me; in Resolution, in Prudence, in Health, in Beauty, and even in Riches too. But this supream Reputation, and this mighty Authority oppress my Imagination. ... My soul is so sneaking and mean, that I measure not good Fortune by the height, but by the Facility.¹⁰¹

If Dryden found this uncomfortable to read,¹⁰² I expect it also impressed him as a model of sceptical self-analysis. In the grip of his 'crisis ... both professional and private', he matched it, remaining as alert as Montaigne to the likelihood of self-deceit or self-interest on the part of those – among whom he included himself – who claim to have learnt the secret of happiness in adversity. His kaleidoscopic treatment of the consolations of philosophy in *Sylvae; or, the Second Part of Poetical Miscellanies* is the equivalent of Montaigne's famously miscellaneous prose, that of a 'Man, whom Nature hath made too big to Confine himself to the Exactness of a Studied Stile'.¹⁰³ Montaigne said he was driven to adopt that style by the miscellaneity of his subject – man – and he commemorated his sceptical determination not to 'Confine himself' to a narrow view of that subject by having a tag from Terence inscribed on the ceiling of his study: 'Homo sum, humani a me nihil alienum puto' ('I am a man, and I consider no aspect of humanity beyond the range of my concern'). It was a favourite tag of Dryden's too,¹⁰⁴ and – by refusing to confine his poetic attention to the noble aspects of a taste for 'freedom from disturbance, perfect equanimity', by refusing to occlude the human indignities such a taste may be used to veil – he lived up to it.

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Notes

- 1 David Hopkins, *John Dryden* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 94; Hopkins, 'Dryden and the Tenth Satire of Juvenal', *Translation and Literature*, 4 (1995), 31–60 (p. 43).
- 2 Paul Hammond, *John Oldham and the Renewal of Classical Culture* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 212; for other statements of all or part of this view, see Dustin Griffin,

- 'Dryden's "Oldham" and the Perils of Writing', in *Modern Language Quarterly*, 37 (1976), 133–50, Tom Mason, 'Dryden's Chaucer' (unpublished Ph.D, University of Cambridge, 1977), pp. 57–62, Stuart Gillespie, 'Dryden's *Sylvae*: A Study of Dryden's Translations from the Latin in the Second Tonson Miscellany, 1685' (unpublished Ph.D, University of Cambridge), pp. 84–6, and David Hopkins and Tom Mason, *The Beauties of Dryden* (Bristol, 1982), pp. 272–3.
- 3 Hammond, *John Dryden: A Literary Life* (Basingstoke, 1991), p. 147.
 - 4 For a list, and discussion, see *The Poems of John Dryden*, ed. Paul Hammond (4 vols, 1995–), II, 86, n.28; most pertinently, Dryden called attention to 'my natural diffidence and scepticism' in the Preface to *Sylvae* (*Poems*, II, 247 and n.). In what follows I quote Dryden's poems in the text of Hammond's edition – cited as *Poems* – to which hereafter references are made by volume and page number within the text.
 - 5 Hammond, *Dryden: A Literary Life*, p. 168; for an excellent discussion of the volume along these lines, see Hopkins, *John Dryden*, pp. 168–200.
 - 6 Hopkins, 'Dryden and the Tenth Satire of Juvenal', 56, 57, with which compare Gillespie, 'Dryden's *Sylvae*', p. 94; Judith Sloman, *Dryden: The Poetics of Translation* (Toronto, 1985), p. 147.
 - 7 Throughout the essay I treat the teachings of the Stoics and Epicureans on 'the happy life' as roughly equivalent; I am of course aware that they are not identical, but within the polemical 'reception' contexts which concern me here it is rare to find the ethical teachings of the two schools clearly distinguished one from the other: in the Jacobean period, Bacon and Burton, among others, present them as overlapping (see Reid Barbour, *English Stoics and Epicures: Ancient Legacies in Early Stuart Culture* (Amherst, Mass., 1998), pp. 12–13, 66–7), and the two writers most often cited as sources for Dryden's thinking about the consolations of classical philosophy – Walter Charleton and Montaigne – also do this: the full title of Charleton's *Epicurus Morals* (1656) adduces 'Seneca' as one of its sources; and for evidence that 'Stoicism and Epicureanism ... are by no means as sharply differentiated as might appear at first sight' in Montaigne's *Essais*, see R. A. Sayce, *The Essays of Montaigne: A Critical Exploration* (1972), pp. 166–7; the tendency of Restoration writers to conflate Stoic and Epicurean ethics around the broad themes of retirement and self-possession is exemplified in Edward Cooke's translation of Antoine Le Grand, *The Divine Epicurus* (1676): 'their aims are at one and the same end, and both are Rivals to the same Mistress, though indeed it is under different Pretexts' (p. 8).
 - 8 Peter du Moulin, a royal chaplain and canon of Christs Church, Canterbury in the Restoration, equates this passage of Lucretius with the unsettlement of Interregnum England at the outset of the second edition of *A Treatise of Peace & Contentment of Mind* (1671) in a passage remembering how he found refuge as a tutor in the household of the Boyle family in Ireland: 'Some years ago being cast by the storm upon a remote coast, and judging that it would have been to no purpose for me to quarrel with the tempest, I sate upon the shore to behold it calmly; taking no other interest in it, but that of my sympathy with those friends whom I yet saw beaten by the wind and the waves.' (sig. A4r).
 - 9 The full title of one of them – Henry Wilkinson's *The Doctrine of Contentment, Briefly Explained and Practically Applied* (1671) – indicates its relation to the tripartite scheme of 'explication', 'confirmation' and 'application' according

