“The bright blue sky of Rome and…the vigorous awakening of spring”: re-evaluating Percy Shelley’s debt to ancient Roman literature

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by

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Abstract

This thesis reevaluates Percy Shelley's engagement with classical literature. Scholars have typically given more attention to the allusions to Hellenic literature and culture in Shelley's poetry than Roman. In the ancient world, Roman literature is sometimes portrayed as being second-rate to Greek literature. This was often the case during the nineteenth century too: Shelley himself suggests that Rome was an imitator of Greece in his *A Defence of Poetry*. However, through close analysis of the allusions to ancient Roman texts found in four of Shelley's major works, I propose that Roman literature had a valuable, far-reaching impact on his writing. This thesis traces Shelley's debt to authors from the Roman republic and empire in four chapters that examine the following works: *Queen Mab* (1813), *Prometheus Unbound* (1820), *The Cenci* (1820), and *The Triumph of Life* (1822). I read the ancient texts in the original Latin as Shelley did. In the latter three chapters, I analyse Shelley's engagement with Latin literature in conjunction with his response to being immersed in the topography of Italy, as seen in his Preface to *Prometheus Unbound* and his letters from his time there. What emerges from closely reading the above works in this way is the understanding that ancient Roman literature played a crucial part in the formulation of Shelley's radical discourse on a range of philosophical, political, and ethical topics, including his criticism of organised religion and his advocacy of vegetarianism. This thesis posits that Roman literature influenced Shelley in specific, meaningful ways, as did the Greek that he read. I argue that the philosophers, epicists, lyric poets, and tragedians of ancient Rome permeated Shelley's imagination and influenced how he expressed some of his most renowned and distinctive ideas.

Contents

Acknowledgements……...i

List of Abbreviations……ii

Introduction

0.1. '…the shadow is less vivid than the substance': Shelley on Rome and its legacy…….1

0.2. 'Whatever Shelley loved came out in his poetry': A review of secondary scholarship on Shelley and Greek and Latin literature…….6

0.3. Theoretical framework……..16

0.4. Exposition of chapters……...22

Chapter One: 'Mild was the slow necessity of death': Horace, Lucretius and Pliny in Shelley's *Queen Mab*

1.1. Introduction……...……27

1.2. 'Mild was the slow necessity of death': Horace's influence on Shelley's vegetarianism in *Queen Mab*…….37

1.3. 'There is no god': Lucretius' and Pliny's influence on Shelley's atheism in *Queen Mab*…….……47

1.4. The role of the philosopher in *Queen Mab*……62

1.5. Conclusion…….66

Chapter Two: 'Like him whom the Numidian seps did thaw': Lucan's influence on Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*

2.1. Introduction……...…69

2.2. ‘Like a volcano’s meteor-breathing chasm, / Whence the oracular vapour is hurled up’: Lucan and Shelley on divination……81

2.3. ‘Like him whom the Numidian seps did thaw’: Lucan’s influence on Shelley’s Thetis…….98

2.4. Conclusion…….111

Chapter Three: ‘…she was an actor and a sufferer’: Identity and transformation in ancient Roman tragedy and Shelley’s *The Cenci*

3.1. Introduction……..…114

3.2. Shelley’s Beatrice, Virgil’s Dido, and Ovid’s Philomela……...….128

3.3. ‘…their mingled blood’: Shelley’s Francesco and Seneca’s *Thyestes*……152

3.4. Conclusion……...160

Chapter Four: ‘Like atomies that dance / Within a sunbeam’: Lucretian and Virgilian apparitions in Shelley’s *The Triumph of Life*

4.1. Introduction…….162

4.2. ‘Like atomies that dance / Within a sunbeam’: Lucretian physics in *The Triumph of Life* ……....171

4.3. Lucretius’ *De Rerum Natura* and Virgil’s *Aeneid* 6……178

4.4. ‘…the conqueror…in his chariot’: Shelley on the Roman triumph……194

4.5. Conclusion…….….198

Conclusion……..…201

Bibliography…….207

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List of Abbreviations

CPPBS 1, 2, 3, 4	Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Complete Poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley, Volume One*, ed. by Donald H. Reiman and others, 4 vols to date (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000 -)
MSJ i, ii, iii	Mary Shelley, *The Journals of Mary Shelley, Volume 1*, ed. by Paula R. Feldman and Diana Scott-Kilvert (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987)
MW	Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Major Works*, ed. by Zachary Leader and Michael O'Neill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003)
PBSL i, ii	——, *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. by Frederick L. Jones, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964)
PS 1, 2, 3, 4	——, *The Poems of Shelley,* ed. by Kelvin Everest and others, 4 vols (London: Longman, 1989 -)
SPP	——, *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Donald H. Reiman and Neil Fraistat, 2nd edn. (New York: Norton, 2002)
SSP	——, *Shelley: Selected Poems*, ed. by Kelvin Everest (London: Routledge, 2023)

Introduction

0.1 '…the shadow is less vivid than the substance': Shelley on Rome and its legacy

Percy Shelley was fascinated by ancient Rome, both on a sensory and an intellectual level. Joseph Severn's posthumous portrait of him shows the poet composing his *Prometheus Unbound* among the ruins at the Baths of Caracalla.[1] In his Preface to this work, Shelley had made it clear that his surroundings had supplied him with creative impetus, writing: 'This Poem was chiefly written upon the mountainous ruins of the Baths of Caracalla […]'.[2] He continues: 'The bright blue sky of Rome, and the effect of the vigorous awakening of spring in that divinest climate, and the new life with which it drenches the spirit even to intoxication, were the inspiration of this drama.'[3] Shelley's immersion in the Italian topography, and particularly Rome, where he stayed from 20 until 27 November 1818 and from 5 March until 9 June 1819, had a profound effect on him.[4] His 17 or 18 December 1818 and 23 March 1819 letters to Thomas Love Peacock describe the various ancient sites that he and Mary Shelley had visited at Rome, including the Colosseum, the Pyramid of Cestius, the Baths of Caracalla, the Forum, and the imperial arches of Constantine and Titus.[5] The level of detail in his descriptions suggest that Shelley enjoyed the mental stimulation that these sites had to offer, as well as their sensory appeal.

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[1] Joseph Severn, *Shelley Composing 'Prometheus Unbound' in the Baths of Caracalla*, 1845 [oil on canvas], Dove Cottage, The Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere, on loan from Lord Abinger.
[2] *PS* 2, 473.
[3] *PS* 2, 473.
[4] Shelley writes to Peacock from Rome on 20 November 1818. He begins his letter: 'Behold me in this capital of the vanished world.' *PBSL* ii, 54. Mary Shelley records 'enter[ing] Rome' on 20 November 1818, *MSJ* i, 237. On 27 November 1818, Mary Shelley writes: 'Shelley departs for Naples', *MSJ* i, 239. The Shelleys return to Rome on 5 March 1819, *MSJ* i, 251. They depart on 9 June 1819, after the death of their eldest son William, *PBSL* ii, 97.
[5] *PBSL* ii, 57-64; *PBSL* ii, 83-90.

An exceptional student of languages, Shelley read Latin literature extensively. As with much of what Shelley read, the effects of his Latin reading translate into his poetry.[6] In this thesis, I am proposing that Roman authors play a crucial part in the formulation of Shelley's radical voice on a number of philosophical, political, and ethical topics, including his criticisms of empire, monarchy, and organised religion, and even his advocacy of vegetarianism. Chapter One examines Lucretius' and Pliny's influence on Shelley's anti-religious discourse in his *Queen Mab* (1813), using as evidence the lines from Lucretius which form one of the poem's epigraphs, the references to both writers within the poem's notes, and traces of their ideas on religion within the body of the poem itself. Chapter One also investigates Horace's influence on the link between diet and behaviour in the same poem. Canto 9.57 from *Queen Mab*, 'Mild was the slow necessity of death', sees Shelley manipulate Horace's *Ode* 1.3.32-3 (*tarda necessitas / leti*), a connection that has, to the best of my knowledge, not yet been attended to in Shelleyan scholarship. Through original findings such as this one, I propose that the epicists, philosophers, tragedians, and lyric poets of ancient Rome influenced how Shelley expressed some of his most renowned and distinctive ideas.

I have chosen to examine Roman influences on the following works by Shelley: *Queen Mab*, *Prometheus Unbound*, *The Cenci*, and *The Triumph of Life*. First, because each of these works contains examples of the poet's engagement with Roman literature, and secondly, because they cover a significant portion of Shelley's career. These works also contain different kinds of 'allusion' or 'intertextual' dynamic.[7] The earliest of these works, *Queen Mab* (1813), once seen as juvenilia, was published with a compendium of 'long' and

[6] Gilbert Highet likewise says, 'Whatever Shelley loved came out in his poetry', Gilbert Highet, *The Classical Tradition: Greek and Roman Influences on Western Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949, repr. 1959), 419. I discuss Highet and this statement in Section 0.2 of the Introduction.
[7] I discuss the theoretical framework of my research, including definitions of these terms, in section 0.3.

'philosophical' notes which offer us extensive insight into Shelley's thoughts and his writing process.[8] Horace's presence in this poem is fascinating. Yet it has been understated by Shelley's scholars. Other Roman authors influenced Shelley in his *Queen Mab* era: namely Lucretius and Pliny. *Queen Mab* therefore demonstrates to us how Shelley engaged with Roman literature at an early stage in his career. However, I maintain that *Queen Mab*'s debt to Roman authors has not yet been thoroughly attended to.

In *Prometheus Unbound* and *The Cenci*, Shelley explores different genres. While *Queen Mab* takes the form of a 'philosophical' verse poem, *Prometheus Unbound* is subtitled 'A Lyrical Drama in Four Acts'. *The Cenci* is a tragedy, initially written with the intention of it being performed.[9] These texts present further diverse ways in which Shelley is engaging with Roman influences. It is noted in commentaries on *Prometheus Unbound*, for instance, that Shelley makes two direct references to Lucan's *Bellum Civile*.[10] I believe that these allusions should be drawn out of the footnotes and their implications fully explained. Meanwhile, *The Cenci* shows Shelley engaging with both Greek and Roman tragic tropes. In his portrayals of Francesco and Beatrice Cenci, Shelley alludes to Virgil's Dido, to Ovid's Philomela and his Tereus, and to Seneca's and Ovid's Medeas. Furthermore, both *Prometheus Unbound* and *The Cenci* were inspired, partly at least, by Shelley's time at Rome. As I point out in my opening paragraph, Shelley felt that his *Prometheus Unbound* was indebted to his Roman surroundings in the spring of 1819. *The Cenci*, meanwhile, was inspired by a story

[8] In March 1813, Shelley described the notes that would accompany *Queen Mab* to Thomas Hookham as: 'long philosophical, & Anti Christian.' *PBSL* i, 361.
[9] On 20 July 1819, Shelley wrote the following to Thomas Love Peacock: 'I have written a tragedy on the subject of a story well known in Italy, & in my conception eminently dramatic—I have taken some pains to make my play fit for representation, & those who have already seen it judge favourably […] What I want you to do is to procure for me its presentation at Covent Garden. The principal character Beatrice is precisely fitted for Miss O Neil, & it might even seem to have been written for her […] and in all respects it is fitted only for Covent Garden. The chief male character I confess I should be very unwilling that any one but Kean shd. play—that is impossible, & I must be contented with an inferior actor.' *PBSL* ii, 102-3.
[10] *PS* 2, 548 and *PS* 2, 578, for instance. These allusions form the basis of my discussion in Chapter Two.

well known in Italy and the topography of sites such as the Cenci Palace in Rome.[11] Therefore, the language and themes that Shelley deploys in these works contain allusions to classical Roman literature, while their settings also gesture towards the site of Rome itself, either directly or implicitly.

Finally, *The Triumph of Life* (1822) offers yet another diverse insight into Shelley's engagement with Roman literature. Shelley wrote this poem while staying in Lerici.[12] Like *Prometheus Unbound* and *The Cenci*, this poem provides evidence of Shelley's immersion in Italian culture and its sites. As I discuss in Chapter Four, the setting of the poem mirrors Shelley's own location while he was writing. Moreover, scholars have recognised that *The Triumph of Life* engages with Lucretius' imagery surrounding atoms and the role of science and philosophy in society.[13] In this chapter, I discuss Shelley's debt to Lucretius on conjunction with Virgil's *Aeneid* 6, which has its own complex relationship with *De Rerum Natura*. Although *The Triumph of Life* can perhaps be seen as an outlier compared to *Queen Mab*, *Prometheus Unbound*, and *The Cenci*, because of its unfinished state at the time of Shelley's death and the fact that there is no fair copy for the majority of the poem, it constitutes a vital component to this thesis, owing to the insights it offers into Shelley's engagement with Roman literature at a later stage in his career. *The Triumph of Life* sees the more mature Shelley engage with Lucretius once more, as well as Roman ideas of the underworld and the afterlife, while also immersing himself and his poem's speaker in his Italian surroundings, which become a site of profound reflection.

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[11] In his Preface to *The Cenci*, Shelley writes: 'On my arrival at Rome, I found that the story of the Cenci was a subject not to be mentioned in Italian society without awakening a deep and breathless interest […]', *PS* 2, 728-9. I discuss Shelley's encounter with the story of Beatrice Cenci further in 0.4, and in Chapter Three.
[12] Shelley stayed at Casa Magni from 28 April until 1 July 1822, *PBSL* ii, 413; *PBSL* ii, 443.
[13] For instance, *SSP*, 809; *SSP*, 875, and Paul Turner, 'Shelley and Lucretius', *The Review of English Studies*, 10 (1959), pp. 269-82.

In spite of his engagement both with Roman texts and with Roman and Italian topography, Shelley's scholars continue to overlook the presence of ancient Rome and Latin literature in his work. Typically, discussions of his engagement with the ancient world favour Greece over Rome. One explanation for this is the complex position that ancient Rome occupied in Shelley's mind. In his 'A Defence of Poetry' (1821), Shelley calls Rome an imitator of Greece. He writes: 'The institutions also, and the religion of Rome, were less poetical than those of Greece, as the shadow is less vivid than the substance.'[14] This analogy, in which Greece is the 'substance' and Rome the mere 'shadow', illustrates a clear hierarchy in which Rome is ranked below Greece. Shelley was not alone in forming this opinion. The ancients themselves gesture towards a hierarchy of this kind, with some Roman poets casting themselves, overtly at least, as being inferior to their Greek predecessors. But in terms of its own afterlife, Rome was highly valued too. During the Renaissance period, and the 'Augustan age' of English Literature, generally agreed to date from approximately 1680 until 1750, Rome was, on the whole, regarded as the pinnacle of literature in Britain.[15] Eighteenth-century writers such as Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift modelled some of their works on poets from the early Roman empire, namely Virgil, Ovid, and Horace. But by the early nineteenth century, the dynamic between Greece and Rome appears to have shifted. Greece displaces Rome. For example, Thomas Love Peacock's 'The Four Ages of Poetry', written and published in 1820, calls Homer the 'golden age' of poetry, and Virgil the 'silver'.[16] The status of Rome and of Augustan literature can be seen to rise and fall over time, or at least this has been the general consensus so far.

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[14] *MW*, 688.
[15] Wolfgang Bernhard Fleischmann; J.K. Newman, 'Classicism', in *The New Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. by Alex Preminger and others (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 215-19, 218.
[16] Thomas Love Peacock, 'Appendix C: "The Four Ages of Poetry"', in *Nightmare Abbey*, ed. by Nicholas A. Joukovksy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 134-57, 141-2.

0.2 'Whatever Shelley loved came out in his poetry': A review of secondary scholarship on Shelley and Greek and Latin literature

Although it appears that Greek literature was regarded more highly than Roman in the early nineteenth century, evidence for Shelley's fascination with and admiration for Latin literature abounds in his writing. The authors of ancient Rome had a profound influence on Shelley, which scholars such as Gilbert Highet and Jennifer Wallace fail to mention when discussing his engagement with classical texts. For instance, Highet deems that Shelley's favourite classical authors were predominantly Greek, listing Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Plato, Theocritus, and, finally, the Roman poet Lucan.[17] I agree when Highet states that, 'Whatever Shelley loved came out in his poetry'.[18] Shelley had a retentive memory. Whatever he loved did come out in his poetry, including the Latin that he read. In order to understand the meaning of Shelley's poetry to a greater extent, it is important, therefore, that we appreciate specific Roman influences on his work, as well as the wealth of other resources that informed his writing and thinking processes.

This thesis examines Shelley's allusions to ancient Roman texts and, in doing so, pays attention to an area that Highet neglects. Highet spends little time on Shelley's engagement with Roman authors. He finds an explanation for this in the broader cultural sphere of which Shelley was a part, stating: 'The Renaissance meant the assimilation of Latin, while the revolutionary era meant a closer approach to Greek.'[19] I agree that on the whole, Latin was preferred during the Renaissance and the so-called Augustan age in Britain, having presented this idea in section 0.1. Highet continues: 'Men in the Renaissance […] would quote fifth-rate Latin poets like Silius Italicus freely and first-rate Greek poets like Homer sparsely. This

[17] Highet, 419-21.
[18] Highet, 419.
[19] Highet, 360.

attitude was now reversed.'[20] I disagree with this on the basis that Shelley was also comfortable quoting from Roman writers in his letters. Shelley quotes from Horace's *Epistle* 2.1.3-4 in Latin in two letters to Godwin from 1812, inserting the ancient's words into conversation as though they are his own.[21] Later, in January 1819, Shelley quotes from Horace's *Epistle* 1.6 in a letter to Peacock.[22] I discuss all three of these examples in Chapter One of this thesis. Highet also suggests that 'there is little trace of [Lucretius'] influence in Shelley', and that Virgil 'could mean little to Shelley except as a nature poet'.[23] Highet takes the same stance with regard to Roman tragedy, writing: 'When Shelley and Goethe decided to write great plays, they thought nothing of Seneca, but strove to emulate Aeschylus and Euripides.'[24] Chapter Three of this thesis, on *The Cenci*, forms a direct challenge to this statement. Overall, I find that Highet makes unjustified statements when it comes to Shelley's engagement with classical authors, ignoring the influence of Roman texts and ideas on the later poet's work. This thesis offers an alternative evaluation to that of Highet.

In 1997, Jennifer Wallace re-addressed Shelley's 'Hellenism'.[25] Wallace deems that, unlike Keats and Byron, who thought about Greece in 'aesthetic and 'passionate' terms respectively, Shelley nurtured an 'intellectual' relationship with Greece.[26] Wallace continues: 'Rather than passively imbibing the translations and mediations of other scholars […] he actively struggled to read the texts in the original, and hence Greece appealed directly to his mind as well as to his emotions.'[27] Shelley felt it was important to be able to read texts in their original language. He discusses this topic in a letter thought to date from spring 1821. In

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[20] Highet, 360.
[21] *PBSL* i, 230; *PBSL* i, 318.
[22] *PBSL* ii, 75.
[23] Highet, 422. Paul Turner opposes this statement in his 1959 article, *Shelley and Lucretius*, which I discuss later in this section.
[24] Highet, 360.
[25] Jennifer Wallace, *Shelley and Greece: Rethinking Romantic Hellenism* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan: 1997).
[26] Wallace (1997), 3-4.
[27] Wallace (1997), 4.

this letter, whose recipient seems to be unknown - in Jones' edition it is addressed 'To [A Lady]' - Shelley writes:

> What is a translation of Homer into English? A person who is ignorant of Greek need only look at 'Paradise Lost,' or the tragedy of 'Lear' translated into French, to obtain an analogical conception of its worthless and miserable inadequacy. Tacitus, or Livius, or Herodotus, are equally undelightful and uninstructive in translation. You require to know and to be intimate with those persons who have acted a distinguished part to benefit, to enlighten, or even to pervert and injure humankind. Before you can do this, four years are yet to be consumed in the discipline of the ancient languages, and those of modern Europe […]'.[28]

After discussing his *Queen Mab*, Wallace concludes that the young Shelley represents a new kind of engagement with the classical world. Wallace argues that 'by […] the confusion over the relationship with the past and the feminisation of knowledge, Shelley unsettles the orthodox assumptions about education.'[29] Wallace continues: 'The juxtaposing and questioning of the classical past with the contemporary present can apparently give rise to all sorts of liberating, positive new ideas', including 'vegetarianism and atheism'.[30] I agree with Wallace's stance on Shelley and the idea that he represented an alternative, individualistic kind of classicism. However, I pose the question, why do readers continue to overlook Roman authors in this discussion? In Chapter One of this thesis, I demonstrate that Shelley had Roman poets at the forefront of his mind when discussing the benefits of atheism and vegetarianism in *Queen Mab*, namely Lucretius and Horace. Therefore, it may be an accurate summation to say that Shelley was building from his 'classical education' when discussing vegetarianism and atheism in *Queen Mab*, but it is broad and unnuanced. He was engaging with Roman republican and imperial poets specifically when treating these topics.

[28] *PBSL* ii, 277-8.
[29] Wallace (1997), 43.
[30] Wallace (1997), 43.

Wallace neglects Rome further in the chapter, 'The Younger Romantics: Leigh Hunt, Keats, and Shelley'.[31] Wallace posits that Shelley and his contemporaries 'turned to the mythology and literature of ancient Greece as subject matter for their poetry.'[32] Wallace continues: 'While all three writers [Hunt, Keats, and Shelley] read Latin literature […] it was Greek literature that especially piqued their interest and which – most importantly – they *claimed* as their inspiration.'[33] I agree that Shelley was troubled by Rome and its legacy, addressing this issue of hierarchy in section 0.1. Further, I do not deny the importance of Greek literature and culture in Shelley's writing throughout this thesis. However, in accepting that Hunt, Keats and Shelley 'claimed' Greece 'as their inspiration', Wallace perpetuates a narrative that I deem to be inaccurate. While Shelley immersed himself in Greek literature, as Wallace points out, and at times critiqued Roman authors for their lack of originality, it is an over-simplification to say that Shelley and his contemporaries preferred Greece to Rome. Wallace does acknowledge the fact that Shelley was indebted to Virgil's *Eclogues* in his *Rosalind and Helen*, in particular *Eclogue* 10 which contains an encounter between the shepherd Gallus and Pan, but only in the context of extrapolating the broader influence of classical pastoral poetry on Shelley.[34] Again, I find that Wallace prioritises discussion of Greek influences, and falls short of discussing Roman influences in their own right.

However, there has been some acknowledgement and discussion of the importance of Roman texts and Rome itself within Shelley's writing. This thesis builds on the work carried out by scholars such as Jonathan Sachs, Paul Turner, Amanda Jo Goldstein, Timothy Webb, Nicholas Joukovsky, and Tom Phillips. In terms of its close-reading approach, this thesis takes a similar approach to Turner, Goldstein, Joukovsky, and Phillips. But in terms of the

[31] Jennifer Wallace, 'The Younger Romantics: Leigh Hunt, Keats, and Shelley', in *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature, Volume 4 (1790-1880),* ed. by Norman Vance and Jennifer Wallace (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 413-448.
[32] Wallace (2015), 413.
[33] Wallace (2015), 413.
[34] Wallace (2015), 431-434.

scope of the research, as well as the scope of its findings, it aligns more with Webb's chapter on Italy's influence on Shelley, and with Sachs' study into Shelley's engagement with the concept of the ancient Roman empire itself. I discuss each of these critical stances below. Although the field is developing, and scholars are recognising that Shelley forged meaningful connections with ancient Roman culture, I argue that there remains work to be done.

Turner's 1959 article highlights Shelley's debt to Lucretius in a number of Shelley's works, including *Queen Mab*, 'The Daemon of the World', *The Revolt of Islam,* 'Prince Athanase', *Rosalind and Helen, Swellfoot the Tyrant,* and *The Triumph of Life*.[35] While his work is valuable, the quantity of material that Turner presents means that his article serves to signpost moments of Lucretian influence, rather than to offer a sustained analysis of the full implications of these connections. While this thesis takes a similar approach to Turner by closely reading lines or passages from Shelley alongside the parallel passages in the ancient texts, I focus on one of Shelley's major works at a time. This allows me to fully explain the context and meaning of Shelley's engagement with a particular author. I refer to Turner's article in Chapter One, on *Queen Mab,* and in Chapter Four, on *The Triumph of Life*.

Amanda Jo Goldstein regards Lucretian physics as an important influence for Shelley, Goethe, Marx, 'and other contemporary appropriators'.[36] Goldstein suggests that 'among the welter of vitalist, materialist, Spinozist, hylozoist, and animist positions then in circulation', these writers and thinkers found something 'unique' in Lucretius.[37] Goldstein finds that *De Rerum Natura* 2 influenced Shelley's simile comparing the triumph participants to dust motes at *The Triumph of Life* 446-7, arguing that Shelley's 'motes' have a double meaning: 'not only a figure for atomic motion, the dancing motes are a figure for the reality of figures, here

[35] Turner, 1959.
[36] Amanda Jo Goldstein, *Sweet Science: Romantic Materialism and the New Logics of Life* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2017), 25.
[37] Goldstein, 25.

credited as conduits between sensuous perception and realities of otherwise inaccessible scale.'[38] Like Turner, Goldstein also regards Shelley's Rousseau and Rousseau's articulation of his experience as an embodiment of Lucretian physics.[39] Goldstein concludes that 'in *De Rerum Natura*, reality only ever occurs because, amid the rain of first particles falling in parallel, two come into contact'.[40] Goldstein continues, 'Shelley's poem on life seeks out this touched, tinged, contingent matter as equipped to bring the discourses of history, life, and poetry into nontriumphal and timely contact.'[41] I find Goldstein's remarks on Shelley's debt to Lucretius in *The Triumph of Life* from a philosophical standpoint to be valuable. In the fourth chapter of this thesis, I too engage with Shelley's debt to Lucretius in this poem, but with attention given to Virgil's underworld in *Aeneid* 6 as well. While I agree with Goldstein, I think that discussions of the influence of Roman philosophy on Shelley's ghostly triumph in *The Triumph of Life* should also acknowledge literary depictions of spirits, such as in *Aeneid* 6, as well as other sources for the historical practice of the Roman triumph, including the imperial arches that Shelley saw – and critiqued – in the spring of 1819.[42]

Further, readers should understand Shelley's Roman allusions in conjunction with their Greek precedents. Some scholars have made advances in this regard. Nicholas Joukovsky investigates the 'mythological syncretism' of Shelley's *Adonais*, claiming that Horace's *Odes* were an important influence on Shelley's poem.[43] As I do in Chapter One of this thesis, Joukovsky also offers an overview of Shelley's reading of Horace, plus that of his first wife, Harriet Westbrook, and Mary Shelley.[44] With regard to Horace's influence on Shelley's poetry, Joukovsky claims that *Adonais* was inspired by Horace's 'dirge for

[38] Goldstein, 150.
[39] Goldstein, 152.
[40] Goldstein, 164.
[41] Goldstein, 164-5.
[42] *PBSL* ii, 86.
[43] Nicholas Joukovsky, 'Pleading against Oblivion: Shelley's Adonais and Horace's Odes', *Modern Philology*, 112 (2015), pp. 479-502, 501.
[44] Joukovsky, 483.

Quintilius', *Ode* 1.24.[45] Joukovsky concludes that 'by repeatedly echoing one of the two acknowledged masters of the genre [the ode] in *Adonais*, Shelley may have intended an indirect compliment to Keats as a lyric poet'.[46] Moreover, Joukovsky continues, 'Shelley's elaborate conflation of classical sources in *Adonais* recalls the sophisticated imitation of Greek models by Horace'.[47] Joukovsky seems to suggest that part of Horace's appeal for Shelley lay in the ancient poet's own complex literary heritage. 'Shelley uses Roman techniques of imitation while basing his elegy on conventions of Greek bucolic poetry', Joukovsky writes.[48] I find that Joukovsky's close analytical style is a helpful way of looking at Shelley and his influences, whose work was often tightly woven into his poetry. Further, Joukovsky's distinction between Greek and Roman influences in the case of *Adonais* is valuable, as I find that differentiation such as this can sometimes be lacking in Shelleyan scholarship.

Tom Phillips also considers the combination of Greek and Latin influences on Shelley's 'The Witch of Atlas'.[49] Phillips suggests that lines 241-45, when the Witch is weeping in the cave, borrow from Apollonius Rhodia and Virgil.[50] Specifically, the 'reflections' of the Witch's tears in the well water are said to recall *Argonautica* 3.756-59 and *Aeneid* 8.22-25. Phillips sees the Witch as 'the culminating figure in this sequence', preceded first by Medea, and then by Aeneas.[51] The Witch 'extends […] the "cares" felt by her intertextual predecessors', that is, the personal anguish felt by Medea and the political and military-oriented cares of Aeneas, in their respective passages.[52] Phillips suggests that, 'Rather than offering the Witch as a figure to be imitated, the sequence pulls attention

[45] Joukovsky, 484-8.
[46] Joukovsky, 500.
[47] Joukovsky, 500.
[48] Joukovsky, 501.
[49] Tom Phillips, 'Fancy's Flight: "The Witch of Atlas"', *European Romantic Review*, 33 (2022), pp. 739-51.
[50] Phillips, 744-5.
[51] Phillips, 746.
[52] Phillips, 746.

towards the exemplary character of the event of reading itself.'[53] In this reading, the Witch takes on a metapoetic role. The dancing reflections of the Witch's tears represent the stimuli that encourage the expansion of the mind, an idea that Shelley discusses in his 'A Defence of Poetry'.[54] Here, Phillips shows us the value of unfolding every link of an intertextual chain, to investigate both the Greek and Roman aspects of a classical allusion. Similarly, there are instances in this thesis where Shelley either echoes a Roman passage or motif that has a Greek precedent, or where he perhaps has more than one text in mind at a time. For example, in Chapter Four, on *The Triumph of Life*, I investigate the influence of both Homer's and Virgil's underworlds (*Odyssey* 11 and *Aeneid* 6, respectively), on Shelley's speaker's hallucination of the 'similitude' of the triumph (*TL* 117). In the same chapter, I also examine the inspiration behind 'the million leaves of summer's bier' (*TL* 50), which seems to come from *Iliad* 6.156 and *Aeneid* 6.309-10.[55]

Timothy Webb, meanwhile, addresses the conflation between space and intellectual pursuit that Rome offered to both Percy and Mary Shelley, as well as Lord Byron.[56] Webb observes that Shelley distinguishes between Rome's ancient past and its present. Webb observes that in his [?20] December 1818 letter to Leigh Hunt, Shelley differentiates between the 'two Italies' as follows: 'one composed of the green earth & transparent sea and the mighty ruins of antient times, and aerial mountains, & the warm & radiant atmosphere which is interfused through all things. The other consists of the Italians of the present day, their works & ways.'[57] I agree with Webb's summation that, for Byron, Hunt and Shelley, 'it did not seem possible to encounter parts of Italy without remembering their associations with

[53] Phillips, 746.
[54] Phillips, 746.
[55] *SSP*, 828.
[56] Timothy Webb, 'Haunted City: the Shelleys, Byron, and Ancient Rome', in *Romans and Romantics,* ed. by Timothy Saunders (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 203-24.
[57] *PBSL* ii, 67. Webb, 209.

Latin poets and with the impress of their writing.'[58] I address this congruence between geography and literature in Shelley's mind in the fourth chapter of this thesis, when discussing the Shelleys' visit to Lake Avernus at the end of 1818. Furthermore, Webb also suggests that 'Shelley seems to have discovered in the gradual processes of nature and its reclaiming fertilities some consolation for the powerful ostentation and the cruelties of ancient Rome'.[59] Again, I find Webb's observations convincing. I briefly discuss Shelley's delight in the 'sublime & lovely' 'desolation' at the Baths of Caracalla in Chapter Two to a similar end, arguing, alongside Wallace, that the deterioration of certain sites at Rome represented the deterioration of humankind's vanity for Shelley.[60] Ultimately, I find that Webb's chapter is a valuable starting point for beginning to consider Shelley's sensory experience of Rome in conjunction with his Latin reading.

I argue that it is Sachs who has done much to re-orientate Shelley's readers with regard to understanding Shelley's classical engagement. Sachs' work gives, for the first time, I believe, sustained attention to the importance of ancient Roman culture in Shelley's writing, and therefore represents a similar perspective to the one that this thesis adopts. Sachs recognises that 'the importance of Rome in the Romantic period has been not merely ignored, but actively denied.'[61] Sachs comments on a phenomenon that he terms 'differentiated classicism', which is the recognition that 'for certain historical situations Roman precedents might be more appropriate than Greek ones, or vice versa.'[62] I agree, and I find that this is the case for certain philosophical topics too. For example, Horace's *Ode* 1.3 provides Shelley with a suitable precedent for his discussion of humankind's moral and ethical degeneration in *Queen Mab*, which I discuss in Chapter One. Sachs also traces the evolution of Rome within

[58] Webb, 211-2.
[59] Webb, 223.
[60] *PBSL* ii, 84.
[61] Jonathan Sachs, *Romantic Antiquity: Rome in the British Imagination, 1789-1832* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 4.
[62] Sachs, 11.

Shelley's writing. Sachs posits that Shelley initially grouped Greece and Rome together, as seen in his 29 July 1812 letter to Godwin.[63] There, Sachs points out that Shelley wrote: 'the evils of acquiring Greek & Latin considerably overbalance the benefits.'[64] The study of both Greek and Latin therefore represented a kind of despotism to the young Shelley. However, Sachs deems that Shelley differentiated between the two as time went on. In his *Queen Mab*, for example, Sachs states that the poet 'single[s] imperial Rome out for particular vilification when the poem later denounces Nero as a representative despot'.[65]

Sachs' work marks a crucial step in the process of illuminating Rome's significance in the British Romantic period. But he examines Shelley's use of Rome as a political entity, arguing that Shelley deploys Rome in his work in order to better understand and represent the turbulence of his own day. Sachs states that, at times in Shelley's writing, 'Rome functions as a negative foil to the positive virtues of Greece, an effective vehicle with which to criticize regency England and post-Waterloo Europe more generally.'[66] Sachs' chapter on Shelley is valuable and I refer to it throughout my thesis. My research differs on the basis that my primary focus is literary, and I am more concerned with the political undertones of Shelley's intertextual engagement with Roman authors such as Horace and Lucan, as seen in Chapters One and Two, than with his representation of Rome as a metaphorical 'vehicle' being used to comment on contemporary politics. Like Sachs, I wish to illuminate the importance of Rome's impact on Shelley's imagination, but I do so by way of examining its literary and cultural legacy, rather than its governmental body. Moreover, while Sachs deems Shelley's Rome to be 'a negative foil to the positive virtues of Greece', I propose that Shelley values Roman literature in its own right. While I do not doubt that Shelley was aware of the complex

[63] Sachs, 147.
[64] *PBSL* i, 316.
[65] Sachs, 151.
[66] Sachs, 174.

lineage of the Roman poetry and philosophy that he read and admired, including its debt to Greek literature, I argue that he often overtly alludes to Roman texts, suggesting that his opinion was not necessarily that Roman literature was a 'foil', but that it could complement its Greek models by way of representing cultural exchange and intellectual development.

0.3 Theoretical framework

This thesis throws new light on the reception of Roman literature in Shelley's poetry. The nature of my research means that it also responds to critical theories of intertextuality and allusion. Each chapter of this thesis closely examines lines or passages in which I identify an echo of an ancient Roman text that Shelley had read. I provide evidence for his reading either from Shelley's letters or from Mary Shelley's journal. Wherever possible, I identify the version of the Latin text that Shelley owned or read by reading the primary evidence from Shelley's letters and Mary Shelley's journals, and by attending to recent secondary scholarship such as Valentina Varinelli's article on editions of books owned by the Shelleys.[67] However, it remains a challenge to accurately identify the Latin edition on every occasion, and further to compare the Latin text that Shelley may have read to more recent editions. I am therefore open to the possibility that the editions read by Shelley may differ from the text to which I am referring. However, by engaging with the ancient Roman texts in the original Latin, as Shelley did, I hope to illuminate the connections between the authors as comprehensively as possible.

0.3.1 Recent theories of influence and intertextuality

The theoretical framework for this research builds on existing reception studies and, more specifically, definitions of 'intertextuality'. Some key terms that I deploy throughout this

[67] Valentina Varinelli, '"The Choice Society of All Ages": The Shelleys' Books at Keats-Shelley House', *The Keats-Shelley Review*, 34 (2020), pp. 138-159.

thesis are ‘echo’, ‘allusion’, and ‘intertextuality’. I use the umbrella term ‘intertextuality’ to refer to points of contact between Shelley and a Roman text. These points of contact might be verbal, and specific (an ‘echo’), or thematic, or slightly more abstract (an ‘allusion’).

I believe that Julia Kristeva was the first scholar to coin the term ‘intertextuality’ in her 1966 essay ‘Word, Dialogue and Novel’.[68] In what is partly a response to Mikhail Bakhtin’s ‘Discourse in the Novel’ (1934), Kristeva proposes replacing ‘the notion […] of intersubjectivity’ within literary works with ‘the notion of *intertextuality*’.[69] According to Kristeva, ‘[…] horizontal axis (subject-addressee) and vertical axis (text-context) coincide, bringing to light an important fact: each word (text) is an intersection of word (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read.’[70] Kristeva reminds us of the consequence of ‘intertextuality’, that one text can signify ‘at least one other’ and therefore contain multiple meanings. Kristeva envisions each word in a text as an intersection, whereby it is given a double meaning according to subject, addressee, text, and context. This is an important model to have in mind when considering Shelley’s use of imagery or turns of phrase from Latin literature, because it reminds readers of the fact that any one word may have several significances. When Shelley refers to ‘atomies that dance / Within a sunbeam’ at *The Triumph of Life* 446-7, for instance, the image makes sense to a reader who has not read Lucretius. However, the scene takes on new significance when one understands it as a reference to Epicurean physics. This line and its debt to Lucretius is discussed in Chapter Four of this thesis.

Helen Regueiro Elam’s entry for ‘intertextuality’ in *The New Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics* draws on critics including Roland Barthes and Jacques

[68] Julia Kristeva, ‘Word, Dialogue and Novel’, *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. by Toril Moi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 34-61.
[69] Kristeva, 37.
[70] Kristeva, 37.

Derrida, who both comment on an author's lack of paternity or ownership over a text.[71] While Barthes suggests that 'there is no father-author', Derrida similarly argues that texts are 'orphan[s]'. 'Given' that 'no text is self-sufficient', Helen Elam writes, 'no writer can ever be in control of the meaning of the text.'[72] Elam's definition of intertextuality corresponds with that of Kristeva, who argued that individual words can evoke multiple meanings according to subject, addressee, text, and context. While a loss of 'control' for the author can be a possible outcome of intertextuality, I maintain that intertextuality can be and often is a conscious process on the part of the author. I do not agree with the implication that 'intertextuality' is only something that only occurs after the writing and dissemination of a text. Throughout this thesis, I use the term 'intertextuality' to mean verbal or close thematic links between a work by Shelley and a work by a Roman author, which I believe that he makes consciously. Hence it is crucial to detail Shelley's reading of said author[s] at the beginning of every chapter, to prove that he was aware of their works and that he had engaged with them closely.

Harold Bloom does not use the term 'intertextuality' in his *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*.[73] Instead, he coins his own categories for different types of influence. These are: '*Clinamen* or Poetic Misprision'; '*Tessera* or Completion and Antithesis'; '*Kenosis* or Repetition and Discontinuity'; '*Daemonization* or The Counter-Sublime'; *Askesis* or Purgation and Solipsism'; '*Apophrades* or The Return of the Dead'. Bloom comments that: 'by "poetic influence" I do not mean the transmission of ideas and images from earlier to later poets. This is indeed just "something that happens" […]'.[74] This implies that he deems

[71] Helen Regueiro Elam, 'Intertextuality', in *The New Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. by Alex Preminger and T.V.F. Brogan (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 620-622, 621. See Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', *Authorship: From Plato to the Postmodern: A Reader*, ed. by Seán Burke (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), pp. 125-130. See also Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981). Derrida says: 'The specificity of writing would thus be intimately bound to the absence of the father', 77.
[72] Elam, 621.
[73] Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, 2nd edn (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).
[74] Bloom, 71.

'influence', contrary to 'just something that happens', as a conscious process. I believe that both 'poetic influence', as defined by Bloom, and 'the transmission of ideas and images' are at play in Shelley's works. However, my focus in this thesis are points of influence that I deem to be conscious and therefore deliberate acts of transmission from the ancient text to Shelley.

0.3.2 Intertextuality in classical literature

Stephen Hinds discusses 'self-annotation' in *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry.*[75] Hinds begins with the 'Alexandrian footnote', a device whereby a poet makes a reference to an anonymous third-party source (*dicitur,* 'it is said', *fama est,* 'the story goes', etc.,), in order to signpost their debt to a predecessor.[76] The Alexandrian footnote is a conscious kind of allusion. It is a way for writers to lend authority to their work. Hinds later turns to Seneca the Elder in his examination of the difference between 'reference' and 'allusion'.[77] At *Suasoriae* 3.7, Seneca the Elder imagines a scene in which Ovid borrows from Virgil. Ovid does so *palam*, 'openly', rather than *clam*, 'secretly', which Hinds regards as 'a guarantee of the author's integrity'.[78] 'As *palam* is to *clam,* so 'reference' is to 'allusion': a 'reference' is 'a specific direction of the attention'; an 'allusion', in the words of the *OED*, is 'a covert, implied or indirect reference', Hinds writes.[79] I use 'reference' and 'allusion' in this thesis in much the same way. For instance, when Shelley's Jupiter recalls Thetis' cries of agony at *Prometheus Unbound* III.1.33-43, he claims that she compared herself to Lucan's Sabellus: 'Like him whom the Numidian seps did thaw' (*PU* III.1.3.40). I find that this is, in Hinds words, a 'reference', meaning 'a specific direction of

[75] Stephen Hinds, 'Reflexivity: allusion and self-annotation', in *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 1-16.
[76] Hinds, 1.
[77] Hinds, 'Interpretability: beyond philological fundamentalism', in *Allusion and Intertext,* 22.
[78] Hinds, 22.
[79] Hinds, 22.

the attention' on Shelley's part towards *Bellum Civile.* 'Allusion', meanwhile, still marks a conscious gesture towards a predecessor text, but one that is 'implied or indirect'. The 'oracular vapour' that Asia and Panthea encounter at *PU* II.3.4, for instance, constitutes an allusion of this kind. Everest and Matthews remark that the poet likely had *Bellum Civile* in mind when describing the site of Demogorgon's cave in this way.[80] Both of these intertextual points of contact, one that may be called a 'reference' and the other an 'allusion', are discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis. Hinds therefore aids us in differentiating between these points of contact on a theoretical level.

0.3.3 New meanings found in 'translation'

It is possible to understand the various degrees of Shelley's intertextual engagement with ancient Roman texts as processes of translation, during which new meanings of the 'originals' are generated. At times, Shelley refers to a Roman text or author in an ironic fashion. In section 1.1.2 of Chapter One, for instance, I examine two instances in 1812 letters from Shelley to William Godwin, where Shelley relocates and recontextualises a line from Horace's *Epistle* 1.2. The line from Horace is written with humility, designed to flatter the emperor, although Brink interprets the ancient poet as wielding some degree of humour.[81] Shelley, meanwhile, quotes the line from Horace to Augustus in his letter to Godwin, granting the exchange between 'mentor' and tutee a flippant, mischievous tone. This constitutes an example of Shelley's regeneration of the ancient texts that he read. He unsettles the sincerity found in Horace's imagined exchange with Augustus, for Shelley – and Godwin – both took exception to imperialism. I discuss this example in further detail in section 1.1.2 of Chapter One.

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[80] *PS* 2, 548.
[81] C. O. Brink, ed., *Horace on Poetry, Volume 3*, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 59.

Also in Chapter One, I examine Shelley's recontextualization of a line from Horace's *Ode* 1.3 in the notes to his *Queen Mab*, and within the poem itself. Shelley refers to a mythological chain of events, of which Horace is offering just one version, and presents the fictional rise of illness and disease as being correlative with humankind's transition towards eating meat instead of maintaining an herbivore diet. In this way, as I discuss in the chapter itself, Shelley roots what appears to be a radical, revolutionary ideology in the context of the nineteenth century – vegetarianism – in an ancient western mythological narrative. Horace's poem, which makes no mention of a connection between humankind's dietary habits, its ethics, and its physiological health, becomes, through Shelley's lens, a champion for that very revolutionary concept. Furthermore, in Chapter Three, I discuss what appears to be an allusion to Virgil's Dido in Shelley's *The Cenci*. The character Orsino tells Beatrice that her 'image' 'follows' him, even in his dreams (*The Cenci*, I.2.12-13). As I discuss in detail in this chapter, Orsino, who is a priest, recalibrates the hunter-prey dynamic found in *Aeneid* 4, when Dido wanders Carthage like a shot deer, so as to present himself as the victim of Beatrice's so-called callousness. In this example, Shelley alludes to a simile from Virgil in order to critique Catholicism in sixteenth-century papal Rome. He attributes a new meaning to Virgil's language, displacing it from its original context in which Dido, the 'anti-Roman', Carthaginian queen, was a victim of Juno's and Venus' intervention, and instead inserts it into an anti-Catholic, anti-patriarchal narrative that holds resonance for his nineteenth-century audience.

These examples of intertextual juxtaposition, amongst others, will show that Shelley is not simply iterating or echoing the Roman authors that he read. Rather, he translates these authors into his own context. Most significantly of all, he reworks ancient Roman authors in surprising, sometimes mischievous circumstances, such as by attaching a pro-vegetarian agenda to Horace's *Ode* 1.3. At other times, it seems that his aim is not to be mischievous,

but to evoke empathy, and even sorrow, as seen in the way that he configures Beatrice Cenci as a new Dido, who is endangered by the Catholic, patriarchal society by which she is surrounded. Shelley, therefore, generates new meanings of the ancient texts through his various interactions with them.

I return briefly to Highet. Highet comments on the importance of being aware of the classical allusions in a text, writing: 'the reader who knows and can recognize these evocations without trouble gains a richer pleasure and a fuller understanding of the subject than the reader who cannot.'[82] I agree with this statement. As I outline in section 0.1, some of Shelley's most radical and 'modern' ideas pertaining to monarchy, religion, and diet had their roots in the Latin literature that he read. In his advocacy of vegetarianism, for instance, Shelley finds an unlikely alliance with the Augustan Horace. By attending to classical references such as this one, I hope to illuminate the intellectual process behind some of Shelley's most renowned ideas. It is only by having a full view of the range of Shelley's influences that readers can fully appreciate and understand his exploration of humankind's shortcomings, as well as its potential, within his poetry.

0.4 Exposition of chapters

The rationale for examining *Queen Mab*, *Prometheus Unbound*, *The Cenci*, and *The Triumph of Life*, in that order, is outlined in section 0.1 Chapter One investigates Shelley's debt to Lucretius, Pliny, and Horace in his *Queen Mab.* The former two poets had a significant impact on Shelley's thoughts about religion and atheism at the time of writing *Queen Mab*. Shelley quotes from Lucretius for one of his poem's epigraphs. He also quotes from Lucretius and Pliny in the notes which accompany the poem, referring to *De Rerum Natura* 3.85-6 in his note to Canto 5.112-3, and to Pliny's *Natural History* in his note to Canto 7.13. Lucretius'

[82] Highet, 157-8.

presence in the poem has been stated by scholars such as Turner. However, Horace was another, less likely source of inspiration for the young Shelley. Horace in fact lies behind the later poet's scrutiny of humankind's dietary habits. Shelley quotes from *Ode* 1.3 in the note to Canto 8.211-12 ('no longer now / He slays the lamb that looks him in the face'), arguing that humanity's moral state underwent a sharp decline, coinciding with our discovery of fire and our transition to a carnivorous diet. Shelley quotes Horace alongside a reference to John Frank Newton, who also quoted *Ode* 1.3 in his *The Return to Nature: Or, a Defence of the Vegetable Regimen* (1811).[83] It is worth noting that while Shelley adapts from Newton's discussion of Horace in relation to humanity's transition towards a carnivorous diet, Shelley himself knew Horace very well. He also translates from *Ode* 1.3.32-3 ([…] *tarda necessitas / leti* […]) at Canto 9.57: 'Mild was the slow necessity of death'. To my knowledge, this connection has not yet been attended to in Shelleyan scholarship. In my first chapter, therefore, I throw new light on the allusions to Latin texts and their significance in *Queen Mab*.

Chapter Two focuses on Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* (1820). In *Queen Mab*, Shelley takes inspiration from Horace's *Ode* 1.3, which discusses the Prometheus myth and the philosophical and ethical implications of the theft of fire. *Prometheus Unbound* provides evidence for Shelley's continued interest in the Prometheus story, although his attitude towards Prometheus has evolved in the intermediary years. Stuart Curran states that the younger generation of Romantic-era British poets, namely Shelley and Byron, 'saw' in Prometheus 'not an august patriarch but a spokesman for the oppressed, not an agent in God's design for the earth but a revolutionary denier of all divine right to it.'[84] Shelley's Prometheus

[83] John Frank Newton, *A return to nature; or, a defence of the vegetable regimen* (London: Cadell & Davies, 1811).
[84] Stuart Curran, 'The Political Prometheus', *Studies in Romanticism*, 25 (1986), pp. 429-55, 431.

was ‘a fundamentally political icon’.[85] His *Prometheus Unbound* therefore offers a revolutionary answer to Aeschylus, whose own *Prometheus Unbound* has not survived. As he notes in his drama’s Preface, Shelley altered the narrative set out by the ancient by refusing to reconcile Prometheus with Jupiter. ‘Had I framed my story on this model’, Shelley says, ‘I should have done no more than have attempted to restore the lost drama of Aeschylus’. Shelley appears to reject the idea that a poet should simply imitate, or repeat, the work of an earlier writer. His reworking of Aeschylus sees him combine numerous sources in order to create a new world based on love, as seen in *Prometheus Unbound* Act IV. The Roman empire also provided inspiration for the world that Shelley wanted to leave behind. Lucan’s epic, *Bellum Civile,* offers a model for Shelley’s disenchantment with post-revolution Europe, which is represented in his *Prometheus Unbound* by the Olympians’ failure to offer a new and changed world. As I discuss in Chapter Two, Shelley’s scholars have identified two references to Lucan in *Prometheus Unbound.* Lucan is often perceived as an ‘anti-Virgil’ for his anti-imperial stance in *Bellum Civile.* Shelley greatly admired Lucan, deeming that he ‘transcend[ed] Virgil’.[86] Shelley’s two points of contact with Lucan, which I mention in 0.3.2, the ‘Numidian seps’ (*PU* III.1.40) and ‘oracular vapour’ (*PU* II.3.4), contribute to what I perceive to be one of his drama’s overarching messages. This is a message on the need to challenge authoritative voices and the importance of independent critical thinking. I find that ‘the oracular vapour’ helps to lead Asia on her path towards clarity of thought, while Thetis’ pain both represents in a literal sense the corruption caused by figures of authority and leads to the metaphorical conception of ‘a third’ ‘spirit’, ‘mightier’ than even Jupiter, who, according to myth, is destined to overthrow its father. Chapter Two therefore discusses the full implications of Shelley’s engagement with Lucan in *Prometheus Unbound*.

