

Stoics in the ocean: Iambulus' novel as philosophical fiction

PETER VON MÖLLENDORFF

Universität Giessen¹

We neither know the title of the work Diodorus excerpts in his *Bibliotheca Historica* (2,55-60), while attributing it to a certain Iambulus, nor do we have any information on the identity of its author. Yet it is the name of an author Lucian deems worthy of being singled out for special mention in the proem of his *True History* (1,3).² Generically speaking, the account of a voyage to the Islands of the Sun in the Southern Ocean, given by the first-person narrator Iambulus, and dated back to the 3rd or 2nd century B. C.,³ is generally attributed to the novelistic genre. This is suggested by the great number of pivotal motifs of the later romantic novel and adventure novel, especially prominent in the frame narrative concerning the outward and return journey: double abduction, danger to life, enslavement, double storm at sea, homecoming (implying an overall ring-compositional structure).

It is precisely when we consider Iambulus' account as novelistic that the composition of the middle part attracts our attention. Comparable novels develop a quite complex plot throughout, they are action-oriented, and they introduce a wide range of characters who have an impact on the protagonists' actions. This

¹ I am much obliged to Katrin Dolle for her translation; any remaining mistakes are, of course, my own.

² Cf. Winiarczyk's fundamental literature survey: 1997, 128-153, esp. 129-131. The name Iambulus – Diodorus leaves open the question as to whether he is to be identified as the author or only as the first-person narrator and protagonist – is either of Aramaic or Arabic (more precisely, Nabataic) origin; cf. Altheim 1948, 155. If, following Cizek 2006, 57, Iambulus may well be called a 'marchand arabe hellénisé', we would thereby have a Hellenistic pioneer for figural exoticism in the novel of the late Roman imperial period (i.e. Heliodorus).

³ On Iambulus' text being only vaguely datable, cf. Winiarczyk 1997, 146f. Suggestions range between the 4th century B.C. and the publishing of Diodorus' *Bibliotheca* in the middle of the 1st century B.C.

even holds true for the great and widely imitated text, the prototype of the Greek novel, the *Odyssey*, especially Odysseus' *apólogoi*. According to Diodorus' excerpt, in Iambulus this part was substituted for a description of the island's inhabitants, their institutions, their customs and traditions. The novelist seeks to arouse an impression of an ideal place in his description, as some examples may illustrate:⁴

... for by reason of the fertility of the island and the mildness of the climate, food-stuffs are produced of themselves in greater quantity than is sufficient for their needs (2,57,1) ... There are also in the island abundant springs of water, the warm springs serving well for bathing and the relief of fatigue, the cold excelling in sweetness and possessing the power to contribute to good health. Moreover, the inhabitants give attention to every branch of learning and especially to astrology (2,57,3) ... And the inhabitants are extremely long-lived, living even to the age of one hundred and fifty years, and experiencing for the most part no illness (2,57,4) ... They do not marry, but possess their children in common, and maintaining the children who are born as if they belonged to all, they love them equally (2,58,1) ... In each group the oldest man regularly exercises the leadership, just as if he were a kind of king, and is obeyed by all the members (2,58,6) ... Although all the inhabitants enjoy an abundant provision of everything from what grows of itself in these islands, they do not indulge in the enjoyment of this abundance without restraint, but they practise simplicity and take for their food only what suffices for their needs. Meat and whatever else is roasted or boiled in water are prepared by them, but of all the other dishes ingeniously concocted by professional cooks, such as sauces and the various kinds of seasoning, they have no notion whatsoever (2,59,1) ... And at the festivals and feasts which are held among them, there are both pronounced and sung in honour of the gods hymns and spoken laudations, and especially in honour of the sun, after whom they name both the islands and themselves (2,59,7).

