

respect, even when opposing him (*Phil.* 8. 1). But a man with a very strong claim to the *principatus senatus* was L. Calpurnius Piso, consul in 58 and, more important, the senior living ex-censor. He was one of Antony's leading supporters, and the reconciliation between himself and Cicero can only have been

hollow. In view of their past enmity, Piso was a man of whom Cicero could easily have used such phrases as "*vitiis cum virtute contendit*," "*ipse pessime senties*," and "*ad te improbos invitabis*."

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### PROPERTIUS 3. 12-14

Poems 12-14 form two interlocking structures which merge and overlap in 3. 13, the numerical center in a book of twenty-five elegies.<sup>1</sup> The first frame is concerned with the loyal devotion of married couples; the second relates to the spontaneous gratification of lovers. The unifying interest of all three poems is the participation of women in military exercise, and the contest between *aurum* and *fides*. The over-all movement of the group is from what is more objective and Roman (Postumus leaving Galla to fight with Augustus in 3. 12) to what is subjective and personal (Propertius' wish for the city's women at the end of 3. 14). Elegy 3. 12 thus carries on well from the "Roman" poetry in 3. 11, while the latter part of 3. 14, though still including reference to Rome, prepares the way for the wholly amatory elegies to follow (3. 15-17). Poems 3. 12 and 14, with thirty-eight and thirty-four lines respectively, stand in balance around 3. 13 with sixty-six verses.

In 3. 12, Postumus is making ready to set out under Augustus toward the East. To the activity of one of the Princes' soldiers abroad, Propertius opposes a second battle waged at home in the city—that against the corruption of morals—in the prosecution of which Augustus professed the greatest interest. What is a poor girl to do, the poet asks, when she has no scruples to defend her, no partner to keep her in line, and Rome to teach her indulgence?

"quid faciet nullo munita puella timore, / cum sit luxuriae Roma magistra suae?" (3. 12. 17-18). The military allusion in *nullo munita* . . . *timore* is continued by *uincit* in 19, where Postumus need not fear lest Galla be "conquered" by a wealthy seducer. On the day the fates grant his return, she will hang from his neck, modesty intact, even though time's passage weigh more heavily upon her than it did upon Odysseus' patient Penelope. Postumus, nevertheless, will not find his wife less faithful. Galla's *fides* is said to subdue even that of Penelope, "*uincit Penelopes Aelia Galla fidem*" (3. 12. 38).

Elegy 3. 13 falls into five sections. The moral climate at Rome is such, Propertius continues at the beginning, that Penelope herself would have found the siege carried against her, "*haec etiam clausas expugnant arma pudicas, / quaeque gerunt fastus, Icarioti, tuos*" (3. 13. 9-10). Gold, rare dyes, and spices from the East have become *arma* in a struggle to subvert within Rome the integrity for which Icarius' daughter was famed.

The second part of 3. 13, verses 15-24, looks back to 3. 12 as it tells of the loyalty of wives toward their husbands, and concludes with mention, once again, of Penelope (*hic . . . nec pia Penelope*, 3. 13. 23-24). According to the Indian practice of suttee, a dead man's wives compete to place themselves on the pyre so that they may be burned with one

1. A preliminary sketch of the structure of Book 3 appears in the recent edition by W. A. Camps, *Propertius: "Elegies," Book III* (Cambridge, 1966), p. 4. The first five elegies form a group which, to some degree, parodies Horace's Roman Odes. Elegies 3. 6 through 3. 13 alternate erotic with nonerotic

verse. No clear arrangement can be discerned after 3. 14, but the last five elegies all seem to point toward the conclusion of Propertius' career as a lover. The two *epicedia* or laments for Paetus and Marcellus (3. 7 and 3. 18) are found at about the same distance from the beginning and end of Book 3.

they have honored. A happy custom, Propertius says (*felix . . . lex* in 3. 13. 15); in precisely verse 15 of 3. 12 we read, of Postumus, "in casta *felix* . . . Galla." As in 3. 12, the virtuous wife's behavior is couched in language that suggests battle and the search for victory. When the pyre has been lighted, the wives stand ready to enter the lists—*certamen habent leti* (3. 13. 19). They will contend over the right to die, counting it a shame to live longer. Those who prevail, the victors (*uictrices*, 3. 13. 21), burn. *Uictrices* recalls *uincere*, used of Galla in the preceding elegy.