[85] Curran (1986), 431.
[86] *PBSL* i, 432.

In Chapter Three, I examine Shelley's debt to ancient Roman tragedy and tragic episodes in the epic genre in his *The Cenci* (1820). Shelley was greatly moved by the legend of Beatrice Cenci, having first encountered her family's story in manuscript form while staying with the Gisbornes in Tuscany in May of 1818.[87] On 22 April 1819, Shelley saw a portrait that he believed to be of Beatrice Cenci, generally attributed to Guido Reni, in the Palazzo Colonna in Rome.[88] Shelley's Beatrice in *The Cenci* has been compared to Greek tragic heroine Antigone.[89] While I agree that Shelley's Beatrice does embody a new Antigone, I also believe that readers are in danger of overlooking Shelley's debt to Roman tragedy. *The Cenci* is very much Roman. It takes place in the labyrinthine corridors of the Cenci Palace in the Jewish Quarter of Rome. What's more, Beatrice's story had been known to the Roman people for generations. Upon spending time at Rome, Shelley noted 'that the story of the Cenci was a subject not to be mentioned in Italian society without awakening a deep and breathless interest'.[90] Roman tragedy also aided Shelley in his portrayal of the events that befell Beatrice Cenci. In Chapter Three, I posit that Shelley's Beatrice is also a new Philomela, based on a crucial point of contact between the two figures. When Beatrice returns to the stage with dishevelled hair at II.1, Shelley marks her similarity with Ovid's Philomela, whose own hair was grabbed by the king Tereus at *Metamorphoses* 6.549-60. Furthermore, I suggest that Beatrice's journey towards avenging her father's treatment of her sees her transform, on a meta-level, into a new Dido or Medea. While Shelley certainly had Greek sources in mind, it is important that we also acknowledge the role that Roman tragedies play in his drama, especially when it comes to the staging or presentation of

[87] *PS* 2, 727, and Claire Clairmont's journal entry for 1 until 25 May 1818, *SC* 5, 455.
[88] *MSJ* ii, 259.
[89] 'The distinctive characterisation of Beatrice draws on heroines of classical tragedy, especially Sophocles' Antigone […]', *PS* 2, 720.
[90] *PS* 2, 728-9.

extreme violence and interfamilial trauma, which Seneca and Ovid do with horrifying and memorable results.

Finally, in Chapter Four, I investigate the influence of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* and Virgil's *Aeneid* 6 on Shelley's *The Triumph of Life.* This is Shelley's final work, left unfinished when he drowned off the coast of Lerici on 8 July 1822. At the time of writing, Shelley was interested in Lucretian ideas of atomism, and the Virgilian underworld. This is evident in his allusions to both poets. For instance, he recalls Lucretius at *TL* 445-6, where Rousseau describes the crowd attending the triumph as '[…] atomies that dance / Within a sunbeam'. He also alludes Virgil's underworld in *Aeneid* 6 on a more abstract level, recalling Aeneas' quest for the golden bough by having his speaker rest beneath 'the self same bough' of an old chestnut tree. *The Triumph of Life* poses numerous challenges because of its unfinished state. At times, it seems to be about the dangers of misrepresentation, seen in the crowd's blind participation in the triumph itself. It is also about repetition and duplication. Shelley's speaker's experience is an iteration of that of Rousseau. The answer to the question, 'What is life?', was presumably going to lie somewhere within the poem's involute structure. As though enacting the theme of repetition, Shelley reimagines both Lucretius' and Virgil's works as semblances of themselves, not simply iterating their ideas, but transforming and advancing them.

Chapter One
‘Mild was the slow necessity of death’: the influence of ancient Roman literature on Shelley’s *Queen Mab*

1.1. Introduction

Percy Shelley’s notes to *Queen Mab* are a valuable resource. They contain a wealth of references to texts that the young poet had read during his life so far. Reiman and Fraistat term the notes to *Queen Mab* ‘a compendium of eighteenth-century radical thought, along with some of its most prominent sources in the Renaissance and in classical antiquity’, which is a fair summary.[91] In writing these notes, Shelley was allowing himself a ‘safe’ ‘opportunity’ to ‘propagat[e] [his] principles’, which he ‘decline[d] to do syllogistically in a poem’.[92] Although Shelleyan scholars recognise the significance of the notes to *Queen Mab* when it comes to furthering our understanding of the poet’s intellectual development and his poem’s meaning, I argue that parts of the notes have yet to be comprehensively attended to, particularly in relation to the verse itself. I have in mind the note that accompanies Canto 8.211-212, to which Shelley attaches lines 25-33 from Horace’s *Ode* 1.3, the propempticon to Virgil, in Latin. Shelley quotes from Horace in order to substantiate his own argument that humankind became less moral in accordance with its evolution towards a carnivorous diet. Shelley later inserts a line into his poem which must be a translation of *Ode* 1.3.32-3 (*tarda necessitas / leti*): ‘mild was the slow necessity of death’, at Canto 9.57. To my knowledge, this connection has yet to be acknowledged in Shelleyan criticism.

The first section of this chapter therefore throws new light on the texts that influenced one of Shelley’s major radical principles during the period in which he wrote *Queen Mab*. This is his belief that, for humankind, there is a relationship between diet and behaviour. As I

[91] *CPPBS* 2, 498.
[92] *PBSL* i, 350.

explain further in 1.2, Shelley's interest in vegetarianism seems to have been encouraged through his friendship with John Frank Newton. The findings from this chapter simultaneously illuminate and attempt to answer the question of how far Shelley actually admired and found value in Latin literature in the early stages of his career, as well as providing a fresh perspective on Shelley's allusions to ancient Roman authors within works of his that are intrinsically contemporary and radical. By readdressing Shelley' s dependence on ancient Roman texts for the articulation of his own modern and utopian ideals, I hope to contribute to the emerging narrative in which ancient Roman literature is understood to have had as much of an intellectual and cultural impact on nineteenth-century British authors and thinkers as classical Greek literature, advancing on critical works such as those by Turner, Sachs, Phillips, and Goldstein.

I begin my discussion by tracing Horace's reception in the early nineteenth century, paying particular attention to the attitudes amongst Shelley's friends and contemporaries towards the ancient. I will also investigate John Frank Newton's own reference to Horace's *Ode* 1.3 in his *The return to nature; or, a defence of the vegetable regime* (1811), a text that Shelley had read and to which he refers in the note to Canto 8.211-212 in *Queen Mab*. With these findings I hope to begin to elucidate the variety of feelings towards Horace amongst Shelley and his peers, and to situate Shelley's allusion to *Ode* 1.3 within the intellectual and political milieu of his day. After assessing Horace's status as seen through the lens of Shelley's references to him in his letters and in his verse itself, I will compare Horace's reception in *Queen Mab* to three other ancient Roman authors who influence major themes in Shelley's text: Lucretius, Pliny the Elder, and Virgil. Both Lucretius and Pliny influence Shelley's thoughts about atheism, while there are echoes of Virgil's fourth eclogue in Shelley's vision of a harmonious, non-violent future. I interpret Cantos 8 and 9 as advocating vegetarianism and a peaceful society; therefore, I will discuss Horace's and Virgil's influence

on Shelley in conjunction with one another in the first section of this chapter, and Lucretius and Pliny, who both contribute to Shelley's early understanding of atheism, in the second.

1.1.2 Horace's reception in the nineteenth century

Horace had a complicated status in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Shelley and his contemporaries appear to have harboured similar feelings towards him. Norman Vance observes that Horace 'continued to be a source of elegant translation and more or less apt gentlemanly quotation' during the Romantic era.[93] While this is true, evidence of which is provided below, attitudes towards Horace were far more nuanced than Vance suggests here. He was not always regarded favourably. The circumstances under which Shelley and his contemporaries first met Horace offer us some insight with regard to how they may have viewed him, at least in their youth. According to *A history of Eton College, 1440-1875*, by H. C. Maxwell Lyte, Horace was one of the main classical authors on the syllabus at Eton in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[94] Shelley attended Eton from 1805 until 1810. From the beginning of George III's reign, 1760, until the 1830s, Lyte writes that the fifth and sixth forms at Eton attended seventeen 'construing' and repetition lessons per week.[95] In the 'construing' lessons, students studied Homer, Lucian, Virgil, and Horace, as well as miscellaneous Greek verse.[96] In repetition, students studied Homer, Virgil, Horace, and selections from Ovid, Tibullus, and Propertius.[97] Lyte later includes an extract from an ex-pupil identified only as 'a correspondent intimately acquainted with Eton affairs', who begins: 'there were three ancient authors well known to Etonians: Homer, Virgil, and

[93] Norman Vance, 'Classical Authors, 1790-1880', in *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature, Volume 4: 1790-1880,* ed. by Norman Vance and Jennifer Wallace (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 29-55, 48.
[94] H. C. Maxwell Lyte, *A history of Eton College, 144-1770* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1875).
[95] Maxwell Lyte, 314-5.
[96] Maxwell Lyte, 315.
[97] Maxwell Lyte, 315.

Horace.'[98] The correspondent, who attended Eton while Dr Keate was headmaster (who was employed from 1809 until 1834), continues: 'all Horace, except perhaps the Epodes, was read and repeated, subject to expurgation, but it may be doubted whether even superior boys knew the meaning of the Odes accurately'.[99] It is entirely possible that not all of Shelley's peers nurtured a close intellectual relationship with Horace, as Shelley would go on to do in his literary career.

As I note above, Vance calls Horace 'a source of elegant translation' and 'gentlemanly quotation'.[100] Shelley and his peers indeed show some appreciation for Horace's talents and the lasting legacy of his wisdom. They regularly quote phrases from his works that continued to have relevance in their own day and context. But they remain sceptical both of Horace's political stance and of the extent of his talent when compared with the Greek epic poets and dramatists. According to Leigh Hunt, 'the two poets who have done more harm, perhaps, to the reputation of their professions for spirit than all their brethren put together, are Virgil and Horace, both of them flatterers of Augustus'.[101] Hunt continues, 'the latter […] was surely gifted with a very agreeable run of sensations, - so agreeable, that who has not pardoned him (the rogue!) for all his transgressions?'.[102] While Hunt takes issue with what he perceives to be Horace's pro-imperial stance, he concedes that Horace possesses a charm that has ensured his longevity. Meanwhile, in 'The Four Ages of Poetry', Thomas Love Peacock places Horace in the 'silver age, of the poetry of civilized life'.[103] According to Peacock, Virgil's work may be called 'imitative' while Horace's work may be called 'original'.[104] Despite his 'originality', Horace fails to impress Peacock, who defines his poetry (alongside Menander,

[98] Maxwell Lyte, 364.
[99] Maxwell Lyte, 364.
[100] Vance, 'Classical Authors', 48.
[101] Hunt, Leigh, 'On the Poetical Character', in William Hazlitt, *The Round Table: a collection of essays on literature, men, and manners*, 2 vols (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable & Co., 1817), I, 172-90, 183.
[102] Hunt, 183.
[103] Peacock, 142.
[104] Peacock, 142.

Aristophanes and Juvenal) as being 'characterized by an exquisite and fastidious selection of words, and a laboured and somewhat monotonous harmony of expression.'[105] Hence Peacock casts Horace into a group who make 'numerous efforts' but see 'rare success'.[106] It seems that any praise Horace earns is counterbalanced with criticism: Hunt 'pardons' Horace for his failure to challenge imperialism, while according to Peacock, Horace's 'originality' was not sufficient to stop him from contributing to poetry's 'extinction'.[107]

Shelley can be said to share these sentiments to a degree. In general, he displays less appreciation for Horace than he does for the Greeks and the Roman authors that he profoundly admired, such as Lucretius, Virgil, and Lucan. Shelley goes so far as to call Horace a 'coward' in his 'A Defence of Poetry'.[108] Nicholas Joukovsky suggests that this is a response to Horace's admission in *Ode* 2.7.9-12 that he had abandoned the battle of Philippi in 42 BCE during the civil war.[109] Furthermore, Horace had later found favour under the emperor Augustus. 'Nevertheless', Joukovsky continues, '[Shelley] could not help but admire Horace's artistry, especially as a lyric poet.'[110] While, as we will see, Shelley admires Lucretius and Pliny for scrutinizing religion, and Lucan for challenging imperialism, it could be that he deems Horace less of a threat to imperial Rome and its institutions because he nurtured a personal relationship with Augustus. This is perhaps why Shelley calls him a 'coward', and sees him, outwardly at least, as fit for a conversational device and educational purposes only.

Shelley did engage with Horace in the way that Vance describes, referring to Horace as a conversational device. In 1812 Shelley quotes from *Epistle* 2.1. 3-4 in Latin in two

[105] Peacock, 142.
[106] Peacock, 142.
[107] Peacock, 142.
[108] *MW*, 699.
[109] Joukovsky, 482.
[110] Joukovsky, 482.

separate letters to William Godwin.[111] Jones offers the following translation of these lines in his notes: 'I should offend, O Caesar, against the public interests, if I were to trespass upon your time with a long discourse.'[112] The *Epistle* from which Shelley quotes is addressed to the emperor Augustus. According to Suetonius, Horace had penned this poem after a jovial exchange between the two:

> *post Sermones vero quosdam lectos nullam sui mentionem habitam ita sit questus: "Irasci me tibi scito, quod non in plerisque eius modi scriptis mecum potissimum loquaris; an vereris ne apud posteros infame tibi sit, quod videaris familiaris nobis esse?" Expressitque eclogam ad se, cuius initium est:*
>
> > *Cum tot sustineas et tanta negotia solus,*
> > *Res Italas armis tuteris, moribus ornes,*
> > *Legibus emendes: in publica commoda peccem,*
> > *Si longo sermone morer tua tempora, Caesar.*
>
> ('[…] after reading several of his "Talks," the Emperor thus expressed his pique that no mention was made of him: "You must know that I am not pleased with you, that in your numerous writings of this kind you do not talk with me, rather than with others. Are you afraid that your reputation with posterity will suffer because it appears that you were my friend?" In this way he forced from Horace the selection which begins with these words:
>
> > Seeing that single-handed thou dost bear the burden
> > of tasks so many and so great, protecting Italy's
> > realm with arms, providing it with morals, reforming
> > it by laws, I should sin against the public weal,
> > Caesar, if I wasted thy time with long discourse.')[113]

According to Suetonius, the *Epistle* 2.1 is part of an ongoing exchange between the poet and the emperor. It exhibits their intimacy. The context that Suetonius offers aids Horace's readers when it comes to interpreting the tone of these opening lines. Horace, thought of favourably by Augustus, could afford to be humorous. 'It would be a crime against public interests if I were to waste your time with long-winded chatter', he writes, before

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[111] 16th January 1812, *PBSL* i, 230, and 29th July 1812, *PBSL* i, 318.
[112] *PBSL* i, 318.
[113] Suetonius, 'The Life of Horace', *Lives, Volume 2*, trans. by J. C. Rolfe, introd. by K. R. Bradley (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 466-73.

commencing with a further two hundred and sixty-six lines of verse. Furthermore, one of the subjects of the ode – old versus new literature – is handled by Horace in a way that Brink deems to be humorous. '[…] anything long defunct attracts approval […] This argument is humorously overstated; it is perilously close to a smile, however respectful, in the direction of *numen Augusti*.'[114]

The dynamic of Horace's relationship with Augustus therefore poses an interesting model for Shelley's with Godwin. By quoting Horace, Shelley is seeking intellectual intimacy with Godwin and staking out common ground between them. We can interpret Shelley as expressing genuine admiration for all of the good that he regards Godwin as doing.[115] He does not want to distract him from this work, thus he is perhaps using Horace's phrase literally. Reading further into the quotation in question, it may be that in his new friendship with Godwin, Shelley sees a mirror of Horace and Augustus. Horace was likely introduced to Augustus by his patron, Maecenas.[116] Horace, a personal friend of Augustus but also a subordinate, is therefore wielding his humour carefully in the *Epistle* 2.1. In his first letter to Godwin, Shelley had expressed desire for Godwin to become a mentor to him in kind. He writes: 'from the earliest period of my knowledge of his [Godwin's] principles I have ardently desired to share on the footing of intimacy that intellect which I have delighted to contemplate in its emanations.'[117] In another letter to Godwin, Shelley would call him 'the regulator and former of my mind'.[118] Shelley is perhaps inviting Godwin to be his mentor in a troubling mirror-image of the relationship between Horace and Augustus. I say 'troubling'

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[114] Brink 59.
[115] In his first letter to Godwin, Shelley wrote: '[…] I firmly believe [you] are still planning the welfare of humankind.' *PBSL* i, 220.
[116] Michéle Lowrie comments, 'In the early part of Horace's career, his relationship to Augustus was mediated through Maecenas, Horace's patron and a pre-eminent member of Augustus' 'cabinet'. By the end, Horace addressed Augustus directly in his lyric as well as in the Epistle to Augustus.' Michéle Lowrie, 'Horace and Augustus', *The Cambridge Companion to Horace*, ed. by Stephen Harrison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 77-89, 78.
[117] *PBSL* i, 220.
[118] *PBSL* i, 229.

because Godwin believed in anarchism and Shelley in republicanism, hence an emperor might be regarded as an unsuitable model in this situation. But there are nuances to how Shelley is using Horace to engage with Godwin. He introduces an undercurrent of benevolence and humour, whilst also maintaining the expected level of respect towards somebody he admired. Shelley also reconfigures the poet-emperor dynamic found in Horace's text by quoting the poem in conversation with a philosopher who favoured anarchism over imperialism. His use of Horace in the letters to Godwin is far from straightforward: he is neither flattering the ancient nor wholly subverting him; rather, Shelley allows for Horace to be a complex, three-dimensional figure who is being remembered as both sincere and humorous.[119]

Later, in January 1819, Shelley engages with Horace in a way that is perhaps more critical, deviating from the ancient poet's viewpoint and alluding to him in a humorous, yet sceptical manner. Writing to Thomas Peacock from Naples, Shelley says:

> In a [day or two *deleted*] short time I hope to tell you something of the Museum in this city. You see how ill I follow that maxim of Horace, at least in its literal sense, 'Nil admirari'—which I should say 'Prope res est una' to prevent there ever being any thing admirable in the world. Fortunately Plato is of my opinion, & I had rather err with Plato than be right with Horace.[120]

Taken from the first line of Horace's *Epistle* 1.6, the quotation in full reads: *nil admirari prope res est una, Numici, / solaque quae possit facere et servare beatum* ('"Marvel at nothing"—that is perhaps the one and only thing, Numicius, that can make a man happy and keep him so.', *Epistle* 1.6.1-2).[121] Here, Shelley fundamentally disagrees with Horace's

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[119] Lowrie comments on Horace's multi-dimensionality in the epistle to Augustus: 'Horace artfully asserts his independence, even while he recognises that he has in fact praised Augustus in the way here disavowed.' Lowrie, 88.
[120] *PBSL* ii, 75.
[121] Horace, *Satires, Epistles, and Ars Poetica*, trans. by H. Rushton Fairclough (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926). All subsequent references to Horace's *Satires*, *Epistles*, and *Ars Poetica* are from this edition, unless otherwise stated.

'maxim' that one should modulate one's passions, instead proclaiming his admiration for Naples' sites of interest. Furthermore, Shelley is not simply stating his deviation from Horace in these lines, but in doing so, is adapting a line from Cicero. This is observed by Joukovsky, who adds that Shelley's readers have generally overlooked this connection.[122] The line from Cicero reads: *errare mehercule malo cum Platone, quem tu quanti facias scio et quem ex tuo ore admiror, quam cum istis vera sentire* ('I prefer, before heaven, to go astray with Plato, your reverence for whom I know, and admiration for whom I learn from your lips, rather than hold true views with his opponents.', *Tusc.* 1.39).[123] Shelley translates *errare mehercule malo cum Platone* […] *quam cum istis vera sentire* and adapts it so as to respond to Horace's *Epistle* 1.6. As was the case in the letters to Godwin, Shelley is relying on his recipient's familiarity with Horace. By doing so, he deems himself and Peacock intellectual equals. Shelley then capitalises on Peacock's familiarity with Latin literature by inserting a translation from Cicero to conclude his point, 'I had rather err with Plato than be right with Horace'. As Joukovsky suggests, it is likely that Peacock would have been aware of the source of this statement, hence Shelley adds another layer of reference for Peacock to enjoy.[124] In this correspondence with Peacock, Shelley treats Horace with humour, exhibiting cynicism, but also perhaps a degree of fondness. Shelley's use of humour suggests a forgiving stance, recalling Leigh Hunt's wonderment at Horace's charm, 'who has not pardoned him (the rogue!) for all his transgressions?'.[125]

Shelley also found that Horace was a valuable resource when it came to learning Latin. He encouraged his first wife, Harriet Westbrook, to read Horace. In December 1812, he writes 'Mrs. Shelley is attacking Latin with considerable resolution, & can already read

[122] 'Shelley's adaptation of Cicero has been ignored by his editors, although it was noted by James M. Notopoulos, *The Platonism of Shelley* […]', Joukovsky, 481.
[123] Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, trans. by J. E. King (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927).
[124] 'Peacock would surely have recognised a more subtle adaptation of Cicero's discussion of the immortality of the soul in the Tusculan Disputations[…]', Joukovsky, 481.
[125] Hunt, 183.

many Odes in Horace.'[126] In January 1813, Harriet continues to read Horace, and appears to be making progress, with Shelley suggesting that she might move onto John Martyn's edition of Virgil's *Georgics* once she has 'mastered Horace'.[127] Horace had been an integral part of Shelley's own Latin education.[128] Whatever his personal views towards him, Shelley clearly regarded Horace's works as a valuable educational tool. To summarise, we can see that Shelley found pragmatic uses for Horace. In spite of making fun of Horace in the January 1819 letter to Peacock, and calling him a 'coward' in his 'A Defence of Poetry', Shelley saw fit to quote from him to illustrate a point in conversation, such as in his letters to Godwin, and to encourage Harriet to read Horace while she is learning Latin.

Despite the shortcomings that Shelley, Hunt, and Peacock deemed Horace as having, Shelley must have seen some degree of rebellious potential in him. While he was in Cumbria in November 1811, Shelley was inspired by the natural landscape to ruminate on its long history. In a letter to Elizabeth Hitchener, dated 23rd November 1811, Shelley imagines humankind's early state of being: 'Perhaps ere Man had lost reason, and lived an happy happy race.—No Tyranny, no Priestcraft, no War.—Adieu to the dazzling picture.'[129] Jones notes that 'these are the embryonic ideas of *Queen Mab*'.[130] There is a direct correlation between this list of societal ills that Shelley wishes to remove from the world in order to create his 'dazzling picture', and the list found in the note to *QM* 8.211-12, where he quotes Horace's *Ode* 1.3. 'Tyranny, superstition, commerce, and inequality' became commonplace after Prometheus' crime, Shelley writes in the note to *Queen Mab*, having referred to Horace's *Ode* 1.3 as his favoured model for this version of the Prometheus story. The issues that Shelley believes were absent from humankind's early state (when we were 'an happy

[126] *PBSL* i, 341.
[127] *PBSL* i, 347.
[128] As Lyte's account of the Eton curriculum demonstrates to us. Maxwell Lyte, 315.
[129] *PBSL* i, 189.
[130] *PBSL* i, n. 3, 189.

happy race') are seen, by him, to have had their roots in the world which Horace's *Ode* 1.3 describes.[131] In this way, parts of *Queen Mab* can be seen to offer a response to *Ode* 1.3 by portraying a future free of those 'vices' which befell the human race after Prometheus' crime, according to Horace.[132]

1.2. 'Mild was the slow necessity of death': Horace's and Virgil's influence on Shelley's vegetarianism in *Queen Mab*

In his note to Canto 8.211-12, which reads, 'no longer now / He slays the lamb that looks him in the face', Shelley states that in a future utopian state, vegetarianism will be at the heart of humankind's virtuousness.[133] Shelley refers to Hesiod and Horace in this note, two classical authors who both address an early mythical period in which humankind was 'exempt from suffering'. Hesiod and Horace are, of course, not the only classical authors to have written about the ancient western formulation of a golden age. It is interesting therefore that Shelley chooses to refer to these authors, particularly Horace, who, it seems, did not have a reputation amongst Shelley's contemporaries as a champion of progress.

As his poem continues, Shelley returns to the issue of death and humankind's virtuousness. At 9.57, he writes: 'Mild was the slow necessity of death'. He continues by comparing a dying person to 'a voyager to some distant land' (*QM* 9.60). As Everest and Matthews rightly point out, this passage is reminiscent of the Christian belief that living a virtuous life means that one can expect to die peacefully. Everest and Matthews direct readers to Milton's *Paradise Lost* 9.535-7 and to Donne's 'A Valediction Forbidding Mourning, I', for literary representations of this belief.[134] While Shelley is perhaps adapting his

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[131] *PBSL* i, 189.
[132] *CPPBS* 2, 297.
[133] For the text of *Queen Mab* and its accompanying notes by Shelley, I refer to *CPPBS* 2. All subsequent references to the poem are from this edition, unless otherwise stated.
[134] *PS* 1, 353.

conceptualisation of a utopia from texts with Christian ideologies, we should understand that he is handling a number of texts that influenced him in conjunction with one another. Reiman and Fraistat, for instance, refer to Hesiod's *Works and Days (*110-17) and Lord Monboddo's *Ancient Metaphysics* (1779) as two possible sources of inspiration for Shelley's thoughts about death at 9.57-61.[135] Shelley's image of a 'mild' death appears to have been inspired by multiple 'sources' as a result of his extensive reading. However, I maintain that Shelley's readers continue to overlook one source of inspiration in particular for this passage, which is signalled by the poet's language at Canto 9.57. 'Mild was the slow necessity of death', a direct verbal echo from *Ode* 1.3.32-3, which is quoted in the note to 8.211-12, substantiates Shelley's belief that there is a direct correlation between vegetarianism, virtue, and the eradication of physiological afflictions.

The Fairy begins Canto 9 with the joyful exclamation, 'Oh happy Earth! reality of heaven!' (*QM* 9.1) At last, the world has reached a utopian state similar to one which has long been lost to its inhabitants. Shelley's Fairy had introduced herself to Ianthe at Canto 1.167-87 by outlining her role, which is to 'find' 'the secrets of the immeasurable past' and to 'gather' 'the future, from the causes which arise / in each event' (*QM* 1.169-73). The 'future' in *Queen Mab* is therefore dictated by 'causes' from the past and present, and it is made discernible through the study of these causes. Cantos 1-7 see the Fairy and the Spirit observe the past and present, with a focus on elements of human society such as monarchy, commerce, and religion. Cantos 8 and 9 then celebrate humankind's potential perfect future, where 'love, freedom, health, had given / Their ripeness to the manhood of its [Earth's] prime' (*QM* 8.15-16). Shelley views humankind as having the freedom to divert from the

[135] *CPPBS* 2, 592-3.

path it is on, to create a harmonious world that is free from the many kinds of 'tyranny' that *Queen Mab* is critiquing.

At the heart of Shelley's conceptualisation of a utopia lies a harmony between humankind, animals, and the natural environment. At Canto VIII.124-133, Shelley describes how 'the lion now forgets to thirst for blood'.[136] The lion's 'claws are sheathed', 'his teeth are harmless'.[137] Reiman and Fraistat look first to a Christian source for this passage, quoting Isaiah 65:25 and 11:6: 'The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock […] The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together […]'.[138] Reiman and Fraistat also acknowledge the connection with Virgil's *Eclogue* 4.22, which reads *nec magnos metuent armenta leones* ('nor will cattle fear large lions').[139] Virgil's fourth *Eclogue* proposes that Augustus' reign will be a new Saturnian age, a synonym for a new golden age. One of the major characteristics of this golden age is that humankind will live in harmony with nature, and that nature will live in harmony with itself. Virgil is clear that this is not a new state of affairs, but rather the restoration of a past state*: magnus ab integro saeclorum nascitur ordo* ('the great line of the centuries begins anew', *Ecl.* 4.5). Timothy Morton suggests that Shelley had some 'anxiety over the topos of the Golden Age', also known as the Age of Saturn.[140] 'Are we moving backwards or forwards […]?', Morton asks.[141] I would suggest that Shelley is encountering the impossibility of articulating a brand new set of events. His utopia can only be told in terms of a recollection of the past. His description of

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[136] *QM* 8.124.
[137] *QM* 8.126-7.
[138] *CPPBS* 2, 584-5.
[139] Virgil, *Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid 1-6*, trans. by H. Rushton Fairclough, rev. by G. P. Goold (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1916). All subsequent references to Virgil's *Eclogues*, *Georgics*, and *Aeneid* 1-6 are from this edition unless otherwise stated.
[140] Timothy Morton, *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste, The Body and the Natural World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 85.
[141] Morton, 86.

harmonious relations between the animal world joins together biblical discourse, seen in the 'lamb' to which the lion is compared, with classical portrayals of golden ages.[142]

Wendell Clausen makes a convincing argument for the possibility that Virgil was imitating Horace with his depiction of the gentle lion in *Eclogue* 4.[143] Line 22 of *Eclogue* 4 is almost identical to *Epode* 16.33:

> […] *nec magnos metuent armenta leones.*
> ('nor will cattle fear large lions.')
>
> Virgil *Eclogue* 4.22
>
> *credula nec ravos timeant armenta leones […]*
> ('the trusting cattle do not fear tawny lions'…)
>
> Horace *Epode* 16.33[144]

The question of which poem imitates which remains up for debate. Clausen, in arguing that Virgil imitates Horace, uses the logic that the line in Horace's poem is an example of adynaton. It comes after a series of other impossible scenarios.[145] On the other hand, Virgil's golden age 'will be inaugurated in Italy', Clausen argues, therefore the 'congress of domestic and predatory animals' is 'an innovation' in Virgil's work, for it is cast not as an impossible scenario but a possible one.[146] Clausen believes that Virgil 'abstracted Horace's *adynaton* from its context and, with an easy modification, adapted it to his description of the Golden Age'.[147] Virgil uses the assertive future tense. Canto 8 of *Queen Mab*, of course, uses the present tense. Shelley's utopian world is already manifest: 'the lion now forgets to thirst for blood: / There you might see him sporting in the sun / Beside the dreadless kid […]' (*QM*

[142] '[…] custom's force has made / His nature as the nature of a lamb.' *QM* 8.127-8.
[143] Clausen, Wendell, ed., *A Commentary on Virgil, Eclogues* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 147.
[144] Horace, *Odes and Epodes*, ed. and trans. by Niall Rudd (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004). All subsequent references to Horace's *Odes* and *Epodes* are from this edition unless otherwise stated.
[145] Clausen, 147.
[146] Clausen, 148.
[147] Clausen, 148.

8.124-6). Shelley, familiar with both poets' works, could have had both *Eclogue* 4 and *Epode* 16 in mind when configuring the predator-prey dynamic in this scene.

Shelley envisioned humankind giving up a carnivorous diet too. He and Harriet Westbrook took up a vegetarian diet near the beginning of March of 1812, according to a letter to Elizabeth Hitchener written in Harriet Westbrook's hand.[148] Michael Owen Jones supposes that Shelley's primary motivation for converting to vegetarianism was to improve his health: 'of the major considerations people weigh in food choice decisions […] Shelley emphasized health and […] cost'.[149] While it is true that Shelley regarded vegetarianism as a remedy for a great number of physiological ailments, I disagree. Shelley appears to have genuinely believed that there was a correlation between a person's diet and their humour, that an appetite for meat caused unnatural appetites of the mind. As a result, Shelley believed that diet had a social and political impact. For Shelley, vegetarianism is a cause of peace, rather than an effect of it. Once meat-eating has been eradicated from society, the Fairy in *Queen Mab* observes that 'all things are void of terror: man has lost / his terrible prerogative'.[150] In the note to 8.211-12 (' […] no longer now / He slays the lamb that looks him in the face […]'), Shelley opens by claiming that 'the depravity of the physical and moral nature of man originated in his unnatural habits of life.'[151]

In his note to 8.211-12, Shelley refers to Horace's version of humankind's downfall after Prometheus' crime, framing the ode within a discussion about appetite and ethics. According to both Horace and Shelley, Prometheus' actions are a metaphor for humankind's moral and physical degeneration, which was caused, in Shelley's view, by the evolution

[148] 'You do not know that we have forsworn meat & adopted the Pithagorean system; about a fortnight has elapsed since the change and we do not find ourselves any the worse for it.' 14 March 1812, *PBSL* i, 274-5.
[149] Michael Owen Jones, 'In Pursuit of Percy Shelley, "The First Celebrity Vegan": An Essay on Meat, Sex, and Broccoli', *Journal of Folklore Research*, 53 (2016), pp.1-30, 25.
[150] *QM* 8.225-6.
[151] *CPPBS* 2, 295.

towards eating meat. This change in diet led, directly and indirectly, to 'tyranny, superstition, commerce, and inequality'.[152] Vegetarianism therefore lies at the heart of Shelley's utopia, both because of the physical health benefits that he regards a vegetarian diet as having, and because of the inner virtue that he associates with vegetarianism.

Shelley lifts much of his note to Canto 8.211-12 from John Frank Newton's text. Newton discusses Hesiod and Horace thus:

> In Hesiod's poem of 'Works and Days', Jupiter addresses Prometheus in these words:
>
> > You rejoice, O crafty son of Iapetus, that you have stolen fire and deceived Jupiter; but great will thence be the evil both to yourself and your posterity. To them this gift of fire shall be a gift of woe; in which, while they delight and pride themselves, they shall cherish their own wretchedness.
>
> Horace in his 3d ode, says,
>
> > *Audax omnia perpeti*
> > *Gens humana ruit per vetitum nefas:*
> > *Audax Iapeti genus*
> > *Ignem fraude mala gentibus intulit:*
> > *Post ignem aetherea domo*
> > *Subductum, macies et nova febrium*
> > *Terris incubuit cohors;*
> > *Semotique prius tarda necessitas*
> > *Lethi corripuit gradum.*
>
> Hesiod too acquaints us, that before the time of Prometheus, mankind were exempt from all sufferings; that up to that period they enjoyed a vigorous youth; and that death, when at length it came, approached like sleep, and gently closed their eyes.[153]

Shelley, meanwhile, quotes Horace thus:

> Hesiod says, that, before the time of Prometheus, mankind were exempt from suffering; that they enjoyed a vigorous youth, and that death, when at length it came, approached like sleep, and gently closed their eyes. Again, so general was this opinion, that Horace, a poet of the Augustan age, writes –
>
> > *Audax omnia perpeti,*
> > *Gens humana ruit per vetitum nefas;*
> > *Audax Iapeti genus*

[152] *CPPBS* 2, 297.
[153] Newton, 12-13.

Ignem fraude mala gentibus intulit:
Post ignem aetheria domo
Subductum, macies et nova febrium
Terris incubuit cohors,
Semotique prius tarda necessitas
Lethi corripuit gradum.

> How plain a language is spoken by all this. Prometheus (who represents the human race) effected some great change in the condition of his nature, and applied fire to culinary purposes; thus inventing an expedient for screening from his disgust the horror of the shambles. It consumed his being in every shape of its loathsome and infinite variety, inducing the soul-quelling sinkings of premature and violent death. All vice arose from the ruin of healthful innocence. Tyranny, superstition, commerce, and inequality, were then first known, when reason vainly attempted to guide the wanderings of exacerbated passion.[154]

While it is clear that Shelley has lifted the first paragraph about Hesiod and the passage from Horace from Newton's text, he builds from Newton by adding his own explanation of Horace's ode afterwards, demonstrating a degree of independent critical thought about its meaning. Furthermore, there are differences between Newton and Shelley's transcriptions of the ode: the indentations are different, as is some of the punctuation, and the spelling of *aetheria* in the fifth line. This might suggest that Shelley either copied Newton's version incorrectly, or that he did not simply copy Newton's text, but referred to an edition of Horace of his own.

Given Shelley's interest in Horace's *Ode* 1.3 and his translation from it at Canto 9.57, it is important that his readers acquire a more in-depth understanding of the ancient poem. The Horatian ode from which Shelley lifts the phrase 'the necessity of death' is a propempticon, written to wish Virgil well on a journey that he was undertaking to Greece. Roland Mayer observes that Horace's addressee is not actually Virgil, but rather the boat that is carrying him: 'The poem is not addressed to Virgil; it is therefore not about him or about H.'s feeling for him […] Virgil's journey (real or imagined) is therefore not the theme, but

[154] *CPPBS* 2, 297.

only provides an occasion for larger moral reflections […]'.[155] Indeed, Horace soon subverts the expectations of the propempticon genre by expressing concern about the safety of sea travel, adjusting his focus so as to comment on the dangerous ambition of humankind in general. Horace offers Prometheus, Daedalus, and Hercules as 'model' criminals; transgressors who broke the rules in some way, and who are subsequently to blame for the moral crimes that humanity has committed since. Scholars remain divided over what is to be taken literally in the poem and what is allegorical. J. P. Elder takes the ode as 'a study […] of man's greatness in face of Heaven's decrees – in fine, a study of man's tragic heroism.'[156] David West disagrees with Elder, calling the ode 'a condemnation of man's impiety through excessive ambition'.[157] Other critics take the poem as an allegory for poetic ambition. Joseph Pucci, for instance, regards Horace's language in *Ode* 1.3 as 'a commentary on Virgilian epic mimesis'.[158] Mayer, however, disregards such a reading, arguing that if the ode were a metaphor for Virgil's 'poetic daring', then 'the rhetoric would be excessive'.[159] Mayer also dismisses reading the poem as 'political allegory', because it is about humanity, not the Romans specifically.[160]

In his adaptation of *Ode* 1.3 in *Queen Mab*, Shelley appears to have taken the poem neither as 'a study of man's tragic heroism', nor as a comment on poetic ambition. Rather, through Shelley's lens, the ode reads as a narrative about the beginning of humanity's individual and collective failings. Shelley is perhaps more aligned with the likes of West, who referred to humankind's 'excessive ambition'. As his note to Canto 8.211-12 indicates, Shelley regards humankind as having lost its virtuousness over time. 'All vice arose from the

[155] Mayer states: 'the poem is not addressed to Virgil; it is therefore not about him or about H.'s feeling for him […]'. Roland Mayer, ed., *Horace, Odes, Book 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 80.
[156] J.P. Elder, 'Horace, C., 1.3', AJP, 73 (1952), 140-58, 144.
[157] David West, ed., *Horace Odes 1: Carpe Diem* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 16.
[158] Joseph Pucci, 'Horace and Virgilian Mimesis: A Re-Reading of "Odes" 1.3', *The Classical World*, 85 (1992), pp. 659-73.
[159] Mayer, 80.
[160] Mayer, 80.

ruin of healthful innocence', he writes.[161] According to Shelley, in an earlier state, human beings were more virtuous because they had not yet discovered fire, therefore they did not eat meat, and their minds were free of corruption - specifically, thoughts of violence. Horace also writes about the effect that Prometheus' actions had on humankind's physical health. The ancient poet does not mention a correlation between the Titan and humanity's evolution towards eating meat, but he does suggest that Prometheus' behaviour led, either directly or indirectly, to an onset of diseases and other forms of suffering.

Reading the passages from Shelley and Horace side-by-side suggests that there are broader thematic connections between the two works. A reminder of the section from Horace's poem:

> *audax omnia perpeti*
> *gens humana ruit per vetitum nefas.*
> *audax Iapeti genus*
> *ignem fraude mala gentibus intulit.*
> *post ignem aetheria domo*
> *subductum macies et nova febrium*
> *terris incubuit cohors,*
> *semotique prius tarda necessitas*
> *leti corripuit gradum.*
>
> Horace *Ode* 1.3.25-33
>
> ('The human species, audacious enough to endure anything, plunges into forbidden sacrilege. The audacious son of Iapetus by an act of criminal deception brought fire to the nations. After the theft of fire from its heavenly home, a wasting disease and an unprecedented troop of fevers fell upon the earth, and the doom of a distant death, which up to then was slow in coming, quickened its step.')

While the lines following Shelley's 'mild was the slow necessity of death' read:

> Mild was the slow necessity of death:
> The tranquil spirit failed beneath its grasp,
> Without a groan, almost without a fear,
> Calm as a voyager to some distant land,
> And full of wonder, full of hope as he.
> The deadly germs of languor and disease

[161] *CPPBS* 2, 297.

> Died in the human frame, and purity
> Blest with all gifts her earthly worshippers.
>
> *QM* 9.57-64

In Horace's poem, Prometheus' actions are said to have resulted in 'poverty' and 'a new cohort of fevers' (*macies et nova febrium / […] cohors*, *Ode* 1.3.30-1). Death then drew closer. Horace is speaking poetically about the rise of illnesses, which in this narrative, became more prevalent as Jupiter punished humankind and Prometheus for the theft of fire. The implication is that humans began to die at a younger age, hence 'death hastened its step'.

Queen Mab 9.57-64, meanwhile, describes the gentle process of death in Shelley's ideal future. While in Horace's poem, 'an unprecedented troop of fevers fell upon the earth', in *Queen Mab* 'the deadly germs of languor and disease' have been eradicated. Instead, 'purity / bless[es] with all gifts her earthly worshippers'. By inserting a translation from Horace at 9.57, Shelley directly connects a 'mild' 'death' with vegetarianism, the benefits of which he explained in the note to 8.211-12, the other place where he alluded to *Ode* 1.3. This passage and the note to Canto 8.211-12 are therefore in dialogue with one another. In *Queen Mab* 9.57-64, Shelley substantiates his belief in the physiological benefits of vegetarianism and the virtue that he sees it as encouraging. According to myth, including Horace's ode, there was a moment in history at which physiological afflictions became more prevalent. According to Shelley, there could be a point in the future at which these afflictions are eradicated. Horace writes that death was *semotus prius* ('once remote' or 'distant'). Shelley uses a metaphor that compares death to a journey to 'some distant land'. Death was once a far-off threat; it then became more menacing, according to Horace; in Shelley's formulation of the future, death becomes 'distant' once more. This undulating image of death drawing nearer and then ebbing away again demonstrates Shelley positioning himself alongside Horace.

In this section, I have shown how Horace's third ode, the propempticon to Virgil, which was mediated to Shelley through John Frank Newton's treatise on vegetarianism, was central to Shelley's vision of an overhauled, vegetarian society. Horace has typically been left out of discussions on *Queen Mab*, perhaps for the reasons that I outline in section 1.1.2. Shelley's debt to the Augustan poet shows that the later poet admired and sought to emulate him, and that he deemed Horace as taking a stance that challenged his contemporary society's norms, despite claiming that the poet's views were 'general' in the ancient context. Thus, I have begun to show that Horace, and Roman literature more broadly, had much to offer Shelley.

1.3. 'There is no god': Lucretius' and Pliny's influence on Shelley's atheism in *Queen Mab*

It is generally agreed that Shelley finished writing *Queen Mab* in January 1813.[162] In 1811, he and Thomas Jefferson Hogg had been expelled from Oxford University for refusing to deny authorship of a pamphlet entitled *The Necessity of Atheism.*[163] Shelley had therefore experienced the consequences of championing atheism first-hand. This did not stop him from making a number of provocative, anti-Christian statements in *Queen Mab.*[164] Nor did it prevent him from defending his statements in 1821, when bookseller William Clark threatened to publish a pirated copy of *Queen Mab*. In Shelley's 22 June 1821 letter to Leigh Hunt, which was published in *The Examiner,* he distanced himself from the poem.[165]

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[162] A number of Shelley's editors note that in 1821, the poet claims that he was eighteen when he wrote *Queen Mab*, which would date the poem at 1810, *PBSL* ii, 304. This has caused some confusion, as Shelley's letters suggest that he was at least nineteen when he began writing, meaning the poem would have been begun in 1811 at the earliest. As Everest and Matthews and Reiman and Fraistat observe, the younger that Shelley claimed to be, the more credible his excuse of youthful folly when, in 1821, bookseller William Clarke threatened to publish and redistribute a pirated copy of the poem, which caused Shelley some distress. Both Everest and Matthews and Reiman and Fraistat agree that Shelley wrote the majority of his poem between April 1812 and February 1813, although Reiman and Fraistat add that his starting date could lie anywhere between April and June of 1812. *PS* 1, 265; *CPPBS* 2, 592-3.

[163] On 6 January 1811, Shelley wrote the following in a letter to Hogg: 'I will crush Christianity!' *PBSL* i, 38. It seems likely that this was an allusion to Rousseau's *ecrasez l'infame*, which Shelley would later quote for one of *Queen Mab*'s three epigraphs.

[164] Shelley believed that his poem's 'Anti Christian' sentiments would be 'unnoticed in a Note.' *PBSL* i, 361.

[165] *PBSL* ii, 305.

However, he ends his letter by defending the anti-religious statements that he made in *Queen Mab*: 'I am a devoted enemy to religious, political, and domestic oppression; and I regret this publication, not so much from literary vanity, as because I fear it is better fitted to injure than to serve the cause of freedom.'[166] Shelley concludes by stating that:

> It is scarcely necessary for me to protest against this system of inculcating the truth of Christianity and the excellence of Monarchy however true or however excellent they may be, by such equivocal arguments as confiscation, and imprisonment, and invective, and slander, and the insolent violation of the most sacred ties of nature and society.[167]

Although he sought to defend himself from the legal repercussions of advocating atheism, Shelley refused to yield on his belief that Christianity was 'religious […] oppression'.

Queen Mab is framed with religious scepticism. Shelley quotes the opening lines from Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* 4, which include the phrase *artis / religionum animos nodis exsolvere pergo* ('I proceed to set free the mind from the close knots of superstition', *De Rerum Natura* 4.6-7), for one of his epigraphs.[168] Meanwhile, *Queen Mab* Canto 7, which challenges the existence of a god, begins with Ianthe recounting the time she went to see an atheist being burned in her childhood. I would argue that alongside his vegetarianism, atheism is one of the most important tenets held by Shelley during the period in which he was writing *Queen Mab,* and one that he advocated most vehemently.[169] However, there is still work to be done with regard to understanding the role that ancient Roman texts played in

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[166] *PBSL* ii, 305.
[167] *PBSL* ii, 305.
[168] Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, trans. by W. H. D. Rouse, rev. by Martin Ferguson Smith (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975). All subsequent references to Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* are from this edition unless otherwise stated.
[169] A number of his letters from the early period of his career, particularly throughout 1811, reveal the extent of Shelley's hatred of Christianity. On 26 April 1811, Shelley asks in a letter to Hogg, 'has not an Atheist reason to suspect the amiability of a system which inculcates so glaringly uncharitable opinions?' *PBSL* i, 69. He continues by supposing that if one were to 'lop off all the disgusting excrescencies […] I will say it is a system which *can* do no harm', *PBSL* i, 69. Two days later, on 28th April 1811, Shelley asks Hogg, 'why is it that the moment we are seperated, I can scarcely set bounds to my hatred of Xtianity?' *PBSL* i, 71. In the same letter, he complains about the devotion of his sister, Elizabeth, to Christianity: 'Xtianity has tainted her', *PBSL* i, 72.

informing the poet's relationship with contemporary ideas of atheism. Jack Donovan makes some advances in this regard in his account of Lucretius' influence on *Laon and Cythna*.[170] Donovan points out that Good's 1805 edition of Lucretius, and Busby's 1813 edition, 'recover an authorised place for *De Rerum Natura* in the established classical canon'.[171] In Lucretius, Donovan posits that Shelley 'found powerful classical precedent for the critical position on religion that he adopts in *L&C* [sic]'. [172] In this section of my thesis, I build from Donovan's account to examine in detail the ways in which Lucretius' and Pliny's ideas concerning divinity inform Shelley's attack on Christianity in *Queen Mab*.

We should, however, be careful when discussing Shelley's 'atheism'. We must not call his beliefs 'atheistic' without comparing contemporary and modern meanings of the word. Shelley himself aids us in this regard. At the beginning of his note to 7.13, Shelley clarifies that he is challenging the idea of 'a creative Deity'. He does, however, believe in 'a pervading Spirit co-eternal with the universe'. In the 11 June 1811 letter to Elizabeth Hitchener, Shelley confesses: 'in this sense I acknowledge a God, but merely as a synonime [*sic*] for the existing power of existence.'[173] The 'sense' he means is the idea that 'god' is the 'essence of the universe', rather than its creator.[174]

In his note, which is a refiguring of *The Necessity of Atheism*, Shelley references, in the following order, Isaac Newton, Francis Bacon, Holbach, Pliny, William Drummond, and Spinoza. Shelley quotes from Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1670) in Latin. He provides no explanation, leaving us, the reader, to suppose why he chose to end his sceptical note with the affirmation: 'all things happen through the power of God'.[175] Hopps elects to

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[170] *PS* 2, 25-6.
[171] *PS* 2, 26.
[172] *PS* 2, 26.
[173] *PBSL* i, 101.
[174] *PBSL* i, 101.
[175] The full quotation in Latin reads: *Omnia enim per Dei potentiam facta sunt: Imo quia Naturae potentia nulla est nisi ipsa Dei potentia, certum est nos eatenus Dei potentiam non intelligere, quatenus causas naturales*

focus on *The Necessity of Atheism*, *A Refutation of Deism,* and *On Christianity* in his discussion of Shelley's 'atheism' (I use apostrophes because, as I will explain shortly, Hopps argues that Shelley is agnostic rather than atheist), but neglects to discuss Spinoza's role in the note to *Queen Mab*. In discussing the ancient Roman texts that helped to formulate Shelley's ideas about atheism, I deem it necessary to first address Shelley's reference to Spinoza in the note to Canto VII.13, given Spinoza's overarching presence in eighteenth and nineteenth century European atheism.

Reiman and Fraistat suggest that 'Spinoza's historicizing, anti-supernaturalist hermeneutic attracted' Shelley, who ordered his works from Thomas Hookham in December of 1812.[176] Spinoza advocates for humankind's freedom to philosophise, and challenges artificial theological and political power. Dimitris Vardoulakis traces Spinoza's similarities with and deviations from both Epicurus and Lucretius. Spinoza differentiates between artificial power (*potestas*) and 'human propensity' (*potentia*), Vardoulakis writes, which is what Lucretius does in the passage that casts Epicurus as the triumphant general (*DRN* 1.72-7). While Vardoulakis regards Epicurus as having failed to define 'power' sufficiently, he alleges that Lucretius laid the way for Spinoza to 'organize the dialectic of authority and utility' from the onset in his treatise ('authority' referring to the artificial power belonging to priests and kings, and 'utility' referring to humanity's freedom).[177] Lucretius seeks to distinguish between religious and political power and what Vardoulakis terms 'utility', that

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ignoramus; adeoque stulte ad eandem Dei potentiam recurritur, quando rei alicuius causam naturalem, hoc est, ipsam Dei potentiam ignoramus. Benedictus de Spinoza, 'De Prophetia', *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (Hamburg: Heinrich Künraht, 1670), 14. Jonathan Israel's translation reads as follows: 'For everything is done by the power of God. Indeed, because the power of nature is nothing other than the power of God itself, it is certain that we fail to understand the power of God to the extent that we are ignorant of natural causes. Therefore it is foolish to have recourse to this same power of God when we are ignorant of the natural cause of some thing, which is, precisely, the power of God', *Spinoza*, Theological-Political Treatise, ed. by Jonathan Israel and Michael Silverthorne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 28. It is worth noting that Shelley copied the Latin incorrectly in the 1813 print of *Queen Mab*, but that the Latin was amended in the 1821 and 1829 pirated editions of the poem, as noted in *PS* 1, 391.