These examples suffice to show that Iambulus' chief concern was the depiction of a perfect utopian commonwealth in his novel, maintaining a stable and 'dispute-free' social order, which is perfect in many regards – communal thinking, education, healthy and wise conduct of life, natural religiousness – under opti-

⁴ All translations are by C. H. Oldfather (Loeb edition 1935).

mal climate conditions.⁵ Iambulus seems to have stressed its perfection in such an explicit way that even this short epitome makes the emphasis clear: ‘Moreover, the fruits in their islands ripen throughout the entire year, even as the poet writes: Here pear on pear grows old, and apple close / On apple, yea, and clustered grapes on grapes, / And fig on fig’ (2,56,7). These two verses are taken from the description of Alcinous’ garden on the isle of the Phaeacians (*Od.* 7,120f.). They are almost proverbial for the perfection of a place and its inhabitants. Since it is unlikely that the epitomator added these Odyssean verses of his own accord, they should be considered as pertaining to the original and indicating the wellbeing of the Greek arrivals who, due to their intellectual education (2,55,2), express their appreciation for their new lives by using a classical quotation.

Possibly the action was rather reduced in this central section. Nevertheless, it was not completely replaced by mere description. Diodorus’ excerpt shifts from one observation to another, and neither an associative nor a systematic structure of his description can be determined. The reason may be to some extent an original representation of these data, linking the perception and narration on the part of the characters to their gradual acquaintance with the island, their strolls, their new encounters, etc., and so proceeding in an unsystematic way, with the purpose of creating a certain degree of tension in the reader.⁶ The excerpter Diodorus, concerned with the ‘facts’ more than with the (possibly meagre) narrative frame, ignored the latter in favour of a mere listing of the former.⁷

That Iambulus’ narrative is a fictional text conforming to the novelistic genre, and that it is not based on any actual experience on an island in the Indian Ocean, was plausibly argued by Marek Winiarczyk in his survey of the literature on Iambulus.⁸ It is a utopian novel, the narrative of which is not only in line with a contemporary tendency to idealise ‘primitive’ peoples, but is also guided by the literary topics of the locus amoenus and the concept of a Golden Age, which has likewise come down to us through literature.⁹ Moreover, the doubled motif

⁵ On this estimation, cf. Ferguson 1975, 124-129, Holzberg 1996, 628, Winiarczyk 1997, 142; cf. now Winiarczyk 2011, 181-203.

⁶ Cf. Holzberg 1996, 627.

⁷ This is comparable to Lucian’s approach when describing the customs and traditions on the moon in the middle part of his *VH* 1,22-26, possibly imitating Iambulus’ work, which he explicitly mentions as intertext in the proem of his work (*VH.* 1,2).

⁸ Winiarczyk 1997, 143-146; id. 2011, 190-196. These sections also review the identification of the Islands of the Sun with Sumatra, Ceylon, Sokotra and Madagascar, a discussion spanning centuries from Ramusio in the 16th century to Ehlers, 1985.

⁹ Cf. Winiarczyk 1997, 134-137, id. 2011, 188, and the extensive discussion in Montanari 2009, 51-68.

of the voyage to and from the archipelago of the seven Islands of the Sun, taking four months respectively, in my view is central to assuming a fictional utopia. It is the motif of a voyage, the course of which gets out of control both times due to heavy storms. The effect of such a motif is that the way towards the island (which moreover without any doubt is stylized into a myth in the initial Ethiopians' story of 600 blissful years, resulting from the voyage of two scapegoats) is obscured as such and cannot be travelled a second time by the narrator. Nor will the reader be able to follow or survey its route. This motif, that I would like to call a 'utopian leap', is indeed peculiar to all ancient and many modern utopian travel writings. It has a double purpose. The motif gives the impression of authenticity, of the depiction's probability, to a superficial naive reader or to any reader who approaches the text in a first, merely delightful reading. It thus functions as some kind of verification. An experienced and educated reader, however, recognises the 'utopian leap' as a signal for reading the following in an analytic-hermeneutic way and not only as fiction, but as a utopia, and thereby as a text claiming social relevance. In doing so it demands to be interpreted by the reader.

It is quite interesting under these circumstances that Iambulus' description of the Island of the Sun Archipelago implies references to social-utopian motifs of late classic and Hellenistic philosophical schools beyond the already mentioned literary reminiscences.¹⁰ I only mention the most important ones, compiled by Winiarczyk:¹¹

1. The islanders are handsome and strong
2. There is neither slavery nor any hierarchic social structure
3. There are neither temples nor gymnasia
4. Women and children are 'owned' by the community
5. Work is obligatory
6. Food is plain
7. The old and the sick depart this life voluntarily by suicide, or rather, euthanasia
8. Indifference towards the postmortal body
9. Importance of education and astrological interest
10. Solar cult and worship of celestial bodies

¹⁰ Cf. Winiarczyk 1997, 135, esp. n. 21-23.