The next, and longest, section of 3. 13 lies between verses 25–46. As the first part looked backward to 3. 12, so does this central division anticipate Elegy 3. 14. Modeled jointly on Vergil's conclusion to the second book of the *Georgics* and on the lines in Lucretius Book 5 which reminisce nostalgically about the value of choice pears long ago, these verses praise the happy estate of rural lovers who could lie together openly under deer's skin or in long grass, *their riches* (*diuitiae*, 3. 13. 26), fruit from a tree. At that golden time the horned ram would lead back his sheep of his own accord, when they had eaten their fill.

Elegy 3. 14 is built around two features of this blissful period. First, the lack of embarrassment surrounding nudity: "nec fuerat nudas poena uidere deas," writes the poet about the Golden Age in 3. 13. 38. In 3. 14 no shame attaches to a young maiden who has exercised in the midst of men: "quod non infamis exercet corpore ludos / inter luctantis nuda puella uiros" (3. 14. 3–4). The Spartan girl takes arms with no more reticence than Helen, whom it did not embarrass to appear unclad before her brothers, gods though they were. Verses 19–20 of 3. 14 reverse the situation of 3. 13. 38: in the earlier poem, men could look upon a goddess naked without fear of punishment; in the later passage, the fact that gods beheld her naked did not discomfit Helen. The Spartan girl trains in boxing, in throwing the discus, in hunting; she hangs a sword by her side and sheathes her head in a helmet, like the Amazons of bared bosom. It is obvious that throughout 3. 14 the subject of women as

warriors receives its most complete and explicit development.

The second element which characterized Propertius' rustic paradise in 3. 13 and which we find marked in the last half of 3. 14 is the direct and spontaneous expression of desire. Spartan custom, we learn, forbade lovers to withdraw from the other's company, and it was permitted a man to lie by his woman out in the open at the crossroads.

Let us return to 3. 13. The fourth section—we spoke of five—verses 47–58, combines reference both to 3. 12 and to 3. 14. Rome's sacred ceremonies have fallen into disuse; her holy graves are abandoned. Her people worship gold, and *pietas* has been vanquished. Loyalty is driven out by gold; the laws and customs of Propertius' society stand on sale. *Victa iam pietate* (3. 13. 48) recalls the last line of 3. 12 and repeats the battle metaphor found there in *uincit* (Galla's *pietas* proved victorious). *Auro pulsa fides* also is military in connotation and alludes to the central issue of 3. 12, *fides*. "Auro uenalia iura, / aurum lex sequitur" (3. 13. 49–50) include two concepts important in 3. 14. *Iura* appears in the first and last couplets of 3. 14, and *lex* is found in line 21. Elegy 3. 14 contrasts the fundamental values of Sparta with those of Rome.

In the very last part of 3. 13 Propertius speaks out as a Roman Cassandra whose prophecy remains unheeded. His state will be crushed and broken by its own wealth—*bona*.

It has been customary to compare only 3. 13 and 14 and to use them to prove that, during the composition of Book 3, Propertius started to mature through disillusionment with Cynthia; in reaction to the kind of life he had led until that time, the poet began to write enthusiastically in support of Augustus' moral program for the city. We can now better evaluate this assumption.

There can be no question that the two elegies create an effective antithesis: corrupt Rome, pristine Sparta. But let us look more closely. The last half of 3. 14 is scarcely serious pamphleteering for any moral program the Princeps had in mind: the *turba* of pious Indian wives mentioned in 3. 13. 18 gives way to the *turba* of ardent lovers crowding around