[176] *PBSL* i, 342.

[177] Vardoulakis, 62.

is, the 'human propensity to make practical judgements': Spinoza then develops this argument so as to situate monarchy (*potestas*) and democracy (which stems from *potentia*) against one another.

Spinoza's distinction between *potestas* and *potentia*, partly inspired by Lucretius, is crucial for Shelley's reader. The quotation that Shelley takes from Spinoza's treatise begins: *omnia enim per Dei potentiam facta sunt* ('all things happen through the power of God'). On first reading, it seems counterintuitive to include an affirmation of the power of a deity in a note that accompanies the line 'there is no god'. However, Spinoza continues, *imo, quia naturae potentia nulla est nisi ipsa Dei potentia, certum est nos eatenus Dei potentiam non intelligere, quatenus causas naturales ignoramus […]* ('indeed, since the power of nature is nothing but that very power of God, it is certain that we fail to understand the power of God insofar as we are ignorant of natural causes …'). To borrow Vardoulakis' phrasing, Spinoza here categorizes divine power as *potentia,* the same kind of 'propensity' that he regarded humankind as having. Godly power is *potentia*: crucially, it is distinct from the artificial *potestas* of priests and kings. Shelley therefore extracts a quotation from Spinoza that simultaneously disrupts a Christian hierarchy and affirms the power of a god that is synonymous with nature. In quoting Spinoza, Shelley is not negating *potentia*, but *potestas.* To return to the poet's clarification at the beginning of the note to Canto VII.13, he is not challenging the idea of a 'pervading Spirit', but of a 'creative' Christian god.

Hopps regards Shelley as 'agnostic' rather than atheist. Commenting on the note to Canto 7.13, Gavin Hopps observes that 'Shelley has not abandoned the idea of God entirely, and still adheres to a belief in some sort of indwelling Spirit of Nature or Soul of the Universe'.[178] This is in spite of the poet defining himself as an atheist, signing off as

[178] Gavin Hopps, 'Religion and Ethics', in *The Oxford Handbook of Percy Bysshe Shelley,* ed. by Michael O'Neill and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 117-31, 119-120.

'Democrat, Philanthropist, and Atheist' in a visitors' book at a hotel in the Vale of Chamonix in 1816. Having discussed *The Necessity of Atheism,* and shifting so as to focus on *A Refutation of Deism*, Hopps comments that 'Shelley's critique of religion pertains on the one hand to ethics and ecclesial history (the wrathful God of the Old Testament, the violence of the early Church, and effects of Christianity's system or morals)', as well as 'to dogmatic apologetics'.[179] Hopps is also of the opinion that *The Necessity of Atheism* was principally Hogg's design, tracing the treatise's genesis to a January 1811 letter to Shelley. Conversely, Reiman and Fraistat point out that while 'it remains unclear how much each of the co-authors contributed individually to the work', through his 'appropriation of various portions of the text in his *Declaration of Rights, Letter to Lord Ellenborough, Refutation,* and this note to *QM*', Shelley showed himself to be willing to take 'complete responsibility' for writing the pamphlet.[180] Whether or not Shelley could claim authorship of *Necessity,* I believe that Hopps is right to challenge contemporary and retrospective applications of the word 'atheist' to him. Shelley's belief that 'the Universe is God' demonstrates an inconsistency with modern understandings of atheism. Further, Hopps' observations that Shelley was troubled by the 'wrathful' 'Old Testament' 'God' and the 'effects of Christianity's system or morals' are substantiated by the poet's critique of religion in *Queen Mab*.

Shelley says that he is not 'negating' the idea of 'a pervading Spirit co-eternal with the universe' in *Queen Mab*. I maintain, therefore, that we must be careful about calling him an 'atheist' in the modern sense. It is not without good reason that his name has become almost synonymous with 'atheism'. However, we must remember that it is not 'god' that Shelley is attacking in *Queen Mab* and its notes, but what 'god' has come to represent to him, that is, a form of tyranny and oppression enacted by the Church. It is not 'god' that Shelley

[179] Hopps, 127.
[180] *CPPBS* 2, 623.

takes issue with during this period, but Christianity. I now turn to specific instances of anti-Christian statements in *Queen Mab*, which help to inform us which aspects of religion Shelley is criticizing.

In challenging Highet, Turner makes the following observation: 'the anti-religious bias which runs through all Shelley's work can hardly be unconnected with his study of Lucretius'.[181] In taking a closer look at two of Shelley's major anti-Christian statements in *Queen Mab*, we find Lucretius at the forefront. Meanwhile, Shelley's friend Thomas Medwin suggests that another Roman author had a major impact on Shelley's early understanding of atheism. Pliny's 'chapter "*De Deo*" was the first germ of his ideas respecting the Nature of God', Medwin claims.[182] Although it is sensible to treat the reliability of Medwin's biography of Shelley with some caution, Pliny's presence in the note to *Queen Mab* Canto 7.13 suggests that parts of *Natural History* did indeed influence Shelley's early 'ideas respecting the Nature of God'. Both Lucretius and Pliny seem to have garnered Shelley's respect. He deems Lucretius one of the greatest of the Roman poets. Writing to Godwin on 29 July 1812, Shelley concedes that Lucretius 'forms perhaps the single exception' to a statement made previously by Godwin, that the ancient poets 'are fit for nothing but the perpetuation of the noxious race of heroes in the world.'[183] On 6 July 1817, Shelley is pleased to hear that Thomas Hogg has been reading Lucretius lately. He reaffirms his own admiration for *DRN*: 'The 4th book is perhaps the finest. The whole of that passage about love is full of irresistible energy of language as well as the profoundest truth.'[184] Regarding Pliny, Medwin states that Shelley had spent time 'in his leisure hours' 'translating […] several Books of Pliny the Elder' while at Eton.[185] While we cannot know if this is true for certain, Shelley must have

[181] Turner, 282.
[182] Thomas Medwin, *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, 2 vols (London: Thomas Cautley Newby, 1847), 50.
[183] *PBSL* i, 317.
[184] *PBSL* i, 545.
[185] Medwin, *Life* 1, 49.

indeed regarded Pliny highly, calling him ‘the enlightened and benevolent Pliny’ in the note to *Queen Mab* 7.13. Therefore, I will now investigate the extent to which Lucretius and Pliny inspire Shelley’s anti-religious comments in *Queen Mab*, respectively.

I have already addressed the fact that Lucretius features as one of the poem’s epigraphs. Shelley quotes lines 1-3 and 5-7 from *DRN* Book 4, choosing to omit line 4. The quotation in full reads:

> *Avia Pieridum peragro loca, nullius ante*
> *trita solo; juvat integros accedere fontis;*
> *atque haurire: juvatque novos decerpere flores.*
> *insignemque meo capiti petere inde coronam*
> *unde prius nulli velarint tempora musae.* 5
> *primum quod magnis doceo de rebus; et artis*
> *religionum animos nodis exsolvere pergo.*
>
> (‘A pathless country of the Pierides I traverse, where no other foot has ever trod. I love to approach virgin springs, and there to drink; I love to pluck new flowers and to seek an illustrious chaplet for my head from fields whence before this the Muses have crowned the brows of none: first because my teaching is of high matters, and I proceed to set free the mind from the close knots of superstition; […]’).
>
> Lucretius *De Rerum Natura* 4.1-3;5-7

Speaking through Lucretius, Shelley sets out his poem’s intentions. He wishes *arctis / religionum animos nodis exsolvere* (‘to set free the mind from the close knots of superstition’). The meaning of the verb *exsolvere*, ‘to set free’ or ‘to loosen’, enhanced by the fact that it is a compound (*ex* plus *solvere*), demonstrates the nature of what Lucretius, and therefore Shelley, are attempting. This is an act of regression, but not regression in negative terms. It is an act of undoing something that was once done that had caused harm. The ‘knots of superstition’ (*religionum […] nodi*) are bound around the minds of humanity and therefore stifling their mental faculties, Lucretius and Shelley claim. Religion is homogenous with restriction. From even before his poem has begun, Shelley states that religion is his target through Lucretius. Furthermore, the process that he is championing is one of restoration. He

wishes for humanity to be 'set free', and for institutions such as the Christian church to be absolved. The 'dazzling picture' for which he longs necessitates a journey of undoing.[186] Shelley's first issue with Christianity that can be found in *Queen Mab* is therefore its use as a tool of subordination over the minds of humankind. Shelley perhaps envisions his poem as being part of the process of enlightening and 'freeing' his fellow citizens.

I now turn to the note to Canto 5.112-13. Shelley shifts from making a generalised statement about what he deems to be the widespread effects of institutionalised religion, to employing anecdotal evidence about an individual case. The lines which the note accompanies read:

> The man of ease […]
> […] sheds
> A passing tear perchance upon the wreck
> Of earthly peace, when near his dwelling's door
> The frightful waves re driven, - when his son
> Is murdered by the tyrant, or religion
> Drives his wife raving mad. […]
>
> *QM* 5.103;108-13

In the note, Shelley claims to have been 'acquainted with a lady of considerable accomplishments, and the mother of a numerous family, whom the Christian religion has goaded to incurable insanity.'[187] Shelley adds that this is not a unique scenario: apparently, 'a parallel case is […] within the experience of every physician'.[188] Reiman and Fraistat maintain that 'if PBS was indeed personally acquainted with such a woman, her identity remains unknown.'[189] Reiman and Fraistat also provide some further context on the perceived causes of and attitudes towards 'religious mania' in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

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[186] Here I recall Shelley's 23rd November 1811 letter to Elizabeth Hitchener, which I quote in section 1.1.2: 'Perhaps ere Man had lost reason, and lived an happy happy race.—No Tyranny, no Priestcraft, no War.—Adieu to the dazzling picture.' *PBSL* i, 189.
[187] *CPPBS* 2, 251.
[188] *CPPBS* 2, 251.
[189] *CPPBS* 2, 604.

They direct us to Erasmus Darwin's note to *The Temple of Natura,* Canto 4. 87. Darwin writes: 'Many theatric preachers among the Methodists successfully inculcate the fear of death and Hell, and live luxuriously on the folly of their hearers: those who suffer under this insanity, are generally the most innocent and harmless people'.[190] Darwin suggests that the authority of the Methodist church was achieved in two ways: instilling of 'fear' by its preachers, and equally 'the folly of their hearers'. He also admits that those who are taken in by Methodist preachers are 'innocent'.

For the purposes of this discussion, I propose focusing on the issue of 'fear'. Darwin suggested that it was fear of 'death' and 'Hell' that subordinated the followers of Methodism. In the situation to which Shelley refers in his note, the 'lady of considerable accomplishments', which provides the model for the wife driven 'raving mad' in Canto V.112-13, there is no mention of fear. Rather, the presence of fear is introduced via a subtext which is partially informed by the quotation from Lucretius. Shelley follows his piece of anecdotal evidence with a two-line extract from *DRN* 3:

> *Nam iam saepe homines patriam, carosque parentes*
> *Prodiderunt, vitare Acherusia templa petentes.*
>
> ('…for often before now men have betrayed homeland or beloved parents in seeking to avoid the regions of Acheron.')
>
> Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* 3. 85-6

Once more, Shelley casts Lucretius as a historical commentator. Lucretius' assessment of the world prior to Epicureanism is situated in Shelley's note as though it is fact. Shelley is creating a narrative in which families have historically been divided by religion. Furthermore, these lines from Lucretius suggest that the blame lies with the 'men' or rather 'people' (*homines*) who have 'betrayed' (*prodiderunt*) their families. Shelley states that he knows a

[190] Erasmus Darwin, *The Temple of Nature: Or, the Origin of Society: a Poem, With Philosophical Notes* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1803), 137.

woman who ‘was goaded to incurable insanity’ by Christianity. In the poem, this causes some distress to her husband, who ‘sheds / a passing tear’. Shelley then tells us that it has been commonplace for families to be ruptured by religious fervour, by quoting Lucretius. The idea that the wife is not to blame is alluded to in *QM* 5.112-13, by her position as the object of the verb, while ‘religion / drives’ her. However, her blame is further destabilized when we read the entire passage from which the two-line quotation from Lucretius is extracted.

In this passage, Lucretius is commenting on the effectiveness of fear when used by religious officials. The lines I am interested in read as follows:

> *et saepe usque adeo, mortis formidine, vitae*
> *percipit humanos odium lucisque videndae,*
> *ut sibi consciscant maerenti pectore letum*
> *obliti fontem curarum hunc esse timorem:*
> *hunc vexare pudorem, hunc vincula amicitiai*
> *rumpere et in summa pietatem evertere suadet;*
> *nam iam saepe homines patriam carosque parentis*
> *prodiderunt, vitare Acherusia templa petentes.*
> *nam veluti pueri trepidant atque omnia caecis*
> *in tenebris metuunt, sic nos in luce timemus*
> *interdum nilo quae sunt metuenda magis quam*
> *quae pueri in tenebris pavitant finguntque futura.*
> *hunc igitur terrorem animi tenebrasque necessest*
> *non radii solis neque lucida tela diei*
> *discutiant, sed naturae species ratioque.*

> (‘And often it goes so far, that for fear of death men are seized by hatred of life and of seeing the light, so that with sorrowing heart they devise their own death, forgetting that this fear is the fountain of their cares: it induces one man to violate honour, another to break the bonds of friendship, and in a word to overthrow all natural feeling; for often before now men have betrayed fatherland or beloved parents in seeking to avoid the regions of Acheron. For as children tremble and fear everything in the blind darkness, so we in the light sometimes fear what is no more to be feared than the things that children in the dark hold in terror and imagine will come true. This terror, therefore, and darkness of the mind must be dispersed, not by rays of the sun nor the bright shafts of daylight, but by the aspect and law of nature.’)
>
> Lucretius *DRN* 3. 79-93

Lucretius writes that religion incites a terrible 'fear of death'. This in turn confines a person to 'blind darkness'. This narrative is in-keeping with the general view of Methodism at the turn of the nineteenth century. Darwin purports that 'many theatric preachers among the Methodists successfully inculcate the fear of death and Hell' into their followers.[191]

Shelley agrees with Lucretius and Darwin in this regard in *Queen Mab*. In Canto 8, which begins with Ianthe's recollection of going to see an atheist being burned when she was a child, Shelley's Fairy and Ahasuerus attempt to convince Ianthe of Christianity's shortcomings – even its evils. The Fairy claims that 'the name of God / Has fenced about all crimes with holiness'.[192] She later adds, 'Earth groans beneath religion's iron age, / And priests dare babble of a God of peace, / Even whilst their hands are red with guiltless blood'.[193] Shelley alleges that Christianity was able to spread and subordinate its followers through violence. In his note to Canto 7.135-6 ('I will beget a son, and he shall bear / The sins of the world'), Shelley argues that 'Christianity, like all other religions, rests upon miracles, prophesies, and martyrdoms.'[194] He continues, 'no religion ever existed, which had not its prophets, its attested miracles, and, above all, crowds of devotees who would bear patiently the most horrible tortures to prove its authenticity.'[195] Christianity, in Shelley's eyes, is not only guilty of incapacitating its followers' freedom of thought, it has even been used to officiate 'torture'.

Lines 91 – 93 of *DRN* 3 offer a metaphorical shaft of light. 'This terror […] and darkness of the mind must be dispersed', Lucretius tells his audience, 'not by rays of the sun […] but by the aspect and law of nature'.[196] Lucretius uses *ratio,* which Rouse and Smith

[191] Darwin (1803), 137.
[192] *QM* 7.26-7.
[193] *QM* 7, 43-5.
[194] *CPPBS* 2, 289.
[195] *CPPBS* 2, 289.
[196] *hunc igitur terrorem animi tenebrasque necessest / non radii solis neque lucida tela diei / discutiant, sed naturae species ratioque, DRN* 3.91-3.

translate to ‘law’. However, *ratio* specifically connotes ‘logic’ or ‘reason’. *Ratio* offers a direct juxtaposition to *religio*, which appears in the opening lines of Book 4, which Shelley quotes for his epigraph. Lucretius reiterates the power of *ratio* over religion in Book 6, repeating his metaphor from 3.91-3 at 6.39-41.

In quoting *De Rerum Natura* 3.85-6 in his note, Shelley creates a subtext in which we should understand that the ‘wife’ driven ‘raving mad’ by religion was incited by fear. Furthermore, Lucretius is offering a solution to the climate of fear by dispelling *religio* with *ratio*. So, therefore, is Shelley. *Queen Mab* offers a metaphorical shaft of light upon the shadows that Shelley regards ‘Christianity’ as casting.

Meanwhile, the extracts from Pliny which Shelley quotes in his note to Canto 7.13 challenge not the existence of a god, but rather the idea that a god can be omnipotent. Shelley takes fragments from sections 14 and 27 of Book 2 of Pliny’s *Natural History*:

> *Quapropter effigiem dei formamque quaerere imbecillitatis humanae reor. quisquis est deus (si modo est aliquis) et quacumque in parte, totus est sensus, totus est visus, totus auditus, totus animae, totus animi, totus sui […] inperfectae vero in homine naturae praecipua solatia, ne deum quidem posse omnia, -- namque nec sibi potest mortem consciscere, si velit, quod homini dedit optimum in tantis vitae poenis, nec mortales aeternitate donare, aut revocare defunctos, nec facere ut qui vixit non vixerit, qui honores gessit non gesserit, -- nullumque habere in praeterita ius praeterquam oblivionis, atque (ut facetis quoque argumentis societas haec cum deo copuletur) ut bis dena viginti non sint aut multa similiter efficere non posse: per quae declaratur haut dubie naturae potentia, idque esse quod deum vocemus.*
>
> Pliny, *Natural History* 2.14;27

> (‘For this reason I deem it a mark of human weakness to seek to discover the shape and form of God. Whoever God is – provided there is a God – and in whatever region he is, he consists wholly of sense, sight and hearing, wholly of soul, wholly of mind, wholly of himself […] But the chief consolations for nature’s imperfection in the case of man are that not even for God are all things possible-for he cannot, even if he wishes, commit suicide, the supreme boon that he has bestowed on man among all the penalties of life, nor bestow eternity on mortals or recall the deceased, nor cause a man that has lived not to have lived or one that has held high office not to have held it-and that he has no power over what is past save to forget it, and (to link our fellowship with God by means of frivolous arguments as well) that he cannot cause twice ten not to be twenty or do many things on similar lines: which facts

> unquestionably demonstrate the power of nature, and prove that it is this what we mean by the word 'God'.)[197]

The first part that Shelley quotes, section 14 of Book 2, sees Pliny challenge the human instinct *effigiem dei formamque quaerere* ('to discover the shape and form of God'). For, according to Pliny, a god *totus est sensus, totus est visus, totus auditus* […] ('consists wholly of sense, sight and hearing'). Like the Epicureans, the Stoics believed that if gods did exist, they were made of same matter as human beings and the rest of the material universe. The second part that Shelley quotes, section 27 of Book 2, informs us as to the consequences of this statement: *ne deum quidem posse omnia* ('not even for God are all things possible'). According to Pliny, a god has no influence on human matters. This argument also aligns with Epicureanism. In Book 6 of *De Rerum Natura*, Lucretius seeks to deconstruct the belief that natural phenomena such as thunderstorms are enacted by the gods.[198] Although Pliny suggests that the existence of a god is debatable – *si modo est aliquis* ('provided there is a god') – he concedes that 'god' is synonymous with *naturae potentia* ('the power of nature'). Shelley therefore appears to be interested both in the idea that god 'consists' in the senses, and in the argument that the application of the word 'god' in fact more accurately signifies 'the power of nature'.

Aside from Medwin's claim that Shelley had spent portions of his time 'translating [..] several books of Pliny the Elder', and the epithet that Shelley bestows on the ancient in the note to *Queen Mab* 7.13 ('the enlightened and benevolent Pliny'), there is little evidence to inform us as to how frequently or enthusiastically Shelley actually read *Natural History*. Pliny's text 'is valuable as an anthropological document', Rackham writes, but makes no

[197] Pliny, *Natural History, Volume 1: Books 1-2,* trans. by H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938). All subsequent references to Pliny's *Natural History* are from this edition unless otherwise stated.
[198] *DRN* 6.96-421.

further suggestions as to how it was received throughout subsequent generations.[199] Aude Doody comments on the process of romanticisation that Pliny's death underwent, writing: 'for the radical encyclopedists [*sic*] of eighteenth-century Paris, Pliny's death made him a martyr for rational science in the face of ignorance and superstition'.[200] Doody adds that 'nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarship' was 'sometimes dismissive, sometimes indulgent'.[201] During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the integrity of Pliny's science had begun to be discredited, leading to his 'fall from grace' in the context of 'new philological approaches'.[202] 'Bacon was instrumental in removing Pliny from the centre of scientific scholarship', Doody writes, and yet 'the extraordinary power' of 'Pliny's formulation of natural knowledge' prevailed.[203] While his science could not always withstand sixteenth and seventeenth century scrutiny, Pliny's approach when it came to deconstructing 'god' through reason and analysis of 'extreme natural phenomena' appears to have been lauded in an era when claims made by the Christian Church were increasingly being challenged.[204] Vance refers to Gibbon, who, he claims, 'clearly preferred the rationalism of the early Roman Empire' to 'the essential irrationalism of early Christianity, which relied on dubiously attested evidence of the miraculous and the supernatural'.[205] It cannot be said that Pliny had a central position in the intellectual milieu of Shelley's day. However, this makes Shelley's reference to the *Natural History* in the note to *Queen Mab* 7.13 all the more interesting.

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[199] H. Rackham, 'Introduction', x.
[200] Aude Doody, *Pliny's Encyclopedia: the Reception of the Natural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1.
[201] Doody, 1.
[202] Doody, 31.
[203] Doody, 31.
[204] Vance, 'Myth and Religion', *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature, Volume 4: 1790-1880*, ed. by Norman Vance and Jennifer Wallace (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015)
[205] Vance, 'Myth and Religion', 188.

While Lucretius aids Shelley in critiquing the oppression that he regarded as being intrinsic to the Christian Church, Pliny provides Shelley with an alternative viewpoint of the idea of 'god' itself. Pliny helped to perpetuate the Stoic belief that 'god' is indifferent to human matters, writing: *nec mortales aeternitate donare, aut revocare defunctos*, ('nor [can he] nor bestow eternity on mortals or recall the deceased', *Nat.* 2.27). Further, Pliny's insistence that what humankind terms 'god' is in fact *naturae potentia* ('the power of nature', *Nat.* 2.27), and his statement that it is a mark of 'human weakness' (*imbecillitatis humanae, Nat.* 2.14) to attempt to visualise said 'god', must resonate within Shelley's allusions to human weakness in *Queen Mab*. At Canto 7.24-6, for example, the Fairy laments the fact that 'human pride / Is skilful to invent most serious names / To hide its ignorance'.

Both Lucretius and Pliny play a crucial role in shaping Shelley's distinct brand of atheism in *Queen Mab*. In reading Shelley's direct and indirect allusions to Lucretius and Pliny, readers soon learn that Shelley indeed cannot be called an 'atheist' in the modern sense. Rather, he gave his energy to attacking a religious system: Christianity. Like Pliny, Shelley claims that 'god' was a misplaced term, and that 'every seed' of the materialist universe 'contains' an 'exterminable spirit'.[206] This 'is nature's only God'.[207]

1.4 The role of the philosopher in *Queen Mab*

Lucretius' deployment of philosophy in the form of verse, deemed beautiful by Shelley, must have played some part in inspiring Shelley to inscribe his ideologies into poetry. *Queen Mab* is, of course, subtitled *A Philosophical Poem: with notes*. The journey on which his protagonist, Ianthe, is taken, features elements that appear to have been inspired by classical ideas of philosophy, specifically philosophical awakening.

[206] *QM* 7.19;23.
[207] *QM* 7.24.

According to Grant Showerman, Horace demonstrates attributes that are typical of a philosopher. Showerman claims that Horace's 'attitude towards the universal drama is that of the onlooker', continuing, 'he looks down from his post upon the life of men with as clear vision as Lucretius, whom he admires […]'.[208] And yet, Horace is not removed from the 'drama' that he is watching in the same way that Lucretius is at *DRN* 2. 1-15. In Showerman's view, Horace 'is also a spectator of himself'.[209] This is evident in Horace's moments of self-reflection, which often demonstrate his sense of humour. In *Epistle* 1.4, for instance, addressed to Tibullus, Horace paints a less than flattering portrait of himself when calling himself an Epicurean: *me pinguem et nitidum bene curata cute vises, / cum ridere voles, Epicuri de grege porcum* ('As for me, when you want a laugh, you will find me in fine fettle, fat and sleek, a hog from Epicurus's herd', *Epistle* 1.4.15-6).[210] Horace turns his lens on himself as well as the world around him. Although his verse casts an analytical and judgemental eye over present and past Rome, Horace falls short of suggesting that he is superior to the rest of Rome's inhabitants. Horace often situates himself amongst the hustle and bustle of the city. He confesses his own imperfections. While Shelley appears to take inspiration from Horace's criticisms of imperial Rome, including Horace's perception of humankind's decline from virtuousness and its interest in monetary wealth, he draws from other classical texts in order to enhance the sense that his Ianthe is undergoing an awakening of the most profound kind.

The Fairy in Shelley's *Queen Mab* takes Ianthe's Spirit on a journey beyond the earth's atmosphere, until 'Earth's distant orb appeared / The smallest light that twinkles in the heaven'.[211] Perspective is central to the poem's didacticism: Ianthe must observe the world

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[208] Grant Showerman, *Horace and His Influence* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1963), 39-40.
[209] Showerman, 41.
[210] Showerman quotes from this epistle, calling these closing lines 'as easily the jest of a Stoic as the confession of an Epicurean'. Showerman, 38.
[211] *QM* 1. 250-1.

from a new vantage-point, from which she can see the entire planet and the 'countless spheres diffused' around it, in order to fully comprehend humankind's moral and physical degeneration, and the process needed to restore 'healthful innocence'.[212] Shelley's depiction of Ianthe's journey echoes the ancient Greek philosopher Parmenides, who describes a similar journey by *ἅρμα* ('chariot', Parmenides, *On Nature,* 5), to another realm where a goddess awaits to teach him about the nature of reality.[213] After being allowed through the gate which separates the human realm from the divine, said goddess greets Parmenides' speaker and confirms that the path he finds himself on *ἦ γὰρ ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων ἐκτὸς πάτου ἐστίν* ('[…] is indeed remote from the paths of men', *On Nature,* 27).[214] Both Parmenides and Shelley portray a literal journey and a philosophical awakening tangentially with one another. Both poets also acknowledge the fact that this journey is a unique experience for their mortal subjects.

Shelley's use of a quasi-divine perspective above the earth also recalls Lucretius' depiction of the benefits of philosophical outlook. Reiman and Fraistat have commented that Shelley's inspiration for Ianthe's journey towards 'a cosmic view of human history' perhaps came from Milton's *Paradise Lost,* when Michael shows Adam humankind from atop a mountain, as well as the opening lines from Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* 2.[215] Ianthe's new vantage-point has a pragmatic use in the poem, allowing the Fairy to show her the entire earth and its population, but perhaps it also provides her with mental clarity in the way that adopting philosophical beliefs was said to in classical texts. In his note to *Queen Mab* 5.58,

[212] *CPPBS* i, 297
[213] Parmenides, *Early Greek Philosophy, Volume V: Western Greek Thinkers, Part 2*, ed. and trans. by André Laks and Glenn W. Most (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).
[214] Parmenides.
[215] *CPPBS* 2, 506. Reiman and Fraistat add that Shelley would have been familiar with Mary Wollstonecraft's own allusion to this passage in Chapter Five of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), *CPPBS* 2, 506.

which reads ‘the mob of peasants, nobles, priests, and kings’, Shelley quotes lines 1-15 of *De Rerum Natura* 2. The passage reads as follows:

> *Suave, mari magno turbantibus aequora ventis,*
> *e terra magnum alterius spectare laborem;*
> *non quia vexari quemquamst iucunda voluptas,*
> *sed quibus ipse malis careas quia cernere suave est.*
> *suave etiam belli certamina magna tueri*
> *per campos instructa tua sine parte pericli.*
> *sed nil dulcius est bene quam munita tenere*
> *edita doctrina sapientum templa serena,*
> *despicere unde queas alios passimque videre*
> *errare atque viam palantis quaerere vitae,*
> *certare ingenio, contendere nobilitate,*
> *noctes atque dies niti praestante labore*
> *ad summas emergere opes rerumque potiri.*
> *o miseras hominum mentes, o pectora caeca!*
>
> Lucretius *De Rerum Natura* 2.1-15
>
> (‘Pleasant it is, when on the great sea the winds trouble the waters, to gaze from shore upon another’s great tribulation: not because any man’s troubles are a delectable joy, but because to perceive what ills you are free from yourself is pleasant. Pleasant is it also to behold great encounters of warfare arrayed over the plains, with no part of yours in the peril. But nothing is more delightful than to possess lofty sanctuaries serene, well fortified by the teachings of the wise, whence you may look down upon others and behold them all astray, wandering abroad and seeking the path of life:—the strife of wits, the fight for precedence, all labouring night and day with surpassing toil to mount upon the pinnacle of riches and to lay hold on power. O pitiable minds of men, O blind intelligences!’)

In a note to the phrase *edita […] templa* in line 8, Rouse and Smith note that this passage alludes to ‘the serene sanctuaries’ that Epicurean philosophy has to offer.[216] As I have pointed out, Shelley quotes these lines in response to his own depiction of a ‘mob’, made up of ‘peasants, nobles, priests, and kings’ (*QM* 5.58). These groups have been taken in by the ‘all-enslaving power’ of ‘commerce’, Shelley writes. In quoting Lucretius, Shelley distances the Fairy and Ianthe’s Spirit from this group. To quote Lucretius, Shelley’s Ianthe momentarily occupies a ‘lofty sanctuary’, from which she ‘behold[s] them all astray’. Lucretius’ *edita […] templa* have a double meaning, of course: the sense of physical

[216] Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* 2.8, *ad locum.*

elevation acts as a metaphor for spiritual superiority, found by following Epicurean philosophy. In the same way, Ianthe's dizzying position high above the earth reiterates her newfound insight into humanity's faults and the journey towards correcting these faults.

Shelley's evocation of Lucretius emphasises the philosophical nature of Ianthe's journey. And yet Shelley transforms the Lucretian idea at *De Rerum Natura* 2.1-15, that philosophy brings solitude, into the proposal that the individual experience of philosophical awakening has communal benefits. Cantos 8 and 9 of *Queen Mab* describe an ideal future, where humankind's virtuousness and contentment has been restored. In Canto 9, the Fairy tells Ianthe's Spirit that her role is to live by the example that she has witnessed during the latter part of her journey, and to combat humankind's faults: 'thy will / is destined an eternal war to wage / with tyranny and falsehood, and uproot / the germs of misery from the human heart' (*QM* 9.189-92).

1.5. Conclusion

As I note in section 1.3, on 16 June 1821, Shelley writes to John Gisborne to tell him that *Queen Mab* 'is just published by one of the low booksellers in the Strand'.[217] The publisher in question was William Clarke of London.[218] Shelley also writes to Charles Ollier and Leigh Hunt, to ask them to advertise his protest against the poem's redistribution. In the letter to Gisborne, Shelley says that *Queen Mab* contains attacks on 'Jesus Christ, & God the Father and the King & the Bishops & marriage & the Devil knows what'.[219] He seeks to distance himself from the poem 'for the sake of a dignified appearance'.[220] Shelley did not deny his

[217] *PBSL* 1, 300.
[218] *PBSL* 1, 356.
[219] *PBSL* 1, 300.
[220] *PBSL* 1, 300.

controversial views on religion, but rather seemed to only regret *Queen Mab* because of the damage that he regarded it as causing when it came to fighting against the Church.

Shelley's future utopia, articulated in Cantos 8 and 9, reworks classical influences in two major areas: the vegetarianism of its citizens, and the removal of religious institutions. I propose that *Queen Mab*'s incitement for revolution is in fact a call for restoration. Like Lucretius, Shelley seeks to 'loosen' or 'undo' the systems that he deemed to have caused harm to his fellow citizens. When rejoicing in his 'dazzling picture', Shelley refers to humankind as 'taintless': 'Here now the human being stands adorning / This loveliest earth with taintless body and mind'.[221] Shelley elects to describe humanity with an adjective that uses the suffix -less. Moreso than its synonyms, such as 'innocent' or 'pure', 'taintless' implies that the object it is describing was in fact once tainted. Shelley's utopian future is not the result of revolution, but of restoration, or rather, undoing. Timothy Morton alludes to this problem when he questions whether Shelley wishes to travel 'backwards or forwards, with or without violence?'[222] With the findings of this chapter, I would argue that Shelley is looking 'backwards'. Like Virgil, who claimed to prophesize the return of the Saturnian Age in *Eclogue* 4, Shelley articulates his utopian ideologies through a framework of linguistic and thematic allusions that harken to a mythical past, rather than an unknown future. Further, Shelley not only alludes to texts that already had a reputation for disturbing the religious authority of his present day, such as Lucretius and Pliny, but he even unlocks radical potential in Horace, whose centrality on the curriculum at the likes of Eton had meant that he had hitherto been disregarded by radical poets and thinkers, except for John Frank Newton and Shelley himself. Through Shelley's lens, ancient Roman literature did not simply imitate

[221] *QM* 8.198-9.
[222] Morton, 86.

Greek, nor was it a signifier of an oppressive empire: it held the ‘seeds’ of an overhauled world.

Chapter Two

‘Like him whom the Numidian seps did thaw’: Lucan’s influence on Shelley’s *Prometheus Unbound*

2.1.1 Introduction

Shelley continued to find inspiration in Roman literature as his career progressed. After he travelled to Italy in 1818, Shelley’s engagement with ancient Rome and its legacy became more multidimensional. I believe that his interest in and admiration for Roman authors was complemented by the sensory experience of seeing ancient sites and monuments in person.[223] Shelley also continued to be fascinated by the Prometheus figure. As I note in section 0.4 of my Introduction, Shelley appeared to view Prometheus as a tragic hero who represented suffering at the hands of a despotic system.[224] Although Prometheus originates in Greek literature, in his *Prometheus Unbound,* Shelley also employs Roman texts in order to rebuild the Prometheus narrative. In particular, he refers to the *Bellum Civile* by the epicist Lucan, who wrote under the emperor Nero, at two major points in his ‘lyrical drama’.[225]

One point is found in Panthea’s simile describing Demogorgon’s cave: ‘Like a volcano’s meteor-breathing chasm, / Whence the oracular vapour is hurled up’ (*PU* III.2.3-4).[226] Another is found in Jupiter’s recollection of the agony felt by Thetis at the moment that he raped her: ‘[…] all my being, / Like him whom the Numidian seps did thaw / Into a dew with poison, is dissolved’ (*PU* III.1.39-41). Crucially, both of these motifs relate to one of the overarching messages that Shelley seems to be attempting to convey: the need to challenge

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[223] Percy and Mary Shelley and Claire Clairmont travelled in Calais on 13 March 1818, *PBSL* ii, 1, and reached Milan on 6 April, *PBSL* ii, 3. The group had already travelled to Europe in 1816 in order to spend the summer in Switzerland with Lord Byron, arriving at Geneva on 15 May, *PBSL* i, 474, and departing on 29 August 1816, *PBSL* i, 504. Important sources for Shelley’s impressions of Rome include his 20 November 1818 letter to Peacock, *PBSL* ii, 54-7, the 23 March 1819 letter to Peacock, *PBSL* ii, 83-90, and Shelley’s Preface to *Prometheus Unbound*, *PS* 2, 472-6, all of which I quote from in this chapter and in the subsequent chapters.
[224] As argued by Curran (1986), 431.
[225] The subtitle to his tragedy.
[226] The text I use is taken from *PS* 2. All subsequent references to Shelley’s *Prometheus Unbound* are from this edition unless otherwise stated.

authoritative voices, such as religious figures and the monarchy, and to demonstrate independent critical thinking instead of obeying these authorities.[227] The 'oracular vapour' helps to lead Asia on her path towards clarity of thought. Meanwhile, Thetis' pain showcases in a literal sense the corruption caused by figures of authority. It also leads to the metaphorical conception of 'a third' spirit', 'mightier' than even Jupiter, who, according to myth, is destined to overthrow its father. Jupiter's downfall is integral to Shelley's transformation of Aeschylus, who supposedly allowed the Olympian to be reconciled with Prometheus in his lost play.[228] Regarding the 'oracular vapour', Kelvin Everest and Geoffrey Matthews rightly note that Shelley 'draws […] on various classical and contemporary accounts of oracles', one of which is Lucan.[229] Meanwhile, Book 9 of the *Bellum Civile* must have been Shelley's main source of inspiration for 'the Numidian seps', although Everest and Matthews also consider the possibility that I.2.29-30 of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, 'O, that this too too solid flesh would melt, / Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew!', inspired Shelley's 'phrasing'.[230] Further, Matthews mentions Lucan in his discussion of the significance of natural phenomena in Shelley's works, including storms, earthquakes, and volcanic activity, referring to Lucan's treatment of the Delphic Oracle and Demogorgon as a possible model for Shelley's portrayal of Asia's and Panthea's encounter with Demogorgon in Act 3.[231] Earl Wasserman also asserts that Shelley's scepticism of divination and his preference for 'self-

[227] Earl Wasserman comments that Shelley's Prometheus is an allegory for the 'despotism' of institutional Christianity, which 'has appropriated the virtuous life and doctrines of Christ'. *Prometheus Unbound* has therefore been recognised as a model for the need to be attuned to truth, i.e., 'the virtuous life and doctrines of Christ', and not mediators, such as members of religious institutions like priests. Earl Wasserman, *Shelley's Prometheus Unbound: A Critical Reading* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1965), 95.
[228] As explained by Shelley in his Preface, *PS* 2, 472.
[229] *PS* 2, 548. Alan M. Weinberg quotes *Bellum Civile* 5.97-101 as a reference point for 'the ancient tradition which associated volcanic eruptions with the divine inspiration of a prophetess' with which Shelley is in dialogue. Alan M. Weinberg, 'Italian Origins, Sources and Precedents: *Prometheus Unbound*', in *Shelley's Italian Experience* (London: Macmillan, 1991, repr. 1994), pp. 101-34, 109.
[230] *PS* 2, 578. Wasserman also observes Shelley's reference to Lucan's Sabellus, whose gruesome death features at *Bellum Civile* 9.762-88, 91.
[231] Geoffrey Matthews, 'A Volcano's Voice in Shelley', *ELH*, 24 (1954), pp. 191-228.

examination' in *Prometheus Unbound* is inspired by Lucan, as well as Lucretius.[232] Wasserman directs readers to *Bellum Civile* 9.564-65: 'Cato, inspired by the god whom he bore hidden in his heart, poured forth from his breast an answer worthy of the oracle itself […]'.[233] Meanwhile, Alan Weinberg documents several 'references or allusions to Demogorgon' in Latin, Italian, and English sources, including Lucan.[234]

While Lucan's influence on Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* has been acknowledged, particularly in relation to the poet's treatment of divination and his characterisation of Demogorgon, I do not believe that the full implications of Shelley's intertextual engagement with Lucan have been stated. I deem it important to draw Lucan out of the footnotes of commentaries on *Prometheus Unbound* and to elaborate on localized discussions of his influence. To the best of my knowledge, a sustained analysis of Shelley's allusions to the *Bellum Civile* in his *Prometheus Unbound* has yet to be produced. In section 2.2 of this chapter, I will cast light on the history of the shadowy Demogorgon figure and elucidate the changes which Demogorgon has undergone between Lucan's and Shelley's texts. It is the site of Demogorgon's cave which reminds Panthea and Asia of a 'meteor-breathing chasm', therefore Shelley's Demogorgon is intrinsically related to the intoxicating 'oracular vapour' that Panthea and Asia find there. While they are associated with 'madness' in Lucan's text, the vapours in *Prometheus Unbound* are more ambiguous, since they are present at the moment at which Panthea and Asia encounter Demogorgon's cave, where Asia will be impelled to undergo an awakening and thereafter be attuned to the role that love will play in society's revolution.[235] In Shelley's text, 'oracular vapour' can be both destructive and creative.

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[232] Wasserman, 138-9.
[233] Wasserman, 138-9.
[234] Weinberg, 278.
[235] I use the term 'madness' because Lucan calls Appius *demens* at *BC* 5.228. I return to this passage from Lucan in section 2.2.3.

In section 2.3, I turn to Shelley's Jupiter and Thetis in Act III.1, to draw out the implications of the reference to 'the Numdian seps'. In the following discussion, I touch on the popularity of Book 9 of the *Bellum Civile*, which contains the renowned passage about Sabellus' gruesome death by a venomous serpent whilst marching across the Libyan desert. The rape of Thetis is integral to the drama's plot on a number of levels: it is implied that the consummation was Demogorgon's conception, who ends Jupiter's reign in Act III.1 - although I will discuss the complexities around Jupiter's and Thetis' 'child' in sections 2.2.1 and 2.3 - while Thetis' experience is perhaps intended to be directly appositional to Asia's loving union with Prometheus in Act IV. In closely examining Shelley's allusions to Lucan's text, I hope to demonstrate that the 'oracular vapour' and 'Numidian seps' are far from incidental. It is fitting that Shelley's innovation of the classical Prometheus narrative takes inspiration from Lucan, who is renowned for innovating the work of his predecessors in his writing of an 'anti-epic'.[236] I argue that Lucan's subversion of the role that oracles traditionally played in poetry and in religious life had a profound influence on Shelley's portrayal of divination in his drama.

2.1.2 Shelley and Lucan

Shelley seemingly read Lucan for the first time at the end of August 1815. 'I have begun also the Pharsalia', he told Hogg.[237] By 22 September 1815, he had read the first four books, praising the work as 'a poem […] of wonderful genius, & transcending Virgil'.[238] Shelley also read Lucan in 1818, less than a month before he would begin writing *Prometheus*

[236] Lucan's distinction from other Roman authors, including epic poets such as Virgil, was recognised in the ancient world. Quintilian writes: *Lucanus ardens et concitatus et sententiis clarissimus et, ut dicam quod sentio, magis oratoribus quam poetis imitandus, The Orator's Education,* 10.1.90. ('Lucan is ardent, passionate, particularly distinguished for his sententiae, and (if I may say what I think) more to be imitated by orators than by poets.') Quintilian, *The Orator's Education, Books 9-10*, ed. and trans. by Donald A. Russell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).
[237] *PBSL* i, 429.
[238] *PBSL* i, 432.

Unbound.[239] According to Mary Shelley's journal entry for 16 August 1818, 'Shelley is not well – he reads Lucan'.[240] Mary Shelley also read Lucan herself the following year: 'am now reading the Bible and Lucan's Pharsalia […] Write – Read Lucan & the Bible'.[241] Valentina Varinelli suggests that Percy Shelley owned at least two copies of Lucan, and that the copy that is currently housed at Keats-Shelley House, Rome, as part of the Abinger collection, is probably the edition that Percy and Mary Shelley read while they were in Italy.[242]

Shelley is known to have regarded Lucan highly, although he deemed him to have weaknesses in comparison with Dante, Homer, and Milton.[243] His comment in the 22 September 1815 letter to Hogg, that Lucan 'transcend[s] Virgil', seems fitting in relation to his own political views.[244] Norman Vance notes that 'Shelley, the political radical, like his friend Peacock, made a point of preferring republican Lucan to imperial Virgil'.[245] John Talbot goes so far as to suggest that Shelley, 'admirer' of Lucan, could have produced a new translation of the *Bellum Civile* himself, which had largely been neglected by translators since Nicholas Rowe's version in 1718.[246] Although Shelley was closely acquainted with Lucan's text, indicated in the letters to Hogg quoted above, the *Bellum Civile* was also mediated to him through earlier generations of writers and philosophers, as well as his contemporaries. Recent studies throw light on the role that Lucan played during the civil war period and onwards in England. I begin by looking to Lucan's reception in seventeenth- and eighteenth-

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[239] Mary Shelley first records Shelley writing his drama on 14 September 1818, *MSJ* i, 226.
[240] *MSJ* ii, 223.
[241] 4 August 1819, *MSJ* iii, 293.
[242] Varinelli, 150-3.
[243] 'Homer was the first, and Dante the second epic poet […] none among the flock of mock-birds, though their notes were sweet, Apollonius Rhodius, Quintus Calaber Smyrnaeus, Nonnus, Lucan, Statius, or Claudian, have sought even to fulfil a single condition of epic truth […] Milton was the third Epic Poet.' Percy Shelley, 'A Defence of Poetry', *MW*, 692.
[244] *PBSL* i, 432.
[245] Vance, 'Classical Authors', 51.
[246] 'Lucan, famously translated by Nicholas Rowe in 1718, was passed over; Shelley, an admirer, might have produced a new classic version, but let the chance pass.' John Talbot, ''The principle of the daguerreotype': Translation from the Classics', *The Oxford history of Classical Reception in English Literature, Volume 4: 1790-1880*, ed. Norman Vance and Jennifer Wallace (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 57-78, 70.

century Europe, in order to lay a foundation for the coming discussion about what the *Bellum Civile*, and particularly Book 9, had come to signify by Shelley's day.

2.1.3 Lucan in sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth-century Europe

Yanick Maes offers a fairly comprehensive picture of seventeenth-century European translations of Lucan.[247] Maes writes that throughout the seventeenth century,

> the poem is passionately discussed, dissected, deprecated, and praised, activity made possible by a cornucopia of editions (most with commentary) and the 17 published translations made throughout the century, stemming from seven different linguistic and cultural traditions.[248]

Three English translations of Lucan were produced in this period, by Marlowe (1600), Gorges (1614), and May (1626), who used 'blank verse', 'octosyllabic couplets', and 'heroic couplets', respectively.[249] However, Maes suggests that 'the Dutch Republic formed an important, if not the central, axis of European Lucanism', pointing out that the printing press Officina Plantiniana produced seven editions of Lucan between 1564 and 1612.[250] It is worth noting that the Dutch Revolt took place between 1566 and 1648. Indeed, Maes observes: 'Only a couple of years before the official start of the Dutch Revolt […] Poelman used his edition of Lucan as a warning against civil unrest, driven by religious discontent.'[251] 'Lucan's specter continued to hover' during this period of unrest, Maes writes.[252]

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[247] Yanick Maes, '*Haec Monstra Edidit.* Translating Lucan in the Early Seventeenth century', in *A Companion to the Neronian Age Reception*, ed. by Emma Buckley and Martin T. Dinter (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2013), pp. 405-424.
[248] Maes, 405.
[249] Maes, 405. Maes continues: 'French translations are in prose (three different versions from de Marolles (1623), (1647), (1654)) or the verse form of alexandrines (Br´ebeuf (1654 – 5)); the two contemporary Polish translators use rhyming alexandrines (Bardzi´nski (1691)) and, remarkably, the *ottava rima* (Chr´o´sci´nski (1690)), a rhyming stanza form of Italian origin in the writings of Giovanni Boccaccio; the Italian versions are, for the most part in the pedestrian *verso sciolto* non-rhyming usually 11-syllabic verse form (Abriani (1668); Campani (1640); Robillo (1680)), while only the last (Meloncelli (1707)) uses the more ''epic'' *ottava rima'*, Maes, 405.
[250] Maes, 411-12.
[251] Maes, 412.
[252] Maes, 412.

According to Paul Davis, the Restoration period in England 'conventionally figures as a lull between the surges of interest in the *De Bello Civili* during the Civil War era and the early eighteenth century'.[253] However, during the period between 1688 and 1689, commonly known as the Glorious Revolution, Davis observes that 'three competing translations of a single passage from the *De Bello Civili* – Cato's speech to Labienus in Book IX – appeared in the space of nine months.'[254] In 1688, James II, a Catholic king, was deposed and replaced by the Protestant William III and Mary II. Interest in the *Bellum Civile* appears to have been revived during this time of transition. Davis continues, 'in the eighteenth century, 'Cato to Labienus' came to rank, for English readers, as the single most celebrated passage in Lucan, its robust rationalism and contempt for superstition chiming with the ideological priorities of Whig modernity'.[255] Continuing with an analysis of Lucan's popularity in this period, Davis adds: 'In England's dark night of the soul, the flame of enlightenment still burns; travailing through the spiritual desert of James II's England, the Whigs spurn the false hope of superstition.'[256] Lucan's scepticism towards religion and divination in the *Bellum Civile* was perhaps treated as a precursor to contemporary events. Cato seems to have been revered as a representative of Stoic wisdom and rational thinking. Davis informs us that although the *Bellum Civile* waned in popularity during the Restoration period, Cato's speech from Book 9 was revitalized by way of new translations.

Further, Clay Daniel briefly treats Milton's engagement with the *Bellum Civile* 9 in *Areopagitica* (1644).[257] Daniel suggests that Lucan's narration of the march across the desert in Book 9, and the hardships experienced by the soldiers, which includes some lines about the impressive resilience of 'Jupiter's eagle' (*Iovis volucer, BC* 9.902), provides inspiration for

[253] Paul Davis, 'A Lucan Translation Controversy on the Eve of The Glorious Revolution', *The Review of English Studies*, 65 (2014), pp. 673-693, 673.
[254] Davis, 674.
[255] Davis, 675.
[256] Davis, 678.
[257] Clay Daniel, 'Milton's Eagle and Lucan's *The Civil War*', *Notes and Queries*, 54 (2007), pp. 39-40.

Milton's metaphorical eagle in *Areopagitica*.[258] 'Especially relevant to Milton's tract is Lucan's description of how the Psylli maintain their ability to remain unharmed by the bite of a serpent, a traditional symbol of temptation, wisdom, and, for some, evil', Daniel writes.[259] Daniel interprets Milton as being attuned to the dangers of censorship, directing us to Milton's metaphor in which he treats humankind's resilience to dangerous literature as a kind of immunity to infection. Ivana Bičak also addresses a meeting-point between Milton and Lucan, arguing that there are similarities between Milton's Satan in *Paradise Lost* (1667) and Lucan's Caesar.[260] Bičak writes that 'Milton's own Satan and Lucan's Caesar inhabit this very same area [as two paintings of Satan by William Blake and Henry Fuseli respectively], in which the horrific and the ludicrous overlap', continuing, 'they are characters whose main propelling force is ambition, without which there would be no narrative in the two epics.' [261] Bičak maintains that Milton's Satan is based upon Lucan's Caesar, and that both figures attempt a farcical 'undoing' of the circumstances that created them.[262] One other point of intertextual engagement may be found in Milton's Demogorgon, who makes an appearance in Book 2 of *Paradise Lost*, beheld by Satan upon entering Hell at 963-7. Demogorgon's reception has a complex history and will be discussed in greater detail in 2.2.1.