¹¹ Winiarczyk 1997, 138; id. 2011, 188f.

If such a reference can be substantiated as the novel's basic motive, then we would be confronted with the novum of a philosophically oriented fictional narration,¹² a narrative which, almost in an emulative development of the Platonic myths, where we already find the combination of narrative action and philosophical content, combines dramatic action with the concept of an ideal society. Indeed the text of an author like Iambulus would have to be considered the birth of the modern utopian novel.

We may ask whether Iambulus favoured any one of the philosophical schools in his depiction. This is not a superfluous question, since such an ideological accentuation may facilitate the explication of some motifs, possibly even the whole setting of the novel. Nay, maybe it even reveals some aspects of the literary effect Iambulus aimed at. Let us start with Diodorus: Why was he interested in recounting that novel in such an extensive way within his historiographical depiction, a novel which he as a well-educated person probably had recognised as fictional?¹³ One reason may be that he felt some 'ideological', that is, philosophical affinity, because already in the first sentences of his proem Diodorus presents himself as a Stoic. For better comprehension, I start by giving a brief summary of Stoic ethics and thereby calling to mind its essential concepts.

Stoic ethics gives a hierarchy of things which deserve approval, are neutral or should be denied: a hierarchy of virtues (ἀρεταί), neutral modes of behaviour and values (ἀδιάφορα), and of vices (κακία) [SVF 1,190]. The general formula the Stoic takes as the basis for this hierarchy is based on the notion of a connection between human nature and the nature of the world: Diodorus' contemporary Posidonius of Rhodes combined Stoic metaphysics, according to which the power of the *logos* streams through the whole world and through all life, and the ancient theory of a proceeding degeneration of human civilisation. Correspondingly, man was closer to the *logos*' influence in early times than he is now. Therefore he likewise saw the triad ascent - culmination - descent in every individual as in every people and in the whole world. This connection between world and man is as inevitable as the process of degeneration. Therefore, living in accordance with nature (ὁμολογουμένως τῇ φύσει ζῆν) [SVF 1,179] must be imperative, i.e., doing what is appropriate (τὸ καθήκον) [SVF 3,495] to man as being part of the cosmos and of nature; according to Judith Perkins this means

¹² Euhemerus' utopia of Panchaia may indeed be older than the work of Iambulus, but, although this text is often referred to as a travel novel or a utopian novel among scholars (cf. the documentation in Winicarczyk 2011, 134-136), I cannot find any narrative embedding in it. Perkins 1995, 77-103, shows that later novels of the Roman imperial period make recourse with special emphasis to Stoic positions, especially in delineating the protagonists and their behaviour.

¹³ Cf. again Lucian's (polemic) criticism in VH 1,3.

bringing 'one's life into conformity with the actual course of events'.¹⁴ Man arrives at an inner unity with himself, at feeling completely belonging to himself (οἰκείωσις), when, with the help of contemplation, he discovers something within his own self, which is profoundly and truly beneficial for him [e. g. SVF 1,197]. This harmony with oneself then extends and becomes harmony with relatives, friends, fellow men, eventually with the whole world. The Stoic sees himself obliged to act consistently and responsibly, and in a way not only beneficial to himself but also to all the others (κατορθώματα) [SVF 3,494]. Only by fulfilling the social roles assigned to him, his different πρόσωπα, can he be a 'good man'.¹⁵ He may therefore not withdraw from community life, but is demanded to help co-creating this life in its full extent, also beyond the narrow borders of one's own community. The Stoic way of thinking is a cosmopolitan one [SVF 1,262].