the attractive Roman girl at the close of 3. 14 (vs. 29), and Propertius ends wittily, saying that if Roman women preserved the ways of Sparta (*iura!*) and engaged in battle the way Spartan women did (*pugnas*), Augustus' city would be dearer to him by reason of this asset (*bono*). *Bono*, the last word of 3. 14, is a humorous recollection of the sober words, "frangitur ipsa suis Roma superba bonis" (3. 13. 60). Propertius is *not* praising Spartan women for their chastity—this has been the assumption of critics who at present see Propertius backing Augustus' efforts to revive marital solidarity. Instead, he commends them for their open and direct response to a lover's bid, so different from that of their Roman sisters in 3. 13, and for their readiness to disrobe and to "take up arms" with men. This latter image, in elegiac parlance, does little to underline continence. If one pauses to reflect on the pun latent in *pugnas* at the end of 3. 14, or thinks of Helen's failure to blush when she exposed her breasts to "battle" ("nudis capere arma papillis," 3. 14. 19), Elegy 3. 14 stands suddenly clarified as a masterpiece of irony. What could be more fun for an elegist than to set the scene in Sparta—conventionally a symbol of restraint and sublimation in sex—and then to fill the stage with naked women in various military postures amidst "struggling" men ("inter luctantis nuda puella uiros," 3. 14. 4)? Why not quote Horace, that earnest soul, to boot, who in his second Roman Ode had spoken so seriously of the need for Rome's youth to train rigorously and harden their bodies for war? Horace's boys must endure poverty (*pauperiem pati*, C. 3. 2. 1); *pator* is used of the Spartan girl in that "awful contest," the pancration. Propertius' *uirgines* and Horace's young men are to become expert with horses (Prop. 3. 14. 11 and Hor. C. 3. 2. 4).<sup>2</sup>

Propertius is not advocating moral reserve

when he sets 3. 14 and 3. 13 together. A repetition of *uia*, "way" or "path," joins the conclusion of 3. 14 to the beginning of 3. 13. The path to rich living is wide in Rome ("luxuriae nimium libera facta uia est," 3. 13. 4), but that leading to Cynthia's side all too narrow, "nec digitum angusta est inseruisse uia" (3. 14. 30). You can't even reach her for, most venerable of Mediterranean customs, a squeeze! What Propertius is saying is that the unrestrained and honest expression of love is important for the solution of the difficulties pictured earlier in 3. 13. We remember how he deliberately juxtaposes the two Golden Ages in 3. 13, one in which lovers mate openly, the other a product of the gold brought back from the East. "Make love, not war for gold" is not very good Augustan propaganda.

And yet this is just what Propertius urges in these three elegies. But how are we to understand "love" for him? If he only praises loyalty to his mistress, as opposed to fighting for Caesar, 3. 13–14 represent antiestablishment whimsy. This they do, to be sure. However, we must not forget the interaction between 3. 13 and 3. 12. The verbal links which bind 3. 12 and 3. 13 together are many; if we disregard them, the very sequence is eloquent: a soldier leaves his wife to grow rich; Rome's moral collapse is owing to the reverence all have for gold. Augustus is to blame: Postumus will subject his marriage to severe strain following the *Augusti fortia signa* (3. 12. 2). He will leave Galla for the sake of booty, "tantine ulla fuit spoliati gloria Parthi?" (3. 12. 3). Not only do riches distract fortunately wedded husbands from their obligations at home, the subject of 3. 12; more basically, they inhibit honesty and the opportunity and even ability of women to participate fully in love, the subject of 3. 13, whose antidote we find elegiacally elaborated in 3. 14: naked warriors who have no wealth.

2. There is much evidence to show that Propertius parodies Horace in Book 3. A confrontation of Elegy 3. 2 with C. 3. 1 and 3. 30 makes the case: by quoting from these poems, Propertius shows how Horace, at the start of his third book, said he would never burden his life with imposing structures or great wealth which could only bring him envy; but, at the conclusion of the very same book, Horace leaves us with a monument which is conceived physically, one which is *altius*,

only higher than the pyramids—a symbol of the richest kings one might imagine. Only *ingenium*, Propertius says in 3. 2. 25, goes free of death, not physical things like the pyramids. Only the elegiac lover is truly humble in spirit; Horace, for his part, professed humility, but secretly approved of national projects like an expedition after Crassus' standards, or like the pyramids. Cf. W. R. Nethercut, "Vergil and Horace in Bucolic 7," *CW*, LXII (1968), 96 and 98.

