CHAPTER 12

Shelley's Georgic Landscape

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Percy Bysshe Shelley's translation of a fragment from Virgil's Fourth *Georgic* provides a case study in how his ideas on poetry, language, thought, mind, and metre in the *Defence* of Poetry are enacted in a densely allusive space. It is a dynamic passage, in which Shelley acknowledges the innovative and experimental poetry-making of Virgil, whilst testing how he himself might 'innovate upon the examples of his predecessors' (*Defence* 1840: 31). It is also overlooked.[1] I offer here some contextual discussion of Shelley's writing on the philosophy of poetry and language before providing a close reading of the fragment against the original. In so doing, I suggest that the poem is viewed not just as one of the few translations out of Latin by Shelley,[2] but as a creative commentary on the reception of Virgil's *Georgics*, in which fundamental questions about the nature of poetry are posed – and answered.

On 17th December 1812, Shelley began a letter to the publisher and bookseller Thomas Hookham with a criticism: '…The Translation of the Georgics you sent is not precisely *in my*

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[1] The brief exception to this is Webb (1976: 329-333), who traces echoes of some of the underwater imagery in sections of Shelley's poetry.

[2] Robinson (2006: 115) suggests that 'Latin literature hardly occupies Shelley's translation interests at all', given we have in total only a fragment of Virgil's tenth *Eclogue*, and a fragment from the fourth *Georgic*. I would suggest that the opposition of Latin and Greek is unhelpful here.

way, but I shall keep it.'[3] A few weeks later on January 2nd 1813, the opening line to a subsequent letter to Hookham amends this opinion:

> On reflection I feel rather chagrined that I excepted against the Georgics. I fear it may with[h]old your hand when you would otherwise send me some really valuable work. I assure you that I am quite reconciled to Professor Martyn; Harriet will probably derive some assistance from his translation when she has mastered Horace.[4]

The phrase '*in my way*' does a lot of work in the first letter. Shelley had not yet written his 1821 essay *A Defence of Poetry*, in which he conceptualises his thoughts on language, poetry, and poets, but a concern with 'the idea and fact of language'[5] was happening at the very time these two letters were written.[6] The translation to which he is responding is revealed in the second letter to be that by John Martyn, who first published *The Georgicks of Virgil, with an English Translation and Notes* in 1741, ahead of a similar edition of the *Bucolicks* in 1749. Martyn's version is in prose, and he himself foresees criticism over this choice to avoid a poetic translation. 'I am no Poet myself, and therefore cannot by moved by any envy to their superior abilities' says the Cambridge Professor of Botany; 'The prose translation will, I know, be

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[3] Jones (1964: 340), original italics.

[4] Jones (1964: 347).

[5] Keach (1984: 1).

[6] On 24 December 1812 (Jones 1964: 343-44) he requested editions from Clio Rickman, bookseller, of three of the 'most important English theorists and philologists of his day', which Keach takes as evidence for his long-standing interest in, and familiarity with, linguistics and the 'study of language' (1984:1). One is Lord Monboddo; see below.

thought to debase Virgil. But it was never intended to give any idea of the Poet's style; the whole design of it being to help the less learned reader to understand the subject…'.[7] Indeed, the fulfilment of this didactic ambition is what Shelley claims as its usefulness in the January letter (though his revelation that the real concern lies in being cut off by Hookham from other books rather damns the claim with faint praise).

It need not be the case, of course, that '*in my way*' is a criticism of Martyn's work only on the basis of it being prose, given Shelley's later suggestion in the *Defence* that 'the popular division into prose and verse is inadmissible'(*Defence*: 31),[8] but it is perhaps an early articulation of where the real 'division' lies: between texts where 'sounds as well as thoughts have relation both between each other and towards that which they represent', giving a 'uniform and harmonious recurrence of sound' (*Defence*: 31), and those that do not. Texts that achieve this need not only be those written in poetic form, and he includes Plato and Bacon as examples of those writing in prose who are 'poets'. But one can begin to see the broader metaphysical backdrop creeping in behind these statements, for the notion of 'sound' is part of a longer section in which Shelley is engaging with linguistic and philosophical concerns about 'the nature itself of language':

> Poetry…expresses those arrangements of language, and especially metrical language, which are created by that imperial faculty…And this springs from the nature itself of language, which is a more direct representation of the actions and passions of our

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[7] Martyn (1746: xv-xvi).

[8] Given the evidence that Shelley requested classical texts to be 'original and translation, if possible, united' (Jones 1964: 344) it is unlikely that his criticism is founded upon his not requiring a translation.

internal being... For language is arbitrarily produced by the imagination, and has

relation to thoughts alone'.

Keach has discussed in detail the slipperiness of 'Shelley's basing his celebration of the verbal

medium of poetry partly upon the arbitrariness of linguistic signs',[9] and places it within a wider

discussion about the metaphysical relationship between words and thoughts. [10] Shelley's

ongoing concern with this can be seen elsewhere in his *Speculations on Metaphysics*: 'Words

are the instruments of mind whose capacities it becomes the Metaphysician accurately to know,

but they are not mind, nor are they portions of mind'.[11] In his discussion of the importance of

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[9] Keach (1984: 16), though the whole of his discussion in Chapter 1 is of relevance here.

[10] For an excellent discussion of 'Shelley's view of language [as] caught between being-for-itself and the representation of being', see Milnes' 2004 article (this quote from page 18). It is worth noting very briefly one further point here from Keach: he suggests that Shelley is influenced by Monboddo's 'incisive discussion' on the subject, and especially Monboddo's discussion of Plato's *Cratylus* (401e). In the Platonic passage Socrates wonders whether the men who first attached words to things were influenced by Heraclitean theories of flux, and discusses this with particular reference to the names of Ocean and Tethys. Below we shall see how the notion of 'origin' attached to rivers becomes a way of talking about poetic origins, as well as spatial and temporal origins. It is striking that these same passages lie behind the Platonic passage, and are here used to engage in a conversation about etymology, and the nature of words. Compare Morgan (1999, chapter 2) and Ademollo (2011: 181-256). The connection to Heraclitus is revived below.

[11] Ingpen and Peck (1930: 63)

'sound', then, we might understand it to be an aspect of the creative process that combines with 'words' to map out thought in a way that gets closer to an 'eternal truth' (*Defence*: 33).

'Sound' also speaks to the formal and the metrical, of course. Shelley's argument seems to be that poetry manages to capture in the arbitrariness of words, in the sound of language in the broadest sense (utterance and rhythm), a 'truth' about 'the very image of life'. Refashioning that combination through the act of translation is tricky, and it is in this context that he makes his famous declaration on the 'the vanity of translation'. Shelley's suggestion that 'it were as wise to cast a violet into a crucible that you might discover the formal principle of its color and odor, as seek to transfuse from one language into another the creations of a poet'[12] seems often to be taken as a statement about the loss that occurs when the words of one language become the words of another. As we can see, it is more than this. The act of translation itself is framed within a broader contextual questioning of what language is, and how that might be something in flux with itself, so that the identity of thought with the language that it signifies is non-trivial. The higher questions about whether one can ever translate 'thought' as it is reified in poetry becomes wrapped up with the question as to whether the combination of word and metre in one language can ever really be rendered in another. However, Shelley gives us hope: if the task is to be attempted, 'every great poet must inevitably innovate upon the example of his predecessors in the exact structure of his peculiar versification' in order to achieve success. His later 'criticism' of Virgil in the *Defence* (50) should be seen in this context:

> Virgil, with a modesty that ill became his genius, had affected the fame of an imitator, even whilst he created anew all that he copied.