It is already the proem in the first book of Diodorus' *Bibliothēke* that shows us how very committed Diodorus is to following Stoic positions: all men shall profit from reading it since they are all members of one big community; Diodorus regards himself as the advocate of some 'divine providence' (πρόνοια) [SVF 1,176], which the Stoic school deterministically holds responsible for human actions. He presents the Stoic idea of cyclical world-time as well as that of cosmic harmony. The universal world process seems to him to be the domestic politics of a single polis; he thereby uses an image already popular in the old Stoic school. Finally, in Bibl. 1,2,4, he mentions Heracles, the Stoic wise man par excellence, as prototype of the Stoic performer of beneficiality.¹⁶

If Diodorus regards his historiography as some Stoic instrument, then its single elements should conform to such an intended literary effect as far as possible. The search for Stoic ideas therefore seems to suggest itself in a text like Iambulus' excerpt, which is loaded with philosophical motifs, for, as it is, this may well have been one of Diodorus' selection criteria.¹⁷ Due to lack of space, in the following only certain aspects will be thrown into sharp relief, and I wish to point out here that the proper question is directed only secondarily towards verifying or falsifying the factuality of such allusions, but primarily towards what kind of effect their - in my view undeniable - existence has on the understanding of the novel and of Iambulus' authorial concern.

¹⁴ Cf. Perkins 1995, 79.

¹⁵ Cf. Perkins 1995, 96-103.

¹⁶ Cf. Sacks 1990, 55-82.

¹⁷ Holzberg 1996, 624 shows that Diodorus' selection criteria for excerpts were subjective.

On the Stoic allusions of the lowest level in a certain sense, the taking over of single motifs, which has especially aroused the interest of scholars, I refer to Ferguson,¹⁸ and I only give two examples here: The inhabitants of the Isles of the Sun have to depart this life when reaching a certain age; this implies a peaceful resigning from power: 'In each group the oldest man regularly exercises the leadership, just as if he were a kind of king, and is obeyed by all the members; and when the first such ruler makes an end of his life in accordance with the law upon the completion of his one hundred and fiftieth year, the next oldest succeeds to the leadership' (2,58,6). This maxim of intentionally ending one's own life is analogous to the Stoic concept of life and death as *adiáphora*: Zenon of Citium, founder of the Stoic school, intentionally departed life in 262 B.C., as did his successor Cleanthes in the year 233 B.C. At the same time this habit regulates the handover of power within the social group: since the exact point of time for the change of government is predictable, options for conflicts related to it are at least quite reduced. The fact of putting aside the proper individual will to live for the sake of community interests is, as has been said, Stoic as well. As a second example I would like to quote the islanders' specific religiosity: 'And they worship as gods that which encompasses all things and the sun, and, in general, all the heavenly bodies. ... And at the festivals and feasts which are held among them, there are both pronounced and sung in honour of the gods hymns and spoken laudations, and especially in honour of the sun...' (2,59,2,7). Such a pantheistic and at the same time materialistic concept may also be combined with the Stoic doctrine. Especially the cyclical character of the orb's movement, quite familiar to the inhabitants of the Isles of the Sun due to their interest in astronomy, may almost symbolically be understood as the periodic generation, existence and destruction of the cosmos within the *ekpyrosis*. At the same time the Stoics locate divine presence in the world, not beyond: God is the world, nature and the universe. Likewise he is the *logos*, that is, the power of reason controlling each thing and everything, and making it follow a harmonious course [SVF I 160, 162, 175]. That is why revolt and the desire to live out one's individuality are futile. Accordingly, since there is no rivalry among them, they never experience civil disorders and they never cease placing the highest value upon internal harmony (*ἁμόνοια*, also a highly significant term in Stoic thinking; 2,58,1).¹⁹ But it is the islanders' cult practice, especially their singing of hymns, which seems to be prefigured in Stoic doctrine, when thinking of Cleanthes' famous *Hymn to Zeus*.

¹⁸ Ferguson 1975, 124-129.

¹⁹ This was the title of Chrysippus' work *Περὶ ἁμόνοιας*.