- to which the majority of Restoration sermons were organised: see Irene Simon, *Three Restoration Divines: Barrow, South, Tillotson*, 2 vols (Paris, 1967), I, 75.
- 10 Surprisingly, neither C. J. Sommerville, *Popular Religion in Restoration England* (Gainesville, Fla., 1977) nor the otherwise excellent John Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646–1689* (New Haven, Mass., 1991) treats these ‘arts of contentment’ in any detail.
 - 11 *The Art of Patience Under All Afflictions. An Appendix to the Art of Contentment*, p. 86.
 - 12 For Lucretius, see above n. 8; for Horace, see Barrow, *Of Contentment*, p. 44, where Horace is quoted asking Maecenas ‘How comes it to pass, that no body liveth content with the lot assigned by God?’, and Watson, *Autarkeia*, p. 190, where he quotes ‘Saepius ventis agitur ingens / Pinus, and celsae graviora casu / Dedicunt turres, feriuntque summos / Fulmina montes’ from *Odes* 2. 10 – ‘The little pinnacle rides safe by the shore, when the gallant ship advancing with its mast and top-sail, is cast away’, as he translates – an analogue for *Odes* 3. 29, Dryden’s translation of which includes the lines ‘In my small pinnacle I can sail, / Contemning all the blustering roar, / And running with a merry gale, / With friendly stars my safety seek’ (99–102; *Poems*, II, 376); for Juvenal, see Allestree, *The Art of Contentment*, p. 64: ‘we should quickly sink under the weight of our own wishes; and as Juvenal in his tenth Satyr excellently observes, perish by the success and grant of our Prayers’, and Barrow, *Of Contentment*, p. 28 where the tenth satire is cited alongside the advice that ‘we should curb our desires, and confine them in the narrowest bounds we can’.
 - 13 Isabel Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 2 vols (Cambridge, 1991–2000), I, 35.
 - 14 The modern use of this term to denote a party within the Restoration Church of England which ‘relied upon the new science’ has been disputed by Spurr, “‘Latitudinarianism’ and the Restoration Church”, in *Historical Journal*, 31 (1988), 61–82; I use it here in the less anachronistic and looser sense which Dr Spurr recommends, to refer to the broad swathe of Restoration churchmen who, aghast at the antinomian potential of the Calvinist doctrine of justification, ‘were about the work of rehabilitating the notion of “morality” in religion’ (p. 80): Allestree, the probable author of *The Whole Duty of Man*, the single most influential work of ‘practical theology’ in the Restoration, certainly fits that definition (see Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England*, pp. 282–4); Watson also fits it, albeit less easily: ‘strongly Presbyterian in his views’ (*DNB*), he was ejected from his living in the Restoration, but his most substantial work was a *Body of Practical Divinity*, 176 sermons on the Catechism of the Westminster Assembly.
 - 15 Clearly, these were not absolute divisions: as Isabel Rivers points out (*Reason, Grace and Sentiment*, p. 6), the majority of Restoration divines would have agreed that ‘Scripture is paramount, but Scripture must be interpreted with the aid both of the Spirit and of human reason’, and would have disagreed only on the relative emphases to be given to rational and revealed authority, though of course these ‘differences of emphasis’ frequently led to implacable contention.
 - 16 This had happened before: for a discussion of the embroilment of the Stoics and Epicureans in the Jacobean phase of the struggle between the Calvinist and