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[12] Shelley (1840: 10).

It is not that Virgil *was* an imitator, but that the adoption of the guise of imitator distracts from the brilliance of Virgil's achievements. He manages to achieve this difficult aim, to 'copy' (or perhaps 'translate') earlier poetry and makes something new – and therefore 'true' – in the process. This makes his work part of the procession of the 'infinite' line of poetry, for poetry is not singular, but 'as the first acorn, which contained all oaks potentially',

> A great poem is a fountain forever overflowing with the waters of wisdom and delight; and after one person and one age has exhausted all its divine effluence which their peculiar relations enable them to share, another and yet another succeeds, and new relations are ever developed, the source of an unforeseen and an unconceived delight.[13]

Poetry and thought are aligned within the symbol of water. Elsewhere in his poetry and prose Shelley makes clear the metaphorical connection between water imagery and the mind, such as in his *Mont Blanc*: 'The everlasting universe of things | flows through the mind, and rolls its rapid waves…' (1-2).[14] Here in the *Defence* we see 'poetry' elide with the concepts of 'idea', 'thought', 'the mind'. Poetry is simply 'the expression of the imagination' (*Defence*: 26). It is reified thought. For Shelley, the language of poets is 'vitally metaphorical', allowing for the 'unapprehended relations of things' to be marked (*Defence*: 28), and it is but a metaphysical

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[13] Shelley (1840: 40). For the purposes of this essay it is perhaps of significance that Shelley is referring here to Dante.

[14] On the symbolism of water in his works, see, for example, Farnsworth (2001), esp. 69-116, Yeats (1961: 80). On the image of the cave as denoting the 'introspective' turn of the mind, see Butter (1954: 47-8).

step further on from this depiction of poetry as a body of water to symbolise the mind as a cave in which the course runs, as he does in the *Speculations*:[15]

> Thought can with difficulty visit the intricate and winding chambers which it inhabits. It is like a river whose rapid and perpetual stream flows outwards… The caverns of the mind are obscure, and shadowy; or pervaded with a lustre, beautifully bright indeed, but shining not beyond their portals.

Of course, the symbol of the cave also marks one of the clearest indications of Shelley's Platonic engagement. It is with the with this acknowledgement of the potential symbolism contained within the image of the river and the cave, together with the philosophical underpinnings to the act of translation, that we now turn to the passage from the *Georgics*.

Some time between late 1818 and August 1819,[16] Shelley translated his fragment from book four of Virgil's *Georgics*. The excerpt, published only posthumously, describes the moment when Aristaeus visits his mother, Cyrene, under the waters:

<div style="text-align:center">

At illum   360

curuata in montis faciem circumstetit unda,

accepitque sinu uasto, misitque sub amnem.

iamque domum mirans genetricis, et umida regna,

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[15] Ingpen and Peck (1930: 64).

[16] As estimated by, e.g., Reiman (1986: 152), based on the *terza rima* form and the surrounding context from the notebook; Webb (1976: 330-1).

speluncisque lacus clausos, lucosque sonantes,

ibat, et ingenti motu stupefactus aquarum,   365

omnia sub magna labentia flumina terra

spectabat diuersa locis, Phasimque, Lycumque,

et caput, unde altus primum se erumpit Enipeus,

unde pater Tiberinus, et unde Aniena fluenta

saxosumque sonans Hypanis, Mysusque Caïcus   370

et gemina auratus taurino cornua uultu

Eridanus; quo non alius per pinguia culta

in mare purpureum uiolentior effluit amnis.

Georgics 4.360-73[17]

FROM VERGIL'S FOURTH GEORGIC[18]

And the cloven waters like a chasm of mountains   1

Stood, and received him in its mighty portal

And led him through the deep's untrampled fountains

He went in wonder through the halls immortal

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[17] The text is taken from Martyn's edition.

[18] This is the title by which it is commonly known, though it was not titled in Shelley's notebook. The text here follows Everest and Matthews (2000), though the line numbering is changed (see note 21).

Of his great Mother and her humid reign,   5

And groves profaned not by the step of mortal

Which sounded as he passed, and lakes which rain

Replenished not, girt round by marble[19] caves;

By the soft watery motion of the main

Half wildered, he beheld the bursting waves   10

Of every stream, beneath the mighty earth:

Phasis and Lycus which the starred sand paves,

The chasm where old Enipeus had its birth,

And father Tiber, and Aniena's flow,[20]

And whence Caicus', Mysian stream, comes forth   15

And rock-resounding Hypanis, and thou,

Eridanus, who bearest like empire's sign

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[19] Note that 'girt round by marble' is written in Shelley's notebook alongside 'enclosed in glimmering', with neither cancelled. I include marble here, as I understand it to add to surrounding imagery in creating the impression of a built landscape (see below), but one could just as well include 'glimmering, if one recalls the 'lustre' of the mind's cave in the *Speculations* passage, above, or compares *The Revolt of Islam* I.51.584 and the similarity there in topography and journey.

[20] See Webb (1976: 331 n.1).

Two golden horns upon thy taurine brow,

Thou than whom none of the streams divine

Through garden-fields and meads with fiercer power   20

Burst in their tumult to the purple brine.

A possible first section, taken from *Georgics* 4.317-18, is often excluded from those edited

volumes that contain the translation, partly due to the editor Locock having dismissed it when

he first published the poem in 1903; this was due to its cancellation in the original notebook

and the different verse rhyming scheme.[21] Given the significance of the *terza rima* form

(discussed below), I would suggest that this omission is correct. The reader embarks upon the

fragment *in medias res*, uncertain of whose journey is being described, or in which landscape

they are located.

Translations of the *Georgics* had a particular vogue in the long eighteenth century,

beyond the edition published by Martyn. De Bruyn outlines the many that appeared during this

period, naming '1808 as a kind of *annus mirabilis*, when three new versions appeared', a

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[21] Given as follows:

[[The shepherd Aristaeus, as fame tells,

Losing his bees by hunger, fled

Tempe, and to Peneus

Mothers Cyrene [

                                                              ]]]

On a similar combination of geographical locations, see also *Hellas* 1068-1070.

'fascination…[that] continued into the middle of the nineteenth century'.[22] It is perhaps surprising in this context that so little discussion has been generated on Shelley's translation, nor has it been considered in connection to the popularity of the 'georgic' mode at this time, including for the Romantic poets.[23] Yet, despite being fragmentary, the translation speaks to many of the complexities outlined above. The words and the sound are innovative and experimental, and when seen alongside the symbolic potential of the landscape, the imagery of water as poetic inspiration, and the construction of the cave as mind, the fragment becomes a place where we witness a key performance of Shelley's philosophy of poetry. Shelley renews the *Georgics* through careful meditation on the poetic sensitivity of the Virgilian original, and creates a space in which the conceptual crossover of thought, poetry, and language are explored.