Milton's engagement with Lucan leads us to an intriguing triangulation. William Godwin, profoundly admired by Shelley, records reading both *Paradise Regained* Book 1 and the *Bellum Civile* on 25 May 1812.[263] Noam Reisner suggests that the storm at Book 4.409-25 of *Paradise Regained* may have been inspired by Lucan, as well as Virgil, Ovid, and

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[258] Daniel, 39.
[259] Daniel, 40.
[260] Ivana Bičak, 'Transmutations of Satan and Caesar: The Grotesque Mode in Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Lucan's *Pharsalia*', *Milton Quarterly*, 49 (2015), pp. 112-125.
[261] Bičak, 114.
[262] Bičak, 122.
[263] William Godwin, *The Diary of William Godwin*, ed. by David O'Shaughnessy and others (Oxford: Oxford Digital Library, 2010), 25 May 1812, http://godwindiary.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/diary/1812-03-25.html

Seneca.[264] I have yet to find discussion of any engagement between Milton and Lucan in *Paradise Regained* Book 1. However, given the parallels between Milton and Lucan noted above from elsewhere across Milton's body of work, it is interesting that Godwin read both texts, at least momentarily, side-by-side.

There are few English translations of the *Bellum Civile* from the eighteenth-century.[265] In this period, Davis suggests that 'all Virgil's successors in the Latin epic tradition were relegated down the generic scale for their offences against one or both of' the 'canons' as adhered to by Virgil.[266] These canons are, according to Davis, 'Virgil's choice of a single unified action' and 'his strict observance of the decorum of heroic style'.[267] Lucan was thus 'relegated' 'because he did not do enough to shape the historical action of the *Pharsalia* into a coherent design'.[268] As the eighteenth century progressed, the popularity of Lucan's work seems to have diminished, due to its perceived shortcomings.

However, returning to Davis' observations on the three translations of the *Bellum Civile* Book 9 which emerged in England between 1688 and 1689, it seems that this book in particular regained some popularity in the early nineteenth century. We see a series of allusions to and adaptations from Book 9 in this period. According to Jerome McGann's commentary, Byron alludes to Lucan's *Bellum Civile* 9.974 in his *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* at Canto 2.829 (1812).[269] He is also said to allude to *Bellum Civile* 9.976-7 at Canto 3.145-6 (1816), *Bellum Civile* 9.969 at Canto 3.454, and *Bellum Civile* 1.1 at Canto 4.507 (1818).[270]

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[264] Noam Reisner, '*Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*: the ineffable self', *Milton and the ineffable*, Noam Reisner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 234-281, 251.
[265] Talbot, 70.
[266] Paul Davis, 'Latin Epic: Virgil, Lucan, and Others', *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature, Volume 3: 1660-1790*, ed. by David Hopkins and Charles Martindale (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 133-64, 133.
[267] Davis, 133.
[268] Davis, 133.
[269] Lord Byron, *The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. by Jerome J. McGann, 7 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980)
[270] Byron, *CPW* 2, 301; 304; 327.

McGann also recognises an allusion to Lucan at 1. 38-9 of Byron's *The Deformed Transformed* (1824). The lines from Byron read: '[…] Oh that each drop which falls to earth / Would rise a snake to sting them, as they have stung me!'. McGann suggests that Lucan was a source of inspiration for this sequence of events, citing *Bellum Civile* 9.619-703.[271] Furthermore, Shelley himself alludes to Book 9 in *Prometheus Unbound* when Jupiter compares Thetis' agony to that of Sabellus, a point of intertextual engagement that will form the subject of section 2.3 in this chapter. Although Byron was a contemporary of Shelley's, and not a predecessor, his engagement with Book 9 throughout *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* could suggest that Shelley's own interest in the same book was partly mediated through his friend and peer.

The evidence gathered so far suggests that Lucan was regarded highly across Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, particularly at moments of political and civil unrest. Furthermore, although the relevance of Lucan's poem appears to have diminished during the eighteenth century, and despite Lucan being left off the curriculum at Eton and Harrow, British Romantic-era poets including Byron and Shelley himself appear to have known Lucan well.[272] I am intrigued by the significance of Book 9 in the era of the Glorious Revolution, as well as its significance for Milton. Furthermore, interest in Book 9 was revitalized during Shelley's lifetime, who alludes to it in one of his major works, as does Byron.

It is worth noting here that Shelley appears to have retained knowledge of the *Bellum Civile* in its entirety. He alludes to various passages throughout his works. For example, he quotes from *Bellum Civile* Book 5 for his epigraph to 'The Daemon of the World' (1816). The lines that Shelley chooses from Lucan describe the Delphian priestess being possessed by

[271] Byron, *CPW* 6, 520.
[272] Davis, 133.

Apollo.[273] Curran suggests that *Bellum Civile* 5.176-8 could be a 'parallel […] to the burden of human history that PBS's Ianthe, under the guidance of the Daemon, must confidently surmount'.[274] Furthermore, in his *Adonais*, Shelley refers not to the *Bellum Civile* but to Lucan himself, specifically his death. According to the commentary by Everest on lines 406-8 of *Adonais,* which come immediately after the reference to Lucan, Shelley is lamenting 'writers who have died unknown or vilified […] whose greatness or influence will nevertheless be felt in the long perspective of history.'[275] This would suggest that Lucan's appeal to Shelley lay not only in his poetry, but in the circumstances of his life, including the boldness of his subject, in writing an epic poem that did not feature the gods, and his death, given that he was ordered to commit suicide after falling out of favour with the emperor Nero. Everest's comment, however, requires some clarification. Lucan did not die 'unknown': Statius and Martial provide us with ancient examples of posthumous veneration for him.[276] Moreover, Lucan was perhaps only 'vilified' to the extent that he fell out of imperial favour. But his popularity amongst general audiences was not diminished by the emperor's treatment of him: again, I refer to Statius and Martial's poems, and to the resurgence of the *Bellum Civile* in seventeenth-century Europe. While Lucan was scrutinized, his work retained its popularity. Furthermore, although Shelley himself casts a critical gaze over Lucan in *A Defence of Poetry,* comparing his skills as an epic poet unfavourably to the likes of Homer and Dante, in practice, I believe that he recognised a kindred spirit in him.[277]

2.1.4 Composition of Prometheus Unbound

[273] The Latin reads: *nec tantum prodere vati / Quantum scire licet. Venit aetas omnis in unam / Congeriem, miserumque premunt tot saecula pectus, Bellum Civile* 5.176-8. Duff's translation reads: '[…] and [she] is not permitted to reveal as much as she is suffered to know. All time is gathered up together: all the centuries crowd her breast and torture it […]'.
[274] *CPPBS* 3, 452.
[275] *PS* 4, pp. 235-330, 321.
[276] See Statius 2.7, and Martial 7.21, 7.22, and 7.23.
[277] *MW*, 692.

I look now to the composition of *Prometheus Unbound*. Shelley wrote Acts I-III between September 1818 and April 1819, before adding Act IV in December 1819.[278] In March of 1818, while he and Mary Shelley were journeying through France, the awe-inspiring landscape of the Col de l'Echelle reminded Shelley of Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*. A passage from Mary Shelley's journal in Percy Shelley's hand reads:

> After dinner we ascended Les Echelles winding along a road cut thro [sic] perpendicular rocks of immense elevation by Charles Emmanuel Duke of Savoy in 1582. The rocks which cannot be less than 1000 feet in perpendicular height sometimes overhang the road on each side & almost shut out the sky. The scene is like that described in the Prometheus of Aeschylus — Vast rifts & caverns in the granite precipices — wintry mountains with ice & snow above — the loud sounds of unseen waters within the caverns, & walls of topling [sic] rocks only to be scaled as he describes, by the winged chariot of the Ocean Nymphs.[279]

In Shelley's imagination, the sensory experience of travelling across the mountain range merges with his memory of a scene from Aeschylus' tragedy. The contours of the material landscape seem to be in dialogue with how he visualized the setting of *Prometheus Bound* when he read it. It seems likely that the landscape of Col de l'Echelle redirected Shelley's attention towards the Prometheus myth, although he had long nurtured an interest in the various permutations of the Prometheus story. According to Thomas Hogg, Shelley was encouraged to read Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* during his first term at Oxford in 1810.[280] Thomas Medwin states that Shelley read the play to Byron in Geneva in 1816, 'which produced [Byron's] sublime ode on Prometheus', written in July of 1816.[281] Mary Shelley

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[278] On 14 September 1818, Mary Shelley records: 'Shelley is very unwell from taking poison in Italian cakes — He writes his drama of Prometheus […]', *MSJ* i, 226. On 6 April 1819, Shelley tells Peacock that his play is finished: 'My Prometheus Unbound is just finished & in a month or two I shall send it. It is a drama, with characters & mechanism of a kind yet unattempted; & I think the execution is better than any of my former attempts.' *PBSL* ii, 94. However, on 23 December 1819, Shelley writes to John and Maria Gisborne, informing them: 'I have just finished an additional act to Prometheus which Mary is now transcribing […], *PBSL* ii, 165.

[279] *MSJ* i, 200.

[280] Hogg, *Life*, 97.

[281] Medwin, *Life* 1, 268.

records that Shelley was translating *Prometheus Bound* again in July of 1817.[282] Although Shelley had revisited *Prometheus Bound* over the years, and appeared to feel a profound sympathy for the eponymous hero, 'whom he considered the type of Milton's Satan', this journey across the Col de L'Echelle seems to have given him the impetus to begin writing his lyrical drama on the subject.[283] Everest and Matthews have also suggested that the group's journey from the Alps 'to a warm Italian spring' in 1818 'prompted a coalescence in S.'s imagination of many diverse literary, philosophical, political, scientific and personal influences.'[284] It should also be noted that Shelley was much affected by political events taking place at the time of writing, as his correspondences from this period show. The Peterloo Massacre of August 1819 in Manchester, England, prompted Shelley to write *The Masque of Anarchy,* and probably contributed to his decision to add *Prometheus Unbound*'s final act later that year, having told Peacock that the play was already completed in April.[285]

2.2.1 'Like a volcano's meteor-breathing chasm, / Whence the oracular vapour is hurled up': Lucan and Shelley on divination

The first passage thought to be an allusion to Lucan that I wish to discuss is the 'oracular vapour' that Asia and Panthea are reminded of when they reach Demogorgon's cave at *Prometheus Unbound* II.3.4. As I began to posit in the Introduction to this chapter, an integral theme to both Shelley's and Lucan's text is the problem with divination and the presentation of alternative oracular experiences. In Shelley's text, Asia's prophetic awakening is stimulated by the visit to Demogorgon's cave, the site of which reminds Panthea and Asia of

[282] On Sunday 13 July 1817, Mary Shelley writes: 'S tra[n]slates Promethes Desmotes and I write it […]', *MSJ* i, 177.
[283] Medwin, *Life* 1, 268.
[284] *PS* 2, 456.
[285] *PBSL* ii, 94. On 6 September 1819, Shelley writes to Charles Ollier, confirming that he has received 'news of the Manchester work', and stating 'Something must be done – what yet I know not', *PBSL* ii, 117. Jones notes that this sentence is taken from *The Cenci* III.1.86-7. Further, on 9 September 1819, Shelley thanks Peacock 'for sending the papers which contain the terrible and important news of Manchester', *PBSL* ii, 118-119.

'a volcano's meteor-breathing chasm, / Whence the oracular vapour is hurled up' (*PU* II.3.3-4). Therefore, to begin the discussion of Lucan's influence on Shelley's use of 'vapour', I look first to the figure of Demogorgon itself. Demogorgon is thought to have classical precedents, one of which is Lucan. My aim is to clarify what characteristics – if any – Shelley takes from ancient conceptualisations of 'Demogorgon'.

The god who came to be known as 'Demogorgon' was not named by Greek or Roman authors. It cannot be said for certain that Shelley's Demogorgon has a classical model at all. However, a number of Shelley's readers have traced his Demogorgon to the mysterious god to whom Erichtho performs her rites at *Bellum Civile* 6.496-827. In Lucan, the god is called *certus / deus* ('one special deity', *BC* 6.497) and *ille* ('him', *BC* 6.744).[286] A similar god is mentioned by Tiresias in the *Thebaid*, named *triplicis mundi summum* ('ruler of the triple world', *Thebaid* 4.516).[287] Both of these examples see the authors allude to a malignant, all-knowing spirit or entity who dwells deep inside the earth; hence readers of Shelley find similarities between these gods and his Demogorgon. The classical god is feared, thought to possess profound knowledge about the future and used to disturbing ends by the likes of the Thessalian witch, Erichtho. In Lucan's text, the witch is said to perform rites to the *certus / deus*, including reviving the corpse of a dead soldier, in her subverted acts of divination.[288] The characteristics of Lucan's and Statius' anonymous and dreaded god have given rise to comparisons between it and Plato's *demiurge*, the primordial creator of the universe.[289] Indeed, the name 'Demogorgon' is said to have been applied retrospectively after

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[286] The text for Lucan's *Bellum Civile* is taken from Lucan, *The Civil War (Pharsalia)*, trans. by J. D. Duff (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928). All subsequent reference to Lucan's *Bellum Civile* are from this edition unless otherwise stated.
[287] Statius, *Thebaid*, ed. and trans. by D. R. Shackleton Bailey, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003). All subsequent references to Statius' *Thebaid* are from this edition unless otherwise stated.
[288] *BC* 6.496-99, and *BC* 6.667-827.
[289] Duff's footnote to *BC* 6.744 reads: 'The mysterious deity known as Demiurgus is apparently used to threaten the infernal powers with.' Shackleton Bailey's note to *Thebaid* 4.516 reads: 'According to the scholiast he [the *triplicis mundi summum*] is the Demiurge, or creator, of Plato's *Timaeus*.' Shackleton Bailey also points readers to *BC* 6.744ff. as a point of comparison.

demogorgeneo was mistakenly transcribed for *demiurge*.[290] Boccaccio, whom Shelley read, later made Demogorgon canonical in his *Genealogia Deorum Gentilium* (written between 1360 and 1375).[291] Subsequently, the god called *certus / deus* by Lucan and *triplicis mundi summum* by Statius was known by name to European writers, including Spenser, Milton, and Shelley.[292] Further, when he appears in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, it is implied that Demogorgon is present in name only: Satan beholds 'the dreaded name / Of Demogorgon' side-by-side with the likes of 'Chaos', 'Night', 'Orcus and Ades', 'Rumour', and 'Chance'.[293]

Demogorgon offers a fascinating model for studying literary transmission. While the full extent of Demogorgon's journey of reception is too great to cover in this discussion, I deem it necessary for Shelley's readers have some insight into Demogorgon's lifetime during the intermediary period between Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, which has been identified as one of Shelley's sources of inspiration for his Demogorgon, and *Prometheus Unbound*. This will help to clarify previous statements, such as those by Geoffrey Matthews, who rightly posited that Lucan was 'one of Shelley's most admired authorities' but failed to mention the nuances between Lucan's *certus / deus* and Shelley's Demogorgon.[294] In placing Demogorgon within the Graeco-Roman pantheon in his *Prometheus Unbound,* Shelley is not simply engaging with an ancient figure, rather, he is engaging with a complex narrative pertaining to meanings that are lost – or found – in translation.

The ancients deliberately did not name Demogorgon so as to maintain the fear and mystery surrounding him. According to Lucan, 'at the sound of [his / its] name the earth ever

[290] Jon Solomon, 'Boccaccio and the Ineffable, Aniconic God Demogorgon', *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, 19 (2012), pp. 31-62, 36.
[291] Wasserman, 154.
[292] Lucan, *Bellum Civile* 6.497-8; Statius, *Thebaid* 4.516.
[293] Milton, *Paradise Lost* 2.959-67.
[294] Matthews (1957), 220.

quakes and trembles.'[295] Later authors, however, following Boccaccio's footsteps, attached a name to this mysterious figure. 'Demogorgon' continued to be synonymous with the characteristics that the ancients bestowed upon him. However, in being named, Demogorgon loses an integral part of his identity. The once nameless Demogorgon is changed from his original state. Matthews comes close to recognising this phenomenon when he refers to the lines in Lucan which describe the devastating impact of mentioning Demogorgon by name in a footnote.[296] Matthews falls short of recognising the irony in Shelley continuing the tradition of giving a name to the figure whose namelessness was once his defining characteristic.[297] Furthermore, Milton appears to engage with the history of Demogorgon's character by having him exist only as a 'name' when Satan encounters him at the Gates of Hell.[298] Once an entity without a signifier, Demogorgon is transformed by Milton into signifier only.

Shelley's Demogorgon continues to embody ambiguity. He – or it – is described as 'a mighty Darkness' (*PU* II.4.2), 'ungazed upon and shapeless' (*PU* II.4.5). J.F.C. Gutteling suggests that Jupiter's reference to his 'fatal child' (*PU* III.1.19), whom Gutteling takes to be Demogorgon, as 'the terror of the earth' (*PU* III.1.19), recalls the literal meaning of Demogorgon in Greek.[299] 'Rays of gloom' are said to 'dart around, as light from the meridian sun' (*PU* II.4.3-4).[300] Shelley is deliberately obscure: his Demogorgon emits 'rays of gloom' in one line, which resemble 'light from the meridian sun' in the next. Demogorgon is 'neither limb, / Nor form, nor outline' (*PU* II.4.5-6), nor light nor darkness. Shelley uses several

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[295] *[…] quo numquam terra vocato / Non concussa tremit […]* ('at the sound of whose name the earth ever quakes and trembles'), *BC* 6.745-6.
[296] Matthews (1957), 220.
[297] Matthews (1957), 220.
[298] '[…] the dreaded name / Of Demogorgon […]', Milton, *Paradise Lost* 2.964-5.
[299] 'Here "terror of the earth" looks very much like a rendering of Demogorgon (*δημος* + *Γοργώ*) in which the first part should have the meaning which its derivative has *Δημιουργός*, viz. of 'world', 'earth'. The allusion in the second part to the *Γοργώ*, whose looks struck terror into the gazer, is perhaps found again in the irony of the dethronement-scene.' J.F.C. Gutteling, 'Demogorgon in Shelley's 'Prometheus Unbound'', *Neophilologus*, 9 (1924), pp. 283-5, 284.
[300] Geoffrey Matthews comments that Demogorgon is 'too hot to be visible', therefore he 'emits infra-red rays', *PS* 2, 556.

negatives in his portrayal of Demogorgon, describing him in terms of what he is not. Timothy Webb investigates Shelley's use of negative prefixes and suffixes in a number of his works, including in Panthea's response to Demogorgon at *PU* II.4.2-7. Webb suggests that Shelley's depiction of Panthea's and Asia's journey to Demogorgon's cave, which 'involves the transcendence of materiality', and Shelley's Demogorgon itself, is in-keeping with Thomas Aquinas' statement in *Summa Theologica*, that 'because we cannot know what God is, but rather what God is not, our method has to be merely negative'.[301] Webb continues, 'Shelley […] insists on the difficulty of definition […] this is not a sceptical cry of despair which absolves the poet from responsibility […] the *via negativa* is the road not of despair but of hope.'[302]

The contradictions surrounding Demogorgon's material existence continue into his conversation with Jupiter in Act III.1. I find that Shelley alludes to the idea that Demogorgon is the offspring of Jupiter and Thetis, conceived during the rape in which 'two mighty spirits, mingling, made a third / Mightier than either, which, unbodied now / Between us, floats, felt though unbeheld' (*PU* III.1.43-5).[303] This description seems consistent with Panthea's observations on Demogorgon at *PU* II.4.2-7, where she called him 'ungazed upon and shapeless – neither limb, / Nor form, nor outline'. Demogorgon introduces himself to Jupiter as 'thy child' (*PU* III.1.54), with Jupiter calling him 'detested prodigy!' (*PU* III.1.61). This seems consistent with Shelley's intentions which he sets out in his drama's Preface. There, Shelley wrote:

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[301] Timothy Webb, 'The unascended heaven: negatives in *Prometheus Unbound*', in *Shelley Revalued: Essays from the Gregynog Conference*, ed. by Kelvin Everest (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1983), pp. 37-62, 56-7.

[302] Webb, 57.

[303] Gutteling suggests that the third spirit is an incarnation of Demogorgon. Gutteling writes: 'in order to combine the idea of the eternal and mysterious power which overthrows all despots at the destined hour with the mythic idea of the Supreme God dethroned by his son, Shelley, influenced no doubt by Christian conceptions, conceived of an "incarnation" of Demogorgon, made the shapeless being, spirit and eternal, into the child even now begotten by Jupiter.' Gutteling, 285.

> The 'Prometheus Unbound' of Aeschylus supposed the reconciliation of Jupiter with his victim as the price of the disclosure of the danger threatened to his empire by the consummation of his marriage with Thetis. Thetis, according to this view of the subject, was given in marriage to Peleus, and Prometheus, by the permission of Jupiter, delivered from his captivity by Hercules. Had I framed my story on this model, I should have done no more than have attempted to restore the lost drama of Aeschylus; an ambition, which, if my preference to this mode of treating the subject had incited me to cherish, the recollection of the high comparison such an attempt would challenge might well abate. But, in truth, I was averse from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind.[304]

Jupiter's downfall, which comes about at the end of Act III.1, is central to Shelley's transformation of Aeschylus' lost play. In Aeschylus' lost *Prometheus Unbound*, Jupiter apparently avoided 'the danger threatened to his empire by the consummation of his marriage with Thetis'.[305] In Shelley's play, however, Demogorgon overturns Jupiter from his throne and entices him to the 'darkness' (*PU* III.1.56) of the underworld. According to myth, Thetis' fate was to bear a child who would destroy its own father, therefore there is scope to interpret Demogorgon as the 'child' of Jupiter, who ultimately dethrones him, as Jupiter did with Saturn (*PU* III.1.54). However, Jupiter suggests that the 'third' spirit that he and Thetis conceived is an entity separate to Demogorgon. This 'unbeheld' spirit, Jupiter says, is 'waiting the incarnation, which ascends […] from Demogorgon's throne' (*PU* III.1.45-8). Whether or not Demogorgon means that he is literally Jupiter's 'child' is debatable. However, there is a connection between Demogorgon and the 'unbodied' spirit: both possess eternal and omnipresent qualities, and their existences are interconnected.

Solomons says that Shelley 'literally resurrected' Demogorgon, who travels to Olympus in III.1.[306] Wasserman observes that early civilisations, as recorded by mythographers, 'imagin[ed] […] that there must be some dark, divine intelligence in the

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[304] *PS* 2, 472.
[305] *PS* 2, 472.
[306] Solomon, 32.

bowels of the earth'.[307] In Lucan, Demogorgon is a mysterious, unnamed and unseen figure, signified by *certus / deus* at 6.497-8. He is the god for whom Erichtho is said to be performing her terrible rites for resurrecting a human corpse which will answer Sextus' questions. This god in Lucan remains anonymous, characterised by his power to 'inflict upon the world all the compulsion that he suffers himself'.[308] In Shelley's text, Panthea and Asia are impelled to Demogorgon's cave where Asia will experience a prophetic awakening. Shelley departs from Lucan's depiction of Demogorgon's involvement with prophecy, which instils horror in his reader. Shelley's Asia finds the answers that she has searched for inside herself: 'so much I asked before, and my heart gave / The response thou hast given' (II.4.121-2). Asia learns that her heart 'must be the oracle' (II.4.123). Shelley's Demogorgon, while retaining some of the characteristics attributed to it by Boccaccio, takes on a new and distinct role.[309] Since Demogorgon answers Asia cryptically, refusing to enter into a dialogue, Matthews suggests that Asia 'is talking to herself […] is made to interrogate her own soul'.[310] I posit that herein lies the crux of one of Shelley's messages in *Prometheus Unbound*. Demogorgon is transformed so as to facilitate an alternative kind of prophetic awakening. Asia becomes her own oracle. There is more to be said on how Lucan engages with divination in his poem, and, indeed, how Shelley both takes inspiration from and innovates the ancient poet's treatment of oracles.

2.2.2 Appius and the Delphic Oracle

The Stoic poet Lucan appears to have been troubled by prophecy. Federico Santangelo observes that every example of divination in the *Bellum Civile* is framed with scepticism: 'all

[307] Wasserman, 154.
[308] *[…] qui mundum cogere, quidquid / Cogitur ipse, potest […]*, Lucan, *Bellum Civile* 6.498-9.
[309] Wasserman notes that 'Even Boccaccio's description of Demogorgon as sluggish, sleepy, and surrounded by mists and fog lends itself to Shelley's conception of the ultimate Power as a dormant potentiality […]', 155.
[310] *PS* 2, 558.

the characters who seek information through divinatory means fight on the losing side'.[311] In Book 5, while Appius is journeying to Delphi, Lucan finds the opportunity to describe the moment of Apollo's ascension at the Delphic Oracle. The Latin reads as follows:

> *Hesperio tantum quantum summotus Eoo*
> *Cardine Parnasos gemino petit aethera colle,*
> *Mons Phoebo Bromioque sacer, cui numine mixto*
> *Delphica Thebanae referunt trieterica Bacchae.*
> *Hoc solum fluctu terras mergente cacumen*
> *Eminuit pontoque fuit discrimen et astris.*
> *Tu quoque vix summam, seductus ab aequore, rupem*
> *Extuleras, unoque iugo, Parnase, latebas.*
> *Ultor ibi expulsae, premeret cum viscera partus,*
> *Matris, adhuc rudibus Paean Pythona sagittis*
> *Explicuit, cum regna Themis tripodasque teneret.*
> *Ut vidit Paean vastos telluris hiatus*
> *Divinam spirare fidem ventosque loquaces*
> *Exhalare solum, sacris se condidit antris,*
> *Incubuitque adyto vates ibi factus Apollo.*
>
> *Bellum Civile* 5. 71-85

> ('At equal distance from the limits of East and West, the twin peaks of Parnassus soar to heaven. The mountain is sacred to Phoebus and to Bromios, in whose honour the Bacchants of Thebes, treating the two gods as one, hold their triennial festival at Delphi. When the Flood covered the earth, this height alone rose above the level and was all that separated sea from sky; and even Parnassus, parted in two by the flood, only just displayed a rocky summit, and one of its peaks was submerged. There Apollo, with yet unpractised shafts, laid low the Python and so avenged his mother who had been driven forth when great with child. Themis was then queen and mistress of the oracle; but, when Apollo saw that the huge chasm in the earth breathed forth divine truth, and that the ground gave out a wind that spoke, then he enshrined himself in the sacred caves, brooded over the holy place, and there became a prophet.')

According to Lucan, Apollo discovered a site where *vastos telluris hiatus / divinam spirare fidem* ('the huge chasm in the earth breathed forth divine truth'). Lucan also uses a synonym, *spirare*, to emphasise the sense that the ground is literally 'breathing'. Apollo, perhaps recognising the powerful status that he would earn by being the oracle at this site, 'enshrined

[311] Federico Santangelo, 'Testing Boundaries: Divination and Prophecy in Lucan', *Greece and Rome*, 62 (2015), pp. 177 – 188, 182.

himself in the sacred caves'. Lucan adheres to the traditional narrative that the earth 'breathes' inspiration into the vessel that will communicate its *divina […] fides* ('divine truth') to whomever is asking. Here, Apollo takes on the role of intermediary. Apollo is said to have usurped Themis, who was once 'queen and mistress of the oracle' (*regna Themis tripodasque teneret*). Apollo established himself as prophet instead, displacing Themis.

Lucan portrays Apollo's ascension as problematic. He also portrays Appius' decision to journey to consult the oracle about his fate in the forthcoming battle at Pharsalus as cowardly. The passage in evidence of this reads as follows:

> *quae cum populique ducesque*
> *Casibus incertis et caeca sorte pararent,*
> *Solus in ancipites metuit descendere Martis*
> *Appius eventus, finemque expromere rerum*
> *Sollicitat superos multosque obducta per annos*
> *Delphica fatidici reserat penetralia Phoebi.*
>
> *Bellum Civile* 5. 65-70
>
> ('But, while the nations and their leaders prepared for war, uncertain of the future and blind to their destiny, Appius alone feared to commit himself to the lottery of battle; therefore he appealed to the gods to reveal the issue of events; and Delphi, the oracular shrine of Apollo, closed for many years, was by him unbarred.')

Appius is said to have 'feared to commit himself to the lottery of battle' (*in ancipites metuit descendere Martis […] eventus*). He is alone in this, singled out by the adjective *solus*. While the rest of the 'nations and their leaders' (*populique ducesque*) are 'uncertain of the future and blind to their destiny' (*casibus incertis et caeca sorte*), Appius is driven to consult the oracle, with Lucan literally positioning his name away from the other soldiers, three lines later. By giving in to his need to know what the outcome of battle will be, Appius stands out for his cowardice. Lucan also calls Appius *demens* ('Madman!') at *BC* 5.228, for seeking reassurance from a 'deity' that 'he will feel no crash of warfare and escape such worldwide suffering' (*nullum belli sentire fragorem, / Tot mundi caruisse malis, BC* 5.228-9).

Lucan is sceptical of communications with the divine elsewhere in his poem. Sextus, Pompey's son, seeks answers from a prophet in Book 6, when he consults the Thessalian witch, Erichtho, about the battle's outcome.[312] The passage in question is deeply subversive. Erichtho revives a soldier's corpse to be a mediator between the fates and Sextus.[313] Moreover, Appius' situation is depicted as being even more tragic when Lucan reveals to the reader what the priestess meant when she told Appius that he would be kept safe: Appius will die from illness before the battle at Pharsalus.[314] In contrast, Lucan's Cato, represents the Stoic ideal by refusing to yield and consult the oracle even on the insistence of his men in Book 9. Despite this, Cato is 'full of godliness' (*deo plenus, BC* 9.564). I will return to Cato and his impersonation of divinity in 2.2.4.

2.2.3 'That maddening wine of life': Oracles and Madness in Shelley

Everest and Matthews guide readers towards the numerous texts that probably influenced Shelley's account of the oracle and its historical effects on visitors.[315] Shelley's depiction of the 'oracular vapour' at Demogorgon's cave was also informed by his own experience of visiting volcanic sites that were open to tourists. Matthews recognises the lasting impact of some of these visits. For example, 'Shelley had visited the Solfatara, Strabo's *forum Vulcani*, and had doubtless heard the guide thump with his stick on the hollow ground […]'.[316] Sites like these were evidently popular across the Mediterranean in this period. Richard Stoneman notes that in nineteenth century Greece, tourists were shown the effects of volcanic gases at

[312] *BC* 6.588-830.
[313] *BC* 6.775-820.
[314] *Effugis ingentes, tanti discriminis expers, / Bellorum, Romane, minas, solusque quietem / Euboici vasta lateris convalle tenebis, Bellum Civile* 5.194-6.
[315] 'S. draws in this scene on various classical and contemporary accounts of oracles, particularly the oracle at Delphi […] S.'s most direct sources are Plutarch, *Moralia*, 'De defectu oraculorum', xl, xliii, l; Diodorus Siculus xvi 26; Lucan, *Pharsalia* v 82-101 and ix 564-5; and see also *Barthelemy* ii 391-2 and note xx. For analogues with Virgil's account of the Cumaean Sibyl cp. *Aeneid* vi 240ff.' *PS* 2, 548.
[316] Matthews (1957), 214.

'Hierapolis/Pamukkale' by means of 'the sacrifice of unfortunate dogs'.[317] While Shelley continues the precedent set by Lucan and other classical authors in associating divination with madness, the turning-point of his drama centres around Asia's discovery of the oracle inside her 'heart', which occurs at Demogorgon's cave in the scene addressed above. Asia therefore seeks an alternative kind of prophecy. Earlier, I quoted Earl Wasserman's assertion that Shelley's Prometheus is an allegory for the 'despotism' of institutional Christianity, which 'has appropriated the virtuous life and doctrines of Christ'.[318] Asia's ability to find the answers she is seeking in her own 'heart' marks the shift towards a world where individual critical thinking takes precedence over blind subordination to authority.

That is not to say that Shelley disregards Lucan's depiction of oracles entirely. When Panthea and Asia encounter Demogorgon's cave, Panthea comments on the effects of inhaling the volcanic 'vapour':

> Hither the sound has borne us--to the realm
> Of Demogorgon, and the mighty portal,
> Like a volcano's meteor-breathing chasm,
> Whence the oracular vapour is hurled up
> Which lonely men drink wandering in their youth,
> And call truth, virtue, love, genius, or joy,
> That maddening wine of life, whose dregs they drain
> To deep intoxication; and uplift,
> Like Mænads who cry loud, Evoe! Evoe!
> The voice which is contagion to the world.
>
> *Prometheus Unbound* II.3.1-10

'Lonely men' drink these 'vapours' 'to deep intoxication', Shelley writes. In turn, this leads the men to become comparable to 'Maenads, who cry loud, Evoe! Evoe!' Maenads, worshippers of Bacchus - who is perhaps being evoked in the phrase 'that maddening wine of life' - were traditionally female. It is worth noting that there is a classical precedent for

[317] Richard Stoneman, 'Possession or Policy: The Case at Delphi', *The Ancient Oracles: Making the Gods Speak* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2011), pp. 26-39, 33-4.
[318] Wasserman, 95.

criticizing men who exhibit stereotypically 'feminine' behaviours. The denunciation of femininity in men has a long and complex history in classical texts. One example can be found in Book 4 of Virgil's *Aeneid*, when the blindsided king Iarbas calls Aeneas *ille Paris cum semiviro comitatu* ('that Paris, with his group of half-men').[319] It could be that Shelley is portraying these men as losing an integral part of themselves, as well as their sanity. They somehow become less masculine in their pursuit of 'that maddening wine of life'.

Later, Shelley's Earth also laments primordial means of divination which saw human beings inhale her 'vapours' and become 'mad'. When Prometheus was enchained, Earth's heart was 'made […] mad':

> […] there is a cavern where my spirit
> Was panted forth in anguish whilst thy pain
> Made my heart mad, and those who did inhale it
> Became mad too, and built a temple there,
> And spoke, and were oracular, and lured
> The erring nations round to mutual war,
> And faithless faith, such as Jove kept with thee;
>
> *Prometheus Unbound* III.3.124-130

As Lucan's Appius was *demens* (*BC* 5.228), so early civilisations 'became mad' after 'inhal(ing)' the Earth's spirit during the time of Prometheus' imprisonment. Furthermore, in Lucan we saw that 'madness' correlated with death. So here Shelley's Earth describes the correlation between becoming 'mad' and being 'lured…to mutual war'. However, as I have begun to demonstrate, not every type of prophecy in *Prometheus Unbound* is destructive.

2.2.4 Asia's Awakening

At the beginning of Act II.3, Shelley characterises the meeting between Asia, Panthea, and Demogorgon as a consultation of an oracle. Shelley's passage combines classical depictions

[319] Virgil, *Aeneid* 4.215.

of the oracle at Delphi, as well as with his experience of travelling through Italy and visiting sites of natural phenomena, such as the Astroni volcanic crater. Shelley's treatment of oracles can be categorised into two broad opposing sides. One is much in-keeping with the likes of Lucan, by speaking of the 'madness' of those who inhaled the gases at Delphi. The other side to Shelley's treatment of 'divination' is seen in Asia's personal prophetic experience. While Demogorgon's cave reminds Panthea and Asia of a site which historically had toxic, destructive tendencies, like the Delphic oracle in Lucan, Shelley rewrites the narrative by way of Asia's metaphorical rebirth. Unlike the Delphic oracle in the *Bellum Civile,* Demogorgon's cave at Act II.3 of *Prometheus Unbound* is a site of fecundity. Curran comments that Asia has been 'led' 'into the fecund womb of the earth to be reborn.'[320]

Although Shelley claims that his *Prometheus Unbound* 'was chiefly written upon the mountainous ruins of the Baths of Caracalla' at Rome, Everest and Matthews call this 'misleading'. It is, however, a poetic summary of the reality: Shelley did not 'chiefly' write *Prometheus Unbound* at Rome in the spring of 1819, but he wrote at least some of it during the spring spent at Rome. Several details from Asia's journey of awakening in Act II exhibit parallels with the following accounts: Shelley's description of his first visit to Rome in November 1818 (*PBSL* ii, 54-7), his description of Naples in February 1819 (*PBSL* ii, 77), and his journey from Naples to Rome in March of 1819 (*PBSL* ii, 83-90). Everest and Matthews observe that the opening lines of Act II.2, spoken by the Semichorus of Spirits, seem to echo Shelley's response to the Astroni Crater, as detailed in his February 1819 letter to Peacock.[321] Weinberg also directs us to this letter for comparing Shelley's record of his experiences at the volcanic site with Panthea and Asia's visit to Demogorgon's cave.[322] Weinberg even suggests that 'Shelley saw in these great ruins of Rome an image of the union

[320] Stuart Curran, *Shelley's Annus Mirabilis* (California: Huntington Library Press, 1975), 102.
[321] *PS* 2, 540.
[322] Weinberg, 108-9.

of Prometheus and Asia, since Prometheus is the benefactor of man's civilising and artistic instinct, whereas Asia is identified in Act II with Nature and […] Dawn and Spring.'[323]

Shelley's surroundings and his experience of Italy in November of 1818 and the spring and summer of 1819 went some way to inspire his portrayal of Asia's immersive and restorative experience of prophecy in his drama. At the start of Act II.2, the Semichorus I of Spirits details the fecund space in which Asia and Panthea have found themselves. According to the stage direction, the setting is 'a forest, intermingled with rocks and caverns'. In the dialogue itself, Shelley emphasises the presence of the towering trees: according to the Semichorus, 'nor sun, nor moon, nor wind, nor rain / Can pierce its interwoven bowers'. As Everest and Matthews and Weinberg point out, Shelley's description of the forest echoes his 25 February 1819 letter to Peacock, in which he details a visit to the Astroni crater outside Naples, where stands 'a lake with bold shores wooded by evergreens, & interrupted by a sylvan promontory of the wild forest whose mossy boughs overhang its expanse of a silent & purple darkness like an Italian midnight […]'.[324] The image of 'mossy bough overhang(ing)' is replicated in *Prometheus Unbound* Act II.2, with the 'interwoven bowers' of the forest setting.

Similar imagery which declares the omnipresence of nature can be found in the 20 (?) November 1818 letter to Peacock. In the following passage, Shelley relates his journey from Bologna to Rome, specifically seeing the Velino waterfall in Terni:

> The surrounding scenery is in its kind the loveliest & most sublime that can be conceived. In our first walk we passed through some olive groves, of large & antient trees whose hoary & twisted trunks leaned in all directions. We then crossed a path of orange trees by the river side laden with their golden fruit, & came to a forest of ilex of a large size, whose evergreen & acorn bearing boughs were intertwined over our winding path; around hemming in the narrow vale were pinnacles of lofty mountains of pyramidical rock clothed with all evergreen plants & trees; the vast pine whose

[323] Weinberg, 108.
[324] *PBSL* ii, 77.

> feathery foliage trembled in the blue air, the ilex, that ancestral inhabitant of these mountains, the arbutus with its crimson coloured fruit & glittering leaves.[325]

Shelley seems struck by the sensation of being cocooned by the trees. He writes: 'we […] came to a forest of ilex […] whose evergreen & acorn bearing boughs were intertwined over our winding path'. This resonates, I think, with the 'interwoven bowers' that formed a natural protective shelter over Panthea and Asia at II.1.6. Shelley also acknowledges the history of his surroundings. He calls the ilex 'that ancestral inhabitant of these mountains'. He seems attuned to the ancientness of the natural world around him, while also personifying the ilex as an 'inhabitant'. This is possibly reminiscent of Demogorgon, whom Wasserman characterised as 'some dark, divine intelligence in the bowels of the earth', dwelling deep beneath the earth's surface in his cave.[326] Shelley considers the possibility that, hidden inside the crevices of the natural landscape, lies a secret, life-giving power.

I also look to Shelley's 23 March 1819 letter to Peacock. This letter details Shelley's second journey to Rome and his response to the Baths of Caracalla:

> At Albano we arrived again in sight of Rome —arches after arches in unending lines stretching across the uninhabited wilderness, the blue defined outline of the mountains seen between them; masses of nameless ruins standing like rocks out of the plain; and the plain itself with its billowy & unequal surface announced the neighbourhood of Rome. And what shall I say to you of Rome? […] I think I told you of the Coliseum, & its impressions on me, on my first visit to this city. The next most considerable relic of antiquity considered as a ruin is the Thermae of Caracalla. These consist of six enormous chambers, above 200 feet in height, and each enclosing a vast space like that of a field. There are in addition a number of towers & labyrinthine recesses hidden & woven over by the wild growth of weeds & ivy. Never was any desolation more sublime & lovely. The perpendicular wall of ruin is cloven into steep ravines filled with flowering shrubs whose thick twisted roots are knotted in the rifts of the stones.[327]

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[325] *PBSL* ii, 56.
[326] Wasserman, 154.
[327] *PBSL* ii, 84.

Again, Shelley is attuned to a specific sensation of being enveloped in the foliage at the Baths of Caracalla; there are 'labyrinthine recesses hidden & woven over by the wild growths of weeds & ivy' into which he could tuck himself. The 'steep ravines filled with flowering shrubs' offer a contrast to the somewhat sterile and wintry environment of Col de l'Echelle, whose 'vast rifts & caverns in the granite precipices — wintry mountains with ice & snow above' made an impact on the poet when he traversed it in March 1818.[328] Furthermore, his observation that 'never was any desolation more sublime & lovely' seems to affirm Jennifer Wallace's thoughts on Shelley and ruins. Wallace posits that in 'The Coliseum', Shelley's central figure 'enjoys the ruined nature of the building, now disintegrating and reclaimed by the natural landscape, because it reveals the vanity of human pride and self-centredness'.[329] I argue that there is a similar sentiment at play here in the letter to Peacock. Shelley finds beauty in the 'desolation' of what he perhaps deems to be vanity projects, such as the Colosseum and the Baths of Caracalla.

In all three of these passages found in letters to Peacock, Shelley closely observes the growing patterns of the plants and trees around him. He seems particularly impressed by the structures that the trees have created. The image of the 'intertwined' 'boughs' over his head from the November 1818 letter to Peacock recurs in his February 1819 letter ('the wild forest whose mossy boughs overhang its expanse…'), while the 'wild growth of weeds & ivy' which 'hides' and 'weaves over' the humanmade edifices at the Thermae of Caracalla, echoes this sentiment once more. He is also attuned to the ancientness of his surroundings, and more pertinently, to the sense that there is an ancient power lying in the earth. This power is far

[328] *MSJ* i, 200.
[329] Wallace (1997), 158-9.

more ancient and impressive than human-made power, such as that given to monarchies and emperors.

Shelley transposes some of this imagery into his *Prometheus Unbound* at the moment Asia and Panthea are making their journey to Demogorgon's cave, where Asia will become her own oracle. The fecund wilderness of the Italian countryside seems to have inspired Shelley when it came to characterising Asia's prophetic experience. Asia's journey towards enlightenment echoes the poet's own journey through Italy and towards Rome. Shelley's time at Rome prompted an intense creative period, and he wrote prolifically over the coming year, even after he had left the city. The Italian countryside and the fecundity of nature within the city itself, as described in these letters, are therefore symbolic of the lasting creative inspiration that the city would gift to Shelley. From his letters, I interpret the poet as recognising the creative energy that his surroundings have instilled in him. Asia undergoes a parallel experience, with the fecund grove at the site of Demogorgon's cave playing a part in her transformation into a 'prophet'. Furthermore, Shelley believed that the poet, who 'not only beholds intensely the present as it is, and discovers those laws according to which present things ought to be ordered', and also 'beholds the future in the present', was the closest thing to a prophet.[330] He also states that 'poetry acts in a divine and unapprehended manner'.[331] For Shelley, poetry has the potential to play the role that religion and divination once played, to a more positive end.

Both Lucan and Shelley are troubled by traditional concepts of divination. Lucan counters the Delphic oracle, which he portrays both as a site that has been usurped through violence by the god Apollo and which brings out humanity's cowardice, with his Cato. Cato's answer to Labeinus, *BC* 9.566-584, attracted translators during the Glorious Revolution

[330] *MW*, 677.
[331] *MW*, 680.

between 1688 and 1689, while it was lauded for 'its robust rationalism and contempt for superstition' during the eighteenth century.[332] Cato, we should remember, is *deo plenus* (*BC* 9.564).[333] He behaves much like a Delphian prophet, 'inspired by the god whom he bore hidden in his heart' (*BC* 9.564). He 'poured forth from his breast an answer worthy of the oracle itself' (*BC* 9.565). In claiming that Cato's speech is 'worthy of the oracle', Lucan reminds readers that Cato is not actually a prophet, but a mortal man, thus disrupting the hierarchical idea that traditional oracles which claim to communicate with the divine are the utmost authority. Further, in his speech Cato makes the daring statement that *haeremus cuncti superis* ('we men are all inseparable from the gods', *BC* 9.573). This idea resonates with Shelley's depiction of an alternative kind of divination. In particular, Cato's prophetic status is echoed in Shelley's Asia at *PU* II.4.121-3: 'so much I asked before, and my heart gave / The response thou hast given; and of such truths / Each to itself must be the oracle.' Therefore while Shelley draws from Lucan's portrayal of the breathing earth at the Delphic oracle for the physical attributes of Demogorgon's cave, he also finds a model for his Asia in Lucan's Cato.

2.3 'Like him whom the Numidian seps did thaw': Lucan's influence on Shelley's Thetis

Shelley also alludes to the *Bellum Civile* at III.1.40. Jupiter, who is speaking, recalls Thetis' cries at the moment that he raped her:

> When thou didst cry, 'Insufferable might!
> God! Spare me! I sustain not the quick flames,
> The penetrating presence; all my being,
> Like him whom the Numidian seps did thaw
> Into a dew with poison, is dissolved […]
>
> *Prometheus Unbound* III.1.37-41

[332] Davis, 674-75.
[333] Everest and Matthews guide readers to *Bellum Civile* 9.564-5 in the note to *PU* II.3.4, 'whence the oracular vapour is hurled up', *PS* 2, 548.

In Section 2.2.1, I briefly mention the obscurity surrounding the 'third' spirit conceived by Jupiter and Thetis. While the 'unbodied' spirit is perhaps intended to resemble the 'shapeless' Demogorgon, Jupiter makes it clear that the two are separate, though entangled, beings. It is worth revisiting Shelley's Preface, in which he notes that Thetis and Jupiter's union was foreshadowed in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*. Owing to Prometheus, who warned Jupiter of Thetis' fate to bear a child more powerful than its father, the union would never take place. Aeschylus' third and final play about Prometheus, which was lost, saw Thetis married to Peleus instead. As a result of Prometheus warning Jupiter, he was forgiven and the two were reconciled. Shelley goes on to say that he was not satisfied with simply reconstructing the lost play, writing: 'had I framed my story on this model, I should have done no more than have attempted to restore the lost drama of Aeschylus'.[334] He continues, 'in truth, I was averse from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind.'[335] Shelley sought to offer an alternative ending to the Prometheus myth. The main change that he makes is to insert a union between Jupiter and Thetis. The moment at which the two consummate their marriage therefore marks an irrevocable change to the classical version of the myth.

Jupiter appears to take sadistic delight in remembering Thetis' cries, her inability to bear his 'insufferable might' and the 'quick flames' that engulfed her. Shelley has his Jupiter exaggerate his strength and domination over Thetis; indeed, he rejoices in it. Everest and Matthews remark that 'Jupiter's ironically misplaced confidence is exactly the *hubris* of classical Gk tragic drama.'[336] Shortly after this passage, Jupiter will be toppled from his throne and dragged to the underworld by Demogorgon (*PU* III.1.80-83). Everest, Matthews, and Wasserman recognise that Thetis' cry of 'Insufferable might! / God! Spare me! I sustain

[334] *PS* 2, 472.
[335] *PS* 2, 472.
[336] *PS* 2, 578.

not the quick flames, / The penetrating presence […]' (*PU* III.1.37-9) echo Ovid's Semele at *Metamorphoses* 3.308-89: 'her mortal body bore not the onrush of heavenly power, and by that gift of wedlock she was consumed'.[337] The line 'like him whom the Numidian seps did thaw' is likely to be a reference to Lucan, although, as I note in my Introduction to the chapter, Everest and Matthews observe that the wording resembles Shakespeare's *Hamlet* I.2.129-30 ('O, that this too too solid flesh would melt/ Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew!').[338] Wasserman states: 'in echoing Lucan's description of Sabellus' physical dissolution by the seps's poison, Thetis is crying out against the corruptive annihilation of her body by that supreme evil which, if it were omnipotent, even the earth would vanish like thin mist.'[339] Scholars therefore recognise the tradition into which Shelley is placing Thetis' rape, and furthermore, that the metaphorical implications of Sabellus' gruesome and agonising death are meant to be understood in Shelley's text too.

Ross Woodman posits that Jupiter's rape of Thetis is 'an unnatural arrest of pure potential.'[340] As such, it is appropriate that the moment of conception 'becomes, in the bewildering compounding of metaphor, the dissolution of Sabellus when bitten by the poisonous snake'.[341] I agree that Shelley intends for the rape of Thetis to read as a deeply troubling, subversive moment. Thetis' rape is likened to a death. The 'offspring' produced from the union literally fails to materialize. The 'third' spirit is 'unbodied' and 'unbeheld'. In the famous passage from Lucan to which Shelley is alluding, Sabellus' body is destroyed to

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[337] Ovid *Metamorphoses*, trans. by Frank Justus Miller, 3rd edn, rev. by G. P. Goold, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977). All subsequent references to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* are taken from this edition unless otherwise stated.
According to Everest and Matthews, on *PU* III.1.37-9, 'Thetis is here associated with Semele, overwhelmed by the sexual presence of Jove […]', *PS* 2, 578. Wasserman too states, 'Shelley, of course, has transferred to Thetis the fate met by Semele'. Wasserman, 91.
[338] *PS* 2, 578.
[339] Wasserman, 91.
[340] Ross Woodman, 'Figuring Disfiguration: Reading Shelley after De Man", *Studies in Romanticism*, 40 (2001), pp. 253-88, 269.
[341] Woodman, 269-70.

the extent that no part of him is left behind.[342] Sabellus has come to represent, in grotesque and minute detail, the horrors of war. Although Sabellus is killed on a march and not in combat, Lucan has the soldiers recognise that they have found a new enemy in the snakes instead of Caesar: *pro Caesare pugnant* ('the vipers fight in Caesar's place', *BC* 9.850). By Book 9, the civil war has become a battle between humanity and something monstrously inhuman. In comparing Thetis to a mortal man whose disfigured body symbolises his vulnerability, Shelley renders his Thetis with terminology pertaining to the human experience. Like Sabellus, Thetis is caused physical harm by somebody in a position of authority over her. The rape that Thetis suffered is made doubly horrifying: not only must she bear the pain of the conception, but she must also bear the horror that she has been impregnated with an 'unbodied' spirit who still awaits incarnation in Act III.1.

