

THE BONES: PROPERTIUS 1. 21. 9–10

et quaecumque super dispersa invenerit ossa
montibus Etruscis, haec sciat esse mea.

"And no matter what other bones she may find scattered over the
Etruscan mountains, let her know that these ones here are mine."

Commentators differ over the interpretation of these lines. Mine is indicated by my translation.¹ However, as the differing interpretation—"But mine are whichever bones she will come across scattered about on the Etruscan mountains!"—has recently been resurrected, a reconsideration is in order.²

The idea that "both pronouns point to identical contents"³ runs into two insurmountable difficulties. It creates nonsense,⁴ and it runs counter to the normal rules of Latin grammar. Some commentators either do not notice the problem or are misled by the ambiguities of English, French, or German. If the pronouns are correlative, however, these lines can only mean: "Let her know that all the bones, each and every one, that she finds on the Etruscan mountains are mine."⁵ Stahl, though he defends the implications of his interpretation, still attempts to elude this difficulty by paraphrasing, "May she know that my remains may be any bones she finds." However, *quicumque* does not mean "any" (i.e., that out of the sample any randomly selected bones has an equal chance of being his);⁶ *quicumque* means "whatever" (i.e., that any bone picked at random is certain to be his). Housman was characteristically scathing on what this interpretation has to mean: "Certainly the discovery that her brother had 1,000 skulls, 2,000 femora, and 26,000 vertebrae, would be at once a painful shock to her affections and an overwhelming addition to her knowledge of anatomy."⁷ Yet several editors have been unable to surrender this notion, and the reason is not far to seek. If some way is found to ignore the brute facts of syntax and semantics, or if an elaborate set of emotional circumstances are fabricated for the poem, the editor can have Propertius say something quite strikingly modern. Thus Hommel in 1926 invoked the concept of the Unknown Soldier, followed by

1. In my interpretation of the poem as a whole I follow G. Williams, *Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry* (Oxford, 1968), pp. 172–85, especially in his realization that Gallus is not dying but rather speaking from the dead, and that the *soror* of line 6 is the sister of the addressee of the poem and the wife of Gallus (*contra* Housman; see n. 5 below); this scenario does not directly affect the points here under discussion.

2. H. P. Stahl, *Propertius: "Love" and "War"* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1985), p. 116. Stahl follows the editions of M. Rothstein, *Die Elegien des Sextus Propertius*² (Berlin, 1920; repr. Dublin, 1966), and F. A. Paley, *Sex. Aurelii Propertii Carmina: The Elegies of Propertius* (London, 1892); also H. Hommel, "Der 'Unbekannte Soldat.'" Zu Propertius 1, 21, 9–10," *PhW* 36 (1926): 988–90; E. Reitzenstein, *Wirklichkeitsbild und Gefühlsweltentwicklung bei Propertius* (Leipzig, 1936), pp. 4–9; K. Quinn, "Practical Criticism: A Reading of Propertius 1. 21 and Catullus 17," *G&R* 16 (1969): 22.

3. Stahl, *Propertius*, p. 116: that is, *haec* is taken to be antecedent to *quicumque*.

4. So R. Helm, "Propertius 1, 21," *RhM* 95 (1952): 281 ("Unsinn").

5. J. P. Postgate, *Select Elegies of Propertius* (London, 1884; repr. 1962), pp. 105–6, realizing that to make *haec* the antecedent of *quaecumque* resulted in saying "all the bones on the mountains of Etruria were his," altered the text to *quicumque*. But as Housman rightly noted, "These lines are a message from the dying Gallus to his sister, so *quicumque* is clearly wrong: Gallus has no concern with 'whosoever finds bones on the Etrurian mountains'": see "The Manuscripts of Propertius II," *JPh* 21 (1893): 184 = *The Classical Papers of A. E. Housman*, ed. J. Diggle and F. D. R. Goodyear, vol. 1 (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 294–95.

6. So Rothstein, *Elegien*, p. 204, and Hommel, "Unbekannte Soldat," p. 989.

7. Rev. of H. E. Butler, *Sexti Propertii Opera Omnia*, in *CR* 19 (1905): 320 = *Classical Papers*, 2:635.

Reitzenstein in 1936.⁸ This notion can be defended only by evoking some vague idea that Gallus wishes to be buried with his comrades.⁹ Let us note, however, that in this interpretation he is made to ask, not for burial with his comrades, but rather for mass burial (if any at all), without proper funeral rites or even identification of his remains. This is an anachronism that ignores both the social facts of Roman life and the literary facts of Roman sources.