- Arminian tendencies within the Church of England, see Barbour, *English Episcures and Stoics*, pp. 195–239.
- 17 ‘The Art of Contentment’, p. 4 (it should be noted that ‘too flat and low ... being taken from the dignity of man’ is not without polemical bite); for a detailed account of the tenor of Sanderson’s piety, see Peter Lake, ‘Serving God and the Times: The Calvinist Conformity of Robert Sanderson’, in *Journal of British Studies*, 27 (1988), 81–116.
 - 18 The description is Spurr’s (*The Restoration Church of England*, p. 261 n.149); Wilkinson was Principal of Madgalen Hall, Oxford during the Interregnum, ejected under the provisions of the Act of Uniformity, and ‘excommunicated’ in 1671, before being licensed to preach under the Indulgence of 1672 (DNB): the fact that he was excommunicated does not imply that he was startlingly heterodox or troublesome, since people were commonly excommunicated in the Restoration for trifling offences (Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England*, pp. 214–17).
 - 19 *The Doctrine of Contentment Briefly Explained and Practically Applied*, p. 75.
 - 20 *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment* (1685), sig. A2r.: this work was posthumously published by a consortium of Independents, four of whom – William Bridge, Thomas Goodwin, Philip Nye, Sidrach Simpson – had cooperated with Burroughes in *An Apologetical Narration* to the Westminster Assembly in 1644, lamenting ‘authoritative presbyterial government’; see further Spurr, *English Puritanism 1603–1689* (Basingstoke, 1998), pp. 104–5.
 - 21 *Fifteen Sermons upon Contentment and Resignation to the Will of God* (1719); *Of Contentment, Patience and Resignation to the Will of God* (1685).
 - 22 For Barrow’s connections with the Latitude-men, see Simon, *Three Restoration Divines*, 226–8; and for some evidence that Barrow was charier than many Latitudinarians about arguing from rationalist sources – evidence relevant to my argument – see John Gascoigne, ‘Isaac Barrow’s academic milieu: Interregnum and Restoration Cambridge’, in *Before Newton: The Life and Times of Isaac Barrow*, ed. Mordechai Feingold (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 250–90, at p. 281.
 - 23 For discussion of Dryden’s relations with Latitudinarianism, see Harth, *Contexts of Dryden’s Thought*, pp. 155–61, 222–3.
 - 24 *Of Contentment, Patience and Resignation to the Will of God*, pp. 124–5.
 - 25 Appointing Barrow Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, Charles I referred to him as the best scholar in England; for details of his classical scholarship, see Anthony Grafton, ‘Barrow as a scholar’, in *Before Newton: The Life and Times of Isaac Barrow*, pp. 291–302.
 - 26 *All’s Well That Ends Well*, V. ii. 4.
 - 27 Steven Zwicker, ‘Preface’ to *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature 1650–1740* (Cambridge, 1998), p. xii.
 - 28 It might fairly be said, though, that scholars have been more interested in the religious and literary manifestations of late seventeenth-century scepticism – on which see, among many examples, Gillian Manning, ‘Rochester’s Satyr Against Reason and Mankind and Contemporary Religious Debate’, in *The Seventeenth Century*, 8 (1993), 99–121, and Jeremy Treglown, ‘Scepticism and Parody in the Restoration’, in *Modern Language Review*, 75 (1980), 18–47 – than in its application to classical ethics.