The passage from Lucan reads:

> […] *miserique in crure Sabelli*
> *Seps stetit exiguus; quem flexo dente tenacem*
> *Avolsitque manu piloque adfixit harenis.*
> *Parva modo serpens sed qua non ulla cruentae*
> *Tantum mortis habet. Nam plagae proxima circum*
> *Fugit rupta cutis pallentiaque ossa retexit;*
> *Iamque sinu laxo nudum sine corpore volnus.*
> *Membra natant sanie, surae fluxere, sine ullo*
> *Tegmine poples erat, femorum quoque musculus omnis*
> *Liquitur, et nigra destillant inguina tabe.*
> *Dissiluit stringens uterum membrana, fluuntque*
> *Viscera; nec, quantus toto de corpore debet,*
> *Effluit in terras, saevum sed membra venenum*
> *Decoquit, in minimum mors contrahit omnia virus.*
>
> *Bellum Civile* 9.763-776

> ('When a tiny seps stuck in the leg of hapless Sabellus and clung there with barbed fang, he tore it off and pinned it to the sand with his javelin. Though this reptile is small in size, no other possesses such deadly powers. For the skin nearest the wound broke and shrank all round, revealing the white bone, until, as the opening widened, there was one gaping wound and no body. The limbs are soaked with corrupted blood; the calves of the legs melted away, the knees were stripped of covering, all the muscles of the

[342] *[…] manant umeri fortesque lacerti, / Colla caputque fluunt […]* ('The shoulders and strong arms turn to water; the neck and head are liquefied […]'), Lucan, *The Civil War*, trans. Duff, 9.780-81.

> thighs rotted, and a black discharge issued from the groin. The membrane that confines the belly snapped asunder, and the bowels gushed out. The man trickles into the ground, but there is less of him than an entire body should supply; for the fell poison boils down the limbs, and the manner of death reduces the whole man to a little pool of corruption.')[343]

Sabellus' body disappears as his skin, tissue, and bone turn to liquid and evaporate. In the lines that immediately follow this passage, Lucan states that the decomposition of Sabellus' body exposes 'all that is human' (*quidquid homo est, BC* 9.779). On these lines, Hannah-Marie Chidwick states that '*homo*, in this context, refers to the soldier's corporeal 'status' as merely a set of body parts, ready to destroy and be destroyed.'[344] Casting an eye over the entire epic, Shadi Bartsch sees the soldiers' bodies in much the same way.[345] Bartsch writes: 'Lucan expresses the folly of civil war in a language that focuses sharply on the violation of soldierly bodies through the death-dealing wounds inflicted by their fellow Romans.'[346] Indeed, Lucan appears to stylize Sabellus' suffering as a microcosm of the widespread objectification of the soldiers' bodies through the gaze of the army leaders during the civil war. This scene also contains undertones of intense bodily anxiety. Sabellus' body is eaten from the leg upwards, and his groin is consumed by the spread of the venom from the inside, made to exude a 'black discharge'. Lucan's anatomical discourse places emphasis on the corporeality of the figures: Sabellus' body undergoes a process of reduction, becoming no more than a 'pool of corruption'. He literally disappears from the material world.

Thetis' comparison between Jupiter and the seps perhaps also has a model in the *Punica.* In Book 13 of Silius Italicus' *Punica*, the ghost of Scipio's mother, Cornelia, recalls how Jupiter came to her in the guise of a snake at the moment of her son's conception. The

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[343] Lucan, *The Civil War* , trans. Duff.
[344] Hannah-Marie Chidwick, '*Quidquid homo est:* Military Manliness in Lucan's Civil War', *HARTS & Minds: The Journal of Humanities and Arts,* 3 (2017), 1-18, 6.
[345] Shadi Bartsch, *Ideology in Cold Blood: A Reading of Lucan's Civil War* (London: Harvard University Press, 1997), 12.
[346] Bartsch, 12.

dates for Italicus' *Punica* are uncertain, although it must date from somewhere between 69 CE, after Italicus was consul during the year 68 CE, and 88 CE, which is when Martial first refers to the *Punica* in his *Epigrams*. Martial refers to Silius' work in 4.14 (88 CE), 7.63 (around 91 CE), and 9.86 (94 CE).[347] The *Punica* dates after Lucan's *Bellum Civile.* I am intrigued by Silius Italicus' decision to introduce Jupiter in the form of a horrifying serpent, particularly as his poem was written after Lucan's laborious and encyclopaedic depiction of the serpents that poison Pompey's soldiers in the *Bellum Civile* Book 9.[348] There is another point of intertextual engagement with *Bellum Civile* 9 when, in the *Punica* Book 6, Marus recalls battling the giant serpent as part of Regulus' army.[349] As in Lucan's text, the bodies of the men are violated by the serpent, called *monstrum exitiabile* ('deadly monster', *Punica* 6.151): Avens is swallowed whole (*tum trepidum ac socios extrema voce cientem / corripit atque haustu sorbens et faucibus atris* […] *obscaena condidit alvo*, 'Then, as the trembling wretch called on his companions with his latest utterance, the serpent seized him and swallowed him down with a gulp of its black throat […] buried him in its beastly maw', *Punica* 6.197-9); other soldiers' bodies are half-destroyed (*tunc fractis ossibus atram / absorbet saniem et, tabo manante per ora, /mutat hians hostem semesaque membra relinquit,* 'Then he breaks their bones and gulps down the black gore; with his open jaws wet with blood, he leaves the half-eaten body and seeks a fresh foe.' *Punica* 6.236-8).

For the purposes of this discussion, I wish to focus on Cornelia's experience, due to the fact that the role that the snake plays is a sexual one, which reminds us of Thetis' experience with Jupiter in *Prometheus Unbound* III.1. Cornelia tells Scipio:

> *sola die caperem medio cum forte petitos*
> *ad requiem somnos, subitus mihi membra ligavit*

[347] For the dates of Martial's epigrams, I refer to Shackleton Bailey's introduction to Martial, *Epigrams, Volume 1: Spectacles, Books 1-5,* ed. and trans. D.R. Shackleton Bailey (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), pp. 2-4.
[348] I have been unable to find any other instances in classical literature of Jupiter appearing as a snake.
[349] Silius Italicus, *Punica* 6.140-293.

> *amplexus, non ille, meo veniente marito,*
> *assuetus facilisque mihi. tum luce corusca,*
> *implebat quamquam languentia lumina somnus,*
> *vidi, crede, Iovem. nec me mutata fefellit*
> *forma dei, quod, squalentem conversus in anguem,*
> *ingenti traxit curvata volumina gyro.*
>
> *Punica* 13.637-44

> ('It chanced that I was alone at midday, enjoying the sleep that my weariness required, when suddenly I was clasped in an embrace—no common and familiar union, as when my husband came to me; and then in radiant light, though my half-closed eyes were full of sleep, I saw—doubt me not—I saw Jupiter! Nor was I deceived by the god's disguise; for he had changed himself into a serpent covered with scales and drew his coils after him in huge curves.')[350]

After suffering the horrifying rape by Jupiter, Italicus' Cornelia laments that she died after birthing Scipio: *sed mihi post partum non ultra ducere vitam / concessum* ('but I was not permitted to live on after my delivery', *Punica* 13.645-5). The birth of Cornelia's son is juxtaposed with the end of her life: birth begets death. Lucan's graphic depiction of Sabellus' death by snake arguably echoes within Italicus' portrayal of Jupiter's rape of Cornelia, whose body is violated by a serpent and for whom the encounter leads to her death. Shelley's portrayal of Jupiter and Thetis appears to have Lucan's and Italicus' texts amongst its influences.

The issue of corporeal anxiety is transmitted into Shelley's text. By having Thetis compare herself to Sabellus, Shelley instils violence into a scene that contains a marital union, albeit a union between a goddess and Jupiter, who is well-known for carrying out acts of sexual violence. Thetis' experience with Jupiter recalls his rape of Semele. However, Shelley ensures that Thetis' experience surpasses that of Semele in terms of horror, by paralleling her union with Jupiter with Sabellus of the *Bellum Civile*, and, possibly, Silius Italicus' Cornelia. The bedchamber of Jupiter and Thetis becomes a site of death, like the Libyan desert in which

[350] Silius Italicus, *Punica, Volume II: Books 9-17*, trans. J.D. Duff (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934). All subsequent references to this text and the English translation are from this edition, unless otherwise specified.

Sabellus died an agonising death. Jupiter's semen is equated to the venom of the snake that killed Sabellus. The result of Jupiter and Thetis' forced and unnatural union is the 'unbodied' spirit, a non-physical offspring that defies the laws of the physical universe, matching Sabellus' corruption into nothingness. This narrative in which a birth leads to an absence is later paralleled, I think, with Italicus' account of Cornelia, who 'was not permitted to live on' after Scipio's birth. Both Cornelia and Thetis must endure great physical suffering at the desire of Jupiter. Then, their respective birthing experiences are subverted by leading to an absence, either of their potential offspring or an absence of the self.

In Shelley's text, a 'snake-like Doom' is said to be 'coiled underneath his throne' (*PU* II.4.97), presumably the throne of Demogorgon. Wasserman likens this image to the traditional 'circular serpent' motif, which represents 'the unendingness of time'.[351] Moreover, this serpent, which represents eternity, seems to correlate with Demogorgon. Wasserman writes: 'it is unimportant whether or not we identify this figure with Demogorgon, since under any circumstances he must subsume it […] the serpent of Eternity is the "Doom" in the sense of "destiny" because its determined course is inherent in it […]'.[352] Wasserman continues: 'Like Demogorgon, the serpent of Eternity is neither good nor evil […] it can enter the world to overthrow the unnatural Jovian regime; or, after the institution of the Promethean age, it can once again be released to introduce another sequence of temporal change.'[353] Shelley's serpent motif represents a potentiality that can be both good and bad. I am particularly intrigued by the correspondence between Lucan's Sabellus, Shelley's depiction of the union between Jupiter and Thetis, and Demogorgon's snake-like form.

[351] Wasserman, 213-4.
[352] Wasserman, 216.
[353] Wasserman, 217.

Shelley's Demogorgon overthrows Jupiter in III.1. Jupiter came to power by overthrowing Saturn, with the help of Prometheus. Demogorgon comments on the tragedy of Jupiter's reign ending in the same way that he came to the throne: 'I am thy child, as thou wert Saturn's child' (*PU* III.1.54). In the note to III.1.54-5, Everest and Matthews guide readers to Shelley's 'Fragment on Reform', in which the poet claims that 'one of the consequences [of 'reform or revolution'] will be the wresting of political power from those who are at present the depositories of it'.[354] Katie Hunt examines *PU* II.4.39-45 as further evidence that Shelley's Jupiter represents both the potential of revolution and its failure.[355] For, as Hunt points out, both 'Jupiter and Prometheus once acted together to "Let man be free!"'.[356] However, 'Jupiter ultimately becomes a perverse a leader as the previous'.[357] The theme of overthrown tyrannical regimes inevitably recurring over time can be found elsewhere in Shelley's writing. In 'A Philosophical View of Reform', written between 1819 and 1820, Shelley writes:

> From the dissolution of the Roman Empire, that vast and successful scheme for the enslaving [of] the most civilized portion of mankind, to the epoch of the present year have succeeded a series of schemes on a smaller scale, operating to the same effect.[358]

In *Prometheus Unbound*, Jupiter therefore models this pattern, in which a new leader 'ultimately becomes a perverse a leader as the previous'. In this sense, the Roman Empire – and its subsequent 'series of schemes on a smaller scale' – perhaps models for Shelley the disappointing continuation of oppressive regimes in his contemporary Europe, as seen in the instatement of Napoleon Bonaparte as emperor after the French Revolution.

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[354] *PS* 2, 589.
[355] Katie Alyssa Hunt, 'Jupiter of Percy Shelley's Prometheus Unbound reconsidered', *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes and Reviews*, 32 (2019), pp. 28-30, 28.
[356] Hunt, 28.
[357] Hunt, 28.
[358] Hunt, 28.

Although Jupiter does not speak in Lucan's poem, his presence is felt. In his dismantling of what Sarah Nix terms the 'divine machinery of epic', Lucan bestows Jovian characteristics on Caesar.[359] Nix claims that 'Lucan's *Bellum Civile* offers the most extensive comparison in epic poetry of a ruler to the king of the gods', but acknowledges that the assimilation of Caesar to Jupiter has precedence in Virgil's *Georgic* 4 and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.[360] In comparing Caesar to the king of the gods, he is made into a figure of terror. At *BC* 1.153-4, Caesar is likened to a thunderbolt which *populos […] paventes / terruit* ('terrified the trembling people').[361] Furthermore, Jupiter is mentioned in Book 9, shortly after the deaths of Sabellus and the other soldiers who were poisoned by snakes in the Libyan desert. The *Marmaridae Psylli* ('the Psylli of Marmarica', *BC* 9.893) are said to be immune to 'all poison'.[362] Lucan compares the ways of these people to *Iovis volucer* ('Jupiter's bird, *BC* 9.902), whose chicks are encouraged to face the sun, with those who are able 'to endure the sunrays' 'kept alive for the service of the god' (*BC* 9.904-5). Jupiter is not entirely omitted from the universe of the *Bellum Civile*. Rather, human beings are compared to his prowess. In the case of Caesar, it seems that the comparison to Jupiter is intended to portray him as having transcended the authority of a mortal man: he has become capable of razing cities and temples to the ground.[363] The war has transformed him into something non-human, his power unnatural. In the case of the Psylli of Marmarica, Jupiter's 'eagle' symbolises their immunity to the desert serpents and their ability to heal the Roman soldiers. Nix comments that Caesar partakes in the poem's manifold treatment of civil war by embodying Jupiter and metaphorically destroying his own temples: here we perhaps find another layer of combat,

[359] Sarah A. Nix, 'Caesar as Jupiter in Lucan's "Bellum Civile"', *The Classical Journal*, 103 (2008), pp. 281-294, 282-3.
[360] Nix, 284.
[361] My own translation.
[362] *[…] nullumque admittere virus […] potens,* ('able to admit no poison', *BC* 9.894-5), my own translation.
[363] A reference to *Bellum Civile* 1.151-7.

since the rescuers of Cato's army are likened to Jupiter's eagle, while their enemy, Caesar, is yet another 'Jupiter'.[364]

If Lucan's Caesar is intended to be a representation of Jupiter, then Shelley surely recognised the implications in terms of Caesar's political ambitions. Lucan's poem foreshadows the birth of Roman imperialism, originating in Caesar's ascent to power. The comparison between Caesar and Jupiter is deeply troubling. Lucan recognises that Caesar, and subsequent emperors, came to transcend the limits of mortal power, seen most clearly in the process of posthumous deification. Shelley's idea that every generation since the Roman Empire has endured 'a series of schemes operating on a smaller scale' 'for the enslaving [of] the most civilized portion of mankind' can be seen to have a precedent in kind in the *Bellum Civile.*[365] The *Bellum Civile* fails to find a resolution.[366] In Book 2, the elders lament the fact that 'we were not born into the age of the Punic wars, that we were not the men who fought at Cannae and the Trebia'.[367] They simultaneously evoke the circularity of history by alluding to past battles, and evoke the idea of escalation, agreeing that the horrors of the present-day are far greater than those that the previous generations had to endure. Furthermore, the poem's premature ending means that Caesar and his series of enemies are locked in eternal conflict. Tim Stover suggests that Lucan felt that the battle between '*libertas* and Caesarism' was 'still ongoing in his own day', and that 'the Republican cause' and 'the impulse to resist tyranny' did not 'die […] with Cato'.[368] Stover argues that 'the ideals which Cato stood for – adherence to collective institutions rather than to the overwhelming ambition of a single

[364] Nix, 289-93.
[365] Shelley, 'A Philosophical Review of Reform', *MW* 637.
[366] Jamie Masters posits that 'the poem does have an end […] a strange, unconventional end, to be sure, pointing as it does to its own inconclusiveness, avoiding as it does any kind of resolution […]', Jamie Masters, *Poetry and Civil War in Lucan's Bellum Civile* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 247.
[367] *O miserae sortis, quod non in Punica nati / Tempora Cannarum fuimus Trebiaeque iuventus! BC* 2.45-6.
[368] Tim Stover, 'Cato and the Intended Scope of Lucan's "Bellum Civile"', *The Classical Quarterly*, 58 (2008), pp. 571-580, 572.

individual – transcend his death'.[369] In this way, the cyclical nature of political regimes does not necessarily have negative consequences in the *Bellum Civile*. I agree with Stover to the extent that I think Lucan's Cato and Caesar each represent timeless ideologies. In Shelley's text, Demogorgon – representative of social change in the form of volcanic energy – overthrows Jupiter at last, as well as facilitating Asia's oracular experience, thus enacting the aborted promise of Lucan's Cato.

In introducing Sabellus into his drama, Shelley is able to enhance the role that his Jupiter is playing by employing the metaphor of the mutilated body which stands for large-scale conflict. In Lucan, the broken body is symptomatic of the civil war. As a result, in Shelley, Thetis' rape is also symptomatic of a despotic system. Sabellus' body communicates to Lucan's audience what can happen when armies are made to blindly follow their leaders who are battling for supremacy; Thetis' body communicates what happens under absolute power.

However, by bringing Asia and Prometheus together in Act III.3, Shelley explores the possibility of a changed world. The site of Prometheus and Asia's union is portrayed as a haven from which the outside world can be watched. Prometheus addresses Asia:

> Asia, thou light of life,
> Shadow of beauty unbeheld; and ye,
> Fair sister nymphs, who made long years of pain
> Sweet to remember, through your love and care;
> Henceforth we will not part. There is a cave,
> All overgrown with trailing odorous plants,
> Which curtain out the day with leaves and flowers,
> And paved with vein'd emerald; and a fountain
> Leaps in the midst with an awakening sound.
> From its curved roof the mountain's frozen tears,
> Like snow, or silver, or long diamond spires,
> Hang downward, raining forth a doubtful light;
> And there is heard the ever-moving air
> Whispering without from tree to tree, and birds,
> And bees; and all around are mossy seats,

[369] Stover, 572.

> And the rough walls are clothed with long soft grass;
> A simple dwelling, which shall be our own;
> Where we will sit and talk of time and change,
> As the world ebbs and flows, ourselves unchanged.
> What can hide man from mutability?

Everest and Matthews address the debate surrounding the cave, acknowledging the argument in favour of it having Platonic connotations.[370] They do not favour this reading, claiming that 'the lines do not appear to offer close parallels with Platonic sources'.[371] Rather, Everest and Matthews suggest that 'the cave fits *PU*'s patterns of geological and volcanic symbolism and imagery, and its interest in oracular exhalation; there are also hints of actual caves S. knew or may have known about'.[372] Prometheus, who is speaking these lines, takes comfort from the fact that while 'the world ebbs and flows', he and Asia will be 'unchanged'. Prometheus, representative of 'the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature', has found a haven.[373]

These lines also resonate with Shelley's own descriptions of Italy and particularly Rome in his letters and the drama's Preface.[374] In particular, the 'trailing odorous plants / which curtain out the day with leaves and flowers' correlate with Shelley's description of the Baths of Caracalla, with its 'flowery glades and thickets of odoriferous blossoming trees', where much of *Prometheus Unbound* was supposedly composed. The Roman spring of 1819 that inspired Shelley is immortalised in this passage, although he also makes sure to allude to

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[370] *PS* 2, 585.
[371] *PS* 2, 586.
[372] *PS* 2, 586.
[373] Shelley, Preface, *PS* 2, 473.
[374] To Peacock: 'At Albano we arrived again in sight of Rome —arches after arches in unending lines stretching across the uninhabited wilderness, the blue defined outline of the mountains seen between them; masses of nameless ruins standing like rocks out of the plain; and the plain itself with its billowy & unequal surface announced the neighbourhood of Rome', 23rd March 1819, *PBSL* ii, 84. In his Preface, Shelley writes: 'This Poem was chiefly written upon the mountainous ruins of the Baths of Caracalla, among the flowery glades and thickets of odoriferous blossoming trees, which are extended in ever winding labyrinths upon its immense platforms and dizzy arches suspended in the air. The bright blue sky of Rome, and the effect of the vigorous awakening spring in that divinest climate, and the new life with which it drenches the spirits even to intoxication, were the inspiration of this drama.' *PS* 2, 473.

the passing seasons by referencing ‘snow’, ‘silver’, and ‘long diamond spires’. Shelley’s use of the present tense when referring to the various natural elements, the ‘leaves and flowers’, as well as snow and ice, create a vignette in which time is nonlinear. The ‘trailing odorous plants / which curtain out the day’ exist in the same moment as the ‘snow’ and icicles, which ‘hang downward’. The effect of this, alongside Shelley’s word choices that pertain to movement (such as ‘ever-moving air’ and ‘the world ebbs and flows’) is that the utopia that the poet is searching for is at once static, that is, non-moving, and ever-changing. Prometheus’ cave vignette is eternal. Time is suspended; therefore the rolling history of the world and the pattern of despotic leaders has come to a halt.

To return to Shelley’s intertextual engagement with Lucan, I argue that the subversive elements that the *Bellum Civile* lends to *Prometheus Unbound* heighten the polarity that Shelley seeks to create between Thetis and Jupiter and Asia and Prometheus. The gentle fecundity of Prometheus and Asia’s cave is in obvious contrast with the destructive rape of Thetis by Jupiter.

2.4 Conclusion

Historically in Britain, Lucan’s perverse epic has attracted attention at times of national conflict or transition.[375] Shelley’s engagement with Lucan in his *Prometheus Unbound*, written between September 1818 and December 1819, sees this tradition continued. Shelley added Act IV at the end of 1819, perhaps impelled to do so in response to the Peterloo Massacre at Manchester in August 1819. This would suggest that *Prometheus Unbound* was partly a political commentary, providing an answer to the resurgence of despotism that

[375] For instance, Paul Davis remarks on the three translations of Cato’s speech from Book 9 that emerged during the Glorious Revolution from 1688 to 1689. Davis, 674.

Shelley felt had been perpetuated, rather than solved, by the French Revolution, something that scholars such as Katie Hunt, Everest, Matthews, and Wasserman have all recognised.[376]

In his drama's Preface, Shelley wrote: 'had I framed my story' on the lost *Prometheus Unbound*, 'I should have done no more than have attempted to restore the lost drama of Aeschylus'.[377] His transformation of what is known about the ancient version of *Prometheus Unbound* depends on a process of mythopoesis in which a number of influential texts are brought into convergence with one another. Lucan's influence can be felt at two of the arguably most pivotal moments in the drama. Certainly they are moments which mark irrevocable departures from what Shelley knew of Aeschylus' lost play. The 'oracular vapour', the characterisation of Demogorgon, Asia's subsequent prophetic experience, and Jupiter and Thetis' union, are all integral to Shelley's innovation of the original narrative. It is entirely fitting that Shelley should allude to Lucan at these two moments, since Lucan himself was an innovator. Lucan deviated from Homer and Virgil and created an anti-Aeneid in answer to the political climate of his day. Both Shelley and Lucan challenge the concept of divination and present an alternative narrative in which humankind has the capacity to be its own oracle: in Lucan, this is embodied in Cato, and in Shelley, by the nymph Asia. The micro acts of subversion and transformation that we see in each of their texts form a bigger picture in which the poet is a prophet, come to warn humanity about the dangers of the unending cycle of despotism, and, in Shelley's case, show that Love can end this cycle.

Prometheus Unbound shows Shelley's continued interest in the Prometheus myth, as well as how his perception of ancient Rome began to evolve after he travelled there and saw its monuments, such as the Colosseum, the Forum, and the Baths of Caracalla, in person. He found a 'sublime' beauty in the ruination of these sites, perhaps because they represented the

[376] Hunt, 28; *PS* 2, 466; Wasserman, 106-9.
[377] *PS* 2, 472.

expiration of certain aspects of humankind, that is, its political ambitions, and its vanity. However, as I posit at the end of my first chapter, for Shelley, Rome was not simply a foil to an idealized Greece. As we observe in *Prometheus Unbound*, Rome and its literature in fact continued to inspire Shelley's vision of a perfect future.

Chapter Three
'[…] she was an actor and a sufferer': Identity and transformation in ancient Roman tragedy and Percy Shelley's *The Cenci*

3.1.1 Introduction

Shelley was much occupied with writing throughout 1819. As well as composing his *Prometheus Unbound*, the first three acts of which he wrote between September 1818 and April of 1819, adding Act IV in December 1819, he embarked on his tragedy *The Cenci*.[378] Shelley wrote this work relatively quickly. Mary Shelley first records him writing *The Cenci* on 14 May 1819.[379] She writes that he completed it on 8 August 1819.[380]

Shelley's tragedy depicts the events that befell Beatrice Cenci, who was publicly executed in Rome in 1599. Shelley's presentation of Beatrice, while sympathetic, sees her pursue revenge against Francesco Cenci's treatment of her and her stepmother and siblings. I propose that Beatrice rises to the challenge of becoming a tragic heroine. While we cannot know for certain whether Shelley is making conscious allusions to Roman tragedy in *The Cenci*, I posit that two of his central figures, Beatrice, and her father Francesco, are presented in a way that makes them reminiscent of Virgil's Dido, Ovid's Philomela, Procne and Medea, and Seneca's Medea and Atreus. Furthermore, both Beatrice and Francesco seem to be conscious of the roles that they are inhabiting, with Shelley alluding to the issue of metatheatre within the play and in its Preface. In particular, I have in mind the sentence: 'The crimes and miseries in which [Beatrice Cenci] was an actor and a sufferer are as the mask and the mantle in which circumstances clothed her for her impersonation on the scene of the

[378] For dates of *Prometheus Unbound*, see *MSJ* i, 226, *PBSL* ii, 94, and *PBSL* ii, 165.
[379] *MSJ* ii, 263.
[380] *MSJ* ii, 294.

world.'[381] Shelley perceived Beatrice Cenci as 'an actor', as though she were playing a part against her will. In the tragedy, Shelley's Beatrice shifts between a number of roles. I argue that this fluidity in turn alludes to the intertextual dynamic that connects each of the aforementioned tragic figures and which sees them rise to and even transcend the standard set by their predecessor, who is, in this way, another version of themselves.[382] In his Preface, Shelley states: 'I have endeavoured as nearly as possible to represent the characters as they probably were […]'.[383] Shelley, it seems, was interested in representing truth. In drawing comparison between Beatrice and ancient Roman formulations of Dido, Philomela, and Medea, and whether this was intentional or not, Shelley seeks not to illuminate Beatrice Cenci's theatricality, but her humanity.

It has been recognised that Shelley is possibly alluding to Virgil's *Aeneid* 4, a text with tragic pedigree, and Seneca's *Thyestes*, at two pivotal moments in *The Cenci*.[384] At I.2.11-13, the priest Orsino accuses Beatrice's image of haunting him, and compares her to a 'hunter' pursuing 'some struck deer'.[385] This appears to be a reversal of Virgil's deer metaphor used to describe Dido and Aeneas at *Aeneid* 4.69-72. At I.3.77-89, Francesco Cenci rejoices in imagining that the bowl of wine that he is about to drink is filled with his sons' 'mingled blood'. This seems to be an allusion to Seneca's *Thyestes* 917, when Atreus watches as Thyestes unknowingly eats his sons' flesh and drinks their blood. In the following discussion, I investigate these moments in *The Cenci* and the classical texts which they are said to be signposting, with the intention of offering a new perspective on Shelley's debt to Roman tragedy and tragic episodes. I believe that the aforementioned allusions have been

[381] Preface to *The Cenci*, *PS* 2, 735.
[382] I discuss the intertextual dynamic between Virgil's Dido, Ovid's Procne, and Seneca's Medea – and Shelley's Beatrice - in 3.2.
[383] *PS* 2, 731.
[384] Michael Rossington suggests that Shelley has Virgil's *Aeneid* 4 in mind at *The Cenci* I.2.11-13 (*PS* 2, 746), and Seneca's *Thyestes* in mind at *The Cenci* I.3.81, in *PS* 2, 753.
[385] For the text of *The Cenci*, I refer to *PS* 2. All subsequent references to *The Cenci* are from this edition unless otherwise stated.

understated. Further, I put it that there are parallels between Shelley's Beatrice and Ovid's Philomela, Procne, and Medea, and Seneca's Medea, which have not yet been attended to in Shelley's scholarship. I focus on what I perceive to be Shelley's engagement with Virgil, Ovid, and Seneca because I believe that these authors – especially Ovid and Seneca – engage with themes that are particularly pertinent to the story that Shelley is retelling, namely physical abuse, sexual violence, mutilation, infanticide, parricide, and suicide. In presenting these troubling stories, Virgil, Ovid, and Seneca each provide a model which Shelley can follow or depart from in rendering his own telling of the trauma suffered by Beatrice Cenci.

3.1.2 Composition of The Cenci

In his Preface to *The Cenci*, Shelley writes:

> A manuscript was communicated to me during my travels in Italy, which was copied from the archives of the Cenci palace at Rome, and contains a detailed account of the horrors which ended in the extinction of one of the noblest and richest families of that city, during the Pontificate of Clement VIII, in the year 1599. The story is, that an old man having spent his life in debauchery and wickedness, conceived at length an implacable hatred towards his children; which showed itself towards one daughter under the form of incestuous passion, aggravated by every circumstance of cruelty and violence. This daughter, after long and vain attempts to escape from what she considered a perpetual contamination both of body and mind, at length plotted with her mother-in-law and brother to murder their common tyrant. The young maiden, who was urge to this tremendous deed by an impulse which overpowered its horror, was evidently a most gentle and amiable being, a creature formed to adorn and be admired, and thus violently thwarted from her nature by the necessity of circumstance and opinion.
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> *PS* 2, 727-8

It is likely that Shelley first encountered the story of the Cenci family while staying with John and Maria Gisborne in Tuscany in May of 1818. In her journal entry for the period covering 1 until 25 May, Claire Clairmont writes: 'we are much with the Gisbornes. Read the manuscrit [sic] of the Cenci family'.[386] Mary Shelley then wrote a translation of the manuscript between 23 and 25 May.[387] When the group travelled to Rome in the spring of 1819, Shelley was

[386] *SC* 5, 455.
[387] *MSJ* ii, 211.

reacquainted with the Cenci family legend. In *The Cenci*'s Preface, he writes: 'On my arrival at Rome, I found that the story of the Cenci was a subject not to be mentioned in Italian society without awakening a deep and breathless interest […]'.[388] On 22 April 1819, the group saw a portrait that they believed to be of Beatrice Cenci, generally attributed to Guido Reni, in the Palazzo Colonna.[389] They also visited the Cenci Palace, located in the Jewish Quarter of Rome north of the Isola Tiberina, on 11 May.[390] Michael Rossington has suggested that 'interest [in the Cenci story] was revived […] in Rome possibly through the *conversazioni* in the salon of Signora Marianna Candida Dionigi whom they saw regularly in March and April 1819'.[391] This seems to be in accordance with Shelley's recollection of the story's popularity within 'Italian society' as found in his Preface.[392]

According to Mary Shelley's note to *The Cenci* found in the 1839 edition of Percy Shelley's works, 'he urged the subject to me as one fitted for a tragedy.'[393] Mary Shelley says that she 'entreated him to write it instead; and he began, and proceeded swiftly, urged on by intense sympathy with the sufferings of the human beings whose passions, so long cold in the tomb, he revived […]'.[394] Shelley's empathy with Beatrice is clearly stated in his Preface, where he describes the portrait by Guido thus:

> […] There is a fixed and pale composure upon the features: she seems sad and stricken down in spirit, yet the despair thus expressed is lightened by the patience of gentleness. Her head is bound with folds of white drapery from which the yellow strings of her golden hair escape, and fall about her neck. The moulding of her face is exquisitely delicate; the eyebrows are distinct and arched; the lips have that permanent meaning of imagination and sensibility which suffering has not repressed and which it seems as if death scarcely could extinguish. Her forehead is large and clear; her eyes, which we are told were remarkable for their vivacity, are swollen with

[388] *PS* 2, 728-9.
[389] *MSJ* ii, 259. Percy Shelley felt a deep sympathy with Beatrice Cenci upon seeing the portrait, which he would go on to articulate in his drama's Preface, quoted below.
[390] *MSJ* ii, 262.
[391] *PS* 2, 713.
[392] *PS* 2, 728-9.
[393] Percy Shelley, *The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, Volume 2*, ed. by [Mary] Shelley, 4 vols (London: Edward Moxon, Dover Street, 1839), 274.
[394] Shelley, *The Poetical Works*, 274.

> weeping and lustreless, but beautifully tender and serene. In the whole mien there is a simplicity and dignity which, united with her exquisite loveliness and deep sorrow, are inexpressibly pathetic. Beatrice Cenci appears to have been one of those rare persons in whom energy and gentleness dwell together without destroying one another; her nature was simple and profound. The crimes and miseries in which she was an actor and a sufferer are as the mask and the mantle in which circumstances clothed her for her impersonation on the scene of the world.
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> *PS* 2, 735

Prior to this passage in the Preface, in a statement quoted in section 3.1.1, Shelley had set out his intention 'to represent the characters as they probably were', and 'to avoid the error of making them actuated by my own conceptions of right or wrong'.[395] This is supported in Shelley's Dedication to Leigh Hunt. There, he claimed: 'I lay aside the presumptuous attitude of an instructor, and am content to paint, with such colours as my own heart furnishes, that which has been.'[396] While Shelley expressed that he did not want to impose his personal morals onto the play, he wrote his play 'with such colours as my own heart furnishes'. This would suggest that Shelley was emotionally stirred by Beatrice Cenci's story, judging her to be 'simple and profound', even blameless. Further, in presenting the characters as he believed 'they probably were', Shelley perhaps felt that the audience would naturally feel sympathy for Beatrice, too.[397] Therefore there would be no need to formulate his characters 'by my own conceptions of right or wrong'.[398] Anne McWhir is right to say that Shelley viewed the story behind *The Cenci* 'not as an end in itself, but as a means to an end; not a sight to be beheld, but as a means to facilitate sight.'[399] His tragedy is less about the 'story', McWhir continues, than it is about 'the passions it "presents"'.[400] I believe that Shelley felt that his attempt at an

[395] *PS* 2, 731.
[396] *PS* 2, 726.
[397] *PS* 2, 731.
[398] *PS* 2, 731.
[399] Anne McWhir, 'The Light and the Knife: Ab/Using Language in "The Cenci"', *The Keats-Shelley Journal*, 38 (1989), pp. 145-61, 146.
[400] McWhir, 146.

honest portrait of Beatrice was sufficiently morally didactic so as to leave an impression on his audience, without him playing the part of 'an instructor'.

3.1.3 The presentation of trauma

While writing the translation of the Gisbornes' manuscript, "Relation of the Death of the Family of the Cenci", Mary Shelley omitted the passages describing the sexual crimes that Francesco Cenci was said to have committed against Beatrice. After writing the sentence, 'Francesco carried his wicked debauchery to such an excess that he […] often endeavoured by force & threats to debauch his daughter Beatrice who was now grown up & exceedingly beautiful', Mary Shelley inserts the note: 'The details here are horrible. & unfit for publication.'[401] In his drama on the subject, Percy Shelley renders what seems to be an act of sexual violence against Beatrice, and the murder of Francesco, off-stage, between Acts II and III. There could be a number of reasons for this. One explanation is that it was considered more tasteful to censor sensitive topics such as murder and physical and sexual violence by concealing them off-stage. Another explanation could be that the extant Greek tragedies that Shelley had read generally 'hid' gruesome moments off-stage, and employed a chorus or messenger to report the events to a character who was on-stage, and therefore to the audience.

However, Roman authors Ovid and Seneca both 'stage' the most violent moments in their stories. Ovid, opting to relate the myth of Tereus and Philomela within the epic framework of the *Metamorphoses*, necessarily adapts his presentation of the story so as to fit his genre.[402] Since the *Metamorphoses* is a text designed to be read or recited aloud, rather than performed on a stage, there is no chorus to mediate between offstage violence and an

[401] *BSM* 10, 183. Mary Shelley's translation also omits the Petrella laundress' deposition about the bloodied sheet (used to wrap Francesco's body) that Beatrice presented to be washed the morning after Francesco's murder. The deposition allegedly stated that Beatrice told the laundress that the blood was her own menstrual blood. *BSM* 10, 201.
[402] The story of Tereus has its roots in works such as Aristophanes' *The Birds*, Aeschylus' *The Suppliants*, and Sophocles' *Tereus.*

audience. Instead, Ovid's reader is taken across the threshold and into the 'hut deep hidden in the ancient woods', where Tereus rapes Philomela and cuts out her tongue in front of our eyes.[403] Seneca's dramas also merge performance with text. Villy Sorenson posits that 'there is disagreement as to whether Seneca's tragedies were intended for performance, but it can certainly be said that they were not intended for performance at official religious festivals.'[404] This is presumably because the author's treatment of violence and morality made his subject-matter and his presentation of it unsuitable for religious events. Meanwhile, Erica Bexley suggests that although we cannot know whether Seneca's works were written for performance or recital, the two genres were perhaps more similar than we thought.[405] '*Recitatio* is not anti-performance', Bexley writes, 'but merely another kind of performance, one that mediates between theatre, courtroom, and schoolroom.'[406]

In Seneca's *Thyestes,* Atreus murders his nephews offstage, with the news reported by a messenger who speaks to the Chorus.[407] However, when Thyestes unknowingly consumes his sons' flesh and blood at lines 908-69, which is perhaps the most troubling and gruesome moment in the play, the events happen onstage. Furthermore, in Seneca's *Medea,* the final climactic scene shows Medea murdering her children.[408] Like Ovid, Seneca innovates his Greek models by showcasing the most troubling and grotesque moments to his audience. Both Ovid and Seneca challenge the rules and blur the boundaries of their respective genres. While challenging their audience expectations by staging moments of extreme violence, they

[403] […] *rex Pandione natam / in stabula alta trahit, silvis obscura vetustis* ('[…] the king dragged off Pandion's daughter to a hut deep hidden in the ancient woods […]', Ovid, *Met.* 6.520-1). This and all subsequent references to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* are taken from this edition unless otherwise stated.
[404] Villy Sorenson, 'Seneca: the humanist at the court of Nero', trans. W. Glyn Jones (Edinburgh: Canongate Publishing, 1984), 245.
[405] Erica Bexley, 'What is Dramatic Recitation?', *Mnemosyne,* 68 (2015), pp. 774-793.
[406] Bexley, 790.
[407] The messenger enters at 623. He describes Atreus' terrible crime at 641-743.
[408] Seneca, *Medea*, 893-1025.

also redefine the meaning of 'performance', placing their dramatic subjects into texts that were not necessarily written for the stage, but for 'performance' in kind.

In *The Cenci,* Shelley opts to position the alleged rape of Beatrice and the murder of Francesco off-stage, with his characters signifying what has just occurred through their dialogue and, crucially, their appearance, when they return. At the beginning of III.1, Beatrice 'enters staggering and speaks wildly'. She comments on her dishevelled hair: 'How comes this hair undone? / Its wandering strings must be what blind me so, / And yet I tied it fast' (III.1.6-8). Beatrice cannot even articulate the 'wrong' that Francesco has committed against her, for, as she says, 'there are deeds / Which have no form, sufferings which have no tongue' (III.1.141-2). Instead, her rape is communicated by her appearance and the implications that are replete in her inability to speak of what happened. The murder of Francesco also occurs out of the audience's sight. At IV.3.44, the assassins hired to kill Francesco, Olimpio and Marzio, return to the stage and proclaim, 'He is -- Dead!'. Marzio confirms that they have 'strangled' Francesco (IV.3.45).

Although Shelley chooses to handle his subject sensitively by locating Beatrice's rape and Francesco's murder off the stage, the manner in which he alludes to the violence is reminiscent of Ovid's tale of Philomela and Seneca's *Medea*. I argue that Beatrice's dishevelled hair and the language that she uses on her return to the stage in III.1 are a series of allusions to Ovid's Philomela. Moreover, her resolve to murder Francesco with the dagger at IV.3.31 could refer to the moment at which Seneca's Medea murders her children using a knife.[409] Shelley's intertextual engagement with non-dramatic texts has further gravitas when we consider that no public performances of *The Cenci* were staged until 1922, and that Ernest

[409] I discuss the implications of Medea's use of the knife in greater detail in 3.2.2.

Bates called the work 'an unactable play'.[410] Shelley believed that the Cenci story was 'fitted for a tragedy'.[411] However, challenges arose when he attempted to have the play staged. Like Ovid's presentation of the tale of Tereus and Philomela, which sees the poet incorporate a tragedy into the epic form, and Seneca's bold portrayal of violent subject-matter, which made his tragedies difficult - even unsuitable - to stage, Shelley's text transcends the boundaries of drama. *The Cenci* is a hybrid between tragedy and poetry. The story, whilst thought to be true, is almost too grotesque to be re-enacted.

3.1.4 Shelley's reading of Virgil, Ovid, and Seneca

Shelley was familiar with Virgil, Ovid, and Seneca. Students at Eton read Virgil in construing lessons and repetition lessons during the period that Shelley was there.[412] Throughout January 1818, Mary Shelley records reading a number of books from the *Aeneid*. On 6 January she writes: 'Read S. the 6th and 1st book of the Aeneid'.[413] On 9 January she says: 'Read aloud 3 & 4 book of the Aeneid'.[414] Students at Eton also encountered Ovid: *Selecta ex Ovidio, Tibullo et Propertio* was read in repetition lessons.[415] Further, Shelley encouraged his first wife, Harriet Westbrook, to read Ovid while she was learning Latin.[416] Later, Mary Shelley's journal reveals that she read the *Metamorphoses* regularly for a period in 1815, and that she

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[410] Ernest Sutherland Bates, *A Study of Shelley's drama* The Cenci (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1908), 61.
[411] Shelley, *The Poetical Works*, 274. Shelley had intended for the play to be performed. In my Introduction, I refer to the following letter from Shelley to Peacock in a footnote: 'I have written a tragedy […] What I want you to do is to procure for me its presentation at Covent Garden. The principal character Beatrice is precisely fitted for Miss O Neil, & it might even seem to have been written for her—(God forbid that I shd. see her play it—it wd. tear my nerves to pieces) and in all respects it is fitted only for Covent Garden. The chief male character I confess I should be very unwilling that any one but Kean shd. play—that is impossible, & I must be contented with an inferior actor.' *PBSL* ii, 102-3.
[412] Maxwell Lyte (1875), 315.
[413] *MSJ* ii, 189.
[414] *MSJ* ii, 189.
[415] Maxwell Lyte (1875), 315.
[416] On 7 February 1813, Shelley writes the following to Thomas Jefferson Hogg: 'Harriet has a bold scheme of writing you a latin letter. If you have an Ovids Metamorphoses she will thank you to bring it.—I do not teach her grammatically, but by the less laborious method of teaching her the English of Latin words, intending afterwards to give her a general idea of grammar.' *PBSL* i, 353.

reread Ovid in 1819.[417] Given the collaborative nature of reading, writing, and translating amongst the Shelleys and their friends, it seems safe to assume that Percy was aware that Mary was reading Ovid, as well as being interested. Percy Shelley also seems to have known Seneca well: he had requested a copy of Seneca's works from Thomas Hookham in 1812, and Claire Clairmont gave him an unspecified edition of Seneca in April 1815, which he appears to have immersed himself in at once, with Mary Shelley recording 'Shelley reads Seneca every day & all day', on 10 May 1815.[418]

However, like Horace and Lucan, Seneca is generally viewed to have deteriorated in popularity during the nineteenth century. Wallace's chapter on 'Leigh Hunt, Keats, and Shelley' contains a section on 'Shelley and Tragedy'.[419] Wallace discusses Shelley's thoughts on Greek tragedy, and maintains that his Beatrice is an Electra, partly basing this observation on Shelley's own mention of Sophocles in *The Cenci*'s Preface.[420] Like Highet, Wallace makes no mention of Seneca.[421] Vance also overlooks Seneca, stating: 'An influential figure in western thought and culture from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment, his influence dwindled in the nineteenth century.'[422] I find that these statements overlook Shelley's interest in Seneca. According to Mary Shelley, he immersed himself in Seneca's works. While Seneca may not have had an obvious appeal for the likes of the radical Shelley, I posit that his dramatic treatment of topics such as interfamilial violence, kingship, and patriarchy provided Shelley with a model for his rendering of the Cenci family legend. Only works such as Seneca's *Thyestes*, his *Medea*, and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 6, could offer Shelley the

[417] Mary Shelley read Ovid almost daily from 8 April 1815 until 12 May 1815. *MSJ i,* 74-9. Her reading list for 1815 includes Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 'in Latin', *MSJ* ii, 89. Mary Shelley revisited Ovid on 4 May 1820, *MSJ* iii, 317.
[418] *PBSL* i, 217; 'C. makes S. a present of Seneca', *MSJ* i, 75; 'Shelley reads seneca every day & all day', *MSJ* i, 78.
[419] Wallace, 'Leigh Hunt, Keats, and Shelley', 435-40.
[420] Wallace, 'Leigh Hunt, Keats, and Shelley', 439-40. *PS* 2, 729.
[421] Highet, 360.
[422] Vance, 'Classical Authors', 46.

harrowing language and imagery necessary for communicating the horrors that Beatrice Cenci allegedly endured. For this, I deem it important that scholars no longer overlook Seneca when discussing Shelley's debt to classical tragedy.

3.1.5 Chapter Structure

In section 3.2, I address Shelley's treatment of Beatrice in comparison with Virgil's Dido, Ovid's Philomela and his Medea, and Seneca's Medea. Like Philomela, Beatrice's hair is used against her by her aggressor, Francesco.[423] Like Ovid's and Seneca's depictions of Medea, however, Beatrice's dishevelled hair can be seen as a symbol of her autonomy as she becomes the 'self' that she needs to embody in order to exact her revenge. At III.1.42-4, in what is perhaps a psychological response to the trauma that she has allegedly just suffered off-stage, Beatrice momentarily forgets who she is, stepping outside of herself and viewing her life as though from a third-party perspective. She says to Lucretia: 'Do you know, / I thought I was that wretched Beatrice / Men speak of […]'. In Shelley's Preface to *The Cenci,* he states that Beatrice was 'an actor and a sufferer' in 'the crimes and miseries' of her external world.'[424] This metatheatrical sense of 'becoming', of viewing oneself in the third person as one undergoes a transformation and fulfils an audience's expectations, is a trope used in ancient tragedy. It is seen in Seneca's *Medea,* when Medea announces *Medea nunc sum* ('now I am Medea', Seneca, *Medea* 910)[425] in the moments before she will kill her children. Section 3.2 therefore investigates the similarities between Beatrice, Dido, Philomela, Procne, and Medea. I argue that Shelley engages with several metatheatrical stories and episodes from Roman tragedy in order to articulate Beatrice's psychological

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[423] Tereus uses Philomela's hair to restrain her while he ties her hands behind her back: […] *vagina liberat ensem / arreptamque coma fixis post terga lacertis / vincla pati cogit* ('he drew his sword which was hanging by his side in its sheath, caught her by the hair, and twisting her arms behind her back, he bound them fast.' Ovid, *Met.* 6.551-3).
[424] *PS* 2, 735.
[425] This and all subsequent references to Seneca's *Medea* are taken from Seneca, *Tragedies*, ed. and trans. by John. G. Fitch, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), unless otherwise stated.

response to her trauma. In a sense, Beatrice resorts to embodying female figures from other tragedies as a means of comprehending and responding to what has happened to her. Shelley also faces the difficulty, as a poet, in depicting the horrifying events that the Cenci family allegedly endured. *The Cenci* mediates between theatre and reality, with the former enabling both the poet and the audience to understand the latter.

In section 3.3, I turn to Shelley's characterisation of Beatrice's alleged abuser, her father, Francesco. Shelley's Francesco Cenci embodies a formidable domestic and political power, who delights in the abuse of his children. Central to his characterisation are the terrible transgressions that he commits, one of which occurs when he rejoices in comparing his bowl of wine to his sons' 'mingled blood' at I.3.77-89. As noted in section 3.1.1, this is probably a reference to the climactic scene in Seneca's *Thyestes*, in which Atreus gleefully observes that Thyestes is unwittingly eating his sons' flesh and drinking their blood.[426] Like the king Atreus, Francesco poses a danger both in the domestic space of the Palazzo Cenci and outside its walls, in Rome and beyond. From the very onset of the drama, it is said that Francesco Cenci has significant influence in Rome. At I.1.1-3, Cardinal Camillo reassures Cenci that: 'That matter of the murder is hushed up / If you consent to yield his Holiness / Your fief that lies beyond the Pincian gate.' Meanwhile, at I.1.131-3, the audience discovers that Cenci had sent his sons 'from Rome to Salamanca, / Hoping some accident might cut them off, / And meaning, if [he] could, to starve them there.' In giving his Francesco the same qualities as Seneca's Atreus, Shelley comments on the transcendental nature of his antagonist's evil qualities. Francesco's crimes, while horrifying, are not unprecedented in the world of literature. Francesco Cenci perhaps escalates the horror of Seneca's *Thyestes* because he in fact wants to drink his sons' blood.

[426] *mixtum suorum sanguinem genitor bibat* ('His sons' mingled blood let the father drink;' Seneca, *Thyestes* 917).

I will also address the issue of audience anticipation, which ancient tragedians commonly engage with either through foreshadowing or through their audience's familiarity with the story that they are watching – or a combination of both. Of course, the notion of an intergenerational curse forms the foundation for a number of Greek tragedies, including Sophocles' Oedipus trilogy, and Aeschylus' *Oresteia.* It is typical that ancient tragedy audiences would recognise the situation that the characters onstage were involved in, and that they were heading towards an inevitable conclusion in the form of ruin or death. Shelley intended that the translation of the Gisbornes' manuscript, "Relation of the Death of the Family of the Cenci", be published alongside his drama.[427] He wanted his audience to be aware of the story's outcome.