We should note that Propertius does not distinguish between the *fides* of married women and the straightforward interchange of affection all lovers ought to cultivate. Married love is brought level to unmarried passion.<sup>3</sup> Elegy 3. 13 joins both interests. We have noted before that *felix* appears in verse 15 of 3. 12 where Galla is praised, and that it again occurs in verse 15 of 3. 13 when Propertius writes of the devotion of the Indian wives. *Felix* also begins the long passage, 3. 13. 25–46, on the direct and uncomplicated fulfilment of desire. Augustus would have approved of Galla's behavior; he might not have understood what Propertius meant by the Spartan paradigm. For Propertius there is, within love, complete continuity between physical need and its mutual gratification and matrimonial harmony. In his writings *fides* is used of lovers and married couples alike; and if Penelope and the dedicated Indian wives of 3. 13 are

*piae* (vss. 18 and 24), Propertius has written of his own relationship with Cynthia, "si forte pios eduximus annos" (2. 9. 47). For their part, the honorable matrons of India are literally on fire, *ardent uictrices* (3. 13. 21).

The cliché that love is warfare was long familiar from Roman Comedy. *Militat omnis amans*; so Ovid. In this set of elegies Propertius has redirected the equation to focus on the female. He does not write of women only as objects of love, as Catullus had done and as Tibullus was doing, nor do they appear as the evident weakness in the Roman state, as they do in the sixth Roman Ode. Instead, women are cast more sturdily, as props of domestic integrity, as warriors in a full sense.<sup>4</sup> But, as Propertius recognized with a smile, it is delightful that this metaphor has, no less than woman herself, more than one dimension.

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3. Cf. the article of M. Fontana, "Properzio e il Matrimonio," *Giornale italiano di filologia*, III (1950), 73–76, who argues that it would be erroneous to assume that Propertius never thought seriously about marriage, or that he made a distinction between casual love for a mistress and the deep loyalty traditionally assigned to formal unions.

4. We shall not be wrong to see, in the elegies at hand, the

foreshadowing of Book 4, where Rome and her destiny are given meaning and life through the different women Propertius shows us inhabiting the city; cf. P. Grimal's view that, without its women, the state would remain lifeless, if imposing in its conception ("Les Intentions de Propertius et la composition du livre IV," *Latomus*, XI [1952], 450).

### EPISTLE 56: SENECA'S IRONIC ART\*

"It is from a very common but a very false opinion that we constantly mix the idea of levity with those of wit and humour. The gravest of men have often possessed these qualities in a very eminent degree, and have exerted them on the most solemn subjects with very eminent success. These are to be found in many places in the most serious works of Plato and Aristotle, of Cicero and Seneca."<sup>1</sup>

A considerable body of criticism praises Seneca the Philosopher's psychological in-

sights in his prose writings, extolls his nervous, clipped, "modern" style, and stresses his rhetorical skill. But too often this minimizes, by implication, Senecan art. Indeed, it is sometimes urged that Seneca's psychological flaws place him outside the pale of serious art. By this view, Seneca's prose reveals inconsistencies and contradictions so considerable that it is concluded, happily, that he is neurotic or even quite insane.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of this paper is to reaffirm the deliberate artistry of Senecan prose. In exploring the philos-

\* A considerably different version of this paper, entitled "Senecan Irony," was presented by Dr. Motto at the APA meeting in Toronto, 29 December, 1968.

1. H. Fielding, "The Covent-Garden Journal," No. 18 (March 3, 1752), *The Complete Works of Henry Fielding*, Esq., ed. W. E. Henley (New York, 1967), XIV, 131.

2. Exemplary of the clinical approach is E. P. Barker on Seneca (2) in *OCD*, pp. 827–28. It is there asserted that "Seneca's life and works present a fairly clear-cut picture of neurosis . . . Everywhere are traceable . . . stigmata of paranoid abnormality. Abnormal his character is; not devoid of a disfigured greatness in its mutilation . . ." Seneca's philosophy