- 29 *The Art of Contentment*, p. 4; *Fifteen Sermons upon Contentment*, pp. 282–3; see also Rivers, *Reason, Grace and Sentiment*, p. 35.
- 30 Davies was responsible for the unauthorised edition of Hobbes's *Of Liberty and Necessity* (1654) and for its wildly anticlerical prefatory 'Epistle to the Reader'; for his relations with other anticlerical figures in the 1670s, see *The Correspondence of Thomas Hobbes*, ed. Noel Malcolm, 2 vols (Oxford, 1994), II, 899–900; for an outline of Davies's life and a bibliography of his publications, see Joseph Tucker, 'John Davies of Kidwelly (1627?–1693), Translator from the French', in *Proceedings of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 64 (1950), 119–51.
- 31 Joseph Tucker, 'The Earliest English Translation of La Rochefoucauld's *Maximes*', in *Modern Language Notes*, 64 (1949), 413–15.
- 32 Henry C. Clark, *La Rochefoucauld and the Language of Unmasking in Seventeenth-Century France* (Geneva, 1994), p. 13.
- 33 *Epictetus Junior*, p. 108.
- 34 *Ibid.*, pp. 18–19 (nos. xxvi–xxviii).
- 35 On Dryden's relations with Charleton, see the headnote to 'To my Honoured Friend Dr Charleton', in *Poems*, I, 70; and for suggestions of a link between Dryden's translations from Lucretius and *Epicurus's Morals*, Paul Hammond, 'The Integrity of Dryden's Lucretius', in *Modern Language Review*, 78 (1983), 1–23, at 6–7, 23.
- 36 *Essays of John Dryden*, ed. W. P. Ker, 2 vols (Oxford, 1900), I, 4; for the suggestion that this passage demonstrates Dryden's 'sympathetic interest in Hobbesian determinism', see Derek Hughes, *English Drama 1660–1700* (Oxford, 1998), p. 42.
- 37 For some indications that Charleton's temperament may have included a strand of naïve idealism – a tendency to make gigantic claims for the thinkers who were the objects of his enthusiasm, and an uninspected optimism about man's capacity to act in accordance with rational principles – see Lindsay Sharp, 'Walter Charleton's Early Life 1620–1659, and Relationship to Natural Philosophy in Mid-Seventeenth Century England', in *Annals of Science*, 30 (1973), 311–40, at 314–15, 322–4.
- 38 *Epicurus's Morals* (2nd edn., 1670), pp. 200, 201.
- 39 *The Works of John Dryden*, ed. E. N. Hooker, H. T. Swedenberg Jr., *et al.*, 20 vols (Berkeley and Los Angeles, Cal., 1956–), XV, 62.
- 40 Hammond, *John Dryden: A Literary Life*, p. 54; for a sustained analysis of Dryden's heroic plays as 'humane, intelligent, and subtle studies of the disparity between Herculean aspiration and human reality', see Derek Hughes, *Dryden's Heroic Plays* (1981), in particular pp. 1–21 (I quote from pp. 1–2).
- 41 On their association, see James Anderson Winn, *John Dryden and His World* (New Haven, Mass., 1987), pp. 343, 348, 374; as Phillip Harth has lately pointed out, in *Pen for a Party: Dryden's Tory Propaganda in its Contexts* (Princeton, NJ, 1993), pp. 269–70, 'The evidence ... shows Dryden to have been far more widely acquainted with contemporary Tory propaganda than has previously been realised ... In his 'Epistle to the Whigs' prefixed to *The Medall*, Dryden established his credentials as a political polemicist by assuring the writers for the opposition that 'I have perus'd many of your Papers'. He could have made an even stronger claim of this kind to fellow Tory writers, with many of whose newspapers, pamphlets and broadsides he demonstrates the close familiarity of