In Ovid's tale of Philomela, Seneca's *Thyestes* and *Medea* and, to a lesser extent, Virgil's *Aeneid* 4, the conclusion is anticipated both by the respective author's use of forshadowing and the audience's familiarity with the stories, which, in the instance of Ovid's and Seneca's texts, had Greek models.[428] In these texts, the pattern of violence and consequence and the implication that these consequences escalate each time they are carried out can be found in the linguistic details of each story. In Virgil's *Aeneid* 4, Dido's death and even the Punic Wars are prefigured from the onset of the story, when her secret love for Aeneas is compared to an 'unseen flame' (*caeco […] igni*, *Aeneid* 4.2). In Ovid's tale of Philomela, the rape is repeated metaphorically when Tereus takes his sword from its sheath and cuts out his victim's tongue.[429] This action simultaneously recalls the rape and prefigures Procne's violence against Itys. Later, when Procne feeds Itys to Tereus, she penetrates his

[427] Shelley sent the translation of the Italian manuscript to England along with his play, *PBSL* ii, 102.
[428] For Seneca, models include Euripides' *Medea*, while for Ovid, texts that depict or contain allusions to the Tereus myth include Aristophanes' *The Birds*, Aeschylus' *The Suppliants*, and Sophocles' *Tereus*, as I state in a footnote on page 114.
[429] *quo fuit accinctus vagina liberat ensem […] conprensam forcipe linguam / abstulit ense fero* ('he drew his sword which was hanging by his side in its sheath […] he seized her tongue with pincers […] and cut it off with his merciless blade.' Ovid *Met.* 6.551-7.)

body via his mouth to punish him for penetrating Philomela. Elissa Marder states that this is an act of subversion, which sees 'Procne reject […] a logic of symmetry or exchange.'[430] Marder writes: 'Procne violates her husband by making him gag on the law of the father […] In the body of the father, the belly becomes the place of a tomb instead of a womb.'[431] While Procne's revenge for Philomela's mutilation centres around excess rather than reduction, I would argue that there is in fact a logic to Procne mimicking Philomela's rape and subsequent silence with Itys' death and Tereus' ignorance. Meanwhile, in Seneca, Medea foreshadows the deaths of her children when she states: *parta iam, parta ultio est* ('already borne, borne is my vengeance!' Seneca, *Medea* 25) in her opening speech. Each of these texts allude to the issue of repetition and of endlessness, where the notion of an action being succeeded by consequence is enhanced by the respective poet's use of intratextual echoes. The tragic endings of these stories are framed from their outset as being inevitable.

By alluding to classical tragedies and revenge sequences, which themselves allude to a lack of resolution, Shelley introduces the theme of perpetual suffering into *The Cenci*. Shelley seems to have been particularly arrested by the fact that the real Beatrice Cenci was publicly executed for her involvement in the plot to murder her father, thus becoming a martyr. As we have seen in section 3.1.2, the poet speaks of his profound sympathy for Beatrice in the Preface to *The Cenci*. Moreover, Shelley seemed to think that it was important to communicate Beatrice Cenci's story to audiences in England. He writes in his Preface, 'it is a tragedy which has already received, from its capacity of awakening and sustaining the sympathy of men, approbation and success'.[432] He continues, 'Nothing remained […] but to clothe it to the apprehensions of my countrymen in such language and action as would bring

[430] Elissa Marder, 'Disarticulated Voices: Feminism and Philomela', *Philosophy and Language*, 7 (1992), pp. 148-66, 161.
[431] Marder, 161.
[432] *PS* 2, 729.

it home to their hearts'.[433] Although the story of the Cenci family was some two centuries old by the time Shelley encountered it, and the ancient tragedies to which he seems to allude were even more distant, he is occupied by an almost urgent desire to present *La Cenci* to his 'countrymen'. Shelley perhaps deemed that Beatrice's story possessed a universal appeal, and that her suffering, as well as the suffering of Virgil's Dido, Ovid's Philomela, and Seneca's Medea, held resonance for a contemporary anglophone audience. I argue that part of the story's appeal for Shelley was its anti-Church message, which he emphasises in his rendering of the legend by having Francesco Cenci nurture a close, reciprocal relationship with Cardinal Camillo and the Pope. Anti-Catholic sentiments are evident throughout the play.

3.2.1 Shelley's Beatrice, Virgil's Dido, and Ovid's Philomela

To begin the discussion concerning what I deem to be a series of intertextual connections between Beatrice and Dido, Philomela, Procne, and Medea, I look to Dido's story as told by Virgil in *Aeneid* 4. At *The Cenci* I.2.11-13, the priest Orsino tells Beatrice that her image has been haunting him, 'as the hunter some struck deer'. As has been noted by Michael Rossington in his commentary on *The Cenci*, this simile has a number of precedents, a renowned example of which is found in the *Aeneid* 4.[434]

At the beginning of I.2, Orsino attempts to manipulate Beatrice into marrying him. Beatrice argues that she cannot, since he is a priest (I.2.8); Orsino counters by claiming that he 'may obtain / The dispensation of the Pope to marry' (I.2.9-10). He then casts himself and Beatrice into a scenario that is reminiscent of Virgil's Dido and Aeneas in *Aeneid* 4, asking: 'Because I am a priest do you believe / Your image, as the hunter some struck deer, / Follows me not whether I wake or sleep?' (I.2.11-13). There was no figure named Orsino involved in the events that *The Cenci* was based on; instead, Stuart Curran observes that 'Monsignor

[433] *PS* 2, 729.
[434] *PS* 2, 746.

Guerra, who is neither Beatrice's lover nor the treacherous bearer of her petition to the Pope in the original, becomes the calculating Machiavellian, Orsino […]'.[435] Orsino is, Curran continues, 'the one person able to save Beatrice, but a man so completely wrapped in his selfish designs on her that he unwittingly promotes her destruction.'[436] The manipulative and deceitful Orsino, partly a fabrication by Shelley, plays a crucial role in the play's tragic mechanism. As we will see shortly, Orsino seeks to emotionally manipulate Beatrice in I.2, vying for her sympathy to her face, and then switching roles to become the predator after Beatrice has left the stage. Nor does he hand Beatrice's petition over to the Pope, despite claiming that he would. Orsino then encourages the Cenci children to murder Francesco, and urges them to try a second time after the first attempt failed, seen in his conversation with Giacomo in III.2. As Curran comments, 'significantly, Orsino – not Beatrice, as in the "Relation" – is the first to suggest Cenci's murder.'[437] Through Orsino, Shelley sets his tragic narrative in motion and alleviates any blame that the *Relazione* manuscript placed on Beatrice herself. Orsino is also the only character to escape unharmed ('But I will pass, wrapped in a vile disguise; / Rags on my back, and a false innocence / Upon my face […]', V.1.85-7).

When Orsino complains to Beatrice that she has captivated him, 'as the hunter some struck deer' (I.2.12), he is in fact projecting Beatrice's vulnerability onto himself. This is particularly evident after Beatrice has left, and he instead compares himself to a predator and Beatrice to a prey animal: 'I were a fool, not less than if a panther / Were panic-stricken by the antelope's eye, / If she escape me.' (I.1.89-91). Rossington notes that the 'deer' and 'antelope' motif both seem to allude to the myth of Acteon, which itself shares an intertextual relationship with Virgil's simile in *Aeneid* 4. My focus will be Virgil, since Orsino's

[435] Stuart Curran, *Shelley's* Cenci*: Scorpions Ringed with* Fire (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970), 44.
[436] Curran (1970), 44.
[437] Curran (1970), 44.

transfiguration of the deer and hunter scenario is particularly illuminating when it comes to understanding his deceitful character and Beatrice's vulnerability.

After Venus commanded Cupid to beguile Dido at *Aeneid* 1.664-88, out of fear that the Carthaginian queen would otherwise cause harm to Aeneas and his descendants, Dido became tormented by love. At the beginning of *Aeneid* 4, she is compared to a struck deer. The lines in question read:

> *uritur infelix Dido totaque vagatur*
> *urbe furens, qualis coniecta cerva sagitta,*
> *quam procul incautam nemora inter Cresia fixit*
> *pastor agens telis liquitque volatile ferrum*
> *nescius; […]*
>
> (Unhappy Dido burns, and through the city wanders in frenzy—even as a hind, smitten by an arrow, which, all unwary, amid the Cretan woods, a shepherd hunting with darts has pierced from afar, leaving in her the winged steel, unknowing: she in flight ranges the Dictaean woods and glades, but fast to her side clings the deadly shaft.)
>
> *Aeneid* 4.68-72

Aeneid 4 contains a number of tragic elements, the most notable of which is perhaps Virgil's use of forshadowing when it comes to Dido's death. Sarah Spence has defined *Aeneid* 4 as an isolated 'tragedy' within the epic as a whole.[438] Spence interprets Virgil as taking control of his reader's expectations. He alerts us to Dido's death before it happens. The deer metaphor is one such signpost, as is the hunt that Dido and her Trojan guests partake in, and which crucially catalyses the beginning of Dido's relationship with Aeneas.[439] The hunt scene itself is prefigured by the simile quoted above.

Dido's tragic end is signified from the beginning of Book 4, most memorably through the metaphorical *caeco […] igni* ('fire unseen', *Aeneid* 4.2), which is burning inside her. She

[438] Sarah Spence, '*Varium et Mutabile*: Voices of Authority in Aeneid 4', in *Reading Virgil's Aeneid: An Interpretative Guide*, ed. by Christine Perkell (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), pp. 80-95, 80.
[439] Virgil can be seen to refer to a range of texts, not only tragedies, in order to foreshadow Dido's ruin. Spence writes that Virgil's 'allusions to nontragic texts help to establish a sense of terrible foreknowledge on the part of the audience […] Through the intertextual overlays of both Homer and Apollonius we know what will happen to Dido by the end of the hunt long before she does […]', Spence, 87-8.

is driven to find solace in her sister, Anna. Dido complains to Anna about her infatuation with Aeneas and self-imposed loyalty to her late husband Sychaeus (*Aeneid* 4.9-53). The sisters proceed to carry out sacrifices in the hope of receiving divine guidance about whether Dido should remain loyal to Sychaeus or yield to her infatuation with Aeneas (*Aeneid* 4.54-64). Dido continues to be tormented by her love. The reader moves through the city with her, where she is now likened to 'a hind, smitten by an arrow' (*Aeneid* 4.69). Dido inhabits a liminal space here, and indeed in her role within the context of the entire epic.[440] In this moment, she is animalised, no longer a fully functioning member of human society. She wanders through her city alone, marginalised. Unknowingly, she awaits the moment that Venus and Juno will intervene again and use their divine agency to bring Dido and Aeneas together in the cave after the hunt.

Virgil's comparison between Dido and a deer predicts the hunt that the royal party and their Trojan visitors – and most importantly, Aeneas - will soon attend. The hunt is arguably the most significant moment in Virgil's Dido's story. Her relationship with Aeneas, which Dido will believe to be a legitimate marriage, begins in the midst of the storm orchestrated by Juno and Venus.[441] In the deer simile prior to the hunt, Dido metaphorically embodies the deer that she and the rest of the party are out hunting later. There, deer are seen to 'scurry across the open moors and amid clouds of dust mass their bands in flight', with the Latin word for deer, *cervi,* echoing the singular *cerva* which described Dido 84 lines earlier.[442] Virgil also makes use of weapon imagery, in particular the tools used for hunting.

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[440] For further discussion of Dido's role as an outsider and in the Carthage vs. Rome narrative, see Elena Giusti, 'Polarity and Analogy in Virgil's Carthage', *Carthage in Virgil's* Aeneid (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 88-147.

[441] *coniugium vocat* ('she calls it a marriage', *Aeneid* 4.172).

[442] *postquam altos ventum in montis atque invia lustra, / ecce ferae saxi deiectae vertice caprae / decurrere iugis; alia de parte patentis / transmittunt cursu campos atque agmina cervi / pulverulenta fuga glomerant montisque relinquunt.* ('When they came to the mountain heights and pathless lairs, wild goats dislodged from the rocky peaks ran down the ridges; in another part stags scurry across the open moors and amid clouds of dust mass their bands in flight, as they leave the hills behind.' *Aeneid* 4.151-5.)

Dido was wounded with an 'arrow' sticking out from her side, *sagitta* (*Aeneid* 4.69), later called *letalis* at line 73 ('lethal' or 'fatal'); now the hunt gathers with 'wide iron hunting-spears' in hand, *lato venabula ferro,* (*Aeneid* 4.131). The emotional pain that Dido will suffer and that will lead to her suicide at the end of *Aeneid* 4 is prefigured and therefore reiterated over and over.

I consider, for a moment, the varying grades of Dido's vulnerability. Dido's love for Aeneas enhances both her domestic-centred desires and Carthage's political instability. Dido's famous title is 'woman leader', (*dux femina facti, Aeneid* 1.364). When Dido is in dialogue with Anna at the beginning of Book 4, her sister outlines the benefits that a relationship with Aeneas would bring. Readers are shown both the political consequences of Dido's marriage to Aeneas, as well as the personal, human needs that the relationship would fulfil for Dido. First, Anna appeals to a desire to be a wife and mother, asking Dido to consider the potential 'sweet children', *dulcis natos,* and 'gifts of Venus', *Veneris praemia* (*Aeneid* 4.33). Virgil's phrasing is intimate. For now, Anna limits her vocabulary to 'children' and to love.

Virgil's Dido is a tragic figure. She is both a new Medea and a model for Seneca's *Medea.* She also provides a model for Ovid's tale of Philomela. Virgil aligns Dido with Medea, and casts her as a suitable model for future tragic episodes, by way of his presentation of her doomed relationship with Aeneas. The 'sweet children' and 'gifts from Venus' that Anna mentions contrast starkly with the circumstances of Dido's and Aeneas' meeting in the cave, later on in the narrative. Dido 'calls' their consummation 'marriage and with that name veils her sin' (*coniugium vocat; hoc praetexit nomine culpam*, *Aeneid* 4.172). Although Juno, the goddess of wedlock, is said to be in attendance, the false marriage is portended by the 'Nymphs' who 'scream on the mountaintop' (*[…] summoque ulularunt vertice Nymphae, Aeneid* 4.168). The cursed marriage-bed had previously played a part in Apollonius' portrayal

of Medea. In the *Argonautica* 3, the oath spoken by Jason includes the line: 'in our lawful marriage-chamber, you will share my bed, and nothing will separate us in our love until the appointed death enshrouds us'.[443] Apollonius' Medea is also the priestess of Hecate, a goddess of the underworld whose followers included Thessalian witches. What Elena Giusti terms 'the tragic modality' of Apollonius' Medea episode is evident from the very start of Medea's marriage with Jason, when she unknowingly alludes to the terrible sacrifices that she will make, in murdering brother and her father, out of her love for Jason, and to Jason's future betrayal.[444] When Dido and Anna allude to a marriage-bed, they unknowingly alert the audience to the fact that Dido's happiness will be short-lived.

After the *Aeneid*, Ovid also makes use of the cursed marriage-bed in his tale of Philomela. Procne's and Tereus' marriage ceremony was overseen by the *Eumenides*, 'the Furies', instead of Hymen or Juno (*Metamorphoses* 6.428-32). They were also attended by a 'screech-owl'.[445] This in turn alludes back to the scene in *Aeneid* 4 when Dido is startled by the *bubo* ('screech-owl'), who used to sit 'alone on the housetops' and 'with ill-boding song […] would oft complain' (*solaque culminibus ferali carmine bubo / saepe queri et longas in fletum ducere voces, Aeneid* 4.462-3). After being haunted by omens such as this one, and her dead husband's voice, Dido builds her funeral pyre. In referencing the *bubo* at the moment that Procne and Tereus consummate their marriage and conceive Itys, Ovid anticipates the ruin of all three characters. Dido's death scene and her tragic ending therefore provides a model for Tereus' and Procne's cursed marriage. Later still, in Seneca's tragedy, Medea's opening speech calls upon 'The Furies' whom she says were present 'in dread array beside my marriage couch' (Seneca, *Medea* 13-18). Medea believes that her marriage to Jason began

[443] Apollonius, *Argonautica* 3.1126-8
[444] Giusti, 116.
[445] *[…] tectoque profanus / incubuit bubo thalamique in culmine sedit*. ('[…] and the uncanny screech-owl brooded and sat on the roof of their chamber.' *Met.* 6.431-2).

in the same way that Procne's marriage to Tereus began. Medea's marriage will end in almost the same way as Procne's and Tereus' story: with infanticide. Seneca's Medea also calls upon 'three-formed Hecate' (*Medea* 7), the goddess of the underworld that she was said to worship in Apollonius' text. At this point in Seneca's text, Medea has already been betrayed. Therefore, she is retrospectively casting her marriage to Jason as being cursed from the start. For Virgil, Greek versions of Medea's story provide a model for his portrayal of Dido's doomed relationship with Aeneas. Moreover, Virgil's Dido herself becomes a model for the future tragic heroines, Ovid's Philomela and Seneca's Medea.

After mentioning the personal desires that Aeneas would fulfil, Anna turns Dido's attention outwards, to Carthage's hostile surrounding neighbours. She asks, 'does it not occur to you in whose fields you have settled?', *nec venit in mentem quorum consederis arvis?* (*Aeneid* 4.39). In this question Virgil adjusts the dimensions of the image that Anna is painting for Dido. Anna and Dido now look beyond the walls of the household and out onto the land surrounding the city. Anna lists the 'Gaetulian cities, a race unsurpassed in war', *Gaetulae urbes, genus insuperabile bello* (*Aeneid* 4.40), the 'unbridled Numidians', *Numidae infreni,* 'inhospitable Syrtis', *inhospita Syrtis* (*Aeneid* 4.41), the 'raging Barceans', *furentes Barcaei* (*Aeneid* 4.42-3), and finally the threat of 'the war rising from Tyre', *bella Tyro surgentia* (*Aeneid* 4.43-4). Virgil's language here marks the shift in focus. Readers move from 'sweet children' and the marital bed to further afield. Anna's reasoning with Dido changes direction towards her political responsibilities as queen. As a Trojan, Aeneas brings with him protection from the future threat of *bellum* surrounding Carthage. He allegedly brings allyship.[446]

[446] 'Allegedly' because, in reality, Rome will later go to war with Carthage, and Carthage will be destroyed in the Second Punic War.

Virgil's readers shift away from the intimate details of the domestic sphere towards the political reach that a relationship with Aeneas would bring. Anna's speech cleverly juxtaposes Dido's two identities, as 'woman' and 'leader'. She moves from Dido's loyalty to Sychaeus, to the observation that she has never compromised this loyalty for other suitors, who would have had political benefits, to the list of enemies we see above. Virgil uses this structured argument to transition from the appeal of being a wife and mother to the appeal of Carthage having Trojan allies. The duality that Dido represents means that her vulnerability is doubled. The flame motif that Virgil nurtures from the beginning of the book, seen at *Aeneid* 4.2 when Dido is tormented by 'fire unseen' (*caeco […] igni*), and also at *Aeneid* 4.23 when she admits to feeling 'a spark of that former flame' (*veteris vestigia flammae*), premediates Dido's downfall on both of these scales. The flames act as a metaphor for Dido's heartbreak, but they also foreshadow her funeral pyre and predict the literal destruction of Carthage in the Second Punic War. In this way, Book 4 of the *Aeneid* in fact serves to tell the story of a revenge narrative in kind. Dido's curse on Aeneas predicts the Punic Wars, in which the Romans suffered some of their greatest defeats and Carthage was eventually destroyed. Dido's curse that she will unleash against Aeneas at the end of Book 4 eventually turns against Carthage itself. Dido's story is therefore part of a larger, slow-burning revenge sequence.

Percy Shelley alludes to Dido's microcosmic tragedy from *Aeneid* 4 in I.2, when Orsino is in dialogue with Beatrice. There is a crucial distinction between Virgil's and Shelley's deer metaphors. Orsino employs the metaphor in order to manipulate Beatrice, casting himself as the prey and Beatrice as the predator. One could argue that Shelley's recalibration of the roles within the deer simile purposefully endow Beatrice with both culpability and innocence. For, like Dido and Philomela, Beatrice is victimized and transformed by the trauma that she suffers. She follows up this trauma with an act of revenge,

becoming a criminal in the eyes of the law. In reversing Virgil's deer simile, Shelley comments at once on Orsino's deceitful behaviour, and on the changeable nature of his characters' identities more generally. Shelley's Beatrice slips between roles as a survival mechanism; Orsino more as an act of self-preservation. This is seen when he plots his escape and considers his 'innocent' reputation: '[…] I will pass, wrapped in a vile disguise; / Rags on my back, and a false innocence / Upon my face […]' (V.1.85-7).

In *Aeneid* 4, Dido wandered her city in silent pain, while Aeneas remained 'unknowing', *nescius* (*Aeneid* 4. 72). By having Orsino present himself as 'some struck deer', and Beatrice as the 'hunter', Shelley momentarily confuses the characters' culpability. Beatrice is said to be the one who is causing harm to Orsino. Moreover, Beatrice herself is aware of Orsino's capability for manipulating situations. The first line that she speaks to him seems to have a metatheatrical subtext. Beatrice says, 'Pervert not truth, / Orsino […]' (I.2.1-2). I agree with Stuart Curran when he suggests that Beatrice's 'opening words […] furnish a first and lasting impression of the character, to be echoed in his final scene when Giacomo momentarily penetrates the web of Orsino's deceit with the realization, 'Thou art a lie', *The Cenci* V.1.53.[447] There is more to be said on Beatrice's fabrication of the audience's early impression of Orsino. Not only is Beatrice referring to Orsino's perversion of 'truth' within the context of their friendship and their present conversation, but she also alerts the audience as to Orsino's 'Machiavellian' role in the tragedy entire.

After Beatrice has exited, Orsino speaks aloud to the audience and proclaims: 'I were a fool, not less than if a panther / Were panic-stricken by the antelope's eye, / If she escape me' (I.2.89-91). Shelley reverses the hunter-prey dynamic once more, restoring it to the pattern seen in *Aeneid* 4. Like Dido and Philomela, Beatrice is compared to a prey animal.

[447] Curran (1970), 71.

But Shelley has increased Beatrice's vulnerability by having the audience see her through Orsino's gaze. Orsino reveals himself to be the real 'panther', that is, the aggressor. His deceitful nature, predicted by Beatrice, is revealed. He has also confirmed to the audience that he will not give Beatrice's petition to the Pope ('Nor shall he read her eloquent petition', I.2.68), despite giving her his word ('Doubt not but I will use my utmost skill / So that the pope attend to your complaint', I.2.41-2).

The panther reference has further connotations in this scene. Bacchus is accompanied by a panther in a number of ancient Roman art-forms. For example, on a Pompeiian fresco thought to date from between 45 and 79 CE, a panther appears beside Bacchus.[448] On a mosaic from Naples, Bacchus reclines on a rock, holding his customary staff, with a panther beside him.[449] Shelley also seems to make use of Bacchus' association with disorder and animalistic tendencies in I.3, during the banquet-scene, which I will discuss further in section 3.3. By linking Orsino with the panther and therefore Bacchus, Shelley informs his audience that Orsino is an enemy to order. He is guilty of numerous transgressions. Moreover, the Greek tragic genre had its roots in the Dionysia, the festival for Dionysus, Bacchus' earlier Greek iteration. The very genre that Shelley is writing within was born out of Bacchic ritualism. It therefore seems fitting that Orsino, the Bacchic 'panther', is the true agent and the mobiliser of *The Cenci*'s tragic plot.

Not only does Shelley draw parallels between his Beatrice and Orsino and Virgil's Dido and Aeneas, he manipulates his model so as to present Orsino's deceitful nature and the metatheatrical dimension to Beatrice's role in the story to his audience. Beatrice and Orsino engage in a complex, multi-layered dialogue in which both are aware to a degree of each

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[448] *Bacchus laying on a rock; holding thyrsos staff; panther*, date unknown, mosaic, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples https://weblimc.org/page/monument/2118611

[449] *1. Larenwandmalerei 2. Europa; Bacchus with thyrsos staff and kantharos; panther; to the left Mercurius; in the center Lares*, c. 45 – 79 CE, wall painting, Pompeii https://weblimc.org/page/monument/2125302

other's identities within the story that is about to unfold. Beatrice asks of Orsino, 'Pervert not truth' (I.2.1), anticipating his deceit and his betrayal in helping to orchestrate Francesco's murder before his escape. Further, Orsino predicts the transformation that Beatrice will undergo as a result of her trauma, presenting her first as the 'hunter' and then as the frightened 'antelope'. I am particularly interested in the sense of motion that is being given to Beatrice's character. She already fluctuates between predator and prey. In characterising Beatrice as a new Dido, who herself fluctuates between being a victim but also an aggressor towards Rome, Shelley gives a sense of multidimensionality to the portrait that he believed to be of Beatrice, and that he was so moved by.

3.2.2 *'Beatrice nunc sum': Vengeful female figures in Roman tragedy and* The Cenci

I have begun to explore the idea that Shelley's Beatrice undergoes a process of transformation in *The Cenci*, which serves to heighten her humanity. Beatrice slips between identities, much like the figures Dido, Philomela, and Medea, in response to the trauma that she suffers and the revenge that she carries out. I now look to how Beatrice is characterized in her pursuit of revenge against Francesco, seeking to illuminate the characteristics that she shares with Ovid's Philomela and Seneca's Medea. I posit that Beatrice's restless, everchanging character, sees Shelley continue to endow his tragedy with metatheatre, as his protagonist shifts fluidly between a number of female archetypes from Roman tragedies.

By the end of II.2, Orsino has encouraged Giacomo to consider murdering Francesco.[450] Immediately afterwards, at the beginning of III.1, the audience is told that

[450] When Giacomo tells Orsino that he is 'lost' (II.2.94), and contemplating seeking revenge against Camillo and his father, Francesco, Orsino encourages him: 'What? Fear not to speak your thought. / Words are but holy as the deeds they cover; / A priest who has forsworn the God he serves, / A judge who makes Truth weep at his decree, / A friend who should weave counsel, as I now, / But as the mantle of some selfish guile, / A father who is all a tyrant seems,-- / Were the profaner for his sacred name.' *The Cenci*, II.2.74-81.

something terrible has occurred off-stage. At III.1.42-5, Beatrice states that she does not recognise herself after allegedly being raped by Francesco. She says:

> Do you know,
> I thought I was that wretched Beatrice
> Men speak of, whom her father sometimes hales
> From hall to hall by the entangled hair;
> […]
>
> *The Cenci* III.1.42-5

Beatrice and the female characters on whom I argue that she is partly modelled (Dido, Philomela, Procne, and Medea) each undergo a transformation in response to their trauma. Dido and Medea experience romantic betrayal, as does Procne, who is also forced to endure the defilement of her sister's honour. Philomela's trauma is in the form of sexual violence and physical mutilation. As a result of their trauma by way of betrayal or violence, these female figures seek to enact revenge against the person who caused them harm. While these characters transition from evoking feelings of pathos from their audiences, to becoming assailants, I argue that Medea, in particular, would have been perceived as the aggressor within her story.

One way in which Shelley presents Beatrice's revenge arc is through her appearance. When words are no longer available to Beatrice, the rape by Francesco is signalled by her dishevelled hair. At III.1.6-8, Beatrice complains of her hair hanging in her face. When Orsino enters at III.1.37, Beatrice states that she cannot tell him what has happened to her. She says: 'Ask me not what it is, for there are deeds / Which have no form, sufferings which have no tongue' (III.1.41-2). Francesco's rape of Beatrice is left unsaid and told instead through her appearance and the insinuation left by what she does not say. Beatrice's statement, that she has experienced the kind of 'suffering' that has 'no tongue', seems to me

to directly correlate with Philomela's experience of being silenced after her rape.[451] Specifically, Tereus cuts out Philomela's tongue after she vows to 'tell' her story 'where people throng', or, at the very least, 'fill the woods with my story and move the very rocks to pity.'[452] Both Beatrice's and Philomela's capacity for speech is removed by their aggressor. Language is therefore no longer appropriate; their revenge must take the form of action. Indeed, Beatrice, who had intended to hand over a petition to the Pope at the start of the play, no longer uses her words but instead is moved so as to pursue a different kind of revenge.[453] She says: '[…] something must be done; What, yet I know not […]' (III.1.86-7).[454] Fittingly, this statement paraphrases both Ovid's Procne and Seneca's Atreus, as Rossington notes.[455] Beatrice cannot articulate the act of revenge against Francesco that she will help to orchestrate; she has entered a world in which language is no longer sufficient.

I wish to focus now on Beatrice's hair, which I argue plays a part in the tragedy's most pivotal moments. Moreover, Beatrice's hair, which is seen to have been dishevelled by Francesco at the beginning of III.1, marks her similarity with Philomela. Leila Walker has discussed the 'ekphrasis of hair' in *The Cenci* and in another poem of Shelley's, 'On the Medusa of Leonardo Da Vinci, in the Florentine Gallery'. Walker maps 'an ekphrastic trajectory that moves not just from sight to speech, but from the politics of witness to the politics of social implication'.[456] Walker observes that: 'The hair attached to the head can […] become a site of oppressive patriarchal contact, and of struggle.'[457] This is seen in III.1.

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[451] Ovid, *Met.* 6.549-62.
[452] *[…] si copia detur, / in populos veniam; si silvis clausa tenebor, / inplebo silvas et conscia saxa movebo;* ('If I should have the chance, I would go where people throng and tell it; if I am kept shut up in these woods, I will fill the woods with my story and move the very rocks to pity.' Ovid, *Met.* 6.545-7).
[453] 'At supper I will give you the petition', I.2.62.
[454] Shelley uses this line in a letter to Peacock in response to the Peterloo Massacre of August 1819, which I point out in a footnote in section 2.1.4 of Chapter Two.
[455] *PS* 2, 781.
[456] Leila Walker, 'Percy Bysshe Shelley and the Ekphrasis of Hair', *European Romantic Review,* 24 (2013), pp. 231 – 250.
[457] Walker, 240.

Shelley also comments on Beatrice's hair in his Preface, when recalling the portrait thought to be of Beatrice, by Guido. There, he writes: 'Her head is bound with folds of white drapery from which the yellow strings of her golden hair escape, and fall about her neck' (*PS* 2, 735). Beatrice's hair connotes energy and movement for Shelley, even when seen in a flat, two-dimensional portrait. In *The Cenci*'s closing moments, Beatrice and Lucretia attend to one another's hair: '[…] bind up this hair / In any simple knot; aye, that does well. / And yours I see is coming down. How often / Have we done this for one another!' (V.4.160-3). While Beatrice's hair acts as 'a site of oppressive patriarchal contact', it is also a site of restorative maternal contact.[458] As I will discuss in greater detail, Beatrice's hair serves to signal her transition between identities, as she goes from embodying a new Dido, to a new Philomela, to a new Procne and Medea, and finally returns to the gentle being that Shelley recognised in the portrait.

In Ovid's tale of Philomela, the poet references Philomela's hair in order to signal her vulnerability. Her vulnerability is gender-specific, since she is sexually assaulted and physically overwhelmed by Tereus, a male aggressor. Ovid also alludes to Procne's hair in the passages where she rescues her sister, Philomela, under the guise of a Bacchic festival, and when she murders Itys in order to punish Tereus. In Ovid's text, the hair of the female characters figures both as a symbol of vulnerability and of power, in the form of wrath. In Seneca's *Medea,* the protagonist's hair streams free, 'unbound', at the moment she gathers herbs to concoct a poisonous crown for Jason's new wife.[459] This echoes Ovid's presentation of Medea at *Metamorphoses* 7.257.

[458] Walker, 240.
[459] Hair does feature in Euripides' *Medea,* when Medea gifts the poisoned crown to her rival, Glauce. Glauce brushes her hair contentedly as part of her daily routine. Then the poison from the crown begins to work and she shakes her hair about in an effort to remove it (Euripides, *Medea* 1160-1180). However, Euripides does not make use of Medea's own hair.

For both Ovid and Seneca, the hair of their female protagonists signals their transformation. Tousled hair in particular is synonymous with hysteria and disorder. The hair of Philomela and Medea, who both suffer because of a male character, becomes symptomatic both of their trauma and of their transition to monster or predator. Like Ovid's Philomela, Beatrice's hair becomes dishevelled after she is allegedly raped. Her hair appears to remain dishevelled until the very end of the play, when she and Lucretia share that intimate, mother-daughter moment quoted above. Like Seneca's Medea, therefore, whose hair is freed from its restraints during her pursuit of revenge against Jason, Beatrice's hair seems to stay dishevelled throughout her revenge arc. In the Roman texts, unbound, free-flowing hair plays a part both in male-on-female violence and in female-on-male violence.

In *The Cenci*, Beatrice's hair becomes loosened at the hands of her father. Like Ovid's Philomela, Beatrice's hair is complicit in the violence against her. As Walker observes, 'hair' in *The Cenci* is figured 'as the point where the self loses control of itself'.[460] Indeed, following Beatrice's entrance to the stage in III.1, she resorts to speaking about herself in the third person. She says to Lucretia, 'Do you know / I thought I was that wretched Beatrice / Men speak of […] (III.1.42-4). Having lost control over her body, in the way that we will see now, Beatrice loses her sense of self. This is one of two moments that signal Beatrice's loss of bodily autonomy. One is:

> […] How comes this hair undone?
> Its wandering strings must be what blind me so,
> And yet I tied it fast. […]
>
> III.1.6-8

Here, Beatrice staggers on-stage in a hallucinatory state, as a result of the extreme trauma she has just suffered at being raped by her father. There is a nod to the Oedipus tragedy here:

[460] Walker, 240.

when Beatrice first enters, she is convinced that her eyes are 'full of blood' (III.1.2), just like Oedipus after he uses pins to blind himself, having come to that awful realisation that Jocasta is his biological mother. In this moment, Beatrice forgets how her hair has become untidy. She mistakes her hair for blood, temporarily losing the cognitive ability to discern between her different body-parts. Her body is no longer her own, but that of another renowned tragic figure, Oedipus.

Beatrice informs Lucretia and the audience why her hair has become 'undone'. She says, 'I thought I was that wretched Beatrice […] whom her father sometimes hales / From hall to hall by the entangled hair' (III.1.43-4). At IV.1.1-6, Francesco Cenci confirms Beatrice's recollection. He complains: 'She comes not; yet I left her even now / Vanquished and faint. She knows the penalty / Of her delay; […] Might I not drag her by the golden hair?' Francesco has been using his daughter's hair as a tool to physically drag her through the halls of the palace whenever he desires her. Francesco's reference to Beatrice's 'golden hair' reminds the audience of the comments that Shelley made in his Preface, when he recalled 'the yellow strings' of Beatrice's 'golden hair' (*PS* 2, 735). Shelley contrasts his own vision of Beatrice with that of his Francesco, who seeks to ruin his daughter's hair and use it as a weapon against her. In this way, Beatrice's hair is integral to how others view her. At the hands of Francesco, her hair is a useful prop which he can use to facilitate his incestuous desires. Through Shelley's lens, Beatrice's hair represents her beauty, which has lasted beyond her life, thanks to the portrait which is thought to be of her.

Although Shelley stages the rape of Beatrice out of sight, her report of being 'hale(d) from hall to hall by the entangled hair' is reminiscent of Philomela's rape scene, in Ovid. There, Tereus used Philomela's hair to restrain her while he cut out her tongue:

> *Talibus ira feri postquam commota tyranni*
> *nec minor hac metus est, causa stimulatus utraque,*

quo fuit accinctus, vagina liberat ensem
arreptamque coma fixis post terga lacertis
vincla pati cogit; iugulum Philomela parabat
spemque suae mortis viso conceperat ense:
ille indignantem et nomen patris usque vocantem
luctantemque loqui conprensam forcipe linguam
abstulit ense fero. radix micat ultima linguae,
ipsa iacet terraeque tremens inmurmurat atrae,
utque salire solet mutilatae cauda colubrae,
palpitat et moriens dominae vestigia quaerit.

Ovid *Metamorphoses* 6.549-60

('The savage tyrant's wrath was aroused by these words, and his fear no less. Pricked on by both these spurs, he drew his sword which was hanging by his side in its sheath, caught her by the hair, and twisting her arms behind her back, he bound them fast. At sight of the sword Philomela gladly offered her throat to the stroke, filled with the eager hope of death. But he seized her tongue with pincers, as it protested against the outrage, calling ever on the name of her father and struggling to speak, and cut it off with his merciless blade. The mangled root quivers, while the severed tongue lies palpitating on the dark earth, faintly murmuring; and, as the severed tail of a mangled snake is wont to writhe, it twitches convulsively, and with its last dying movement it seeks its mistress's feet.')

Ovid also compares Philomela to a dove whose 'feathers' are 'blood-stained', *columba suo madefactis sanguine plumis* (*Metamorphoses* 6. 529). This simile evokes the idea that Philomela herself is blood-stained, and her hair in particular. The 'soaked feathers', *madefactis […] plumis* seem to represent Philomela's hair. While her hair may not actually be blood-stained like the dove's feathers, Ovid signifies that Philomela's hair has played a crucial role in the acts of sexual violation and mutilation that she has just endured. Like Beatrice, her body is no longer her own. Shelley therefore employs Beatrice's hair in a similar way to Ovid, both as a symbol of feminine vulnerability, and further, as a tool by which the male figure - in both cases, a man of considerable social and political status - enforced this vulnerability by using her own hair against her.

But, in Ovid and Seneca, the hair of Procne and Medea also signifies autonomy and power. Their hair features in the passages depicting their revenge against the man who wronged them. In both Euripides' and Seneca's *Medeas*, part of Medea's drive towards

vengeance is borne from her unstable status in Corinth now that Jason has ended their marriage. Medea is forced into the position of exile, about to be ordered out of the country by the king, Creon, whose daughter Jason has married instead. She is a refugee. Medea's motivation for murdering her children is therefore multilayered. On the one hand, she is responding to Jason's betrayal within a domestic context, as a grieved wife and mother. On the other hand, she is furious because, having helped Jason to get the golden fleece and reach Corinth, she has now been side-lined and even threatened with death if she does not leave.

Ovid makes use of Medea's hair while she is out gathering herbs to create a medicine for Jason's ailing father, Aeson. At *Metamorphoses* 7.182-3, Medea's hair is 'unadorned': *egreditur tectis vestes induta recinctas, / nuda pedem, nudos umeris infusa capillos […]* ('She left the palace, dressed in unclasped robes, Bare footed, her unadorned hair streaming over her shoulders […]'). At *Metamorphoses* 7.257-60, Medea carries out Bacchic-inspired rituals for Hecate: *passis Medea capillis / bacchantum ritu flagrantis circuit aras / multifidasque faces in fossa sanguinis atra / tinguit […]* ('With streaming hair Medea circled the burning altars like a Bacchant and dipped many-branched torches into the black trenches of blood.') In Seneca, Medea is depicted in much the same way as she gathers herbs in order to poison Jason's new wife, Creusa, and Creon. At 752-3, Seneca's Medea narrates her actions: *Tibi more gentis vinculo solvens comam / secreta nudo nemora lustravi […]* ('For you (Hecate), loosening my hair from its bands after the manner of my people, I have trodden the secret groves […]'). She also wears her hair loose when carrying out the rituals to prepare for the murder of her children: *[…] tibi funereo de more iacens / passos cingit uitta capillos, / tibi iactatur tristis Stygia / ramus ab unda, / tibi nudato pectore maenas / sacro feriam bracchia cultro* ('For you, a cap binds my flowing hair in the funeral fashion, for you, a gloomy branch from the Stygian stream is brandished, for you, with bared breast will I, a Maenad, strike my arms with the sacrificial knife', Seneca, *Medea* 802-7). Here, Medea is

retying her hair in 'the funeral fashion', anticipating the deaths that are still to come. In Seneca's text, Medea's witchcraft is utilised for far darker, more destructive ends than in Ovid. In both texts, however, she is associated with witchcraft and therefore disorder. There is a factually accurate, historical dimension as to how and why Ovid and Seneca are characterising Medea in this way. It is thought that Maenads, worshippers of Bacchus, wore their hair loose when performing rituals to the god. Therefore, Medea's loosened hair is a symbol of her Maenadic status, associating her further with transgression and wilderness.

Given that she has loosened her hair in order to carry out the rituals to Hecate, one can assume that Medea's hair remains *passi* when she murders the sons she shares with Jason. While Philomela's hair was compared to the 'blood-stained feathers' of a trembling dove at *Metamorphoses* 6.529, it becomes stained 'with the blood of the frenzied murder' when she partakes in her own revenge sequence.[461] Medea is in a similar frenzy when Seneca describes her, about to murder her sons*: quonam cruenta maenas / praeceps amore saevo / rapitur*? ('to where is this blood-stained maenad borne head-long by mad passion?' *Medea* 849-51). The chorus watches her 'reckless fury' warily (*impotenti* / … *furore*, *Medea* 851-2). *Furor* in particular marks a possible intertextual link to Philomela's *furiali caede*. The two women are connected by vocabulary that depicts them as 'mad' or 'crazed'.

Furthermore, the hair of Virgil's Dido plays a part in her retaliation against Aeneas leaving. At the end of *Aeneid* 4, Dido conducts a ritualistic ceremony, under the guise that this ceremony is to erase her memories of Aeneas.[462] Dido takes on the role of priestess in

[461] *intus habes, quem poscis' ait: circumspicit ille / atque, ubi sit, quaerit; quaerenti iterumque vocanti, / sicut erat sparsis furiali caede capillis, / prosiluit Ityosque caput Philomela cruentum / misit in ora patris* […, 'You have him you want inside you!' she (Procne) says: he looks around and asks where he is; while he is questioning and calling upon him again thus, Philomela leaps forward, her hair dishevelled with the frenzied murder and sends the bloody head of Itys into his father's face', Ovid, *Met.* 6.655-9.
[462] *non tamen Anna novis praetexere funera sacris / germanam credit […]* ('Yet Anna thinks not that her sister veils her death under these strange rites', *Aeneid* 4.500-1).

order to burn Aeneas' outfit and his sword.[463] As part of this role-play, her hair hangs loose: *[…] crinis effusa sacerdos / ter centum tonat ore deos […]* ('with streaming hair the priestess calls in thunder tones on thrice a hundred gods', *Aeneid* 4.509-10). Dido's ceremonial ritual is her own form of retaliation against Aeneas. Although her vengeance takes the form of a curse and her suicide, it is significant that Dido's hair is mentioned at the moment that she responds to Aeneas' betrayal of her.

Philomela, Procne, Medea, and even Dido each disturb the expectations of their gender. Nicole Loraux suggests that in Greek tragedy, deaths are gendered. A woman can 'can seek a womanly way of ending her life, by the noose, or she can steal a man's death by seizing a sword'.[464] I argue that in the texts by Ovid and Seneca, this idea translates into situations where the woman murders a male character – or her children. It was typical that women in classical tragedy and other forms of literature would die or kill by way of poison or hanging, seen as 'a womanly way of ending her life'.[465] Medea, in Ovid's and Seneca's versions of her story, makes use of her familiarity with witchcraft for mixing potions. However, Seneca's Medea moves from using the tools generally attributed to female figures, to the tools attributed to the male. Specifically, she takes up the dagger.[466] Ovid's Procne and Philomela undergo a similar transition in *Metamorphoses* 6, when Procne re-enacts Philomela's rape and the mutilation of her tongue in stabbing Itys.[467] In this story, Ovid constructs a deliberate verbal parallel to make the murder of Itys echo the cutting out of

[463] […] super exuvias ensemque relictum / effigiemque toro locat […] ('On top, upon the couch, she lays the dress he wore, the sword he left, and an image of him […]', *Aeneid* 4.507-8).
[464] Nicole Loraux, *Tragic Ways of Killing a Woman*, trans. Anthony Fraser (Harvard, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 17.
[465] Loraux, 17.
[466] *[…] tibi nudato / pectore maenas sacro feriam / bracchia cultro […]* ('to thee with bared breast will I as a maenad smite my arms with the sacrificial knife', *Medea* 805-7).
[467] *[…] tendentemque manus et iam sua fata videntem / et "mater! mater!" clamantem et colla petentem / ense ferit Procne, lateri qua pectus adhaeret […]* ('while the boy stretched out pleading hands as he saw his fate, and screamed, "Mother! mother!" and sought to throw his arms around her neck, Procne smote him with a knife between breast and side […]' *Met.* 6.639-41).

Philomela's tongue, which in turn was evocative of the rape. Moreover, I believe that Philomela's silence (an incapacity for telling the truth) is paralleled by Tereus' ignorance as to the whereabouts of his son after he has eaten him (an incapacity for knowing the truth): *tantaque nox animi est, "Ityn huc accersite!" dixit* ('And in the utter blindness of his understanding he cries: "Go, call me Itys hither!", *Metamorphoses* 6.652). Therefore, when Philomela and Medea and even Dido are wronged, they respond by inhabiting the role of their aggressor.

Shelley seemed hesitant to present Beatrice's story as though it were a revenge narrative. In his Preface he states that: 'Revenge, retaliation, atonement, are pernicious mistakes. If Beatrice had thought in this manner […] she would never have been a tragic character' (*PS* 2, 730-1). 'Men', Shelley writes, 'seek the justification of Beatrice, yet feel that she has done what needs justification' (*PS* 2, 731). However, Beatrice does at times inhabit the role of tragic heroines who came before her, who formulated vengeance against men who did them harm. Alongside Lucretia, Beatrice at first adheres to a womanly method for incapacitating Francesco. In order to prepare for Francesco's murder by the hired assassins, Marzio and Olimpio, Lucretia has given him a sedative. Beatrice and Lucretia speak of their involvement in this first attempt at Francesco's murder:

LUCRETIA

I mixed an opiate with his drink;
He sleeps so soundly--

BEATRICE

That his death will be
But as a change of sin-chastising dreams,
A dark continuance of the hell within him,
Which God extinguish! [...]

The Cenci IV.2.30-4

Shelley's Beatrice and Lucretia here behave in a way that an ancient audience may have expected of two female figures. They have used 'an opiate' in Francesco's drink to sedate him. Like Medea, who was seen gathering herbs to medicate Aeson in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 7 and to poison Creon and Creusa in Euripides and Seneca's tragedies, Lucretia and Beatrice are harnessing medicine, used here as a non-violent weapon, to destructive ends. Medea's capacity for concocting herbal remedies and poisons is integral to her identity. According to Euripides, Ovid, and Seneca, Medea is a priestess of Hecate, goddess of the underworld. She is related to the witch, Circe. Her involvement with witchcraft is intended to be troubling. Given the climax of Medea's story, in which she murders the children that she shares with Jason, Medea represents everything that traditional gender roles dictated she should not be. She is a woman - a mother - who incites fear and who causes destruction, rather than reproduction and nourishment. Her actions are particularly troubling because of her gender. Therefore, while medicating Francesco by secretly imbuing his 'drink' with 'an opiate' is an act of transgression according to their gender, I read Lucretia and Beatrice as behaving like Medea in the episodes in which she exercises a power that is exclusive to a female character. Their role in Francesco's death is, thus far, a womanly one.

Furthermore, the unity between Lucretia and Beatrice is evident in these lines, as well as in the tragedy's closing moments. The lines quoted above reveal an intimacy between the daughter and stepmother. This is a moment of coalition: Beatrice even finishes Lucretia's sentence in line 31, as though Shelley is emphasising their oneness. I find that Beatrice and Lucretia's relationship throughout the tragedy is akin to the female alliance that we see in Ovid's tale of Philomela. There, Procne and Philomela's sisterhood seemed to address a history of bonds between female figures in classical tragedy. When Procne rescued Philomela from the palace Tereus had locked her away in, she did so under the guise of a Bacchic ritual, historically a cult for women only, disguising her sister with foliage and other Bacchae

attire.[468] Further, in both Ovid's and Seneca's texts, Medea alludes to her own sisterhood by referencing Hecate and the practices involved with her worship. Medea proclaims that she is wearing her hair loosened, 'in the manner of my people', thus alerting the audience as to the group that she is a part of. Outcast by the society in which she finds herself, Medea perhaps finds comfort in resembling a Bacchant. This also serves to remind her of the revenge that she is capable of. I find it fitting that Shelley emphasises Lucretia's and Beatrice's unity at this particular moment, when they reveal that they have worked together to sedate Francesco in anticipation of his murder.

At *The Cenci* IV.3.31-3, Beatrice reprimands the assassins, Marzio and Olimpio, for their 'cowardice' after they initially falter. They say: 'We dare not kill an old and sleeping man' (IV.3.9). Beatrice answers:

> [*Snatching a dagger from one of them, and raising it.*
> Hadst thou a tongue to say it
> She murdered her own father, I must do it!
> But never dream ye shall outlive him long!
>
> *The Cenci* IV.3.31-3

Here, Beatrice momentarily takes hold of the knife, adopting a role that would have been considered 'masculine' to the audience of a classical tragedy. Beatrice grants herself agency in the situation, physically holding the tool that will penetrate her father's body. In the

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[468] *Tempus erat, quo sacra solent trieterica Bacchi / Sithoniae celebrare nurus: (nox conscia sacris, / nocte sonat Rhodope tinnitibus aeris acuti / nocte sua est egressa domo regina deique / ritibus instruitur furialiaque accipit arma; / vite caput tegitur, lateri cervina sinistro / vellera dependent, umero levis incubat hasta. / concita per silvas turba comitante suarum / terribilis Procne furiisque agitata doloris, / Bacche, tuas simulat: venit ad stabula avia tandem / exululatque euhoeque sonat portasque refringit / germanamque rapit raptaeque insignia Bacchi / induit et vultus hederarum frondibus abdit / attonitamque trahens intra sua moenia ducit.*('It was the time when the Thracian matrons were wont to celebrate the biennial festival of Bacchus. Night was in their secret; by night Mount Rhodope would resound with the shrill clash of brazen cymbals; so by night the queen goes forth from her house, equips herself for the rites of the god and dons the array of frenzy; her head was wreathed with trailing vines, a deer-skin hung from her left side, a light spear rested on her shoulder. Swift she goes through the woods with an attendant throng of her companions, and driven on by the madness of grief, Procne, terrific in her rage, mimics thy madness, O Bacchus! She comes to the secluded lodge at last, shrieks aloud and cries "Euhoe!" breaks down the doors, seizes her sister, arrays her in the trappings of a Bacchante, hides her face with ivy-leaves, and, dragging her along in amazement, leads her within her own walls.' *Met.* 6.587-600).

manner of Procne's revenge against Tereus, Beatrice momentarily achieves – or seeks to achieve – a symmetrical response to the violation that Francesco enacted against her. Moreover, the 'womanly' role that Beatrice has thus far inhabited is no longer sufficient. To ensure that the assassins will carry out the murder, she must think and behave like a man.

Beatrice fleetingly resembles Procne and Medea when she takes up the dagger. She may also share their physical attributes. I have in mind the 'blood-soaked' hair, which, as I explain above, is integral to the descriptions of Procne and Medea at the moments in which they enact their revenge. Beatrice's hair cannot be 'blood-soaked' literally, but the evidence seems to suggest that her hair remains dishevelled throughout Acts IV and V, until she and Lucretia retie their hair at V.4.160-164. At III.1.6, we saw that Beatrice's hair had come 'undone', but she did not remember how. At IV.1.1-12, Francesco complains that Beatrice has not come to him when he ordered her to, threatening: 'She knows the penalty / Of her delay […] Might I not drag her by the golden hair?' (IV.1.2-3;6). I posit that for the period of time in which Beatrice takes part in formulating and carrying out the revenge plot against Francesco, she does not resemble the 'gentle' being that Shelley recognised in the portrait attributed to Guido. Rather, her appearance – specifically, her 'undone' hair – signifies a likeness to Procne and Medea.

