

The Abundant Elysian Stream: Callimachean Poetics in the Pastoral Landscape of *Aeneid* 6

In Virgil's vision of Elysium in *Aeneid* 6, heroic shades dwell in a sylvan landscape that offers all the amenities of Virgilian pastoral, including rest on the grass, song, the fragrance of laurels, and flowing water nearby (6.656-59). These characteristics of Virgil's pastoral *loca amoena*, developed in the *Eclogues* after the model of Theocritus' *Idylls*, are "ennobled" in Elysium (Jenkyns 1998): the souls of heroes replace shepherds, war horses replace goats, choral hymns replace solo love songs, and, most suggestively in generic terms, the stream or spring that waters the pastoral landscape becomes a river that is *plurimus*, "most abundant" (6.659 *plurimus Eridani per siluam uoluitur amnis*). It has not been recognized that the description of this river acknowledges a movement beyond the aesthetic of slenderness and fineness that Virgil expresses in the *Eclogues* by reworking Callimachus' *Aetia* fr. 1 (*Ecl.* 6.3-5) – an aesthetic that Callimachus elsewhere expresses by rejecting an abundant stream with the debris it carries (*Hymn to Apollo* 108-13).

The Eridanus is the name of a river known to have been discussed by Callimachus (fr. 458 Pf.; cf. Strabo 9.1.19, who says that Callimachus called the Eridanus undrinkably muddy). In the *Georgics*, Virgil twice refers to a mighty river Eridanus (associated with the Po: Thomas 1988, cf. Horsfall 2013a), in both cases with an emphasis on the violence with which it ravages woods, livestock, and cultivated land (*Geo.* 1.481-83, 4.371-73). The Eridanus contrasts with the Mincius, the Mantuan river that appears as *sphragis* in all of Virgil's poems, each time associated with the *harundo* (reed) that doubles as Virgil's slender Callimachean instrument (*Ecl.* 6.8). It is thus arresting that this violent river has its source in the peaceful abode of the noble souls.

The presence of the still vast, though apparently as yet pure, Eridanus in the pastoral landscape of Elysium suggests the Callimachean pastoral poet's transition to the epic genre. In this green landscape, Anchises surveys his unborn descendants (6.679-83) in terms that recall Virgil's descriptions of herdsmen counting their flocks (*Ecl.* 1.34, 6.85; *Geo.* 4.395, 436): his pastoral role reflects the role he urges upon his son as leader of a new Roman people. Horsfall has recently pointed out that Virgil gives poets a vital role in *Aeneid* 6 and implicitly in the Roman culture it anticipates (Horsfall 2013b); Horsfall argues that the book is "framed" by allusions to Catullus 64 in the *ekphrasis* at 6.14-36 and by the funeral tribute to Marcellus at 6.868-86. In his presentation of Elysium Virgil at once recalls the aesthetic cultivated in his pastoral poetry, in which song (or poetry) is accorded the highest value, and signals that he is approaching the greater themes that the epic genre makes accessible.

In concert with the pattern of references to Latin poets that Horsfall identifies, I argue that throughout *Aeneid* 6 Virgil enacts a generic progression towards epic. Scholars have long recognized that at the Trojans' first entrance into woods in the book, at 6.179 *itur in antiquam siluam*, the poet signals that he too is entering the "ancient wood" of his poetic models for this woodcutting scene in the *Iliad* and Ennius' *Annales* (Hinds 1998). At the same time, the metapoetic sense of *silua* as "the raw material of a literary work" (*OLD* s.v. *silua* 5b) may also summon the thought of the poet's own "old wood" of pastoral, a genre metonymous with *siluae* (*Ecl.* 4.3, 6.2). As the Eridanus of *Aeneid* 6 winds through a wood, the second half of the epic will wind through pastoral Italian forests (cf. the grove of the rural god Silvanus where Aeneas receives the heroic shield, 8.600-1), drawing on the imagery of the *Eclogues* and *Georgics* to evoke Italian landscapes and their emotive associations while transforming their generic identity. At the same time, the presence of the Eridanus in the underworld hints at the darker aspects of

epic violence that await Aeneas as he tries to follow his father's pastoral example, back in the violent world where the river emerges above ground and turns dangerous.

Bibliography

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