Let us move on to a higher level and inquire about the islanders' phenomenology of basic attitudes. The conduct of life in harmony with life's surrounding world demanded by Zenon and Cleanthes, τὸ ὁμολογουμένως τῇ φύσει ζῆν [e. g. SVF 1, 552, 555] is already provided for through nature's abundance on the Isles of the Sun. Still the islanders live in a deliberately resource-sparing way (2,59,1-4). At the same time the inhabitants of the Isles of the Sun stick to a certain kind of diet, that is, they provide for a perfect maintenance of their proper physical balance, although their circumstance of life would allow them to indulge in an extensive life of luxury. Life in the commune and commitment to the community, as it is seen in the community of wives and children, in the obedience to the eldest of the group, eventually in the mutual service (2,59,6), correspond to the Stoic principle of οἰκειώσις. This principle propagates the fulfillment of one's own self by way of useful activity within the closer community of the family, within the political community, eventually within the whole humanity [SVF 3, 346].²⁰ It is only the consequent fulfillment of this active cosmopolitan way of life, that the islanders, being and remaining autarchic and autochthonous due to their natural harmonious way of life, are also open to foreigners: But when they [Iambulus and his companion] were now drawing near to the island, some of the natives met them and drew their boat to land; and the inhabitants of the island, thronging together, were astonished at the arrival of the strangers, but they treated them honourably [ἐπιεικῶς]²¹ and shared with them the necessities of life which their country afforded (2,56,1). Nevertheless, this presupposes the arrivals' will to integrate: after all, the *oikeiosis* only functions in such a homogeneous group as that of the inhabitants of the Isles of the Sun, in which all members are interested in the community's well-being. As a matter of fact though, once both arrivals were merchants (2,55,2), they represent a profession which, in terms of background and education, quite to the contrary makes the personal pursuit of gain be near and dear to them. Thus the failure of integration efforts is inevitable:²² After remaining among this people for seven years Iambulus and his companion were ejected against their will, as being malefactors and

²⁰ Cf. Steinmetz 1994, 613-615, and most recently Bees, 2004.

²¹ On this term, which classifies the islanders from their first appearance as one of those marginal peoples usually idealised in Greek tradition, cf. Montanari 2009, 53-55.

²² In the context of philosophical discourse objections were raised against the excessively Epicurean lifestyle of the Phaeacians in the *Odyssey*; cf. e.g. Hor. *Ep.* 1,2,28f. and 1,15,25. If the already mentioned prominent quotation from the *Odyssey* (2,56,7) mentioned above was uttered by one of the Greek protagonists, then this would be an implicit sign for the philosophically versified reader, prior to the final éclat, of their incomprehension of the islanders' intuitions and thereby for their eventual inability to integrate.

as having been educated to evil habits (ὡς κακούργους καὶ πονηροὺς ἐθισμοῖς συντετραμμένους; 2,60,1).

Considering that Diodorus' excerpt pays much attention to detail, especially in the framing parts, it is even more striking that he does not mention any specific purpose for their expulsion. I therefore do not believe that there was any concrete offence, the more so as emphasizing this expulsion as happening against their own will (ἄκοντας) in combination with some (single) misdeed would not make any sense in my opinion.²³ I rather think it probable that after seven years the islanders came to the conclusion that Iambulus and his companion as such represented a threat to their ideal community, that they, due to their predisposition, were incapable for οἰκείωσις in the sense of feeling at home, and that they therefore had to be removed. Or, to put it another way: they proved incapable to fulfill their roles within this new society, a society distinguishing itself by the assignment of a clearly outlined range of tasks and hierarchic places, and forcing suicide on its members as soon as they cannot cope with these tasks any longer. Accordingly, Iambulus and his companion are not punished (since this would imply an intent to improve them), but expelled. The Greeks' obvious distress about this decision is adequate to that.

Thinking in that direction, the information about the seven years of their stay makes some Stoically determined sense as well.²⁴ Stoic pedagogy determined the seventh year of a child as the one in which the first step towards maturity was reached [SVF 2, 83]. At this point of time the child had acquired all proleptic concepts it needed to make decisions that were reasonably justified, cataleptic, that is, deliberate and therefore responsible, even though the child was not sufficiently mature to form a complete *dianoia*.²⁵ I therefore suggest to understand the period of seven years within the partial narration of their expulsion as the period foreigners, like children, were admitted in order to reach the required attitudes of ὁμολογουμένως ζῆν and of οἰκείωσις self-responsibly; when the islanders finally, after that lapse of time, found that the foreigners –

²³ Contrary e.g. Nesselrath 1993, 41-56, who suspects (52f.) erotic complications, and Holzberg 1996, 627, who assumes some sacrilegious act. Montanari 2009, 63 on the other hand is correct: '...les habitants de l'île du soleil mettaient probablement moins en accusation les deux voyageurs pour telle ou telle faute particulière qu'ils ne remettaient en cause ... les valeurs du monde auquel ces deux hommes appartenaient. ... cet exil forcé des deux compagnons exprime symboliquement l'altérité radicale existant entre l'île du soleil et le reste du monde.'