Even after being involved with the crime of parricide, Shelley portrays Beatrice through a sympathetic lens. At V.2.60, Cardinal Camillo is 'much moved' by Beatrice's defence: 'Shame on these tears! I thought the heart was frozen / Which is their fountain.' (V.2.61-2). Beatrice reminds Camillo of 'mine own nephew' (V.2.64). Shelley also appears to restore Beatrice to the version in the portrait that he sympathized with. At V.4.160-2, Beatrice asks Lucretia to 'bind up this hair', and comments 'yours I see is coming down'. Beatrice's hair, now 'in any simple knot' once more, symbolises the end of her revenge sequence, and indeed, the end of her story in its entirety. The tragedy of Beatrice's death is

heightened, I argue, by Shelley's reminder of her 'gentle' nature, which he detailed in the play's Preface. She is no longer the vengeful, disordered self that she embodied after the rape by Francesco.

3.3 'their mingled blood': Shelley's Francesco and Seneca's *Thyestes*

The events of *The Cenci* hinge on the crimes committed by Francesco Cenci. Stuart Curran makes the compelling argument that the rape of Beatrice, which will 'plunge' the family 'into ruin', is 'an everlasting symbol of Cenci's potency', meaning that he 'will not grow old'.[469] I agree, since, through his crimes, Francesco Cenci ensures that his reputation will be immortal. In Shelley's tragedy, Francesco's initial attacks against Beatrice and her brothers, and their stepmother, Lucretia, form the epicentre of their suffering and their subsequent pursuit of revenge. Moreover, as with Beatrice and the figures Dido, Philomela, Procne, and Medea, Shelley appears to stylize Francesco as a new Atreus, the villain in Seneca's *Thyestes.* Crucially, *Thyestes* has an intertextual relationship with Ovid's tale of Philomela, and the missing tragedies of Tereus on which Ovid's story is based. At *The Cenci* I.3.81, Shelley's audience is reminded of the horrifying scene in Seneca's *Thystes* when Francesco Cenci imagines that he is drinking his sons' 'mingled blood' (I.3.81) at the banquet. The quotation in full reads:

> Oh, thou bright wine, whose purple splendour leaps
> And bubbles gaily in this golden bowl
> Under the lamplight, as my spirits do,
> To hear the death of my accurséd sons!
> Could I believe thou wert their mingled blood,
> Then would I taste thee like a sacrament,
> And pledge with thee the mighty Devil in Hell;
> […]
>
> I.3.77-83

[469] Curran (1970), 78-9.

Michael Rossington indicates the similarities between line 81, 'their mingled blood', and Seneca's *Thyestes* 917 (*mixtum suorum sanguinem genitor bibat,* 'His sons' mingled blood let the father drink'). This moment in *The Cenci* is replete with Senecan horror. It also suggests that Shelley is in dialogue with broader themes from the classical tragic canon, particularly the themes associated with Bacchic ritualism such as excessive emotions and the threat to order, seen here in Francesco's unnatural appetite for his sons' blood. Shelley thereby restages the climactic ending of *Thyestes* in Act I.3 of his tragedy. Francesco's desire to kill and even drink the blood of his own children is introduced to the audience through Senecan language. However, I suggest that Shelley escalates the horror of Seneca's text by having his Francesco self-consciously play up to the role of Thyestes. In an act that perhaps transcends even Atreus, Francesco is glad to have killed his sons. Unlike the unknowing Thyestes, Shelley's Francesco wants to drink his children's blood. He seeks to live up to and even surpass the standard for evil as set by Seneca's Atreus.

For both Seneca's Atreus and Shelley's Francesco, it is implied that the desire to commit the crime of eating or drinking the blood of one's children is linked to political ambitions. In a conversation with his attendant near the beginning of *Thyestes*, Atreus shares his dangerous attitude with regard to the rights of kings. At 205-6, Atreus argues that a king is allowed to do whatever he pleases: *[…] Maximum hoc regni bonum est, / quod facta domini cogitur populus sui / tam ferre quam laudare* ('The greatest advantage this of royal power, that their master's deeds the people are compelled as well to bear as praise.')[470] This dialogue anticipates the awful crimes that Atreus will commit, and those that he will force his brother, Thystes, to commit. The acts of infanticide and forced cannibalism are terrible examples of the 'royal power' that Atreus here presents himself as having. Atreus feels that

[470] This and all subsequent references to Seneca's *Thyestes* are taken from Seneca, *Tragedies*, ed. and trans. by John. G. Fitch, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), unless otherwise stated.

he is justified to do anything without consequences. Seneca's tragedy seems to portray a troubling relationship between the domestic and political spheres. Atreus responds to the attempted usurpation by his brother, which is a crime in the political sphere, by murdering his nephews, disrupting the order within the domestic sphere. Meanwhile, in Shelley's *The Cenci,* the poet can be seen to mediate between the labyrinthine Cenci Palace and the broader setting of sixteenth-century Italy. Francesco exercises unchallenged power within the household and in Rome, by way of nurturing a reciprocal relationship with the Pope.

I begin with Seneca's use of forshadowing in *Thyestes*. Atreus says that he wants to recreate the Thracian banquet as seen in Ovid's tale of Philomela in *Metamorphoses* 6. Seneca writes: *[…] vidit infandas domus / Odrysia mensas – fateor, immane est scelus, sed occupatum; maius hoc aliquid dolor / inveniat. animum Daulis inspira parens / sororque;* ('The Odrysian house once saw a feast unspeakable – 'tis a monstrous crime, I grant, but it has been done before; let my smart find something worse than this. Inspire my soul, O Daulian mother, aye and sister, too […]', *Thyestes* 272-6). Atreus asks to be 'inspired' by Procne and Philomela in the way that one might expect a character to summon the gods. *Thyestes* self-consciously compares itself to iterations of the story of King Tereus. This type of banquet 'has happened before', and it will happen again. The crimes will be repeated. Atreus' language here is self-aware. Seneca, momentarily breaking down the fourth wall, alerts his audience as to the family of stories to which his tragedy belongs. He reminds us of the story of Philomela and Tereus. This both allows the audience to anticipate the sequence of events that is about to come, and sees Atreus self-consciously fulfil a role as offered to him by the tragic genre.

Moreover, Seneca 'stages' the banquet twice. The actual event is premeditated both by the allusion to Tereus and through Atreus' language. When he announces his plan to his

attendant at 271-9, Atreus uses vocabulary that will be echoed in the messenger's report of the plan in action at lines 776-88. The two passages of significance read as follows:

> […] *liberos avidus pater*
> *gaudensque laceret et suos artus edat*
>
> ('Greedy and rejoicing, may the father tear his children
> and eat their limbs […]')
>
> *Thyestes* 277-8

> […] *lancinat natos pater*
> *artusque mandit ore funesto suos;*
>
> ('The father tears his sons
> and chews their limbs with his polluted mouth […]')
>
> *Thyestes* 778-9

The similarities between the imagined scene and the real scene are clearly intended. In both instances, the sons come first, *liberos* and *natos.* The *pater* takes a slightly delayed but emphatic position at the end of the line in both passages. The second line in each example begins with a present participle or noun with *que* which is followed by a verb. In both sentences the verb conveys physical violence: *laceret* and *mandit,* 'may he tear' and 'chew'. Both are governed by *pater*, and both are evocative of the bodies in the scene, in particular of the father's body doing the tearing and the chewing. There are subtle differences between the two scenes, however, which mark the transition from Atreus' projection of his imagination to the action really happening. One is that the first scene uses the subjunctive: 'may the father tear his sons' / 'may he eat their limbs'. In the next scene, the messenger uses the indicative present: 'the father tears his sons and chews their limbs'. The audience moves from hearing the action described in jussive subjunctives, that is, a wish or desire, to hearing about the action as it finally happens. Moreover, *liberos* is substituted for *natos* in the second episode. This distinction means that the second reference to the sons alludes more directly to the act of childbirth, since *natos* comes from the perfect participle of *nascor,* that is, 'those having been

born / birthed'. In the real scenario, Seneca appeals to the relationship between child and parent even more strongly. He reverses the natural order of birth by having the father consume the child ('womb' becomes 'tomb', as in Ovid's Procne and Philomela).[471] The two scenes are the same. Emotively, the second one deepens the reader's understanding that this is an extreme and irreversibly transgressive event.

I argue that when Francesco Cenci drinks wine at the banquet at *The Cenci* I.3, and imagines that it is the blood of his two sons mixed together, it seems as though Shelley is alluding to the banquet scenes from Seneca's *Thyestes* and Ovid's tale of Philomela. Like Atreus' attendant, who asked his master to 'choose other agents of thy grim design' (that is, not Thyestes' own sons) at 308, the guests at Francesco's banquet refuse to be complicit in his behaviour. Francesco announces that he has invited his guests to the banquet in order to celebrate the deaths of his sons Rocco and Cristofano (I.3.21-33). After he describes the nature of their deaths (I.3.55-69), one guest announces: 'Oh, horrible! I will depart.' (I.3.70). Another guest wonders whether they ought to 'stay! / I do believe it is some jest' (I.3.70-1). However, the pivotal moment seems to come when Francesco imagines that his wine, the 'purple splendour' (I.3.77), 'wert their mingled blood' (I.3.81), that is, the blood of his deceased sons. Then, other guests agree to depart and even to 'seize, silence him!' (I.3.94), although Francesco 'address[es] those who rise with a threatening gesture' (I.3.96). Francesco's hunger for blood is both literal and metaphorical. Not only is he able to stomach the idea of drinking his sons' blood, but he also craves dominion of a different kind over another body, seen in his sexual abuse of Beatrice and his physical abuse of Lucretia and Bernardo. He also subordinates his guests with 'a threatening gesture' when they try to leave the banquet hall.

[471] Marder, 161.

Curran states that for Shelley's Francesco Cenci, 'the law of God and nature demands that the powerful sit alone: thrones are held by one ruler, and interference with his will is treason.'[472] This summary is remarkably similar to the beliefs held by Seneca's Atreus. J. Rufus Fears investigates Seneca's treatment of imperial power across his works, some of which propose that imperial power is granted by humans, others that it is granted by the gods.[473] Fears guides us towards lines 607-9 of *Thyestes,* where the Chorus pleads with Atreus to not carry out the murder of his nephews: *Vos quibus rector maris atque terrae / ius dedit magnum necis atque vitae, / ponite inflatos tumidosque vultus;* ('O you, to whom the ruler of sea and land has given unbounded right o'er life and death, abate your inflated, swelling pride […]', 607-9).[474] Both the authors of *The Cenci* and *Thyestes* explore the problems that arise when an individual achieves absolute power.

In Seneca's *Thyestes,* Atreus debates with his attendant on what is morally correct and incorrect for a king. There is, I believe, a clear connection between Atreus' belief in absolute power as a political leader and in the microcosmic domestic tragedy that happens in the narrative's climax. The deeply unsettling and horrifying murders that Atreus commits come as a result of the view that he has of kingship, that he has power to do whatever he pleases.

The statements from Atreus that I have in mind are:

> *Maximum hoc regni bonum est,*
> *Quod facta domini cogitur populus sui*
> *Tam ferre quam laudare.*
>
> ('The greatest advantage this of royal power, that their master's deeds the people are compelled as well to bear as praise.')
>
> *Thyestes* 205-7

[472] Curran (1970), 84.
[473] J. Rufus Fears, 'Nero as the Vicegerent of the Gods in Seneca's de Clementia', *Hermes,* 103 (1975), pp. 486-96.
[474] Fears, 490.

> *Sanctitas pietas fides*
> *Privata bona sunt; qua iuvat reges eant.*
>
> ('Honour, virtue, faith are the goods of common men; let kings go where they please.')
>
> *Thyestes* 217-8

Here, Atreus articulates a dangerous view of what he thinks his rights are as king. Seneca foreshadows the consequences of Atreus' beliefs that will happen later. The audience are introduced to him as a character who does not believe in boundaries. The line 'kings may go wherever they please', *qua iuvat reges eant*, is indicative of literal transgressions. Furthermore, Seneca's Atreus tells his audience exactly the kind of values that he is going to overturn: 'sanctity, piety and loyalty'. These were important values within the household and within the broader social and political infrastructure of the Roman empire. Therefore, Atreus is playing the part that Dido and Medea played in their own tragedies: he is a threat to ordered society.

Through his characterisation of Francesco Cenci, Shelley alludes to the myth of the Atreus household, of which Seneca is a well-known representative. Shelley's Francesco is the head of a household. He represents an abusive domestic patriarch. However, his partnership with the Pope shows Shelley's audience that this abuse transcends the barriers of the household and reaches the broader political landscape of Rome, too. *The Cenci* opens with Francesco in dialogue with Cardinal Camillo. They are having a conversation regarding the Pope's pardoning of Cenci's crimes. Camillo confirms: 'That matter of the murder is hushed up / If you consent to yield his Holiness / Your fief that lies beyond the Pincian gate' (I.1.1-3).[475] Shelley's drama begins by mapping the extent of Francesco Cenci's crimes and also the corruption of the Catholic Church. At once, the audience has in their sights a view of Rome that is not limited to the Cenci Palace, which is where the opening scene is staged, but a view

[475] Michael Rossington notes the location of the gate, as an entrance to the city from the North, *PS* 2, 732.

of further afield in the city. The audience is aware immediately that Francesco is a man of considerable status. The nature of this status also made clear: Cenci is involved in a reciprocal relationship with the Pope, whereby he pays the Catholic church for pardon for his many crimes, including murders. The world that Shelley has his audience enter into is one of deep-rooted and far-reaching corruption.

Two of Beatrice's 'enemies', Francesco and Orsino, are associated with Bacchic ritualism at different moments in the tragedy. We saw that Orsino cast himself as the 'panther' in his relationship with Beatrice (I.2.89-91). I have also demonstrated that Bacchic ritualism led to a reclamation of power and the formulation of revenge for Ovid's Procne and Seneca's Medea. Shelley also seems to transfer aspects of the Roman Bacchic tradition onto Francesco Cenci. At I.3.76-90, Francesco horrified his guests by proclaiming that he wished his bowl of wine were his sons' 'mingled blood'. At I.3.95, he leaves what appears to be a wine-induced reverie, in which he was enjoying the idea of his sons suffering a painful death, to snap at his guests: 'Who moves? Who speaks?'. At I.3.164, Francesco complains that 'My brain is swimming round;', probably owed to the wine he has indulged in, but perhaps also indicating that he is not presently of sound mind. One of the hallmarks of Bacchic ritualism was the idea of excess: excessive drunkenness, drug-taking, feasting, sex, and general indulgence were commonplace during the worship of Dionysus in Greece and of Bacchus in Italy. At I.3.164-5, Francesco comments on his poor clarity of thought. His remedy, however, is to continue drinking the wine that has apparently caused his psychosis. Not only does Shelley allude to the practice of drinking alcohol and taking hallucinogenic drugs, which is thought to be a common practice amongst Bacchic worshippers, he also associates Francesco with the idea of excess. Stuart Curran states that Shelley's Cenci 'is hungry for power' and 'for the things that denote power'.[476] Francesco exercises his power by weakening his sons:

[476] Curran (1970), 79).

he enjoys 'the satisfaction of gloating over his son's weakness', which is contrasted with his own greed.[477] Earlier in section 3.3 (on page 41), I allude to the idea that Francesco Cenci's hunger for blood is indicative of the different kinds of power that he exercises throughout the play. Shelley's Cenci is insatiable. His desire for blood is increased, not fulfilled, by his sons' gruesome deaths. Furthermore, unlike Thyestes, who ate his children's flesh at the climax of the tragedy, at the moment of the banquet Francesco Cenci has yet to commit one of his most terrible and irreversible crimes: the rape of Beatrice.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have endeavoured to show how Roman texts aided Shelley when handling the Cenci family legend into dramatic, tragic form. Through their treatment of sensitive subjects like rape, physical mutilation, suicide, and infanticide, I believe that Virgil, Ovid, and Seneca each help Shelley to render the two-dimensional portrait that he deemed to be of Beatrice Cenci, into a stirring drama. Shelley's Beatrice and his Francesco do not fall into the trap of becoming stereotypes. In particular, Beatrice is not portrayed as a victim of her circumstances. Rather, in elevating her character to the standards of tragic heroines who came before her, Shelley creates a multidimensional, sometimes flawed figure, who both elicits the audience's sympathy and makes us question the morality of her actions. Shelley wished to represent the characters 'as they probably were'.[478] In encountering a story so horrifying, and yet one that retained the interest of its audiences two hundred years after the events, Shelley seemed to think it important that he write a version of it for an English audience. The authors of ancient Roman tragedies and tragic episodes aided him in translating his story, not only

[477] Curran (1970), 80.
[478] *PS* 2, 731.

from Italian into English, but from his imagination onto the page, and subsequently onto the stage.

I argue that Shelley was much inspired by Roman tragedy, and I hope to have shown precisely why Seneca and Ovid should not be left out of discussions concerning Shelley's debt to classical tragedy. This challenges ideas from scholars such as Highet, Wallace, and Vance, who have typically insisted that Shelley thought little of Seneca, and that he preferred the Greek tragedians, especially Aeschylus and Sophocles. While I do not deny that Shelley was profoundly affected and influenced by Greek tragedy, I posit that this was also the case for his engagement with Senecan tragedies, as well as with the tragic episodes within Virgil's and Ovid's epic poems.

Chapter Four
‘Like atomies that dance / Within a sunbeam’: Lucretian and Virgilian apparitions in Shelley’s *The Triumph of Life*

4.1.1 Introduction

In his 6 July 1817 letter to Thomas Hogg, Shelley is pleased to hear that Hogg has been reading *De Rerum Natura.* I quote this letter in section 1.3 of my first chapter. Shelley writes:

> I am well acquainted with Lucretius, and am happy to find that you have cultivated an intimacy with him. The 4th book is perhaps the finest. The whole of that passage about love is full of irresistible energy of language as well as the profoundest truth.[479]

Norman Vance has suggested that Shelley was ‘perhaps’ the ‘truest disciple’ of Lucretius.[480] Traces of the later poet’s admiration for *De Rerum Natura* can be found in a number of his works across his career: the first chapter of this thesis investigated Lucretius’ role in informing Shelley’s anti-religious discourse in his *Queen Mab*. In that chapter, I referred to Paul Turner’s 1959 article, ‘Shelley and Lucretius’, which signals allusions to *De Rerum Natura* in a number of Shelley’s works. This chapter looks to *The Triumph of Life*, a poem in which Shelley alludes to a number of Lucretian ideas, including the ancient poet’s explanation of atoms and his comments on the benefits of being an Epicurean.

In a 2023 edition of *The Triumph of Life*, Will Bowers suggests that Shelley makes ‘numerous local allusions to classical authors, especially Euripides, Horace, and Lucretius’.[481] Readers are later guided to *De Rerum Natura* 4.30-7 as a possible source of inspiration for Rousseau’s references to ‘forms’, ‘phantoms’, and ‘shadows’ throughout *TL*

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[479] *PBSL* i, 545.
[480] Norman Vance, ‘Classical Authors, 1790-1880’, *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature, Volume 4 (1790-1880)*, ed. Norman Vance and Jennifer Wallace (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp.29–56, 48.
[481] *SSP*, 809.

480-53.[482] Furthermore, Turner posits that *DRN* 2.1-14, that famous passage in which the poet enjoys 'looking down serenely from a height at the stormy sea of human life' (paraphrased by Turner), influenced Shelley's depiction of Rousseau 'plung[ing]' 'among / The thickest billows of that living storm' at *TL* 465-7.[483] Turner finds two other points of contact between *De Rerum Natura* and *The Triumph of Life*: Shelley's portrayal of night as a 'conical shadow' at *TL* 21-3, which is reminiscent of *DRN* 5.762-4, and the dancing 'atomies' 'within a sunbeam' at *TL* 445-7, which appear to recall *DRN* 2.114-5.[484] Turner's work, while invaluable, serves to signal Shelley's debt to Lucretius in *The Triumph of Life* and other works, rather than to offer a sustained analysis of the impact of these allusions on his poems' meanings. Amanda Jo Goldstein, whose work I refer to in section 0.2 of the Introduction, answers some of the questions that Turner opened up for discussion with regard to Lucretius and *The Triumph of Life*. Goldstein states that, 'among the welter of vitalist, materialist, hylozoist, Spinozist, and animist ontologies familiar to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century thinking […] Lucretius's epic poetic physics offered something unique.'[485] Goldstein suggests that Lucretius retained his value within eighteenth- and nineteenth-century debates surrounding vitalism, so much so that the actual physics of Shelley's speaker's dreamscape and that of Rousseau seems to be modelled on Lucretius' depiction of Epicurean 'science'.[486]

While there has been some scholarly interest in Shelley's debt to Lucretius in *The Triumph of Life*, I find that scholars have fallen short of discussing Lucretian physics in relation to the idea of the triumph itself. At *DRN* 1.62-79, Lucretius exalts Epicurus as a hero, going so far as to compare him to a military leader who 'marched far beyond the flaming

[482] *SSP*, 875.
[483] Turner, 271.
[484] Turner, 275; 281.
[485] Goldstein, 25.
[486] '[…] in *De rerum natura*, reality only ever occurs because, amid the rain of first particles falling in parallel, two come into contact […] Shelley's poem on life seeks out this touched, tinged, contingent matter as equipped to bring the discourses of history, life, and poetry into nontriumphal and timely contact.' Goldstein, 164-5.

walls of the world' and returned 'victorious' and 'bearing his prize'.[487] At *DRN* 6.47, Lucretius himself mounts 'the glorious chariot [of the Muses]' and goes on to lay bare the 'spoils' that he has accumulated during his mission to subordinate *religio*.[488] It therefore seems remiss to not mention Lucretius' metaphorical triumphs when discussing his influence on Shelley's *The Triumph of Life.* In making this observation, I also expand on the invitation issued by Bowers' identification of such allusions in order to offer a more capacious reading of Lucretius' significance in the poem.

This chapter not only examines Shelley's debt to Lucretius in *The Triumph of Life*, but it also considers the influence of *Aeneid* 6 on Shelley's depiction of his speaker's illusory experience, from the moment that he begins to experience the dream, to the parade itself that appears in front of him. Virgil has his own complex relationship with *De Rerum Natura*. While he certainly nods to Lucretius in *Aeneid* 6, he also departs from the fundamentals of Lucretius' Epicurean doctrine. One example of this can be seen in the moment in which Aeneas attempts to cut down the ghosts in front of him in the underworld, only to be reminded that they are immaterial, and therefore cannot be struck (*Aeneid* 6.290-4). Virgil clearly defies Lucretius' teachings on the materiality of the soul and apparitions. However, hic chosen language when describing 'the slender bodies' is very much Lucretian. I posit that, like Virgil, Shelley alludes to Lucretian philosophy by producing verbal echoes of his work but also challenges some of his fundamental doctrines. This is not to say that Virgil and Shelley are disregarding Lucretius. Rather, Lucretius' work is reimagined as a semblance of itself both in *Aeneid* 6 and in *The Triumph of Life.*

[487] *[…] extra / processit longe flammantia moenia mundi […] refert nobis victor quid possit oriri […]*, *DRN* 1.72-5.
[488] *quandoquidem semel insignem conscendere currum* […], *DRN* 6.47.

In order to explain this argument, this chapter has three main parts. In section 4.2, I closely analyse Shelley's verbal allusions to Lucretius at *TL* 445-6, the 'sunbeam' analogy, and *TL* 465-7, where Rousseau 'plunge[s]' into 'the living storm'. In my view, these ideas – the properties of the apparition of the triumph and the nature of the crowd following the car – are based on *De Rerum Natura.* But, as I mention in the previous paragraph, while Shelley probably had Lucretius in mind when composing these lines, he is not simply iterating the ancient poet. Virgil nurtured a similar dynamic with *De Rerum Natura* in his *Aeneid* 6. Section 4.3 of this chapter begins with a close comparison between Virgil's *Aeneid* 6 and Lucretius' depiction of images in *DRN* 4 and includes discussion of how both of these texts are reflected in Shelley's poem. Within the same section, I attend to Shelley's thematic allusions to *Aeneid* 6, paying close attention to Aeneas' journey into the underworld and also to Virgil's portrayal of the parade of heroes. In both *Aeneid* 6 and *The Triumph of Life*, Lucretius' didactic text is reimagined and reworked in a context in which an individual (Aeneas and Shelley's speaker) is enlightened as to some vital truth that will inform them on their respective journeys. Anchises reveals to Aeneas the workings of the cosmos, as well as the role that he and his descendants will play in Rome's foundation, while Shelley's Rousseau seems to attempt to reveal to the poem's speaker the corruptive effect that the mortal experience has over the human spirit. Finally, in section 4.4, I consider the implications of Lucretius' and Virgil's triumph imagery within *The Triumph of Life* in conjunction with Shelley's thoughts about the historical practice of the ancient Roman triumph, as seen in his letters from his time in Rome. I consider the different meanings of 'triumph' for Shelley. I find that Shelley's association of the Roman triumph with misrepresentation translates into his poem, where the triumph's participants are blind to life's true meaning. Ultimately, *The Triumph of Life* is at once a poem about obscurity and a poem that obscures.

4.1.2 Shelley's reading of Lucretius and Virgil

In the first chapter of this thesis, I examined Shelley's debt to Lucretius in his *Queen Mab* (1813) and offered a brief overview of his reading of *DRN*. Shelley had purchased John Mason Good's 1805 translation of *De Rerum Natura* on 18 April 1816, and it appears on his reading list for 1816 which was compiled by Mary Shelley.[489] Meanwhile, Mary Shelley read Lucretius with Percy Shelley between 28 June and 29 August 1820.[490] Shelley regards Lucretius highly, as seen in the 6 July 1817 letter to Hogg, quoted earlier in this chapter.[491]

Mary and Percy Shelley also read the *Aeneid* together. I am particularly interested in their reading of *Aeneid* 6, which Mary Shelley records reading to Shelley on 24 January 1818.[492] However, it was not through reading alone that Shelley encountered *Aeneid* 6. During their time in Italy, at Naples in December 1818, to be exact, Percy and Mary Shelley visited the site that was thought to have inspired Virgil's underworld. Shelley writes in his 17 or 18 December 1818 letter to Peacock:

> […] we were conducted to see the Mare Morto & the Elysian fields, the spot on which Virgil places the scenery of the 6th Æneid. Tho extremely beautiful, as a lake & woody hills & this divine sky must make it, I confess my dissappointment. The guide showed us an antique cemetery where the niches used for placing the cinerary urns of the dead yet remain. We then coasted the bay of Baiæ to the left in which we saw many picturesque & interesting ruins; but I have to remark that we never disembarked but we were dissappointed, while from the boat the effect of the scenery was inexpressibly delightful. The colours of the water & the air breathe over all things here the radiance of their own beauty. After passing the Bay of Baiæ & observing the ruins of its antique grandeur standing like rocks in the transparent sea under our boat, we landed to visit Lake Avernus. We passed thro the cavern of the Sybil (not Virgils Sybil) which pierces one of the hills which circumscribe the lake & came to a calm & lovely basin of water surrounded by dark woody hills, & profoundly solitary. Some vast ruins of the temple of Pluto stand on a lawny hill on one side of it, and are reflected in its windless mirror. It is far more beautiful than the Elysian fields; but there are all the materials for beauty at the latter, & the Avernus was once a chasm of deadly & pestilential vapours [*sic*].[493]

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[489] *MSJ* i, 75; *MSJ* ii, 97.
[490] *MSJ* iii, 325-
[491] *PBSL* i, 545.
[492] *MSJ* ii, 191.
[493] *PBSL* ii, 61.

It is striking that Percy Shelley felt 'dissappointment' [*sic*] at seeing 'the Mare Morto' and 'the Elysian fields'. He appreciates the material elements that the landscape has to offer: the 'lake', the 'woody hills' and the 'divine sky', but he feels disappointed, although it is debatable as to why. Conversely, Shelley is impressed when visiting Lake Avernus and the Sibyl's cave. He says 'it is far more beautiful than the Elysian fields', and comments on its historical 'deadly & pestilential vapours'. Again, this passage demonstrates an intersection between Shelley's imagination and the reality of his surroundings. While Lake Avernus did indeed emit sulphurous vapours in the past – it is a volcanic crater – I would suggest that Shelley also has in mind Virgil's literary account of the area in *Aeneid* 6.237-42, where the ancient poet mentions its geological properties. These lines in the *Aeneid* see Aeneas encounter the *spelunca* ('cave', *Aeneid* 6.37) situated on the lake – just as Mary and Percy Shelley would do in December 1818.[494] The cave is described thus: […] *talis sese halitus atris / faucibus effundens supera ad convexa ferebat / unde locum Grai dixerunt nomine Aornum* ('[…] such a vapour from those black jaws was wafted to the vaulted sky whence the Greeks spoke of Avernus, the Birdless Place', *Aeneid* 6.240-2). The fictional cave was said to produce a 'vapour', and what is more, it had been famed for generations, having been named by the Greeks.

Mary Shelley elaborates on the visit to the Elysian Fields and Lake Avernus in the introduction to her 1826 novel, *The Last Man*.[495] She adds fictional, supernatural elements to her account, claiming that she and her unnamed companion (presumably Percy Shelley) discovered the 'Sibylline leaves', written 'in various languages', ancient and modern, inside

[494] Austin writes: 'No such *spelunca* has ever been found, despite careful search, within the crater at Avernus. What was until 1932 shown as the Cave of the Sibyl at Avernus is now known to be one of Agrippa's and Cocceius' tunnels […].' Virgil, *Aeneid 6*, 'Commentary', ed. by R.G. Austin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 108.
[495] Mary Shelley, *The Last Man*, ed. by Jane Blumberg with Nora Crook, *The Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley, Volume 4* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1996), pp. 5-9.

the cave that their guides had informed them was that of the Cumaean Sibyl.[496] 'Since that period', Mary Shelley continues, 'I have been employed in deciphering these sacred remains.'[497] Her novel was said to be inspired by what she read: 'I present the public with my latest discoveries in the slight Sibylline pages.'[498] Mary Shelley therefore frames her novel with an invention of a literary authority - as she did with her *Frankenstein* in 1818.

The landscape that inspired *Aeneid* 6, as well as the text itself, had a significant impact on the creative imaginations of both Mary and Percy Shelley. Not only did they read *Aeneid* 6 together, but they also visited the sites that are thought to feature in the book, coming away with a far deeper and more profound understanding of Virgil's text. Mary Shelley created a backstory for her novel in which she became another recipient of Sibylline wisdom. In a way, Mary Shelley casts herself as a new Aeneas, having been inspired by the ancient prophet. Meanwhile, Percy Shelley reflected on the aesthetics of his surroundings and considered whether they lived up to or fell short of the version that Virgil had impressed upon his imagination in *Aeneid* 6. Shelley takes a less literal approach than Mary Shelley in representing the sites' historical associations with prophecy. Rather than replicating the process of receiving the Sibyl's wisdom directly, he communicates the profound effects of the landscape itself. The natural elements are said to behave like a quasi-divine or prophetic power: 'The colours of the water & the air breathe over all things here the radiance of their own beauty.'[499]

4.1.3 Composition of the poem

Shelley immersed himself mentally in his surroundings throughout his time in Italy. As well as recalling his tour of the region of Naples in great detail to Peacock, he later found

[496] Mary Shelley, *The Novels and Selected Works, Vol 4*, 7.
[497] Mary Shelley, *The Novels and Selected Works, Vol 4*, 8.
[498] Mary Shelley, *The Novels and Selected Works, Vol 4*, 8.
[499] *PBSL* ii, 61.

inspiration in the natural landscapes surrounding Lerici, where he stayed from 28 April 1822 until 1 July 1822, while writing *The Triumph of Life.*[500] Shelley wrote his poem from 'his house at Casa Magni, close to the village of San Terenzo',[501] which 'embraced the curve of the Tyrrhenian coast, the ancient town of Lerici, the promontory of Portovenere, the islands of Palmaria and Tito, the Apennines, and the spring and summer skies.'[502] Alan Weinberg notes that as a result, 'the geographical setting of *The Triumph of Life* corresponds to the ruggedly verdant, shoreless and precipitous Ligurian coastline'.[503] The landscape in which Shelley finds himself therefore becomes his Muse. The location of Shelley's speaker, meanwhile, who wakes up on a mountainside in the Apennines at the opening of the poem, is thought to be close to Liguria's Gulf of La Spezia.[504] Shelley also replicates the process of being inspired by one's environment in the experience of his poem's speaker, whose imagination is stimulated by his surroundings. I expand on this idea in section 4.3, which investigates the thematic connections between Aeneas' journey in *Aeneid* 6 and *TL'*s speaker's experience.

The Triumph of Life was left unfinished when Shelley drowned off the coast of Lerici on 8th July 1822. The question of how Shelley would have continued after his speaker asks of Rousseau, 'Then, what is Life?', has caused much debate. Joel Faflak suggests that,

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[500] *PBSL* ii, 413; *PBSL* ii, 443.
[501] Weinberg, 202.
[502] Weinberg, 202.
[503] Weinberg, 202.
[504] 'The slope is on a spur of the Apennines near the coast (such as those that surround Spezia itself), and from it there is a view westward to the sea. The poet's back is, at first, turned to the east. The car that passes him I understand to have come up behind him over the spur, from the east, up from ' the oblivious valley ' of Rousseau's birth, on the further side of which (the eastern side) rises ' the great mountain ' of 1. 452.This assumes, as I think we should, that the vision described by the poet and all that is seen by Rousseau before their meeting are meant to form one picture, on the whole coherent. The curious in such matters will find it quite possible to make a consistent map.' F. Melian Stawell, "Shelley's "Triumph of Life"", *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association*, Vol. V (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914), pp. 104-31, 112. Donald Reiman builds from Stawell's sketch by adding: 'Behind the description of the physical setting is that of the poet's moral situation […] the Poet stands on the brink of the abyss with Heaven, the ideal life, apparently out of reach above him.' "A Reading of "The Triumph of Life"", *Shelley's "The Triumph of Life"* (New York: Octagon Books, 1965, reprinted 1979) pp. 19-86, 25.

ironically, the lack of an answer is an answer in itself.[505] The poem is 'open[ed]' 'ceaselessly to the radically uncertain future of life itself', Faflak writes.[506] John A. Hodgson opens his study of *The Triumph of Life* by asserting that the ending of Shelley's poem could not 'deny the central truth of his vision and of Rousseau's narrative, that natural life ultimately corrupts and so triumphs over man's spirit.'[507] Although offering a confident hypothesis of *The Triumph of Life*'s meaning is made difficult by its unfinished state, as well as the fact that there is no fair copy for the majority of the poem, I believe that Hodgson is right to consider its 'central truth' as the inevitable corruption of the human spirit at the hands of the bodily experience. For Shelley, Roman triumphs reenact the subordination of human beings at the hands of an oppressor. We see this idea in Shelley's 23 March 1819 letter to Peacock, where he describes the Arch to Constantine:

> It is an admirable work of art. It is built of the finest marble, & the outline of the reliefs is in many parts as perfect as if just finished. Four Corinthian fluted columns support on each side a bold entablature, whose bases are loaded with reliefs of captives in every attitude of humiliation & slavery. The compartments above express in bolder relief the enjoyment of success, the conqueror on his throne or in his chariot, or riding over the crushed multitudes who writhe under his horses hoofs, as those below expressed the torture & abjectness of defeat.[508]

This passage offers a fascinating insight into how Shelley regarded the Roman practice of the triumph. He conveys the scenes in the arch as morally troubling, seen in his description of the 'crushed multitudes' beneath 'the conqueror on his throne or in his chariot'. I propose that, as well as Roman literature and philosophy, triumphal practices act as a model for both

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[505] Joel Faflak, 'The Difficult Education of Shelley's "Triumph of Life"', *The Keats-Shelley Review*, 58 (2009), pp. 53-78.
[506] Faflak, 54.
[507] John A. Hodgson, 'The World's Mysterious Doom: Shelley's The Triumph of Life', *ELH*, 42:4 (1975), pp. 595-622, 595.
[508] *PBSL* ii, 86.

Shelley's understanding and his representation of the dynamic between the human spirit and the mortal experience.

4.2.1 'Like atomies that dance / Within a sunbeam': Lucretian physics in *The Triumph of Life*

Lucretius provides Shelley with a fitting model for disseminating philosophy in the form of poetry. In his account of Lucretius' influence on Shelley's *Laon and Cythna*, Donovan posits that Lucretius helps Shelley to construct 'an analogy between Rome of the late Republic and post-revolutionary Europe […] in both, a corrupt society which is prey to religious confusions and anxieties is losing its attachment to liberty in favour of the cult of the heroic military man which will soon issue in tyranny.'[509] Similarly, we will see that in *The Triumph of Life*, Lucretius is employed as an exemplar for combatting tyranny, instead bringing freedom and clarity of thought to his readers, and therefore to the citizens of each poet's wider society. While Lucretius himself takes on a didactic role, addressing his audience with the use of the second person, Shelley's didactic elements take place within the dialogue between Rousseau and the speaker. Their fundamental messages also differ somewhat. But there are nods to Lucretian imagery throughout *TL*, showing that Shelley must have had *DRN* in mind, particularly when portraying the triumph participants. Further, the alterations that Shelley makes to his 'source' enact the very message that Rousseau seems to be teaching to the poem's speaker, that the true meaning of 'life' is distorted and obscured by the mortal experience. Here we find an alignment between *TL* and "Lift not the painted veil". In this sonnet, Shelley warns his audience to 'Lift not the painted veil which those who live / Call Life […]' (1-2). To do so would result in disappointment, he says: 'I knew one who had lifted it-he sought, / For his lost heart was tender, things to love / But found them not, alas! […]' (7-

[509] *PS* 2, 25.

9). I propose that *The Triumph of Life*, which features Rousseau's resignation to the frenzy of the triumph, further enacts Shelley's exploration of the philosophy that we see in "Lift not the painted veil", the idea that the mortal experience is made up of a series of layers, or 'veils', that obscure and distort life's true meaning. Lucretius himself has much to say on apparitions, including how atoms reassemble to form images within our dreams. Shelley then transforms moments from Lucretius' text into semblances of themselves.

One such moment is when Rousseau compares the crew of the triumph to dust particles seen in a 'sunbeam'. Rousseau himself is an apparition, appearing to the speaker after he fell into a dream-like state upon a hillside in the Apennines. In this dream the speaker sees the image of a chaotic triumphal parade, before encountering Rousseau, who relates his own experience of drinking from a cup of nepenthe and seeing the triumph for the first time. Both Barbara Estermann and Geoffrey Matthews have commented on the poem's 'dream within a dream' narrative structure. So Matthews writes, 'the body of the poem […] consists of two parallel accounts of the same experience.'[510] Estermann deems that Shelley complicates the chronology of the events by having Rousseau's story function as a 'reiteration' of that of the speaker: 'one vision seems to blend almost seamlessly into another, the past becoming the present and the present becoming the past, as the narrator sees Rousseau's Shape and Car as déjá vu experience […]'.[511] As a result of this structure of recurrent events, the poem features intratextual echoes – some of which are misrepresentations of an earlier moment, rather than a reiteration.[512] Some of the details of

[510] Geoffrey Matthews, 'On Shelley's "The Triumph of Life"', *Studia Neophilologica*, 34:1 (1962), pp. 104-134, 106.
[511] Barbara Estermann, 'Shelley's Antimasques of Life: Re-visioning "The Triumph"', *ELH*, 81:4 (2014), pp. 1193-1224, 1214.
[512] Richard Cronin comments on Shelley's 'relativist world'. He notes that the sun at first outshines the stars: 'the Sun sprang forth / rejoicing in his splendour, & the mask of darkness fell from the awakened Earth' (*TL*, 2-4). The sun's light is soon overpowered by the arrival of the chariot: 'a cold glare, intenser than the noon, / but icy cold, obscured with […] light / the Sun as he the stars […] so came a chariot on the silent storm' (*TL*, 77-9, 86). Moreover, Cronin states that 'when the Shape all light appeared to Rousseau she stamped out his sparkling thoughts', but, soon after, 'when […] the chariot 'burst' on his sight, the Shape herself becomes like a star

the things that happen in front of the poem's speaker are recalled in the thematic and verbal details of Rousseau's account. As Estermann remarks, the original source becomes obscured by the poem's involute structure.

Shelley's work is also an intertextual site. Colin Burrow has treated the relationship between writing about similitude and enacting it by way of intertextual transformation in Virgil's *Aeneid* in his analysis of ghosts in Lucretius, Virgil, and Homer.[513] Burrow ends his chapter by stating: '*Imitatio* is a duplicitous tool: an attempt to re-embody a past text will always generate ghosts of the earlier text within itself.'[514] In recalling his first impression of seeing the triumph, Shelley's Rousseau compares the 'crew' to 'atomies that dance / Within a sunbeam' (*TL* 446-7). At *DRN* 2.114-7, Lucretius writes:

> *contemplator enim, cum solis lumina cumque*
> *inserti fundunt radii per opaca domorum*
> *multa minuta modis multis per inane videbis*
> *corpora misceri radiorum lumine in ipso […]*
>
> ('Do but apply your scrutiny whenever the sun's rays are let in and pour their light through a dark room: you will see many minute particles mingling in many ways throughout the void in the light itself of the rays […]').

In Lucretius' text, the appearance of dust particles in sunlight provides a model for his complex theory of atoms, or *corpora.* The dust represents atoms as they behaved in the primordial age of chaos: its 'mingling' movements are atomic theory writ large.

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disappearing in the light of the sun'. The sun, Cronin suggests, is employed by Shelley as a symbol within his 'relativist world […] in which phenomena have meaning only in their relations to one another', as opposed to a 'single, ordered hierarchy'. The sun's status fluctuates. Once an entity that outshines the stars, it is itself outshone by the chariot; later, the Shape outshines Rousseau, but then she is eclipsed by the light of the sun. Therefore, although Shelley revisits certain images, the poem's system of symbols is never stable, instead continuously distorting, waxing and waning in relation to one another. Richard Cronin, 'Elegy and Dream', *Shelley's Poetic Thoughts* (London: Macmillan Press, 1981), pp. 169-222, 205.

[513] Colin Burrow, 'Dreamitation: Lucretius, Homer, Virgil', *Imitating Authors: Plato to Futurity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 106-135.

[514] Burrow, 135.

Lucretius' didactic voice, offering instructions to his reader, is important here. He employs an everyday, familiar image so as to illuminate something highly complex and unfamiliar. Not only do the sun's rays pour into the room and light up the 'many minute particles', but they also illuminate the mind of the reader. The light that Lucretius lets in has both literal and metaphorical functions. He is imparting wisdom to his audience. The 'sunbeam' in Shelley's text occurs in a similar context. The apparition of Rousseau plays a didactic role, come to 'tell that which to this deep scorn / Led me and my companions, and relate / The progress of the pageant since the morn;' (*TL* 191-3). Since it is Rousseau who deploys the 'atomies […] within a sunbeam' metaphor at *TL* 446-7, I find that the dual meaning of Lucretius' imagery also applies for Shelley's poem. Like Lucretius, Rousseau seeks to bring light to the speaker's mind.

Lucretius precedes his sunbeam allegory by telling his audience that it is a *simulacrum et imago*:

> *cuius, uti memoror, rei simulacrum et imago*
> *ante oculos semper nobis versatur et instat.*
>
> *DRN* 2.112-3

> ('Of this fact there is, I recall, an image and similitude always moving and present before our eyes.')

Lucretius takes a self-referential approach in his explanations of images and eyesight and of atomic motion. Here, he compares the constant movement of atoms to dust particles, calling his metaphor a *simulacrum et imago*, while later in *DRN* 4 he employs the same language to explain how images and eyesight work. *Simulacra* has both a literal and metaphorical meaning in Lucretius' text. While atoms form *simulacra,* so do the dust particles that Lucretius chooses to represent them.

Rousseau's sunbeam analogy is a step removed from the logical reality of Lucretius' passage. Shelley's speaker is not actually gazing upon particles of dust, as Lucretius invites his reader to do; Rousseau is recalling his experience of seeing the pageant, which in turn reminded him of 'atomies' in a 'sunbeam'. Shelley has inverted the Lucretian metaphor. In *DRN*, 'dust' provided the connection between the human mind and the understanding of atomic behaviour at the beginning of time. In *TL*, the particles in the sunbeam are enfolded deep within the poem's concentric structure: they form the final outpost of an involute narrative in which the speaker's reality is obscured over and over again. The speaker is removed from reality first by having a hallucinatory experience in which he sees the triumph and meets Rousseau; Rousseau then tells the story of his own dream-like experience, which contains an apparition of the same pageant; finally, the apparition in Rousseau's dream is compared to dancing 'atomies' 'within a sunbeam'. In Lucretius, the audience first imagines dust in a sunbeam, and thence is able to picture how atoms behaved in the early chaotic days of the young universe. In Shelley's poem, the speaker is first required to picture the pageant's 'crew', and then to imagine the dust motes that are exposed by rays of light. This scene in *TL* has two functions: one is that the crowd in Rousseau's imagination is seen as a cloud of dust, therefore it is about duplication; the other is that it enacts the process of duplication in that Shelley is iterating the source to which he alludes (*DRN* 2.114-7).

4.2.2 'the living storm'

In what is perhaps an even more explicit departure from *DRN* than the sunbeam analogy, Shelley's Rousseau says that he 'plunged' into 'the thickest billows of the living storm' (*TL* 466-7). In doing so, he ignores the advice that Lucretius gave in the opening lines of *DRN* 2. There, Lucretius writes:

> *Suave, mari magno turbantibus aequora ventis,*
> *e terra magnum alterius spectare laborem;*

> *non quia vexari quemquamst iucunda voluptas,*
> *sed quibus ipse malis careas quia cernere suave est.*
>
> *DRN* 2.1-4
>
> ('Pleasant it is, when on the great sea the winds trouble the waters, to gaze from shore upon another's great tribulation: not because any man's troubles are a delectable joy, but because to perceive what ills you are free from yourself is pleasant.')

Lucretius comments on the benefits of being a man of philosophy. The act of observing another's 'tribulation' is allegorised as watching a stormy sea from dry land. Don Fowler wonders whether the parallel has the 'ring' of a Greek proverb, *Εξάντης λεύσσω τοὐμὸν κακὸν ἄλλον ἔχοντα*, documented in Leutsch and Schneidewin's *Corpus Paroemiographorum Graecorum.*[515] 'A stormy sea', Fowler writes, 'is an obvious symbol for disturbance in other spheres, particularly political life', while 'a calm sea offers an equally clear symbol for mental peace'.[516]

Lucretius makes his argument watertight, framing his observation and his subsequent explanation with *suave*. On Lucretius' choice of adjective, Fowler suggests that, given historical usages of *dulcis* and *suavis, suavis* can be said to have a 'wider' implication than the 'sensual' *dulcis.*[517] Fowler suggests 'smooth' and 'agreeable' as possible suitable translations for *suavis*, which Rouse translates as 'pleasant'.[518] The metaphorical 'smoothness' of *suavis* works well as a juxtaposition to the turbulent waters in the next clause.

While Lucretius stays out of these turbulent waters, Shelley's Rousseau enters them, despite it being to his detriment. Explaining the events to the speaker, he says:

> […] I among the multitude

[515] Don Fowler, Lucretius on Atomic Motion: A Commentary on De Rerum Natura Book Two, Lines 1-332 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 28; Ernst Ludwig von Leutsch and Friedrich Wilhelm Schneidewin, *Corpus Paroemiographorum Graecorum, Volume 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 81-2.
[516] Fowler, 28-9.
[517] Fowler, 33.
[518] Fowler, 33.

Was swept; me sweetest flowers delayed not long,
Me not the shadow nor the solitude,

'Me not the falling stream's Lethean song
Me not the phantom of that early form
Which moved upon its motion, — but among

'The thickest billows of the living storm
I plunged, and bared my bosom to the clime
Of that cold light, whose airs too fierce deform.

TL 460-8

There has been some debate on the cause behind Rousseau's initiation into the 'living storm'. Earlier, there is ambiguity as to how Rousseau came to experience the apparition. At lines 403-5, Rousseau recalls that he 'touched with faint lips the cup she raised', 'she' being the 'shape all light' who appears at 352. After this action, his 'brain became as sand'. Scholars have been unable to agree as to whether Rousseau actually drinks the nepenthe inside the cup offered to him by the Shape. Matthews thinks not, suggesting that 'had Rousseau quenched his thirst at the cup, as he was commanded, the fair Shape's influence would not have been so weakened by the experience that followed; he would have known enough to resist Life's seduction.' Everest disagrees, stating that there is in fact 'a chain of causes from the shape's *Arise*, to Rousseau's *rose, touched,* and *became* that suggest he does follow her instruction to drink, and that the subsequent vision is a consequence of this.' [519] It is telling that while Rousseau is at first acted upon, 'I […] was swept', Shelley switches from a passive to an active voice, as Rousseau then 'plunge[s]' 'among the living storm'. Unable to resist the forces which 'sweep' him along, Rousseau willingly or unwillingly 'bare[s]' his 'bosom to

[519] *SPP*, 873.

the clime / Of that cold light'. Whether or not Rousseau drank the nepenthe from the cup, he ultimately gives in to the triumph and loses his autonomy, ignoring Lucretius' advice.

4.3.1 Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* and Virgil's *Aeneid* 6

Before I examine Shelley's debt to *Aeneid* 6, I will first discuss Virgil's engagement with Lucretius in this book. Virgil, writing his underworld scene in *Aeneid* 6 some thirty or forty years after *De Rerum Natura* (Lucretius died in the mid-fifties BCE) seems to have had Lucretius in his mind during the composition of his poem. Indeed, various scenes throughout the *Aeneid* point to Epicurean atomism and Lucretian language.[520] This does not mean that Virgil's debt to Lucretius is straight-forward. The apparitions that Aeneas encounters in the underworld in the scene that I will examine do not seem to adhere to the Epicurean idea that all matter – including images – is made up of atoms. When Aeneas tries to cleave the ghosts with a sword, the Sibyl reminds him that they are 'faint, bodiless lives' (*Aeneid* 6.290-4). However, I will show that Virgil's language for describing the ghosts in fact echoes that of Lucretius when describing the physics of images. In this way, Virgil presents Lucretius' work as a reimagined semblance of itself.