- a colleague engaged with them in a common cause, and wishing to ensure that his goals accord with theirs.'
- 42 *Epictetus Junior*, p. 119.
- 43 L'Estrange is still under-researched; but for some recent discussion of his activities, which complements my own, see Dorothy Turner, 'Roger L'Estrange's Deferral Politics in the Public Sphere', in *The Seventeenth Century*, 13 (1998), 85–101.
- 44 For L'Estrange's awareness of the difficulty, see, for instance, *The Free-Born Subject: or, The Englishmans Birthright* (1681): 'You shall seldom or never find this expression used, but as a kind of Popular Challenge; and still in favour of the free-born, without any regard to the Subject, whereas we should as well consider the Authority of an Imperial Prince on the one hand as the Priviledges of a Free-born People on the other ... The Englishmans Birthright sounds much to the same purpose too, with the Free-born Subject; only there lies a stronger Emphasis (in Common Speech) upon the word Englishman. As when we speak of a Brave Man, that stands up for the Honour and Defence of his Country; such a one, we cry, is a Right Englishman, a True Englishman' (p. 1).
- 45 Miriam Griffin, *Seneca: A Philosopher in Politics* (Oxford, 1976), p. 296.
- 46 In fact, as Griffin makes clear, the 'sapiens' represents only one wing of Seneca's thoughts on the advisability of political participation; he also canvassed a contrary ideal, that of the 'imperfectus', 'the self-confident active man': see *Seneca: A Philosopher in Politics*, p. 296, and for an excellent discussion of Seneca's tangled and various views on public life and private life, pp. 315–66. It may be that the long essay entitled 'Of Happy Life', which makes up the second of the three parts of *Seneca's Morals Abstracted*, was a devious effort to establish the 'sapiens' as the single ideal of Seneca's ethical thought. The essay is not, as one might expect, a translation of Seneca's 'De Vita Beata', but a sort of soi-disant summary of Seneca's views on happiness, which misrepresents those views by gathering its materials from the most thoroughly quietistic portions of Seneca's work, notably the 'De Otio', the work in which there is least to distinguish him from Epicurus, on which see Griffin, *Seneca: A Philosopher in Politics*, pp. 328–34.
- 47 *Seneca's Morals*, sig. 3L1r.
- 48 For evidence of the centrality of 'ease' and 'care' within the terminology of Dryden's translations from Lucretius, see Hammond, *Dryden and the Traces of Classical Rome* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 168–70.
- 49 'Life of Dryden', in *Lives of the English Poets*, ed. G. B. Hill, 2 vols (Oxford, 1905), I, 458.
- 50 See *Poems*, II, 385 n.; also, H. A. Mason, 'The Dream of Happiness', in *The Cambridge Quarterly*, 8 (1978), 11–55, at 22–36.
- 51 For an exemplary discussion of that engagement, see Hammond, *Dryden and the Traces of Classical Rome*, pp. 171–7; and for a reading which disproportionately emphasises the ending, Winn, *John Dryden and His World*, p. 400.
- 52 For Dryden's editorial role in determining the shape of *Sylvae*, see Gillespie, 'Dryden's *Sylvae*', together with his essay on 'The Early Years of the Dryden-Tonson Partnership: The Background to their Composite Translations and Miscellanies of the 1680s', in *Restoration*, 12 (1988), 10–19.
- 53 Commentators eager to stress Dryden's attachment to the Epicurean content