²⁴ Winiarczyk 1997, 147f. stresses the high frequency of mentionings of the numbers seven and four, understood by him numerologically, without giving any hint though to the specific hermeneutic significance of such symbolics.

²⁵ Cf. Pohlenz 1984, 56 and the documentation 32f.

and it is only now that the peculiar wording makes sense – had been raised (συντεθραμμένους) to bad customs and might not be reshaped into Stoic conformism, the foreigners were removed in order to prevent any harm to the community.

Assuming this, the possibility that Iambulus' novel might be intended as some fictional narrativation of a Stoic state utopia gains complexity. Iambulus then would not have contented himself with accumulating social utopian topics of Stoic provenance. He rather would have approached a grave issue of Stoic ethics and pedagogy. For on the one hand the Stoic school claims that everything, cosmos and individual, is combined through the *logos*' causal nexus, that therefore everything is predetermined (πρόνοια) and that every doing directed against this natural demand eventually is due to fail. On the other hand, though, the freedom, ἐλευθερία, of the individual that makes his decisions responsible, is propagated. Was there, under these circumstances, any option for the individual to make use of his natural abilities in another way, autonomously and anti-deterministically? Exactly that is the problem, the confrontation between determination and human autonomy, which remains unsolved in Stoic philosophy.²⁶ The compatibility of man and nature is not a matter of course but needs to be achieved by everyone. This gives rise to a potential conflict, and it was only therefore possible for Iambulus to narrativise Stoic ideas, that is, to design a novel with an action (in the emphatic sense of making a decision with the option of success and failure, not only in the reductionist sense of mere acting). It is exactly this conflict – spread on two groups of protagonists, the islanders and the arrivals – that enables the significant combination of frame narrative and description of a utopia.

Of course it is significant against this background, that Iambulus explicitly addressed the topic of 'education', based on an aptitude test on the Isles of the Sun (2,58,5): Each group of the inhabitants also keeps a bird of great size and of a nature peculiar to itself, by means of which a test is made of the infant children to learn what their spiritual disposition is; for they place them upon the birds, and such of them as are able to endure the flight through the air as the birds take wing they rear, but such as become nauseated and filled with consternation they cast out, as not likely either to live many years and being, besides, of no account because of their disposition. A child able to remain on the back of the bird without any fear – a bird, which may be seen as a quasi totemic representative of the respective group –, shows thereby on the one hand that it will be able to live in close communion with nature, embodied by the animality of the bird, on the other hand it thereby already proves its ability to integrate in the group repre-

²⁶ Cf. Forschner 1981, 104-113; generally Bobzien 1998.

sented by the bird. At the same time it demonstrates its innate ability to control its affects (*ἀπάθεια*), which, from a Stoic point of view, is of primary significance for voluntarily accepting what is predetermined by nature, and therefore its behaviour is significant for coping with exactly this conflict between individual propensity and fateful determination.