There is ongoing debate around Virgil's 'Epicureanism'. Virgil alludes to spending time with Epicurean tutors in Naples in *Georgics* 4, lines 563—4.[521] But Susanna Braund doubts that Virgil was 'a card-carrying Stoic or Epicurean, however much he was drawn to Epicurean ideas.'[522] Rather, Braund proposes that across his writing, Virgil 'uses different ideas for different purposes in different contexts.'[523] In the context of *Aeneid* 6, Virgil appears

[520] Virgil also alludes to Epicureanism and to Lucretius in other works, including his *Eclogues.* It is generally agreed that his Tityrus in *Eclogue* 1 exhibits 'Epicurean ataraxy', an idea explored by John Rundin, 'The Epicurean Morality of Vergil's "Bucolics"', *The Classical World* 96:2 (2003), pp. 159-176; 161-4.
[521] *illo Vergilium me tempore dulcis alebat / Parthenope, studiis florentem ignobilis oti, Georgics* 4.563—4 ('In those days I, Virgil, was nursed by sweet Parthenope, and rejoiced in the arts of inglorious ease […]').
[522] Susanna Braund, 'Virgil and the Cosmos: Religious and Philosophical Ideas', *The Cambridge Companion to Virgil,* ed. by Charles Martindale and Fiachra Mac Góráin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 279 —98, 282.
[523] Braund, 296.

to simultaneously signal his admiration for Lucretius and challenge Epicurean teachings, even within the same lines. Of the complex dynamic between *Aeneid* 6 and atomism as it was presented in *De Rerum Natura*, scholars have posited various interpretations. Agnes Michels contests the idea that *Aeneid* 6 defies Lucretius' central teachings, arguing that 'when Vergil was composing the *Aeneid* he was still in many ways very much an Epicurean'.[524] Clifford Weber, meanwhile, insists that the golden bough which allows Aeneas entry into the underworld is described in terms that liken it to the Epicurean idea of the mortal soul and body.[525] Weber posits that at *Aeneid* 6.205-11, the 'clinging' bough replicates Epicurean explications of the human spirit which is deemed to be separable from the body.[526] On the other hand, Matthew M. Gorey interprets Virgil as being 'hostile' to atomism throughout the *Aeneid*, concluding that: 'The narrative context of all three moments of atomic indecision for Aeneas [*Aeneid* 8.20-1; *Aeneid* 4.283-6; *Aeneid* 5.700-3] suggests that atomism […] is a hostile force that must be overcome to restore political and cosmological order.'[527] Gorey later states that when Aeneas kills Turnus in *Aeneid* 12, 'the philosophy of Lucretius is firmly rejected, but in terms distinctly Lucretian.'[528] I find Gorey's view more convincing than those of Michels and Weber. For while Aeneas' attempt at cutting down the ghosts 'rejects' Lucretius' Epicurean philosophy, Virgil relates the action in 'terms' that are 'distinctly Lucretian'. To my knowledge, Gorey does not examine this scene in *Aeneid* 6 in his discussion.

In arguing for Virgil's status as an Epicurean, Michels begins by inviting comparison between *Aeneid* 6.269 and *DRN* 1.509. When Aeneas and the Sibyl enter the underworld, an

[524] Agnes Kirsopp Michels, 'Lucretius and the Sixth Book of the Aeneid', *The American Journal of Philology*, 65:2 (1944), pp. 135—148, 135.
[525] Clifford Weber, 'The Allegory of the Golden Bough', *Vergilius*, 41 (1995), pp. 3—34, 5—12.
[526] Weber, 6.
[527] Matthew M. Gorey, *Atomism in the Aeneid* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2021), 86.
[528] Gorey, 149.

early part of their journey takes them *perque domos Ditis vacuas et inania regna* ('through the empty halls of Dis and his phantom realm', *Aeneid* 6.269). Michels is right to note that the adjectives *vacuas* and *inania* allude to one of Epicureanism's most fundamental doctrines, that of the dynamic between body and void. Lucretius summarises this idea thus: *nam quacumque vacat spatium, quod inane vocamus, / corpus ea non est; qua porro cumque tenet se / corpus, ea vacuum nequaquam constat inane. / sunt igitur solida ac sine inani corpora prima* ('For wherever is empty space, which we call void, there no body is; further, where body maintains itself, there by no means exists empty space. The first bodies therefore are solid and without void,' *DRN* 1.507-10). In line 509, Lucretius deploys the noun *vacuum* ('space') and the adjective *inane* ('empty'). This does indeed seem to be a precedent for 'the empty halls of Dis and his phantom realm' in Virgil's underworld. As Weber observes, 'Virgil has borrowed a Lucretian image and turned it into material reality.'[529]

Michels goes on to draw further parallels between *De Rerum Natura* and various aspects of Virgil's underworld. Michels does, however, concede that Virgil disregards one of Lucretius' fundamental ideas in having Aeneas look ahead to the future.[530] Michels rightly notes that, 'to the true Epicurean such a preoccupation would be simply silly', but that Virgil 'has used their own physics, the material and often the very words of their greatest exponent, to preach against the principle on which their secure and peaceful lives were founded.'[531] While Michels acknowledges that Virgil opposes Lucretius and therefore atomism, I maintain that Gorey's statement on the *Aeneid* 12's relationship with *De Rerum Natura* – 'the philosophy of Lucretius is firmly rejected, but in terms distinctly Lucretian' – is a more nuanced and accurate summary of Virgil's complicated engagement with Lucretius. Gorey is more explicit than Michels in addressing both how and why Virgil challenges Lucretius'

[529] Weber, 4.
[530] Michels, 148.
[531] Michels, 148.

brand of Epicureanism. Gorey proposes that after Turnus' death, who embodied Epicurean philosophy himself in the killing of Eumenides, 'teleology and Trojan power emerge victorious […] but in a manner that uncomfortably likens Aeneas' actions to those of Turnus.'[532] While Lucretius portrayed Epicurus as returning victorious from war, Gorey proposes that Virgil takes a combative stance against Lucretius, thus continuing the cycle of intellectual warfare.

This combative stance can be found at *Aeneid* 6.290-4. I find this passage particularly interesting because, as I will explain, the content disagrees with the fundamentals of ancient atomist doctrine as explicated by Lucretius, and yet the language echoes that of Lucretius. In the passage below, Aeneas and his guide have just reached the tree of dreams (*Aeneid* 6.281—4) and the hero is startled by apparitions of 'Centaurs', 'Scyllas', 'Briareus', 'Lerna', the 'Chimaera', 'Gorgons', 'Harpies', and 'the three-bodied shade', Geryon (*Aeneid* 6.285—9). There is already a parallel with Lucretius at play here. Michels observes that Virgil's list of supernatural beings echoes the pairing of Centaurs with Scyllas in *De Rerum Natura* 4 and 5.[533] In *DRN* 4, Lucretius argued that we are able to imagine monsters because the atoms thrown off existing beings – humans and animals alike – can reassemble to form images that are hybrids of their original forms. This, Michels argues, 'establishes firmly the association of these imaginary creatures with Hades'.[534] I agree that Virgil is characterising these figures as non-living, non-organic beings. They are semblances, just as I interpret Lucretius' poetry to be in the next lines:

These lines read:

corripit hic subita trepidus formidine ferrum
Aeneas, strictamque aciem venientibus offert;
et, ni docta comes tenuis sine corpore vitas

[532] Gorey, 147.
[533] Michels, 137.
[534] Michels, 137.

> *admoneat volitare cava sub imagine formae,*
> *inruat et frustra ferro diverberet umbras.*
>
> *Aeneid* 6.290-4
>
> ('Here on a sudden, in trembling terror, Aeneas grasps his sword, and turns the naked edge against their coming; and did not his wise companion warn him that these were but faint, bodiless lives, flitting under a hollow semblance of form, he would rush upon them and vainly cleave shadows with steel.')

After Aeneas takes out of his sword, the Sibyl reminds him that they are in the underworld, and that these inimical bodies are *tenuis sine corpore vitas* ('faint, bodiless lives', *Aeneid* 6.292). She also calls them *umbras* ('shadows', *Aeneid* 6.294). Therefore, Aeneas is unable to strike them: their ghostly form means that they escape him unharmed. In Book 3 of *De Rerum Natura*, Lucretius teaches that the soul and mind are mortal, material entities. At *DRN* 3.228-30, Lucretius writes: *mentis naturam animaeque / scire licet perquam pauxillis esse creatam / seminibus* ('[…] we may understand the substance of mind and spirit to be made from very minute seeds […]'). Later, Lucretius insists that the spirit is mortal at *DRN* 3.455-8.[535] The spirits in Virgil's underworld are not material, nor are they mortal. At *Aeneid* 6.713-4, Anchises tells Aeneas that the phantoms he can see are 'souls, to whom second bodies are owed by fate' (*animae, quibus altera fato / corpora debentur*). Souls, according to Virgil, are able to undergo reincarnation.

The anti-Epicurean ramifications of Virgil's immortal souls come into opposition with the Lucretian-tinged language that the poet chooses to use. In the passage above, the Sibyl refers to the insubstantial phantoms by using similar language to that which Lucretius uses to describe images throughout *De Rerum Natura* 4. The part that I have in mind are lines 6.292-3, where Virgil states: *docta comes tenuis sine corpore vitas / admoneat* ('his wise

[535] *ergo dissolui quoque convenit omnem animai / naturam, ceu fumus, in altas aeris auras, / quandoquidem gigni pariter pariterque videmus / crescere et, ut docui, simul aevo fessa fatisci*. ('It follows therefore that the whole nature of the spirit is dissolved abroad, like smoke, into the high winds of the air, since we see it begotten along with the body, and growing up along with it, and as I have shown, falling to pieces at the same time worn out with age.')

companion warn[s] him that these were but faint, bodiless lives […]'). Nicholas Horsfall notes that the combination of *sine* with *corpus* is a 'common Lucretian phrasing'.[536] However, I also find that the adjective *tenuis* and the noun *corpus* are echoes of Lucretius. Lucretius uses these words in proximity with each other on a number of occasions when describing images in *De Rerum Natura* 4. Three examples read as follows:

> *dico igitur rerum effigias tenuisque figuras*
> *mittier ab rebus summo de corpore eorum […]*
>
> *DRN* 4.42-3
>
> ('I say, therefore, that semblances and thin shapes of things are thrown off from their outer surface.')

> *quae quoniam fiunt, tenuis quoque debet imago*
> *ab rebus mitti summo de corpore rerum […]*
>
> *DRN* 4.63-4
>
> ('[…] since these things happen, a thin image must also be thrown off from things, from the outermost surface of things.')

> *ergo lintea de summo cum corpore fucum*
> *mittunt, effigias quoque debent mittere tenvis*
> *res quaeque, ex summo quoniam iaculantur utraque […]*
>
> *DRN* 4.84-6
>
> ('Therefore, since canvas throws off colour from its outermost surface, everything else must also cast off thin semblances, because in each case they throw off from the outermost surface […]')

In the first two instances, Lucretius outlines the process by which 'thin shapes' (*tenuisque figuras, DRN* 4.42) or a 'thin image' (*tenuis […] imago, DRN* 4.63) are 'thrown' off an object. These 'slender' atoms form similitudes of the object that they have come from. In the

[536] Nicholas Horsfall, *Virgil, "Aeneid" 6: A Commentary* (Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2013), *Aeneid* 6.292, *ad locum*.

third instance, Lucretius compares everyday objects to artwork, which emits 'colour from its outermost surface' Again, the atoms which objects 'throw off' are described as *tenuis* (*DRN* 4.85).

Virgil borrows both words from Lucretius, writing: *docta comes tenuis sine corpore vitas / admoneat* ('his wise companion warn[ed] him that these were but faint, bodiless lives', *Aeneid* 6.292-3). In Virgil, *corpus* is qualified by *sine*. Virgil's apparitions are defined by what they lack. Here we see a departure from *De Rerum Natura* 4. While Virgil's language is much the same as that of Lucretius, he uses *corpus* to refer to material form. His spirits are *sine corpore,* ('without a body'), that is, they lack any physical properties. *Corpus* therefore takes on a fairly literal meaning in these lines from Virgil, as it is indicative of the human body. Meanwhile, in Lucretius, *corpus* was used to refer to the objects from which images are cast or 'sent' (*DRN* 4.85). In spite of this distinction, I maintain that Virgil's use of *tenuis* in proximity with *corpus* is intended to remind readers of the Epicurean law of images. It is even possible that Virgil means that the apparitions are made up of atoms that are too sparsely arranged for a sword to cause damage to them. This could mean that Virgil's spirits have a physical form, but, adhering to Lucretius' theory of dreams, their form is less dense and therefore more fluid than that of the human form.

4.3.2 *Virgil and Shelley*

The editors of the 2023 Longman edition of *The Triumph of Life* attribute Shelley's 'self-same bough' (*TL* 37) to James Thomson's "Spring" (1730).[537] Thomson writes: '[…] Fruits and Blossoms blush'd, / In social sweetness on the self-same Bough' (321-2). The Longman editors suggest that 'the natural harmony' in Shelley's scene 'is reminiscent' of these lines.

[537] *SSP*, 837.

Shelley's wording certainly indicates that he was borrowing from Thomson: his speaker observes that he 'had felt the freshness of that dawn' (*TL* 34) and 'sate as thus upon that slope of lawn / Under the self-same bough' (*TL* 36-7) at another time. While Thomson is commenting on the unity between 'Fruits and Blossoms' which are growing on the same branch as one another, Shelley's speaker wonders at the sense that he has experienced the present moment before, thus he notices 'the self-same bough'. The harmony between the 'fruit' and the 'blossom' in Thomson's scene is transferred, perhaps, to a sense of harmony between the speaker and his surroundings in Shelley's poem. The speaker's immersion in the landscape, thought to be based on the Apennines near to where Shelley was staying at the time of writing, and the subsequent harmony between nature and man, is presented in a way that correlates with the 'Vision' that arrives at *TL* 40. The speaker's 'trance of wondrous thought' (*TL* 41) seems to have been stimulated by his surroundings – or rather, by his recognition of the long-standing significance of these surroundings.

The speaker's affirmation of the landscape around him seems to be important for his transition from consciousness to a dream-like state. The 'Vision' appears suddenly at *TL* 40, interrupting the harmonious dialogue between 'the birds, the fountains and the Ocean' (*TL* 38). What the vision comprises, 'a great stream / Of people' (*TL* 44-5), a 'chariot' carrying a 'Shape' (*TL* 85) driven by a 'Janus-visaged Shadow' (*TL* 94), followed by 'the million with fierce song and maniac dance / Raging around' (*TL* 110-11), all of which combine to form 'the just similitude / Of a triumphal pageant (*TL* 117-8), has a precedent in the parade of heroes shown to Aeneas in Virgil's *Aeneid* 6. Shelley was undoubtedly inspired by Dante and Petrarch too, both in form and in content.[538] But the *Commedia* and *Trionfi* themselves had been preceded by classical depictions of the dead, such as those found in Homer's *Odyssey* 11

[538] 'S. adapts his *terza rima* to rhyme *aba bcbc,* which is the same adaptation that Dante uses to conclude contos of the *Commedia* and Petrarch to conclude parts of the *Trionfi.*' *SSP,* 819.

and Virgil's *Aeneid* 6. There appear to be direct correlations between *The Triumph of Life* and *Aeneid* 6, signalled in the verbal details of Shelley's poem as well as his broader thematic concern with the triumphal pageant.

Shortly after the 'Vision' has begun to show itself to Shelley's speaker, the poet compares the 'great stream / Of people' (*TL* 44-5) to 'the million leaves of summer's bier' travelling 'through the sky' (*TL* 50-1). The 2023 Longman editors of the poem rightly observe that 'the simile of a crowd as dead leaves is common in classical poetry', offering *Iliad* 6.156 and *Aeneid* 6.309-10 as examples.[539] At *Aeneid* 305-312, Virgil employs the image of autumn leaves to describe the souls who are left on the riverbank, spurned by Charon, because their bodies have not been buried.[540] The simile reads as follows:

> *huc omnis turba ad ripas effusa ruebat,*
> *matres atque viri, defunctaque corpora vita*
> *magnanimum heroum, pueri innuptaeque puellae*
> *impositique rogis iuvenes ante ora parentum:*
> *quam multa in silvis autumni frigore primo*
> *lapsa cadunt folia, aut ad terram gurgite ab alto*
> *quam multae glomerantur aves, ubi frigidus annus*
> *trans pontum fugat et terris immittit apricis.*
>
> *Aeneid* 6.305-12
>
> (Hither rushed all the throng, streaming to the banks; mothers and men and bodies of high-souled heroes, their life now done, boys and unwedded girls, and sons placed on the pyre before their fathers' eyes; thick as the leaves of the forest that at autumn's first frost drop and fall, and thick as the birds that from the seething deep flock shoreward, when the chill of the year drives them overseas and sends them into sunny lands.)

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[539] *SSP*, 828.

[540] *Anchisa generate, deum certissima proles, / Cocyti stagna alta vides Stygiamque paludem, / di cuius iurare timent et fallere numen. / haec omnis, quam cernis, inops inhumataque turba est; / portitor ille Charon; hi, quos vehit unda, sepulti; / nec ripas datur horrendas et rauca fluenta / transportare prius quam sedibus ossa quierunt.* 'Anchises' son, true offspring of gods, you are looking at the deep pools of Cocytus and the Stygian marsh, by whose power the gods fear to swear falsely. All this crowd that you see is helpless and graveless; yonder ferryman is Charon; those whom the flood carries are the buried. He may not carry them over the dreadful banks and hoarse-voiced waters until their bones have found a resting place.' (*Aeneid* 6.322-328).

Virgil invites comparison between the seasons and the human lifespan, portraying the souls of people who have passed away as *folia* ('leaves', *Aeneid* 6.310) that have fallen from the tree during the colder autumnal months (*autumni frigore primo*, 'at the first cold of autumn', *Aeneid* 6.309, my own translation). Virgil also compares the souls to 'birds that from the seething deep flock shoreward, when the chill of the year drives them overseas' (*Aeneid* 6.311-12), thus further evoking the sense that his underworld is a cold and lifeless site. Similarly, Shelley's speaker refers to the apparitions in front of him as 'the million leaves of summer's bier' (*TL* 51). He also makes a reference to the passing of seasons, imagining the transition between summer and autumn as a funerary ritual ('bier').[541] By alluding to Virgil's underworld, and by introducing his own imagery pertaining to the theme of death, Shelley seems to confirm that his triumph is made up of souls of the dead. What's more, the souls in Shelley's triumph can be understood to be perturbed, like those seen by Aeneas. Through his echo of Virgil, Shelley implies that the participants in his triumph are restless, unable to keep from moving onwards.

The warm, spring-like climate that permeated the early lines of *The Triumph of Life* has vanished. The arrival of the apparition of the crowd brings with it the cooler months of autumn and winter. The now lifeless leaves provide Shelley with a fitting metaphor for his apparition of the crowd, which, like the shades that Aeneas meets in the underworld, is not a warm, living entity, but a similitude of such. In Virgil's *Aeneid* 6, the dynamic between the living and the dead is heralded early in the book. Virgil's depiction of the golden bough has provoked different readings, with some arguing for its inanimate status and others arguing for

[541] Shelley may also have in mind the passage describing preparations for Misenus' funeral, where leaves adorn the bier: *principio pinguem taedis et robore secto / ingentem struxere pyram, cui frondibus atris / intexunt latera, et feralis ante cupressos / constituunt, decorantque super fulgentibus armis […] pars ingenti subiere feretro, / triste ministerium, et subiectam more parentum / aversi tenuere facem […], Aeneid* 6.214-17; 222-4. ('And first they raise a huge pyre, rich with pitchy pine and oaken logs. Its sides they entwine with somber foliage, set in front funereal cypresses, and adorn it above with gleaming arms […] Some shouldered the heavy bier—sad ministry—and in ancestral fashion, with averted eyes, held the torch below.')

its vitality. While important, this debate will not be my focus. Rather, my focus is to argue that Shelley had the bough from *Aeneid* 6 in mind when he was composing *TL* 21-39, which sees his speaker recline beneath 'an old chestnut' (*TL* 25). As I note above, Shelley's speaker recognises that he has lain beneath 'the self-same bough' at an earlier moment in his life. His recognition of its presence seems to correlate with the arrival of the 'Vision', which 'roll[s]' upon the speaker's 'brain' (*TL* 40). While the Longman editors rightly remark that 'self-same bough' replicates a phrase from line 321 of Thomson's "Spring" exactly, I propose that reading the bough alongside *Aeneid* 6.201-11 lends it new significance as an integral moment in the speaker's transition into the 'trance'.

Aeneid 6 marks the halfway point of the epic entire. Although Aeneas has arrived at Italy, the journey towards reaching the future site of Rome is far from over. K.B. Fletcher argues that the scene in the underworld in this book, in particular the passage describing the parade of heroes that Anchises shows to his son, is vital for securing Aeneas' knowledge of and investment in this journey. Fletcher writes: 'the primary function of the parade is to give Italy a new meaning for Aeneas […] he needs to develop an idea of the land and to do so quickly, as he will need something to fight for.'[542] Philip Hardie posits that the classical underworld is typically a site that bridges the past and future, where the epic hero is confronted with a 'desire, both for what is lost and for what is to come'.[543] In this way, Virgil's underworld has profound philosophical associations. It is a site where past, present, and future converge. Aeneas' journey into the underworld marks a crucial moment in fulfilling his destiny. Virgil says that Aeneas's experience of the underworld is a privilege

[542] K.F.B. Fletcher, 'Book 6: *aeternumque tenet per saecula nomen,* Names on the Land', *Finding Italy: Travel, Colonisation, and Nation in Vergil's* Aeneid (Michigan, U.S.: University of Michigan Press, 2014), pp. 194—216, 207.
[543] Philip Hardie, 'In the Steps of the Sibyl: Tradition and Desire in the Epic Underworld', *Materiali e discussioni per l'analisi dei testi classici*, 52 (2004), pp. 143—156, 143.

that is not typically given to mortal beings, and he must prove his worthiness by finding the golden bough which will allow him entry.

While describing Aeneas' discovery of the tree, aided by Venus' doves, Virgil invites various interpretations of the bough itself. He writes:

> […] *inde ubi venere ad fauces grave olentis Averni,*
> *tollunt se celeres liquidumque per aera lapsae*
> *sedibus optatis geminae super arbore sidunt,*
> *discolor unde auri per ramos aura refulsit.*
> *quale solet silvis brumali frigore viscum*
> *fronde virere nova, quod non sua seminat arbos,*
> *et croceo fetu teretis circumdare truncos,*
> *talis erat species auri frondentis opaca*
> *ilice, sic leni crepitabat brattea vento.*
> *corripit Aeneas extemplo avidusque refringit*
> *cunctantem, et vatis portat sub tecta Sibyllae.*
>
> *Aeneid* 6.201-11

> ([…] then, when they came to the jaws of noisome Avernus, they swiftly rise and, dropping through the buxom air, settle on the site longed for, the twofold tree, whence, with diverse hue, shone out amid the branches the gleam of gold. As in winter's cold, amid the woods, the mistletoe, sown of an alien tree, is wont to bloom with strange leafage, and with yellow fruit embrace the shapely stems: such was the vision of the leafy gold on the shadowy ilex, so rustled the foil in the gentle breeze. Forthwith Aeneas plucks it and greedily breaks off the clinging bough, and carries it beneath the roof of the prophetic Sibyl.)

As seen in section 4.2, Weber reads the pliant bough and the tree from which it is removed as models for the Epicurean idea of the human body and the mortal, separable soul.[544] Virgil's insistence on the bough's vitality, seen in the fruit that it bears (*croceu fetu, Aeneid* 6.207), indeed suggests that it is living, even life-giving. It also 'clings' to its tree (*cunctantem, Aeneid* 6.211). Moreover, the bough's living status was also emphasised by the Sibyl while

[544] Weber, 6.

she was issuing instructions to Aeneas. She initially called the bough the *aureus ramus* ('the golden bough', *Aeneid* 6.137), and then the *auricomus fetus* ('the golden foliage', *Aeneid* 6.141).[545] *Fetus,* R.G. Austin writes, marks that the branch is 'the 'fruit' of the tree'. He continues: 'the phrase is a preparation for the *croceus fetus* of the mistletoe (*Aeneid* 6.207), where 'fetu' refers to the berries'.[546] The bough, therefore, is at once the giver of life, and the recipient of it. It is both the nurtured 'fruit' of the tree, and the parent of its own fruit.

However, Virgil complicates the bough's vital properties. In the passage above, readers are reminded that the bough is a *brattea* ('gold-leaf', or 'foil', *Aeneid* 6.209). The bough is metal, not living. 'It was rustling' (*crepitabat*, *Aeneid* 6.209, my own translation). It is no longer a pliant living thing, but a strange inanimate object that is out of place in the organic matter that makes up the rest of the forest. Virgil has already hinted at this paradox through his choice of simile. He compares the radiant bough to a mistletoe which stands out as the only living plant during winter. M. Owen Lee observes the illogical nature of Virgil's chosen simile, writing that while 'the mistletoe seems in the depth of winter to be alive when all else in the forest appears dead', in actuality, 'the forest trees are really alive, and it is the mistletoe that is dead.'[547] Lee concludes: 'As a kind of reverse-image of life-amid-death, the mistletoe effectively symbolises the experience of the hero who will pass living through a dead world.'[548] The mistletoe to which the bough is compared is dead rather than living, a parasite living off the dormant trees that surround it. Conversely, Virgil portrays the bough as

[545] Virgil's phrasing is unusual. While acknowledging the originality of the compound adjective *auricomus*, Norden states that the closest precedent for 'the particular combination' of *auricomus fetus* comes from Paulus Silentiarius: 'Die besondere Verbindung *auricomi fetus* (χρυσόκομοι όζοι) erinnert an die χρυσόκομα κλήματα des Paulus Silentarius, des Nachahmers alexandrinischer Dichter.' Eduard Norden, *P. Vergilius Maro Aeneis Buch VI* (Berlin: Druck und Verlag B.G. Teubner, 1926), 176.
[546] Virgil, *Aeneid Book 6*, ed. by R. G. Austin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977, reprint 1986), 84.
[547] M. Owen Lee, 'Chapter Three: The Golden Bough', *Olive-Tree Bed and Other Quests* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), pp. 41-69.
[548] Lee, 55.

though it is alive, gleaming with yellow fruit against the rest of the forest which is in winter's grip.

Therefore, another quality that is crucial to Virgil's bough is its radiation of light. In the passage above, it is said to have 'shone out' (*refulsit, Aeneid* 6.204); its hue was multicoloured (*discolor, Aeneid* 6.204); its 'golden leaves' glowed against the 'shadowy ilex' (*auri frondentis […] opaca / ilice, Aeneid* 6.208-9). The bough is visible to Aeneas through its emission of rays. Virgil's language emphasises the hero's status as the recipient of the bough's golden light. This light is partly functional: Lee notes that, on a literal level, the bough will act as a torch for Aeneas as he journeys over the murky Styx and through the shadowy Mourning Fields. However, the bough remains hidden in the Sibyl's robe for this part of the journey. Readers learn this at *Aeneid* 6.406: *aperit ramum, qui veste latebat* ('she showed the bough, which was lying hidden in her robe'). The bough's glow is therefore diminished by the fabric of the Sibyl's dress. Its capacity as a torch for showing Aeneas the way remains an unfulfilled potential.

On a figurative level, I believe that the bough's golden hue represents Aeneas' awakened consciousness to both the workings of the cosmos and to the foundation of Rome. Lee calls the bough's luminosity a 'sunlike gleam of consciousness'.[549] More specifically, the bough can be said to represent the hero's mind as he becomes enlightened with regard to Rome's future and the role that he will play in its foundation. Lee continues: Aeneas 'needs the Golden Bough […] only as he makes his way through the moonlit and often illusory part of his consciousness'.[550] Aeneas does not need the torch once he reaches Elysium. He places the torch on the threshold, relinquishing his source of light, but also preparing for the mental

[549] Lee, 54.
[550] Lee, 54.

illumination that is shortly going to come his way.[551] I find that Lee's suggestion that the bough is only useful for Aeneas up to a point is a valuable one, particularly when we understand the bough as a symbol of the hero's process of enlightenment. By relinquishing the bough, Aeneas surrenders himself to instruction, to the process of illumination. While he is in Elysium, Aeneas is confronted by visions of future heroes who will be instrumental in Rome's foundation and its progress. Virgil's underworld is therefore a site of observing the past and future, rather than acting in the present; a site of receiving, rather than radiating. Hence Aeneas takes on the role of receptor, rather than emitter, and hence the bough is relinquished at the threshold.

Aeneas takes the bough with him for at least part of his journey into the underworld. While Shelley's speaker does not literally cut a bough away from the tree, nor does he travel to another realm in order to see the apparition (instead, it appears before him), I maintain that 'the self same bough' (*TL* 37) alludes to Aeneas' quest and subsequent journey of learning. The bough and the tree to which it is attached reveal themselves to be a crucial part of *The Triumph of Life*'s speaker's experience. The 'bough' hanging above his head must be attached to the 'old chestnut' (*TL* 25) behind him. The speaker has confirmed this: 'I […] Stretched my faint limbs beneath the hoary stem' (*TL* 21—24). Later, after the initial vision of the triumph has appeared, prompting to speaker to ask, 'And what is this? / Whose shape is that within the car?' (*TL* 177-8), 'what [he] thought was an old tree root which grew / To strange distortion out of the hill side' (*TL* 182-3) transforms into a 'grim Feature' (*TL* 190) – 'what once was Rousseau' (*TL* 204). The apparition of Rousseau, misrecognised as a tree-root by the speaker, takes on the role of the guide, there to explain the meaning of the triumph. He is the speaker's attendant. The Longman editors observe that when the apparition

[551] *occupat Aeneas aditum corpusque recenti / spargit aqua ramumque adverso in limine figit, Aeneid* 6.635-6 ('Aeneas wins the entrance, sprinkles his body with fresh water, and plants the bough full on the threshold.')

of Rousseau later comments on a 'number of figures associated with the eighteenth-century advancement in thought often referred to as the Enlightenment', he says that they have been 'spoiled'.[552] This, the Longman editors suggest, links with Rousseau's own 'distorted' state.[553] Of Rousseau and the other thinkers, 'their appearance and their ideas have become rotten.'[554] While Shelley may be representing Rousseau's decrepit and failed intellect through his corrupted material state, I suggest that the speaker misinterprets him as a tree-root in a nod to the tree from which Aeneas takes the bough in *Aeneid* 6. Like the bough which affords Aeneas the unique experience of entering a site where he will learn a vital truth about his destiny, it is implied that the tree that hangs above Shelley's speaker and protrudes out of the ground around him provides him with a privileged insight into the meaning of life.[555] The bough seems to awaken him, and he mistakes Rousseau for its roots, who then provides him with enlightenment throughout the remainder of the poem.

Shelley's Rousseau is not the typical guide that readers may have come to expect from the models seen in Virgil's and Dante's works. Readers might expect Rousseau to have the answers that the speaker is searching for, in order to explain the meaning of the triumph. Rousseau does issue an instruction to the speaker: '[…] follow thou, & from spectator turn / actor or victim in this wretchedness […]' (*TL* 305—6). But then Rousseau continues: 'and what thou wouldst be taught I then may learn / from thee […]' (*TL* 307—8). Shelley reverses the teacher-student dynamic. His Rousseau does not answer the speaker's questions, but rather provokes further questions. In section 4.2.1, I quote from Estermann and Matthews,

[552] *SSP*, 850.
[553] *SSP*, 850.
[554] *SSP*, 850.
[555] I find that there is another connection between Aeneas and Shelley's speaker in relation to their respective transitions. At *TL* 35, the speaker recognises that he had 'bathed in the same cold dew my brow and hair' at an earlier point in his life. This could be an allusion to *Aeneid* 6.635-6, where Aeneas 'sprinkles his body with fresh water' (*corpusque recenti / spargit aqua*) before entering Elysium. As part of their journeys, both protagonists prepare themselves by immersing their bodies, or parts of their bodies, in 'water' or 'dew'. The experience of physically immersing oneself is central to both scenes.

who have both commented on *The Triumph of Life*'s involute structure, by which they mean that Rousseau's explanation – including his recollection of his own experience of seeing the triumph for the first time – is embedded within the speaker's dream. The result is that the poem has a dream-within-a-dream narrative structure. Consequently, Rousseau neither frames nor authorises the speaker's experience. Instead, he invites the speaker to delve deeper into a distorted and surreal dream.

Shelley's 'self-same bough' is an intertextual allusion that points to a number of source texts. It is also an intratextual symbol, introducing the fact that the poem's speaker has lived through this moment, or a moment like this one, at an earlier point in his life, as well as foreshadowing Rousseau's later recollection of a similar experience. Although Shelley may borrow his wording from Thomson's 1730 poem, he cannot be replicating its meaning exactly, since Thomson was referring to the interconnectedness between the 'Fruits and Blossoms'. Rather, by referring to the bough as 'the self same', Shelley's speaker is recalling a previous experience of sitting below this tree. Moreover, the bough has further significance when readers understand its precedent in *Aeneid* 6. While Shelley's readers can appreciate the bough's role within the transition from consciousness to 'trance' – the speaker sees the bough, affirms its presence, and is presented with the vision of the triumph – reading these lines alongside *Aeneid* 6 brings greater clarity and understanding to the meaning of the bough and the tree to which is attached. Like Aeneas, who required the bough to allow him entry into the underworld, Shelley's speaker's journey of awakening is heralded and attended to by the bough and its tree.

4.4 'the conqueror … in his chariot': Shelley on the Roman triumph

On 23 March 1819, Shelley wrote to Thomas Love Peacock about his impression of Rome. Contained in this letter is a passage about two of Rome's ancient triumphal arches, which I

quote in section 4.1.3 in the Introduction to this chapter. In it, Shelley is critical of the practices that the arch to Constantine is commemorating. The passage reads as follows:

> Descending from the Capitol to the Forum is the triumphal Arch of Sept[imius] Severus, less perfect than that of Constantine, though from its proportions & magnitude a most impressive monument. That of Constantine, or rather of Titus, (for the reliefs & sculptures & even the colossal images of Dacian captives were torn by a decree of the Senate from an arch dedicated to the latter to adorn that of this stupid & wicked monster Constantine, one of whose chief merits consisted in establishing a religion the destroyer of those arts which would have rendered so base a spoliation unnecessary) is the most perfect. It is an admirable work of art. It is built of the finest marble, & the outline of the reliefs is in many parts as perfect as if just finished. Four Corinthian fluted columns support on each side a bold entablature, whose bases are loaded with reliefs of captives in every attitude of humiliation & slavery. The compartments above express in bolder relief the enjoyment of success, the conqueror on his throne or in his chariot, or riding over the crushed multitudes who writhe under his horses hoofs, as those below expressed the torture & abjectness of defeat. There are three arches, whose roofs are pannelled with fretwork, & their sides adorned with similar reliefs. The keystone of these arches is supported each by two winged figures of Victory, whose hair floats on the wind of their own speed, & whose arms are outstretched bearing trophies, as if impatient to meet. They look as it were borne from the subject extremities of the earth on the breath which is the exhalation of that battle & desolation which it is their mission to commemorate. Never were monuments so completely fitted to the purpose for which they were designed of expressing that mixture of energy & error which is called a Triumph.[556]

Shelley's description of the arches encapsulates his conflicting opinions on them. Objectively, the arches are 'impressive' and 'admirable' works of art. However, in the case of the arch to Constantine, Shelley differentiates between his immediate sensory response to the arch's 'perfect' form, while also remaining attuned to its morally dubious connotations. The monument's magnificence is countered by its 'reliefs of captives in every attitude of humiliation & slavery'.

Looking to Shelley's criticisms of ancient Roman wartime and triumphal practices in this letter provides important context for his handling of the triumph in *The Triumph of Life.* Indeed, in the 2021 edition of the poem, Nora Crook finds a connection between the 'jubilee'

[556] *PBSL* ii, 86.

at *TL* 111 and the depiction of the 'Jewish jubilee' 'in the bas-reliefs of the Arch of Titus in Rome', who was 'victor over and enslaver of the Jews after the sack of Jerusalem (A.D. 70)'.[557] Furthermore, I find that the tone of this passage from the letter to Peacock foreshadows the way in which Shelley portrays the triumphal procession in his poem, whose followers are stylized as Bacchant worshippers. The participants in *The Triumph of Life* are enslaved, called 'a captive multitude' (*TL,* 119). This echoes Shelley's description of the 'crushed multitude' beneath 'the conqueror' on Constantine's arch in the letter to Peacock. In his poem, Shelley perhaps offers a more nuanced portrait than the one in his passage about the arch to Constantine. Partaking in 'the wild dance' (*TL,* 138), the participants in *The Triumph of Life* are 'tortured by agonizing pleasure' (*TL,* 143). 'They throw back their heads & loose their streaming hair' (*TL,* 147). The scene is reminiscent of a Bacchic ritual. This points to a different kind of subjugation than the kind seen on the imperial arch. The followers are said to 'soon stoop […] to bear' the 'yoke' (*TL,* 116). They are active participants in the parade, but this does not mean that they have autonomy.

We should recall the ambiguity surrounding Rousseau's entrance into the triumph, which I mention in Section 4.2.2. There, I briefly investigate the debate surrounding Rousseau's encounter with the Shape. Matthews argues that Rousseau did not drink the nepenthe from the cup, on the basis that 'had Rousseau' acted 'as he was commanded, the fair Shape's influence would not have been so weakened by the experience that followed; he would have known enough to resist Life's seduction.'[558] Everest opposes, suggesting that Rousseau 'does follow her instruction to drink, and that the subsequent vision is a consequence of this.'[559] I also considered Shelley's use of the passive and the active voice: Rousseau first 'was swept' along with 'the multitude', but soon he 'plunge[s]' 'among the

[557] *CPPBS* 7, 251.
[558] *SSP*, 873.
[559] *SSP*, 873.

living storm'. Rousseau's autonomy is ambiguous. He both acts and is acted upon. I find that this ambiguity recalls the nature of the crowd said to be following the Shape in the chariot at *TL* 107-116. These lines read:

> The crowd gave way, and I arose aghast,
> Or seemed to rise, so mighty was the trance,
> And saw like clouds upon the thunder-blast
>
> The million with fierce song and maniac dance
> Raging around; such seemed the jubilee
> As when to greet some conqueror's advance
>
> Imperial Rome poured forth her living sea
> From senate-house and prison and theatre
> [ ] upon the free
>
> Had bound a yoke which soon they stooped to bear.

The 2023 editors of the poem note that in his 'A Philosophical View of Reform', Shelley describes the Roman empire as 'a vast and successful scheme for enslaving the most civilized portion of mankind'.[560] Hence his image of the 'yoke which soon they stooped to bear' at line 116 seems to be in-line with that viewpoint. Shelley's choice of language complicates the issue of whether or not the followers of the triumph – and the citizens of ancient Rome – are willing participants. Those in the 'Imperial Rome's' 'living sea' are said to have 'stooped to bear' the 'yoke'. The verb 'stoop' suggests that they are shouldering a heavy burden, even suffering. But the verb is active, as though the Roman citizens are 'stoop[ing]' of their own volition. Moreover, the inclusion of the adverb 'soon' implies that the process of bearing the 'yoke' took some time, albeit a short amount of time. The citizens did not immediately 'stoop' to bear the 'yoke', but rather they did so over time. I find that Shelley deems that

[560] *MW*, 637.

Rome's citizens were only partly responsible for the historical triumph. Likewise, the participants of the triumph seen by his speaker are following the chariot against their will. We see the process of being manipulated into joining the crowd firsthand at 460-61, when Rousseau is 'swept' into the 'multitude', which, we should recall, was called 'captive' at 119. Shelley's knowledge of the Roman triumph therefore comes into play throughout his poem, mainly when he is representing the participants, which he does in a sympathetic manner.

Nora Crook, in commenting on lines 115-6, observes that Shelley distinguishes between 'forcible enslavement (at first resisted) and voluntary servitude induced by custom, fear, or bribery'.[561] Of the deleted line 'When freedom left those who would not be free', Crook says:

> 'Freedom left' the Romans after they reduced independent nations like Greece to docile provinces, and the self-imposed slavery of the Roman people followed: the Republic having been abolished they bartered their liberties for empire, bread, and circuses.[562]

In Crook's view, Shelley appears to deem that the Roman people played a part in their own enslavement, 'bribe[d]' by 'empire, bread, and circuses'. Crook also posits that Shelley's use of the word 'jubilee' is contradictory: 'originally referring to an occasion for emancipation, here [jubilee] means an occasion for enslavement.'[563] While I agree that Shelley introduces a strong sense of ambiguity with regard to who should take the blame for the endurance of the Roman Empire – the oppressor or the oppressed – modelled in his poem by a microcosmic example of imperialist practice, I suggest that he portrays the triumph participants in *The Triumph of Life* as victims to a higher power. This power is 'Imperial Rome' who 'poured forth her living sea' (*TL* 113).

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[561] *CPPBS* 7, 252.
[562] *CPPBS* 7, 252.
[563] *CPPBS* 7, 251.

4.5 Conclusion

In *The Triumph of Life,* Shelley creates an intersectional site where past meets present, and where semblances of ancient forms meet the speaker's corporal world. While his poem can be said to be modelled on Petrarch's *Trionfi*, I propose that Shelley's triumph is also much inspired by his knowledge of the practices of imperial Rome. His opinion of the events depicted on the Arch of Constantine, for example, is echoed in his treatment of the triumph's participants both at the moment the speaker sees them and when Rousseau described joining the crowd. Shelley therefore remains critical of certain aspects of imperial Roman culture. But, as with his other works which I have engaged with in this thesis, Shelley finds moments of clarity and even illumination in Rome's ancient literature. Like Lucretius' privileged philosopher, who watches the events of humankind serenely from above, and like Virgil's Aeneas, who is granted the experience of visiting the underworld in order to learn about his future, Shelley's speaker occupies a unique position whereby he is able to reflect on the meaning of 'Life'. Unfortunately, the poem ends prematurely before Rousseau can answer the speaker's question, 'what is Life?'.

The physical properties of Shelley's poem's landscape indicate that he had atomism in mind while he was writing. As I outline in Section 4.1.1, some scholars have signalled the echoes of Lucretius' work in Shelley's *The Triumph of Life*, typically examining them on a local level. I find that Shelley engages with two major ancient Roman works that explore ancient ideas of atomism, namely *De Rerum Natura* and *Aeneid* 6. These works differ from one another in that Virgil portrays his spirits in the underworld as being immaterial, thus he seems to challenge Lucretius' brand of atomism. Like Virgil, Shelley does not simply iterate Lucretius' ideas from *De Rerum Natura.* One example can be seen when Shelley's Rousseau enters the 'living storm', thus ignoring Lucretius' advice.

Shelley engages with both Lucretius' and Virgil's ideas on atomism within the same text. His triumph is at once a semblance of the past, made up of old atoms (as Lucretius dictates the world to be), and a non-living entity, like Virgil's parade in *Aeneid* 6. In a poem whose narrative structure hangs on a process of repetition and duplication, Shelley reimagines both Lucretius' and Virgil's works as semblances of themselves. His speaker is able to observe the parade from the outside, and to see it for what it really is, in Shelley's eye: a replica of a 'crushed multitude' beneath a conqueror's 'horse's hoofs'.[564]

[564] *PBSL* ii, 86.

Conclusion

Shelley gained much from his time in Italy. Scholars have never denied this. What some have denied, however, is that which he gained from reading its ancient literature. As I have outlined in the Introduction to this thesis and in all four chapters, classical Latin influences on Shelley's works have often been overlooked in favour of emphasising his engagement with ancient Greek literature. While this thesis has at no point disagreed with the fact that Shelley was enamoured with and influenced by Greek authors, it posits that to continuously prioritise Greek literature in discussions concerning Shelley's classical influences is to risk erasing his significant debt to ancient Roman poetry, philosophy, and history.

There are possible explanations for this imbalance. Shelley himself said, overtly at least, that Rome and its cultural legacy were inferior to that of Greece, using the analogy of a 'shadow' 'less vivid than the substance'.[565] This view fits with the broader intellectual climate of the early nineteenth century. Shelley's contemporaries voiced similar opinions: Thomas Love Peacock said that Homer belonged to the 'golden' age of poetry, while Virgil belonged to the 'silver'.[566] Once lauded during the Renaissance and the Augustan age of English literature, Rome was demoted to second place in favour of Greece.

Whatever Shelley claimed to think of ancient Rome, his poetry says differently. In Chapter One of this thesis, I presented evidence to prove that Shelley's exploration of atheism and vegetarianism in the early stages of his career was much influenced by the Latin poetry and philosophy that he read. Although Lucretius' presence in *Queen Mab* has been partly attended to by scholars such as Paul Turner, Horace's presence in the poem has been neglected. I have conjectured that Horace was an unlikely source of inspiration for the young

[565] *MW*, 688.
[566] Thomas Love Peacock, 'The Four Ages of Poetry', 141-42.

and radical Shelley, on account of his associations with imperialism.[567] Further, Horace could have been a reminder of the kind of educational authority that Shelley disliked, because of the usage of his poetry in construing and repetition lessons at Eton.[568] However, Shelley refers to Horace's *Ode* 1.3 in the note to Canto 8.211-12 on vegetarianism. Horace is cast as an authority on humankind's ethical state, proposing that our excessive ambition came about after the discovery of fire. Shelley applies Horace's warning to his own critique of humankind's dietary habits, claiming that eating meat corresponds to a combative state of mind. Although Shelley and his peers critiqued and even mocked Horace for praising Augustus – and therefore upholding the emperor's authority – Shelley saw an anti-authoritative figure in Horace. His engagement with Horace in *Queen Mab* demonstrates precisely why readers should not overlook his ancient Roman influences. Some of his most radical and 'modern' ideas have their roots in classical Latin texts.

I continue to argue this point in Chapter Two. Shelley's 'lyrical drama', *Prometheus Unbound*, at times comments on the dangers of blind subordination and the lack of independent and critical thought. Shelley advocates a message that has its roots in Lucan's characterisation of Cato in the *Bellum Civile*. Shelley's Asia states: 'so much I asked before, and my heart gave / The response thou hast given; and of such truths / Each to itself must be the oracle' (*PU* II.4.121-3). Lucan's Cato, meanwhile, 'inspired by the god whom he bore hidden in his heart', 'poured forth from his breast an answer worthy of the oracle itself' (*BC* 9.564-5). Asia's statement, seemingly inspired by Lucan, contains a number of political and anti-religious undertones. Shelley continues to challenge societal and cultural institutions in *Prometheus Unbound*, in the same way that we saw in *Queen Mab*, asserting his stance

[567] Leigh Hunt associates Horace with Augustus, calling him the emperor's 'flatterer'. Leigh Hunt, 'On the Poetical Character', 183.
[568] Lyte, 315.

against the monarchy and the church. Again, the way that he articulates these ideas seems to have been inspired by Roman authors, specifically Lucan in the *Bellum Civile.*

Shelley's anti-monarchy, anti-government, and anti-Church feelings are also evident in *The Cenci*, which is the subject of Chapter Three. As I point out, in his dramatization of the Cenci family legend, Shelley sought 'to represent the characters as they probably were'. Truth was important to Shelley. In order to communicate the horror of the Cenci legend, Shelley had to turn to Roman tragedies such as *Medea* and *Thyestes* for inspiration, as well as other genres containing tragic themes such as Ovid's tale of Philomela in *Metamorphoses* 6, where the most troubling and repulsive moments are played out on stage, rather than behind the scenes. As a result, I argue that Shelley's Beatrice is a new Philomela, as well as a new Antigone. As I demonstrate in Chapters One and Two, it is Roman literature that provides Shelley with the inspiration – and often the words – for challenging even the most contemporary issues that he believed his society was faced with, including patriarchy, and the power of the Church.

Finally, Chapter Four addresses Shelley's engagement with Lucretian and Virgilian ideas of apparitions in *The Triumph of Life*, as well as his thoughts about the practice of the Roman triumph itself. Unsurprisingly, Shelley takes issue with what the triumph represents, describing the reliefs on the Arches of Severus and Constantine in unfavourable terms in his 23 March 1819 letter to Thomas Love Peacock. Although *The Triumph of Life*'s meaning is obscured by the fact that it is unfinished, as well as the lack of a fair copy for the majority of the poem, I suggest that Shelley's intention is partly to warn his reader as to the dangers of blind worship, of yielding to an authority and losing one's capacity for critical thinking. This is seen in the stylization of the triumph's participants, who are likened to Bacchants, and called 'a captive multitude' (*TL*, 119). These themes were also at play in *Prometheus Unbound*. In this chapter, I discussed Shelley's references to a Roman practice which is cast

in strictly negative terms. However, this is juxtaposed with the mental clarity and illumination that both Lucretius and Virgil offer in *De Rerum Natura* and *Aeneid* 6, respectively. Where, in Shelley's view, Roman leaders instilled blindness in their subjects through practices such as the triumph, Lucretius opens his readers' eyes. At *De Rerum Natura* 2.114-5, he literally encourages them to cast their gaze upon a sunbeam to watch the dancing motes of dust, in order to better understand atomism. Therefore, in all four chapters, I have endeavoured to show that, through Shelley's gaze, Roman authors were neither imitators of Greece, nor 'flatterers' of authority. They could be innovative and disruptive; therein lies their allure for Shelley.

This thesis opens up space for further discussion of the status of Roman literature amongst Shelley's contemporaries. In all four chapters, I have mentioned the broader reception of the Roman author in question in Shelley's day. In Chapter Two, for example, I outline the history of Lucan's reception in England in the centuries prior to the Romantic period. Interest in *Bellum Civile* 9 was revived between 1688 and 1689, a period commonly known as the Glorious Revolution. It is important for readers to be aware of the history of the reception of *Bellum Civile* in English writing, and particularly Book 9, in order to appreciate Shelley's engagement with it in *Prometheus Unbound.* Further, in Chapter Four, I touch on the contemporary tourism that arose out of the interest in geographical spaces that had inspired classical authors. In December 1818, Shelley describes his visit to 'the Mare Morto & the Elysian fields, the spot on which Virgil places the scenery of the 6th Aeneid', and 'Lake Avernus', along with Mary Shelley, in his letter to Thomas Love Peacock. Like Virgil, both Percy and Mary Shelley were profoundly inspired by their visit to Avernus, with Mary Shelley writing an Introduction to her 1826 novel, *The Last Man*, based on their experience of visiting what they believed to be the Sibyl's cave. For Shelley, topography and literature converged at Italian sites such as these. Therefore, Latin literature was remembered not only

through its text-based form, but also through the sites and locations associated with it. This type of tourism, seen in the popularisation of the Grand Tour during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, allowed for visitors to engage with classical literature in a new way.

Although this thesis offers insight into the broader reception of Roman culture and specific Roman authors in Shelley's day, there remains work to be done. I have shown the importance of re-addressing Shelley's engagement with classical literature, arguing that Roman literature plays a far more substantial part in his poetry than was previously thought. Because of the bias towards Greek influences in scholarship on Shelley, I am inclined to suggest that Roman influences have been insufficiently examined amongst other writers in his circle too. Future research projects might offer a comprehensive study of the role of Latin literature in the writing of Mary Shelley or Thomas Love Peacock, for instance.

There is also the possibility of adjusting our focus and investigating the reception of a particular Roman author across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For example, Horace's reputation was ever-changing in this period, a phenomenon that I have begun to explore in this thesis. His status fluctuated between different generations. To some extent, work of this kind exists in the form of book chapters, such as in Volume 4 of *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature,* edited by Norman Vance and Jennifer Wallace, and in Timothy Saunders' collection of essays, *Romans and Romantics*. However, there is still value in taking one poet, such as Horace or Lucan, and situating their early nineteenth-century reception by English poets in terms of their earlier reception in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This would provide a rich, detailed analysis that would include a number of later authors, not just one. While this thesis has done much of the groundwork with regard to the reception of some key Roman authors amongst the second-

generation Romantic-era poets, with a special focus on Shelley, it has also opened up the possibility for further avenues of research relating to Roman authors specifically.

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