From the outset, the spatiotemporal framework of Shelley's translation nudges away from the Virgilian original. The connective opening – 'And' – immediately posits a looking backwards; by beginning *in medias res*, Shelley demands that his version is considered both against and within the original. Temporal markers throughout are absent,[24] and the corresponding timelessness becomes amplified through the lack of context. The reader is set wandering at an unspecified time, through an unknown landscape, companion to an unidentified figure. The first stanza reveals that the landscape too is subtly different to that found in the *Georgics*. At *G*. 4.360-3, Virgil describes the parting of the water, which is the means of allowing Aristaeus to enter his mother's underwater domain. The description of the

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[22] De Bruyn (2005: 152). De Bruyn's excellent article outlines different purposes behind the translations, with a particular focus on the scientific.

[23] On the georgic and Romanticism, see especially Goodman (2004).

[24] Virgil identifies the Aristaeus story as an *aetion* (cf. *G*. 4.315-16), thereby setting it within the (albeit flimsy) timeframe of the mythological past.

water's mountainous shape[25] captures the size and the interaction from a ground-level perspective: the *curved* waves stand *around* Aristaeus (*circumstetit*, 361), and receive him, host-like, before despatching him to his mother beneath (362).[26] In Shelley's translation, there is an elemental crossover, a disconnect of sorts, from the beginning: the water is 'cloven' (1), as if it were solid, earth-like.[27] Rather than the curve of the water marking the point of comparison to a mountain, the body of water is itself made mountain, and the fissure between is likened to a 'chasm'. This minor alteration ensures that the emphasis is not as much on what *is* there (a wave as big as a mountain: *curuata in montis faciem*, *G*. 4. 361), but on what is *not* (the absence of water in the cleft: 'like a chasm of mountains', line 1), whilst (almost conversely) rendering the content of the line simultaneously more substantial and material.[28]

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[25] *G*. 4.418-20 − the description of Proteus's cave − offers the reverse of this situation: a mountain where waves enter.

[26] The sentience of the water may be amplified too by *accipio* and *mitto*; also by the source from which the passage ultimately derives: the description of the rape of Tyro by Poseidon in the *Odyssey* (11.243ff.), where the god disguises himself as the river Enipeus (cf. Mynors *ad loc.*).

[27] The word is particularly appropriate, of course, at the start of a translation from a poem more usually about the earth, harvesting and cutting. In addition, it often has satanic overtones: cf. *OED* s.v. A.c. on the allusive properties of the word 'cloven' as indicating the Devil. Such an infernal aspect is important given the suggestion that this comprises an underworld descent of sorts.

[28] It is possible that Shelley was influenced in his emphasis on the 'chasm' by Dryden's famous translation: 'Two rising Heaps of liquid Crystal stand, | And leave a Space betwixt, of empty Sand.'

Indeed, the overall size has been scaled up to stress the enormity of the breach, with the Virgilian singular *in montis faciem* ('into the form of a mountain') becoming the plural 'mountains'. Shelley thus opens his translation with an emphasis on the divide; in a poem dense with intertextual allusion it seems to be the divergence from the Virgilian original, the gap between, that is given emphasis.[29] It is not that the translation departs substantially in content from the original, but that the conceptual changes invite a perceptual adjustment. The Shelleyan waters are still sentient; he maintains the sense of *accepit*[30] ('received') and *misit* ('led'), yet reduces the softness of *sinus*[31] (present even when coupled with *uastus*, a word which captures both 'empty of human presence', and 'awe-inspiringly vast'), and replaces it instead with

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[29] Indeed, it should be noted that 'chasm' can be figurative in its meaning rather than literal, potentially rendering this line even more metatextually loaded than I have suggested; see *OED ad loc*. 5a 'A break marking a divergence, or a wide and profound difference of character or position, a breach of relations, feelings, interests, etc.'.

[30] The *TLL* (I.312.19-20) draws a parallel between this use of *accepit* at *G.* 4.362 and that found at Virg. *Aen*. 9.817 (note that the *TLL* contains an error: the line is 817 and not 814 as stated). There, Turnus is welcomed by the Tiber after his rampage and returned to his comrades. The connection may serve to highlight the sentient landscape in both instances; it also aligns Turnus and Aristaeus such that the Homeric aspects of the *Georgics* section are more easily apprehended.

[31] On the 'nurturing' aspect of the phrase, see Thomas *ad loc*. *Sinus* here refers to the hollow of a wave (s.v. 8), and seems to have been used in this sense for the first time in the *Georgics* (at 3.238). More usually, the primary meanings of *sinus* relate e.g. to the folds of clothing and fabric (s.v. 1), or figuratively to a 'bosom, refuge or shelter' (s.v. 3).

something more constructed, majestic, and potentially less organic in his 'mighty portal'.[32] The certainty that *sinus uastus* (362) refers to the hollow of the wave is gone, but something of the meaning and the affective force of Virgil's original remains. We are left with the impression of having arrived at a gateway between two worlds; which, of course, we have. In recognising this, one cannot help but recall Shelley's other use of 'portal' in the *Speculations* passage above, where 'portal' seems to denote the entry points to the mind.

It is also here that I believe we can see the influence of Martyn on Shelley. Whatever the aesthetic or philosophical qualms about Martyn's translation, by 1817 there seems to have been some improvement in Shelley's assessment of the work; or at least a willingness to spend money on it. On August 3rd of that year[33] he wrote to his publisher Charles Ollier to send him a manuscript – Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* – and in the postscript requests that he 'Be so kind as to tell me also, is Martyn's Georgics of Virgil printed in a very large Octavo Edition to match with the Eclogues.' It is unclear if this request converted into a purchase, but I would like here to suggest that Martyn's edition is understood to be a contributing factor in Shelley's translation of this section of the *Georgics*. Whilst it is uncertain if Martyn's translation improved on Shelley, his edition also contained accompanying notes on the text, and it is there a connection can be discerned. Indeed, Martyn's note may even have been the catalyst for Shelley's interest in choosing this particular passage. On line 4.363 Martyn includes a long note, which in part recounts Servius' comments on the line about Egyptian rites related to

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[32] Whilst the *OED* does allow for the application of portal to 'a natural entrance, as of a cave, a mountain pass, etc.' (s.v. 1d), the more predominant usage is as 'a door, gate, doorway, or gateway, of stately or elaborate construction; the entrance to a large or magnificent building...' (s.v. 1a), and it seems likely that a pluralistic reading is applicable here.

[33] The letter is erroneously dated 1818; see Jones (1964: 549) for the full text.

groves under the earth and the 'immense water…from which everything is procreated'. Martyn goes on to note that,

> Homer makes the ocean to be the source of all rivers… But Plato, whom Virgil seems to follow here…supposes all the rivers to rise from a great cavern, which passes through the whole earth, and is called by the poets *Barathrum* and Tartarus.