If this motif, fantastic at first view, turns out to be comprehensible when accepting a Stoic concern prevalent in the text, then another paradox of the utopian description opens up for a Stoic interpretation. This concerns a physical anomaly of the islanders (2,56,5f.): they have a peculiarity in regard to the tongue, partly the work of nature and congenital with them and partly intentionally brought about by artifice (*ἐξ ἐπινοίας φιλοτεχνούμενον*); among them, namely, the tongue is double for a certain distance, but they divide the inner portions still further, with the result that it becomes a double tongue as far as its base. Consequently they are very versatile as to the sounds they can utter, since they imitate not only every articulate language used by man but also the varied chatterings of the birds, and, in general, they can reproduce any peculiarity of sound. And the most remarkable thing of all is that at one and the same time they can converse perfectly with two persons who fall in with them, both answering questions and discoursing pertinently on the circumstances of the moment; for with one division of the tongue they can converse with the one person, and likewise with the other talk with the second. Certainly, the ability to reproduce any natural sounds, resulting from their forked tongues, may be understood in a Stoic way as a deliberately perfected ability to live 'consonantly' with nature. But thereby we are not yet doing justice to the detail of the description and especially to the last part of it. Would not there be more meant here than the mere concretisation of a perfected group life, in which it is possible to prevent any harmful disagreement between two individuals who are just supposed to communicate with each other, through many simultaneous individual dialogues? The search for a Stoic analogue might lead to the practice of allegorical interpretation, to be noticeably found in Stoic literary criticism.²⁷ This method serves the purpose of integrating fictional literature into the philosophical discourse by interpreting elements in the literary text that obviously are invented, untrue, improbable, as a discourse on truth deliberately enigmatic, and by being able in this way to philosophically make use of the authoritarian episteme, especially of the mythic narration. It operates on the assumption of two different levels of statements within a single text, which are hierarchically distinct. Nevertheless, the level of the literary significant is awarded some intrinsic value, namely that of emotional involvement and aesthetic perfection. If, on top of that, the related-

²⁷ Cf. Buffière 1956, 137-154 and *passim*, as well as Bernard 1990, 11-21.

ness of literary significant and allegorical significate is not provided by a proper (third) interpretational text, then something independent and distinct is revealed on both levels, corresponding to the meaning of ἀλληγορία, ‘to say different things’. It is exactly this art of saying one thing and another at the same time, which the single speakers of the Islands of the Sun with their forked tongues do master; and, as an allegorically operating hermeneut tries to perfect his art, thus the islanders are anxious to physically perfect their ability to communicate simultaneously.

Considering this we have now arrived at a point in our interpretation, which may already be called speculative. Going beyond though would hardly be admissible, since here the fact that we do not possess the original text but only an excerpt calls for a halt. That is, a reductive editing of the text has already taken place. Diodorus states explicitly, at least at two points, that he obviously does not reproduce longer explanations by Iambulus.²⁸ Thus in 2,59,4, he says the animals on these islands were of quite a peculiar nature (παρηλλαγμένας φύσεις), paradox to such an extent that it sounds unbelievable. And at the end of his excerpt Diodorus mentions (2,60,3) Iambulus’ adding some pieces of information on India as well, which at that time was unknown to other men. Diodorus therefore was interested in partially excerpting certain aspects and themes of the original depictions in a detailed way, but in deleting others, especially those which were intended to create distrust in the reader. He considered it part of his duty as a historian to select his information in a critical way.²⁹ We cannot therefore rule out the possibility that the text’s dominant Stoic style is the result of Diodorus’ Stoic preferences and his aiming at a literary effect.

Let us therefore look at the initial question on whether the text might be classified as novelistic. If this could be brought into line with the text’s stoicizing tendency as well, it would again lessen concerns about Diodorus’ possible influence, since the genre of the novel is not amenable to the being influenced by the excerptor. Novelistic examples from later times, more comprehensively or completely surviving, have one common salient feature in common: they intensely speak of themselves, their aesthetics and their poetics. This metapoetic level has been sufficiently established in much of the research on the novelistic genre, so that we may ask for its existence in Iambulus’ novel as well. At this point I would like to bring up for discussion the following considerations based on the localisation of the novel’s main part in the Indian Ocean, far from the known world. The choice for this setting was not inevitable, as can be seen in

²⁸ Cf. Winiarczyk 2011, 183.

²⁹ On this last point cf. especially Wiater 2006, 248–271, with regard to Iambulus 264f.

the utopian text by Euhemerus, which was written at about the same time, and which is indeed settled in the periphery of the oecumene as well, but still within sight of known shores. Contrarily to that, choosing an isle within the distant ocean Iambulus possibly alludes to a contemporary debate on fictionality, a debate, which the Stoics took an unequivocal stand on: the discussion on the displacement of poetic actions into the exterior ocean, the *ἐκτοπισμός*, or rather *ἐξωκεανισμός*.