- of the poem sometimes appear to elide its ending: see, for instance, Hammond, *John Dryden: A Literary Life*, p. 151: 'Epode II celebrates the joys of a simple pastoral life, where the countryman [*sic*] has turned his back on the turbulent world of public life with its clamorous voices'.
- 54 See the letter which Keats's publisher John Taylor wrote to John Woodhouse, on 25 September 1819, in *The Keats Circle*, ed. Hyder Edward Rollins (2nd edn., 1965), I, 96; Keats to Woodhouse, 22 September 1819 (commenting on 'Isabella, or The Pot of Basil'); and for discussion, Christopher Ricks, *Keats and Embarrassment* (Oxford, 1976), pp. 146–7.
- 55 As Hammond acutely notes, in these lines 'the emphasis changes from Horace's attention to the proud thresholds of powerful citizens, to Dryden's interest in the state of mind with which such people are approached ... the voluntary servitude' (*Dryden and the Traces of Classical Rome*, p. 175); but it is worth adding that 'voluntary servitude' was said by some to be the habitual state of Dryden's mind: 'servile' and its cognates were terms his Whig enemies were particularly fond of attaching to him, as, for instance, Shadwell does in *The Medal of John Bayes* (1682), reprinted in *Dryden: The Critical Heritage*, ed. John and Helen Kinsley (1971), pp. 143–50, at pp. 145, 150; 'dared with awe' too precisely describes a condition in which the Whigs often represented him.
- 56 For the suggestion that Dryden revised 'To my Lady Castlemaine' (1663) for publication in *Examen Poeticum*, because he regarded the flattering 'hyperbole' of the original as 'embarrassing' (which is putting it mildly), see *Poems*, I, 80; for the possible genesis of *The Medal* in a 'hint' from Charles II, and Joseph Spence's report that Dryden, like a good Laureate dog, 'took the hint, carried the poem as soon as it was written to the King, and had a present of hundred broadpieces for it', see *Poems*, II, 7.
- 57 This was first pointed out by H. A. Mason, in the second part of his long essay on the translation, 'The Dream of Happiness', in *The Cambridge Quarterly*, 9 (1980), 218–71, at 251–3.
- 58 See, for instance, Shadwell, *The Tory-Poets: A Satyr* (1682), which describes Dryden's 'Muse' as 'prostitute upon the Stage', reprinted in *Dryden: The Critical Heritage*, pp. 151–6, at p. 151.
- 59 For the suggestion that 'the Horace who attracted [Dryden] was ... the philosophical poet of Odes 1. 9, 3. 29 and Epod. 2', see Paul Hammond, 'Figures of Horace in Dryden's literary criticism', in *Horace Made New*, ed. Charles Martindale and David Hopkins (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 127–47, at p. 147.
- 60 It is the only one of Dryden's five translations from Lucretius not discussed in Hopkins, *John Dryden*, and the same applies to Hammond, *Dryden and the Traces of Classical Rome*; Mason and Hopkins do, however, include it in their anthology of *The Beauties of Dryden*.
- 61 The interpolated phrase as a whole seems to recall Job 17: 1 – 'My breath is corrupt, my days are extinct, the graves are ready for me.' (AV) – which illustrates the complex interrelations of pagan and Christian sources in Dryden's thought; contemporary churchmen, even those sympathetic to pagan philosophy, had more difficulty accepting the suicidal extremity of Job's despair: Simon Patrick, for instance, sought to finesse the moment in his *The Book of Job Paraphras'd*, which appeared in the same year as *Sylvae*: 'Job desires he may be tried presently before God's tribunal, his Life being just upon the point to expire' (p. 97).