He then proceeds to quote Plato's *Phaedo* (111e6-112a5), in which Socrates describes the geography of the underworld. The quote includes Socrates' claim that one of the χασμάτα ('chasms') under the earth is larger than the rest, and it is into and out of here that all rivers flow. It is thus the beginning and the end of everything. This inclusion of the reference to 'chasm' (and again at line 13) seems to me to explain its seemingly odd inclusion in Shelley's translation, and, in so doing, prompts a reading of the Virgilian passage through Plato's dialogue. Martyn's paratext helps us to recognise the philosophical framework in which this space is situated, the 'metaphysical liminality' of the riverscape, 'be it in geographical space or historical time'.[34] It also helps to introduce the notion that this landscape might be look eschatological.

Shelley's translation augments the sense of admittance to an otherworld, and potentially an underworld, over the subsequent lines. The coupling of 'the deep's untrampled fountains' (3; an expansion of *amnem*, 'river', 362) and 'halls immortal' (4) with the figure's sense of 'wonder' (4) seems to whisper that this is the first admittance of a mortal (or perhaps anyone)

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[34] Morgan (1999: 39). There is much more that could be said here on the connection between the *Phaedo* passage and Morgan's excellent discussion of Ocean in the *Georgics*.

to these realms; Aristaeus's 'semidivine'[35] status is mitigated by the anonymous opening. Virgil's text also focalizes through Aristaeus, but the emphasis falls on the oddity of the situation: that of a son who has seemingly never entered his mother's home. The line *iamque domum mirans genetricis et umida regna* (363), 'And now, awe-struck at the home of his mother, and the humid kingdom…', slows down metrically at *mirans* to stress the marvelling moment, with the encircling *domum…genetricis* indicating where the focus of the awe should rest: the first sight of this divine realm by a (not-quite) mortal. Shelley retains this awe, but establishes a secondary point of wonder: that of the unfrequented landscape. His Aristaeus goes 'in wonder through the halls[36] immortal | of his great Mother… | *And* groves profaned not by the step of mortal' (4-6), projecting the astonishment forward in space. In fact, the very notion that the groves are unvisited by mortals is a significant addition by Shelley to the original; the idea does not appear here in Virgil's text.[37] Shelley's tactile 'untrampled' of line 3 sets up his expansion in lines 6-7 of the compressed Virgilian *lucos…sonantes* (364), where it is explained that the cause of these 'echoing groves' are the footsteps of Aristaeus as he passes. The kinetic is made aural, and the echo sounds throughout the text with the rhyming pattern of the *terza rima* form, given extra emphasis at this moment with the homonyms 'reign / rain' (5, 7). This elaboration of the Virgilian text is stressed, coming, as it does, at the centre of a series of negatives ('untrampled', 3; 'groves profaned not by the step of mortal', 6; 'lakes which rain replenished not', 7-8), a familiar Shelleyan technique.[38] The translation thus lends particular

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[35] Miles (1980: 257). On the ambiguous divinity of Aristaeus, see below.

[36] 'Halls' too seems to capture a grandeur that lacks the homeliness of *domus*.

[37] It is perhaps inspired by Cyrene's earlier claim at *G.* 4.358-9.

[38] See Webb (2002).

focus to the untrodden landscape, and the gap between mortality and immortality: two tropes associated with the very act of poetry writing.

This particular passage is already a creatively and intertextually significant space within the Virgilian corpus. Morgan extends the notion of the underground origins of life, discussed above, and proposes that 'Aristaeus' descent to Cyrene's cave and subsequent capture of Proteus…dramatizes Virgil's mastery of Homeric poetry, the highest possible form of literary inspiration, the source of all other poetic inspiration…a return to the *beginnings* of poetry.'[39] Shelley maps a realm that holds the potential for both origin and renewal, proceeding from Virgil, and his utilization of the 'untrodden path' offers an extension to this poetic dissonance: the poet creates 'anew', but within a landscape crafted in part by his literary ancestors. That the most famous examples of the (Hesiodic) untouched path come from Lucretius, the *translator* of Epicurean material into Latin, adds weight to the idea that the act of translation provides an opportunity for innovation and creation.[40] At *De Rerum Natura* 1.925-8, Lucretius describes his pathless landscape, and its watery topography: 'I feel, I rising feel, Poetick Heats, | And now, inspir'd trace o'er the Muses Seats, | Untrodden yet: 'tis sweet to visit first | Untouch'd and virgin Streams, and quench my Thirst…'.[41] Virgil has alluded to this passage earlier in the *Georgics*;[42] Shelley's translation prompts us to read Virgil's Aristaeus passage as

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[39] Morgan (1999: 48-9).

[40] On Shelley's engagement with Lucretius, cf. e.g. Turner (1959), Roberts (1997).

[41] Taken from Thomas Creech's translation of Lucretius, 'the standard full-length English Lucretius throughout the eighteenth century' (Hopkins 2007: 256). Creech helpfully lists the various places where the motif occurs in the note to (his) *DRN* 1.933.

[42] *G.* 3.289-93.

another moment in this mould, where space becomes self-definition, where untouched landscape is equivalent to new poetic ambition.

The person who walks these untrodden ways is almost always the poet-narrator. In resituating his translation as a fragment Shelley un-names Aristaeus, rendering him anonymous. In so doing, the figure begins to look both like Aristaeus and a surrogate poet, one who repeats the walk through an allusive, untouched landscape. Such a combination has neat implications for Shelley's position in the hierarchy of poet-narrators, and plays on the surrounding concern with mortality and immortality. The figure of Aristaeus holds a peculiar position within the *Georgics*: his status is uncertain, his divinity insecure.[43] Cyrene claims *fas illi limina diuum | tangere* ('it is permissible for him to ['touch', or perhaps just 'reach'] the threshold' 4.358-9); a statement which clarifies almost nothing beyond elevating him somewhat above standard mortality. He is frequently called a 'semidivine hero',[44] one who succeeds where Orpheus fails precisely because of some intangible godliness, though the point at which he transitions from man to god is unclear: 'Aristaeus was a deity; in this story he is a shepherd and still mortal (though with expectations)' claims Mynors.[45] Such an indeterminate identity may suit the Romantic writer: he figures himself as demi-god and poet, immortal visitor and mortal interloper, not yet, perhaps, equal to *diuinus poeta noster Virgilius* ('our divine poet Virgil'),[46] but fostering a potential for emulation beyond imitation.

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[43] Importantly, Aristaeus is 'clearly original to V[irgil]'; see Thomas on 4.315-32.

[44] Miles (1980: 257).

[45] Mynors (1990: *ad* 4.317).

[46] Dante, *De Monarchia* 2.3.6. Shelley is responding to Dante's reception of 'Virgil' as well as his poem; see below.