This debate first and foremost concerned the books 9-12 of the *Odyssey*, in which, at the court of Alcinous, king of the Phaeacians, Odysseus tells the tale of his journey, and it concerned in particular the controversial question as to whether this odyssey was historical and had happened in a historically and geographically real space (or might have happened).³⁰ Extreme positions were represented by the Stoic Crates of Mallos on the one hand, who held the opinion that Homer had given a realistic description of the world's shape with his geographic material, and by the Alexandrian Eratosthenes of Cyrene on the other hand, who regarded psychagogy and entertainment as poetry's sole function, and who located the apologues of the *Odyssey* in the ocean's region, and passed off the *exokeanismós* as a sign for this mere poetic edification, but as historically untrue.³¹

That this could virtually be seen as an anti-Stoic stroke becomes obvious through Strabo's polemics in the late 1st century B.C.: he took the genuinely Stoic view, that poetry first of all served the education of the people (which he believed to be not sufficiently educated for indoctrination through historiography and philosophy), and that is why the most eminent poet, and therefore tutor of all, Homer, packaged historical and geographical facts in fabulous literature, in order to make them more 'digestible'.³² That is, he ascribed a comprehensible location in the Mediterranean region to the Homeric apologues, but believed that the reason for their relocation into the ocean, the *exokeanismós*, which (against Polybius' opinion) could not be denied, was owed to Homer's educational intent: he supposed the truth to be more digestible if it was blended with invention (Str. 1,2,9; the term itself Str. 1,2,10 and 1,2,17), a position already established by Plato as is well known, and later adopted by the Epicurean Lucretius. In order to strengthen his (strategically not undisputable) position,

³⁰ Cf. Romm 1992, 172-214, Buonajuto 1996, 1-8, and Kim 2010, 56-71.

³¹ A differentiated presentation of Eratosthenes' positions, who generally conceded Odysseus' journeys to be historical, but who viewed Homer as a deficient historiographer, in Kim 2010, 56-60. Eratosthenes' statements on Homer are available in Berger 1880, fr. I, A, 1-21. On the homeric-cratic world view cf. Mette 1936, 58-96.

³² For the shortcomings of such a view cf. Kim 2010, 64-67.

Strabo attacked his predecessor Eratosthenes as a failed Stoic (Str. 1,2,2) and as semi-educated.

Such debates thus were en vogue in Hellenistic literary criticism and scientific theory; they also encroached upon Hellenistic literature itself by taking the detour of metapoetically legible motifs and segments of action, as research on the *Argonautica* by Apollonios of Rhodes has made plausible.³³ For Strabo as a Stoic the use of literature as a philosophical means was at stake on the one hand, on the other hand was at stake the credibility of the Stoic thesis on the *logos* as pervading everything, world and man: the *logos* was unlikely to evade literature, literature was also supposed to be intimately tied to reality. This is why Strabo's interest in allegory as well as his intention to explain the *exokeanismós* as some didactic device is easily understood.

The Stoic school thus was highly interested in the ability of literary narrations to become historicised. The relocation of some pedagogically valuable material into the distant ocean was something a Stoic was able to light-heartedly approve of, especially if the addressee himself was not a scholar. If indeed Iambulus was concerned with stoically shaping the utopian space of the Islands of the Sun, or, to put it in 'Strabonian' terms, with adding fantastic stories to a basically educative philosophical text,³⁴ then the *exokeanismós* of the event could not only be acceptable from his point of view, but even be significant for its function. On top of that he was ready to concede the joy of 'revealing' such a metaliterary strategy to an educated reader. This concession may well - as suggested by Diodorus' explicit excerpt - result from the (possibly even in the original) prominent use of the verbatim quotation from the Odyssean episode at the Phaeacians' court: that is to say, if Homer's Odyssean narratives were indeed the primary subject of the discussion on the *exokeanismós*, then such a quotation, especially if emphasised, could serve as a short key for someone knowing or even following this debate, and directly interrelate Iambulus' shaping of a utopia with that controversy.

³³ Cf. Romm 1992.

³⁴ Strabo, writing on Homer, calls this *προσμηθεύειν* (Str. 1,2,19), which results in creating a kind of 'historical fiction' (Kim 2010, 68. Perhaps we witness here a Hellenistic / post-Hellenistic process of popularizing knowledge by fictionalizing it: Iambulus - who, then, should be dated not too early - would have participated in this process by writing a 'philosophical fiction'.

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