- 62 Ben Jonson, 'To the Immortal Memory and Friendship of that Noble Pair, Sir Lucius Cary and Sir H. Morison', 8.
- 63 Johnson's *Dictionary* records Dryden using both forms of the adjective.
- 64 Hopkins, *John Dryden*, p. 115; see further pp. 115–16, 123–4 for a suggestive discussion of the importance of the verb 'live' in Epicurean contexts within his contributions to *Sylvae*.
- 65 *Epicurus's Morals*, pp. 132–3.
- 66 *Epictetus Junior*, p. 41.
- 67 For the claim that Dryden was particularly concerned to replicate the energy of Lucretius's poetic voice, see Emrys Jones, '“A Perpetual Torrent”: Dryden's Lucretian Style', in *Augustan Studies: Essays in Honour of Irvin Ehrenpreis*, ed. D. L. Patey and T. L. Keegan (Newark, DEL., 1985), pp. 47–62.
- 68 For a recent account of the conflict between the subject matter of the *De Rerum Natura* and its style, see Philip Hardie, *Virgil's Aeneid: Cosmos and Imperium* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 17–22.
- 69 On Lucretius's employment of the techniques of 'diatribe', see E. J. Kenney, *The "De Rerum Natura" of Lucretius. Book Three* (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 11–15; and for some distinguished proofs of Dryden's responsiveness to these elements of Lucretius's verse, see Jones, 'Dryden's Lucretian Style', pp. 54–62.
- 70 *Epicurus's Morals*, sig. E2v.
- 71 Gillespie comments that they deserve to be forgotten ('Dryden's *Sylvae*', p. 36); only one critic that I know of has pointed out anything of poetic value in any of them – Eric Griffiths, whose spirited account of 'Daphnis. From Theocritus Idyll 27' may be found in his Chatterton Lecture on 'Dryden's Past', in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 84 (1994), 113–49, at 133–4.
- 72 Hopkins does not discuss the episodes from Virgil in his otherwise eloquent account of *Sylvae*, in *John Dryden*, pp. 111–30; Gillespie too depreciates them by comparison with the passages from Lucretius and Horace, in 'Dryden's *Sylvae*', p. 121; the exception is Paul Hammond, who has consistently paid attention to them, in *John Dryden: A Literary Life* (pp. 146–7), for instance, and in *Dryden and the Traces of Classical Rome* (pp. 150–6), laying the groundwork for an understanding of their role in the volume as a whole – though I disagree with his conclusions, as will become clear below.
- 73 The potential for such modulation within the ambit of the senses of 'disdain' is clear from the citations beneath the word in Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755): the second of them – from *Coriolanus* – is impassioned ('They do disdain us much beyond our thoughts, / Which makes me sweat with wrath'), the fourth – from Addison's *Cato* – a *locus classicus* for the philosopher's conquest of passion: 'Tell him, Cato / Disdains a life which he has power to offer.'
- 74 Charleton, *Epicurus's Morals*, p. 38.
- 75 In Theocritus, the object of the lover's desire is male: see *Poems*, II, 352n.
- 76 *Ibid.*, p. 143.
- 77 When Thomas Creech, the translator of Lucretius, committed suicide in 1700, his death was regarded by some as the inevitable conclusion of an Epicurean journey: see Michael MacDonald and Terence Murphy, *Sleepless Souls: Suicide in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 152, 170; interestingly, one of the poems mourning Creech's death – which correctly attributed it to a disappointment in love – was couched in the form of a Theocritean idyll: *Daphnis: Or, A Pastoral*