Shelley's Aristaeus perhaps seems closer to mortality, in part, through being alone. Separated from his mother (their reunion is not translated, and thus denied), and deprived of the catalogue of nymphs that precedes the passage in the Virgilian text, he becomes emblematic of the archetypal Romantic hero: isolated, a wanderer, connected to nature (though somehow alienated from it), potentially rebellious,[47] and having 'a tendency to respond to the world through feeling rather than rational cogitation';[48] an observation substantiated by the Aristaeus-figure's only given reactions being his 'wonder' (4) and 'half wildered' gaze (10). The shift from a divinely populated landscape in the *Georgics*, to a differently divine yet unpopulated landscape (the space is not for gods now, but poets), is perhaps a subtle change, but a striking one. Such a progression may mark the transition from the implicit engagement with the sublime that we find in Virgil,[49] to it being foregrounded in the eighteenth-century version. In this context the earlier emphasis on mountains can be seen anew: through the mountainous imagery,[50] the water, and the overwhelming sense of awe, Shelley's fragmentary translation becomes a sublime tableau. He uncovers the aesthetic in Virgil's work, and amplifies as he translates. In so doing, he makes the fragment into a contemporary piece, which is aligned to

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[47] Here the transgression occurs within the 'untrampled' setting, as well as the metapoetic transgression resulting from the alteration to Virgil's poetry.

[48] Cf. Williams (2004: 8). His entire section on the Romantic Hero is useful here (8-13).

[49] On the Virgilian and the Lucretian sublime, see Hardie (2009); on retrospectively considering the ancient sublime in a post-eighteenth-century environment, see Day (2013).

[50] On mountains as an especially sublime trope, see e.g. Day (2013: 4).

the concerns of (for example) Wordsworth's *Prelude*, and similarly shaped by the potential of the imagination. [51]

The anonymization of person in Shelley's translation extends also to place. Whereas Virgil signposts the geographic location of Aristaeus for us (*G.* 4.317-19), there is no map at the beginning of Shelley's fragment to locate ourselves within the text; no title, beyond the utilitarian and non-specific one attached later. Tally Jr. describes the 'sense of disorientation, [the] sort of cartographic anxiety or spatial perplexity' that supervenes when a work of literature begins in the middle, as here.[52] The topography is also ambiguous, drawing our attention to the complexity already intrinsic to the *Georgics*: the setting is either under a river, in a palace of sorts, or walking through groves – or all three. The elongation of 'And groves profaned not by the step of mortal | Which sounded as he passed' (6-7) over not just a line, but the break between stanzas, allows for the maximum amount of surprise, whilst seeming almost to freeze Aristaeus's foot in mid-air just as it seeks placement. It lends a pause just long enough for us to wonder why this waterscape seems to be populated with trees.[53] In English, 'groves' certainly does denote a wooded area,[54] and *lucus* too would seem to indicate a wood (*G.*

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[51] On sublimity and Wordsworth's *Prelude*, cf. e.g. Shaw (2007: 101), who also discusses the 'Romantic Sublime' more comprehensively.

[52] Tally Jr. (2013: 1)

[53] See p.181 on the metapoetic significance of trees.

[54] *OED* s.v. 1a: 'A small wood; a group of trees affording shade or forming avenues or walks, occurring naturally or planted for a special purpose. Groves were commonly planted by heathen peoples in honour of deities to serve as places of worship...' The final sense of this definition may help to access a 'heathen' and semi-religious undertone to the choice of wording in the translation. It is also of significance to a consideration of Dante (below), given the ancient poets

4.364).[55] Mynors suggests that 'caves… make it easier for the reader's imagination to accept the 'groves loud with waters', which are at home really in the upper air'.[56] Yet it is also the case that a landscape placed under the earth, in which one encounters 'groves' and a river, may immediately recall underworld topography.[57] The anonymity of Shelley's Aristaeus exaggerates this confusion, allowing other possible scenarios to suggest themselves: without the title we could briefly imagine ourselves to be reading about Moses and the Red Sea, for example; with it, we might expect to encounter Orpheus. The shadowy characterization amplifies the surrounding spatial uncertainty and reflects a textual ambiguity in the *Georgics*, for Shelley is here accessing and augmenting the infernal hints in Virgil's text, and, in so doing,

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are to be found in a wood (*Inf*. IV.65-6).

[55] The *TLL* indicates that its primary meanings are 'wood' (*silua*; VII.2.1751.22), or a sacred wooded grove (*TLL* VII.2.1751.52); the usage here is put in the 'stylistic appendix', where attention is drawn to the fact that the end of the line, *lucosque sonantis,* is repeated at *Eclogues* 10.58 and *Ciris* 196 (*TLL* VII.2.1754.4-5). *Eclogue* 10 is of significance to the study of Shelley, as it represents the *only* other published Virgilian – indeed, Latin – poem that he translates. One might imagine a deliberate connection between the translations, especially given the Servian suggestion that *Eclogues* 10 and *Georgics* 4 are connected through the figure of Gallus. The translated sections are also those which figure (explicitly or implicitly) Arethusa, on whom Shelley composed his poem *Arethusa*.

[56] Mynors (1990: *ad loc*.). Virgil may also be responding to Lucretius's depiction of the topography below the earth's surface (*DRN* 6.536-42), which includes lakes and pools.

[57] As exemplified in the Sibyl's description of the underworld descent at *Aeneid* 6.131-2.

evokes in his translation two underworld episodes: that of the descent to Hades by Orpheus, and the descent to Hell by Dante.[58]

First, Orpheus. The Aristaeus episode in the *Georgics* encircles a longer narrative, the climax of which is a description of Orpheus's descent to the underworld in an attempt to rescue Eurydice (*G.* 453-527). The Orpheus section has always been celebrated: Low claims that in the seventeenth century the episode was one way 'the *Georgics* survived', due in part to the significance of Orpheus as poet-figure.[59] By the Romantic period, Wordsworth had produced his own translation of this 'most imitated and translated part of the *Georgics*', which 'offered the young poet an attractive opportunity to measure himself against the English poetic tradition'.[60] Like Shelley, Wordsworth's translations remained unpublished; indeed, Wu describes their unfinished state as 'the great lost project of Wordsworth's Cambridge years'.[61] Importantly, Graver suggests that Wordsworth's translation of the Orpheus passage offers a space in which to think about poetry itself, and, whilst it is uncertain how widely known Wordsworth's project was, it is tempting to see here a conversation between the older Romantic poet and the younger about poetry via the passages they have chosen.[62] Shelley does not

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[58] One might as easily suggest 'at least' two underworlds: Socrates' depiction in the *Phaedo*, above, the famous underworld in Virgil's *Aeneid* and Hell in Milton's *Paradise Lost* certainly provide infernal texture.

[59] Low (1985: 17). One must also account for the influence of Ovid's versions of the myth, of course, when considering its popularity. In *Metamorphoses* 10, he omits the Aristaeus episode altogether; in the *Fasti* (1.363-80) he omits the descent of Aristaeus. It makes the episode a particularly Virgilian moment, emphasizing the focus of Shelley's piece.

[60] Graver (1991:146).

[61] Wu (1990).