- Elegy Upon the Unfortunate and much-lamented Death of Mr Thomas Creech* (1700).
- 78 *Aeneid* x. 870–1.
- 79 *Aeneid* x. 858.
- 80 Gillespie observes that the death of Dryden’s Mezentius has a ‘Stoic’ quality: ‘Dryden’s *Sylvae*’, pp. 139–40.
- 81 In the dedication of *Fables Ancient and Modern* (1700): see *The Poems of John Dryden*, ed. James Kinsley, 4 vols (Oxford, 1958), p. 1442 (the volumes are continuously paginated).
- 82 These lines seem to have stuck in Dryden’s mind: he echoed them at the moment of Priam’s death, and of Turnus’s, in the *Aeneis*; for a reading of the interrelations of these moments, see Hammond, *Dryden and the Traces of Classical Rome*, pp. 238–9.
- 83 *The Poems of John Dryden*, ed. Kinsley, p. 1442.
- 84 *Epictetus Junior*, pp. 41, 42.
- 85 I borrow this tag from La Rochefoucauld: see Clark, *La Rochefoucauld and the Language of Unmasking*, p. 122, which summarises his analytical technique as ‘the exploration of the heart’s “plis et replis”, of the “terra incognita” that comprises the domain of self-love’.
- 86 Hammond, *Dryden and the Traces of Classical Rome*, pp. 151, 152, 156.
- 87 Joseph Farrell, ‘The Virgilian Intertext’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Virgil*, ed. Charles Martindale (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 222–38, at p. 235.
- 88 See, for instance, the subtle discussion of Aeneas’s arrival in Italy, in Richard Jenkyns, *Virgil’s Experience* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 513–64.
- 89 See, for instance, Michael West, ‘Dryden and the Disintegration of Renaissance Heroic Ideals’, in *Costerus*, 7 (1973), 193–222, and ‘Dryden’s Ambivalence as a Translator of Heroic Themes’, in *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 36 (1973), 347–66; and, more recently, Cedric D. Reverand II, *Dryden’s Final Poetic Mode* (Philadelphia, PA., 1988), ch. 2: ‘The Anti-Heroic Fables’ (pp. 11–45).
- 90 See e.g. ‘Lucretius: The Beginning of the Second Book’, 23 (*Poems*, II, 313); ‘From Horace, Epod. 2d’, 4 (*Poems*, II, 379).
- 91 As is suggested by ‘Horace. Ode 29. Book 3’, 10: ‘Make haste, and leave thy business and thy care’, Dryden often uses ‘business’ as a synonym for ‘care’, the enemy of the Epicurean ‘*sapiens*’ (see further the annotation to that line, in *Poems*, II, 370); hence, the importance of Dryden’s decision to put some grammatical space between the ‘Trojan peers’ and the ‘business’ of the state.
- 92 *Epicurus’s Morals*, p. 30.
- 93 For ‘supine’, see *Threnodia Augustalis*, 14 and n. (*Poems*, II, 392); for ‘Dissolv’d’, see ‘Horace Lib. 1. Ode 9’, 7 (*Poems*, II, 366); for ‘Ease’, see ‘From Horace, Epod 2d’, 59 (*Poems*, II, 383), together with *Absalom and Achitophel*, 168 and n. (*Poems*, I, 470); and for ‘securely’, see ‘Horace. Ode 29. Book 3’, 67 (*Poems*, II, 374).
- 94 Hammond, *Dryden and the Traces of Classical Rome*, p. 156.
- 95 In the 1697 text, it reads:
- All creatures else forgot their daily care,
And sleep, the common gift of nature, share;
Except the Trojan peers, who wakeful sate
In nightly council for th’endangered state.

They vote a message to their absent chief,
 Show their distress, and beg a swift relief.
 Amid the camp a silent seat they chose,
 Remote from clamour, and secure from foes.
 On their left arms their ample shields they bear,
 The right reclined upon the bending spear.

(*Poems*, II, 269)

- 96 See, most recently, Hammond, *Dryden and the Traces of Classical Rome*, pp. 150–1, 153.
- 97 For a convincing discussion of the significance of the Oldham elegy to Dryden personally, see Hammond, *John Oldham and the Renewal of Classical Culture*, pp. 212–16.
- 98 *The Rehearsal*, ed. Montague Summers (Stratford-upon-Avon, 1914), pp. 2, 3.
- 99 Hopkins, *John Dryden*, p. 120; Mason, ‘Dryden’s Chaucer’, p. 64.
- 100 Charles Cotton, *Essays of Michael Seigneur De Montaigne* (2nd edn., 1693), I, 475, 474.
- 101 *Ibid.*, III, 217–18.
- 102 I quote from the translation by Charles Cotton, which provides useful indirect evidence of how Dryden might have read Montaigne, for Cotton’s temperament matched Dryden’s in two relevant respects – he was attracted to the ideal of contented retirement (to the extent of writing Epicurean verse on the subject), and he delighted in the literary arts of debunking (though his travesties of classical epic are, of course, rougher things than *MacFlecknoe*); as the vigorously satirical tone of the passage quoted suggests, translating Montaigne gave him scope to exercise the latter as well as the former of those predilections. Dryden may not have seen Cotton’s Montaigne until after the publication of *Sylvae*, however, since it was not published until later in 1685, though it is, of course, possible that he knew it in manuscript: Stuart Gillespie discerns some echoes of its phrasing within *Sylvae* (‘Dryden’s *Sylvae*’, pp. 213–14); for examples of its presence in *Fables*, see Mason, ‘Dryden’s Chaucer’, pp. 236–7.
- 103 Cotton, *Essays of Michael Seigneur De Montaigne*, sig. *3v.
- 104 See Hopkins and Mason, *The Beauties of Dryden*, p. 277.

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