[62] Graver (1991: 146)

translate the Orpheus scene directly, but situates himself referentially 'before' Wordsworth by translating the precursory Aristaeus episode. The section does not figure as a highlight of the *Georgics* by contemporary literary standards (the Proteus episode and the Ages of Man seem to be the next most popular passages), and yet it is one which is fundamental to our understanding of the wider Orphic narrative, for the Aristaeus scene in the *Georgics* contextualizes why Orpheus must undertake his short epic adventure, and reflects the second descent within the *Georgics* both structurally and thematically. Both missions require that they 'seek' something lost; each offers a contrasting outcome related to their success or failure in following instructions; both heroes must approach 'subterranean deities'.[63] By responding to the intratextual connections in the *Georgics*, as well as to contemporary receptions, Shelley's translation intensifies the readers' awareness that Aristaeus's trip is also an underworld journey of sorts, though crucially for a renowned atheist, an underworld which hints at, but largely avoids, religious counsel.

Shelley's reading of the Orpheus scene through the Aristaeus episode is especially clear through his depiction of the landscape. On his way to Hades, Orpheus *Taenarias etiam fauces, alta ostia Ditis, | et caligantem nigra formidine lucum | ingressus…* 'He even entered the mouth of Taenarum, the lofty [or 'deep'] entrances of Dis, and the grove glooming with black dread…' (*G.* 4. 467-70). The details recall Virgil's Aristaeus scene, and are augmented through Shelley's fragment. Orpheus must pass through the *alta ostia*, reminiscent perhaps of the 'mighty portal' of the translation; one might even remember that *ostium* can be applied to the mouth of a river.[64] He must then pass through a grove, before arriving in the vicinity of the king and queen. Cyrene, a relatively middling goddess, has both her power and surroundings

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[63] Hardie (1998: 46); see also e.g. Thomas on 4.315-558.

[64] Cf. *TLL* IX.2.1152.85.

expanded in Shelley's version. Her domain is elevated to a palatial grandeur akin to Persephone's in the first three stanzas: 'mighty portal' [2], 'halls immortal' [4], 'Great Mother'[65] [5], 'humid reign' [5], 'marble caves' [8]; this latter an upgrade from Virgil's more modest *pumex* ('pumice', 4.374). The episode is made grander, more significant in the re-telling, a reading that deftly and subtly maintains the Orphic scene within the translation, reminding the reader that the Aristaeus episode is the *first* descent in *Georgics* 4. By eliding the Aristaeus and Orpheus episodes just enough, Shelley manages to triangulate the three textual moments, to set the echoes sounding. The Romantic poet becomes the vatic narrator, inheritor of the classical role: a mortal showing us the immortal realms.[66]

The construction of space connects the two passages, even when the motivation for the excursion is lost. Whilst in the *Georgics* Aristaeus and Orpheus both descend because 'they both lose what is most precious to them'[67], such provocation is absent from Shelley's translation. There is no bee mystery, and no Eurydice here. As it stands, the culmination of the journey is the discovery of the waters and the source of the rivers. The translation is balanced, and falls into two exact halves: the first ten lines are concerned with Aristaeus's journey through the underwater landscape; a middle line transitions from sight to description (11); the final ten lines comprise the catalogue of rivers. It is in this latter section especially clear how the fragment not only speaks to Shelley's ongoing concern with water, but offers a way of reading this engagement against a longer reception of classical material. His catalogue again enhances as it translates; for example, the sibilant sounds of Virgil's text are maintained, but

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[65] Shelley's translation of *genetrix* (*G.* 4.363) as 'great Mother' (5) seems almost to metamorphose Cyrene into Cybele, the Roman *Magna Mater*.

[66] A trope seen elsewhere in his work; cf. e.g. *Alastor.*

[67] Hardie (1998: 45-6).

there is greater variation given to the auditory than is heard in the *Georgics*. The addition at line 9 of 'the soft watery motion of the main' allows one better to appreciate the crescendo of sound in lines 16 ('rock-resounding Hypanis') and 20-1 ('with fiercer power | Burst in their tumult to the purple brine').

At line 12 *Phasimque Lycumque* (*G.* 4.367) is extended to 'Phasis and Lycus which the starred[68] sand paves'. It is slightly ambiguous as to whether 'starred' is written in the notebook here, and a lacuna between 'the' and 'sand' is sometimes suggested. Whilst 'starred' is often used to mean 'decorated' (as at *The Revolt of Islam* XX.9), there is a spatial distancing, a dislocation that is invited through the astral connection which disorients the reader.[69] In line 13, Shelley translates *caput* as 'chasm', thereby repeating the 'chasm' of line 1 and denying the reader the satisfaction of visualizing the very place from whence Enipeus springs.[70] There is then an alteration in order: *saxosumque sonans Hypanis Mysusque Caicus* (*G.* 4.370) becomes 'And whence Caicus', Mysian stream, comes forth | And rock-resounding Hypanis…' (15-16). In itself, this might be attributed to a readjustment for the rhyming scheme; as it falls within such a metapoetical setting, one might wonder whether the delay of Hypanis is to bring

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[68] 'Starred' is a slightly odd choice here. The editors remind me that Virgil's Orpheus is singing *sub astris* ('beneath the stars') at *G.* 4.509 in some manuscript traditions, so could form another connection across the episodes. Another, more tentative, suggestion is that one might recall the constellation of Aries, given these rivers appear in Apollonius's *Argonautica* (4.131-4) at the moment when the Golden Fleece is stolen.

[69] It is possible that this speaks again to a symbolic rendering of the mind, as Shelley frequently uses the idea of marks on the sand to represent thought.

[70] A sly acknowledgement, perhaps, of what the wanderer might find there were he to look; see n. 26 on Poseidon. See also above on Platonic 'chasms'.

it closer to the Eridanus, now in the same stanza and separated by only two words. The intextextual background to these rivers is carefully articulated by Heyworth (2007: 59), who explains their coupling in Propertius 1.12 through their connection to Catullus, and especially to Gallus,[71] arguing that we should see the Hypanis as ultimately representative of elegiac poetry, and the Eridanus of epic. That Shelley recognizes the epic embodiment of Eridanus is made clear in his expansion of Virgil's *Georgics* 4.371-2, which at lines 16-18 becomes '…and thou, | Eridanus, who bearest like empire's sign | two golden horns upon thy taurine brow…'.[72] The river bears 'empire's sign', due to its being both the largest and most forceful river here, and the Italian Po; it is thus representative of epic, and particularly Virgilian epic. The sudden interpolation of 'garden-fields and meads' at line 20 is a deliberate move away from the Latin (*per pinguia culta*, 'through fertile lands' 4.372), and the shift towards a particularly English phraseology[73] unsettles our prospect. Rather than the Po forming the climax to the catalogue, the land intrudes in the final stanza, landscape that has suddenly altered from Italianate to English. The change is temptingly suggestive: in poetic terms, the enduring influence of classical texts can be discerned in the English literary landscape. At the same time, the well-watered earth now generates not georgic *culta*, but smaller, fragmentary, gardens.

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[71] 'The Hypanis alludes to Gallus, whose only surviving line until 1979 was a description of the river preserved by Vibius Sequestus' (Heyworth 2007: 59). Heyworth connects Gallus to this passage in the *Georgics*; the association is triangulated by the fact that Shelley's only other translation of Virgil is a passage concerning Gallus, 'From Virgil's Tenth Eclogue'. It is clear the two Virgilian translations should be considered more closely together.

[72] Note also that the final stanza dramatically shifts as the narrator swims into focus and apostrophizes the Eridanus, a particularly epic form of address.

[73] 'meads' = meadows: *OED* s.v. 'mead', n.2.

Virgil's watery underworld already brings the symbol of the river into symbiosis with the act of writing poetry. Homer was long associated with large bodies of water,[74] and the image was perpetuated in the Hellenistic period, most memorably by Callimachus in the opening to his *Hymn to Apollo* (105-13).[75] Morgan argues that the riverscape of Virgil's Aristaeus scene is a locus of complex intertextuality, a space that features significant interplay between the Homeric and the Callimachean.[76] At *Georgics* 4.285-6 Virgil makes clear the aetiological connection between watery and poetic sources, and the catalogue of rivers extends this idea, becoming 'at once an epic device and a reference to Hellenistic scholarly traditions'.[77] In other words, the Aristaeus scene is already a space in which poetic time converges, where poetic sources are rendered in topographical terms, and where Virgil demonstrates his ability to create an original landscape within a complex tradition. Just as the concepts of *imitatio* ('imitation') and *aemulatio* ('emulation') are core to the Virgilian passage, so Shelley makes them central to his translation. In so doing, Virgil's text becomes a source in itself, the fount to which Shelley returns. The renewed motivation for the descent of Shelley's Aristaeus is to gaze on this confluence of poetic rivers. No wonder that he finds himself 'half wildered' at the overwhelming poetic landscape.

That Shelley's fragment is a creative renewal is made clearer when we consider the other text that he imitates and emulates through the translation: Dante's *Inferno*. The fragment follows the unusual *terza rima* structure – a form devised by Dante – and the 'continuous

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[74] In particular, the Ocean; Morgan (1999: 32-3) has a useful summary.

[75] Also his treatise on rivers; see Thomas (1988: 4.333-86).

[76] Morgan (1999: 37-40); as does Thomas (1988: 4.333-86).

[77] Jones (2005: 85).

flow'[78] of its rhyming structure (aba, bcb, cdc), 'technically, [with]…no beginning or end',[79] suits exactly the narrative description of the rivers. The importance of Shelley's instruction, discussed above, that 'every great poet must inevitably innovate upon the example of his predecessors in the exact structure of his peculiar versification' is here demonstrated, as form becomes a way of referencing as much as recreating. And Shelley's choice of form is particularly innovative; though there are a handful of earlier examples, *terza rima* was still experimental in the eighteenth century.[80] Whilst in Italy in late 1818, Shelley began re-reading Dante intensely; then, and in the period following, he tested the *terza rima* scheme in several poems.[81] At the same time that Percy was reading Dante, Mary Shelley was reading the *Georgics*, and the two of them spent time in Naples visiting the surrounding countryside and relating aspects of the scenery to Virgil's descriptions.[82] Webb suggests that 'For Shelley, of course, Virgil was not so much a classical as an Italian poet',[83] and it may be this which inspires the elision between translation and rhyme scheme. Yet it must also be true that the very act of rendering Virgil's words within a Dantean scheme forces the Roman poet into this Italian role,

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[78] Baer (2006: 130). On Shelley's use of *terza rima* in *Ode to the West Wind*, and especially this quality of 'fluidity', see Mahoney (2011: 54-58).

[79] Ravinthiran (2011: 156).

[80] See the detailed history of *terzetti* in English poetry up to Shelley in Reiman (1984: 151-60).

[81] This fragment represents an early example. By coincidence, Byron is also writing in *terza rima* in the same period; see Bone (1981), Reiman (1984: 157-59).

[82] Webb (1976: 332-3).

[83] Webb (1976: 329)

one that is politically subversive,[84] as much as it is poetically ambitious. The alteration in the metrical medium points to the gap of time between Virgil's *Georgics* and Shelley's version of the *Georgics*, and to the other receptions that have occurred in between. Shelley's mastery of a difficult rhyme scheme aims to surpass the Virgilian original, creating it 'anew', whilst consciously introducing Dante's *Inferno* thematically, as well as structurally, into his *Georgics* landscape.

Shelley's synchronization of the *Inferno* with the *Georgics* helps to illuminate in the earlier texts the repeated theme of descent, the significance of water, the poet as both innovator and imitator, and the density of poetic allusion, as much as in his own. The very opening of Dante's *Inferno* features the famous depiction of dislocation that the narrator feels upon finding himself in an unknown wood, *una selva oscura*:

> Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
>
> mi ritrovai per una selva oscura,
>
> ché la diritta via era smarrita.
>
> Ahi quanto a dir qual era è cosa dura
>
> esta selva selvaggia e aspra e forte
>
> che nel pensier rinova la paura!

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[84] For Byron, at least, Dante is 'the poet of liberty' (Medwin 1824: 195). See also his *Prophecy of Dante*, written in *terza rima*. Byron was also engaged with his own reception of the *Georgics*, claiming that 'The Georgics are indisputably – and I believe *undisputedly* even – a finer poem than the Æneid. – Virgil knew this – he did not order *them* to be burnt.' (Nicholson 1991: 143).

At one point midway on our path in life,

I came around and found myself now searching

through a dark wood, the right way blurred and lost.

How hard it is to say what that wood was,

a wilderness, savage, brute, harsh and wild.

Only to think of it renews my fear!

(Translation by Robin Kirkpatrick)

Dante articulates the emotional turbulence of finding oneself in the middle of a bewildering landscape, a disorienting effect conveyed to the reader by the structural choice to begin *in medias res*. Shelley reprises this confusing opening, but transmutes the affective charge from fear to wonder. Dante's text, as in Shelley's fragment, is devoid of geographical markers, yet potent in its use of topography: the significance of waking in a wood may play on the metapoetical connotations of trees in Latin poetry (where *silua* can refer to the composition of poetry, alongside 'trees')[85], especially given that certain of the ancient poets are later discovered in this very grove (*Inf.* IV.64ff.). At *Inf.* I.13, Dante describes reaching the foot of a hill, which will mark the entrance to the underworld; Shelley's mountainous opening thus stands within Dante's landscape as well as Virgil's. Dante is of course reworking the various Virgilian descents to the underworld, though one might more immediately recall Aeneas's

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[85] See Henkel (2014), esp. 38-41.

katabasis in book 6 of the *Aeneid*. In drawing the Dantean and the Virgilian texts together in his translation, Shelley reminds the reader that Virgil wrote other descents to other underworlds, and displaces the *Aeneid* with the 'original' descent: the first Virgilian underworld, that of Aristaeus in the *Georgics*. As a consequence, the Aristaeus episode becomes the source for those that follow. Shelley's engagement with Dante in his translation supports the idea of the underworld as a geocritical space in which different texts are brought into dialogue with each other, and, more immediately, compounds the misdirection (in part through the rhyming scheme) that his descent will reveal an eschatological underworld. In fact, Shelley's underworld will contain a revelation: that the texts themselves provide a metaphorical space in which poets possess an afterlife.

Dante famously animates his poetic predecessor within his *Divina Commedia*. Virgil is his guide throughout the landscape of the *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*,[86] and upon meeting and recognizing the Latin poet in the *Inferno*, Dante employs a (now familiar) watery image of Virgilian authority:

> "Or se' tu quel Virgilio e quella fonte
>
> che spandi di parlar sì largo fiume?",
>
> rispuos'io lui con vergognosa fronte.

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[86] It is worth noting that early commentators saw an echo of Orpheus's cry to Eurydice (*G.* 4.525-7) in Dante's cry to Virgil at the moment he realizes his departure in the *Purgatorio* (XXX.49-51); cf. Parker 1997: 247, 252. Shelley's encouragement to read the *Georgics* into the opening of the *Inferno* would mean that Virgil is defined by that text at his entrance and exit.

'So, could it be,' I answered him (my brow,

in shy respect, bent low), 'you are that Virgil,

whose words (a river running full) flow wide?'

(Translation by Robin Kirkpatrick)

His admiration for Virgil, and the inspiration he has provided for his work, is articulated through the image of a river. Dante recognizes here the shift that has occurred since the *Georgics* was written: Virgil has equalled Homer in renown, such that a large body of water now represents the Latin as much as the Greek poet. The metaphor employed by Virgil to express his own debt and competition with his predecessors is used to render the poetry and the poet synonymous with each other. In the *Georgics*, the passage is already a poetic space where the authority of previous poets (Homer, Callimachus) converges; in Dante, we see that Virgil's ability to weave together texts, creating a new poetic unity in the process, makes his very person symbolic of that densely allusive approach. Shelley's translation of the river passage thus becomes a way of placing the figure of Virgil within his own text. Whilst Dante's poetry can also be seen as part of that 'infinite' fountain of poetry, it is perhaps worth recalling the related metaphor Shelley employs later in the *Defence* to describe it, as 'the bridge thrown over the stream of time, which unites the modern and the ancient world' (*Defence*: 48). In the translation, this is rendered quite literally: the structure of the poem becomes a metrical 'bridge' that unites the ancient material with modern English via the *terza rima* form. Shelley's translation becomes part of a successive reworking through the act of reading and re-reading

poetry, such that 'new relations are ever developed', and the waters within the poetic landscape flow fuller and faster.

To exemplify Shelley's mastery in not allowing this river trope to become turgid, let us reverse course briefly to the earlier stanzas. 'Groves profaned not by the step of mortal' (6) sustains the pathless motif already discussed, and coupled with the 'untrampled fountains' (3) seems to alienate the figure in the landscape from the landscape itself. The word 'untrampled', as well as the concept, are unusual; it appears in Shelley's poetry only here and in his *Stanzas written in Dejection, near Naples* (also written in this period). Given the philosophical, and especially Platonic, engagement in this fragment and throughout Shelley's work, it is tempting to think through the image in relation to Heraclitus's claim, as recorded by Plato, that one cannot step into the same river twice.[87] The analogy is, of course, meant to convey something of the metaphysical nature of the universe, and its state of flux; it also comprises a literary response in itself.[88] The Heraclitean image of the river has its own long reception, and one is worth noting here. Hume, an important influence on Shelley,[89] repeats the idea in his *Treatise of Human Nature* (1.4.6):

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[87] *Cratylus* 402a. The Heraclitean fragments (B12, B49a, B91) underline the point even more neatly. It is uncertain that Shelley could have accessed all those directly, though Hume seems to have had B12 in mind. Shelley certainly owned a copy of Thomas Taylor's translation of the *Cratylus* (cf. Keach 1984: 239 n. 36), and his sustained dialogue with Plato and Hume is well recorded, as is his metaphysical philosophy; cf. e.g. Howe (2012), Notopoulos (1949). See also note 10.

[88] Socrates claims the idea is analogous to a point in Homer (*Cratylus* 402a).

[89] See, e.g., Howe (2012).

Thus as the nature of a river consists in the motion and change of parts; tho' in less than four and twenty hours these be totally alter'd; this hinders not the river from continuing the same during several ages.

Hume's point, as Heraclitus's (made clear by fragment B12), is that the river is subject to continual change, yet remains in essence what it was. There is stability alongside flux. Hume's claim forms part of a wider discussion on personal identity 'as it regards our thought or imagination', and, in particular, on the stability of identity over time. Though concerned with the notion of the self, the question of 'sameness' ('uninterrupted or invariable' through time) or 'diversity' ('several different objects existing in succession, and connected together by a close relation') maps well onto the related question of the origin(s) of thoughts and imagination; in this case, that a literary landscape is continually evolving, and yet retains elements that are recognisable and stable. Shelley's translation probes at these deeper questions regarding the nature of allusion and textual reworking. Virgil's poem is both a transformation and a continuation of Homeric and Hellenistic poetry; Dante's poem incorporates these[90] and more, and situates the figure of the poet (Virgil) within a version of his own landscape. Shelley's translation offers a clear identification of his source, but, like the proverbial river, it is both the same and different over time. The very form and structure of a translation allows for these broader philosophical questions, as well as the related metaphysical points discussed earlier on the nature of language, to be posed in a way that would be different had Shelley written an 'original' piece. As poet, he walks through landscapes that remain pristine, untrodden, despite multiple visitations; by the time his figure reaches the catalogue of rivers, we might understand

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[90] Dante did not have access to Homer's works directly, but read them 'through' quotations and allusions by other authors, hence the appearance of Homer in the grove.

that one reading is to see these as new waters running the same courses; another is to see the river as the same. This, then, perhaps indicates some of what Shelley means by a translation '*in my way*'.

Shelley's choice of episode reflects his close scholarship on the material, and his recognition of the Aristaeus scene as central to the *Georgics*. Yet the passage also afforded him the opportunity to approach differently the symbol of the river, employed elsewhere in his poems as a means of representing life, death, and the mind. The un-named figure in Shelley's translation becomes poet-by-proxy, frozen in a perpetual present within which he is surrounded by the metaphorical poetry of the past and of the future. In choosing the Aristaeus passage over the similar Orpheus episode,[91] there is perhaps another self-reflexive move to consider with regard to Shelley's own pretensions: one might remember that Aristaeus is ultimately successful, whereas Orpheus is not. The choice of passage, and the manner in which he enacts that choice, helps us to reimagine Virgil's poetic landscape within Shelley's own. Yet Shelley also positions himself as the successful inheritor and interpreter of the Virgilian 'divine effluence', one who is 'delighted' to gaze, 'half wildered', at the sublimity of the new vista he has created.

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[91] See also Keach (1984: xvi) and the discussion of Shelley's 'perpetual Orphic song' (*Prometheus Unbound* 415-17) as being non-indicative of his approach to language, which may be relevant.

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