Roman soldiers were no more keen than anyone else to remain unburied, and special care was taken to make sure that a soldier would receive burial. Under normal circumstances part of his pay went toward his funeral club.¹⁰ After a battle, if at all possible, the survivors cremated each body separately. The ashes of ordinary soldiers were sent back to the legionary burial place, whereas those of high-ranking officers (or at least a symbolic amount) were sent back to Italy.¹¹ Group cremation was practiced only when unavoidable because of battle conditions (e.g., Livy 27. 2. 9). One need only think of the extraordinary pains taken to bury the bones of Varus' legions (Tac. *Ann.* 1. 61–62). Tacitus describes the feelings of the soldiers: "igitur Romanus qui aderat exercitus sextum post cladis annum trium legionum ossa, nullo noscente alienas reliquias an suorum humo tegeret, omnes ut coniunctos, ut consanguineos . . . condebant." This is not an expression of humanistic universalism or of comradeship in arms. Not being able to tell which are the bones of relatives is part of the horror of the situation and increases the soldiers' desire for revenge. Common burial is a dreadful necessity, not a pious wish.

Further, no one in any actual epitaph or in any poem or historical or literary work ever expresses so dreadful a desire. Rather the speakers in epitaphs express the natural wish for burial,¹² or ask that relatives be told their fate.¹³ But on the interpretation of Propertius' lines noted above, we are presented with a Roman soldier who refuses to let his relatives find his body and ardently desires to be shoved into a mass grave.¹⁴ The commentators who accept this picture write as if the dying Gallus has realized or decided (for some unstated reason) that it will be impossible to discover which bones are his.¹⁵ Why should this be, if he is sending

8. Hommel, "Unbekannte Soldat," p. 989; Reitzenstein, *Wirklichkeitsbild*, p. 8.

9. So, too, L. Richardson, *Propertius: Elegies I–IV* (Norman, 1977), p. 208.

10. See Vegetius 2. 20, with J. M. C. Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World* (Ithaca, 1971), p. 55.

11. G. Webster, *The Roman Imperial Army* (New York, 1969), pp. 271–73. For an earlier period and operations on home ground, cf. the party sent out from Rome to recover bodies during a war with the Sabines (Livy 3. 43. 7).

12. See R. Lattimore, *Themes in Greek and Roman Epitaphs*, Illinois Studies in Language and Literature, vol. 28. 1–2 (Urbana, 1942) esp. pp. 199–202 and 220–30; cf. also Tibullus' fear at 1. 3. 5–10.

13. Simonides' epitaph for the Spartans is the most famous example (92D); cf. e.g., *Anth. Pal.* 7. 499, 500, 502, 540, 544; for death in battle, cf. Lattimore, *Themes*, pp. 142–43, 152, 238–40. The only case known to me where a speaker asks that news of his death not be reported (*Anth. Pal.* 7. 589) is a very late twist indeed, by Agathias Scholasticus; this exception simply proves the rule, for here the boy has already been buried (cited by H. E. Butler and E. A. Barber, *The Elegies of Propertius* [Oxford, 1933; repr. 1964], p. 187; J. S. Phillimore, "Notes on Propertius," *CR* 25 [1911]: 135; Stahl, *Propertius*, p. 334, n. 30).

14. Further, let us note that the modern treatment of the Unknown Soldier is simply an attempt to provide a burial that is as personal as possible. No one, even in modern times, wishes to be (or wishes his son to be) the Unknown Soldier, however much that anonymous corpse may be honored. There is no Unknown Soldier from Viet Nam precisely because of the extraordinary pains that the armed services have taken to identify all the war dead.

15. So Rothstein, *Elegien*, p. 204, and Reitzenstein, *Wirklichkeitsbild*, p. 8.

a message home with a comrade who would be able to identify the body? Stahl is almost alone in facing this difficulty squarely and realizes that in order to hold to this picture, Gallus must earnestly desire to deny to his wife the possibility of ever identifying his body. Yet Stahl's reconstruction can only work if Gallus instructs the soldier to reveal neither the circumstances of his death nor the location of his body, since the position, outside the siege-lines, would tell the story of how he almost made his escape. Butler, realizing this, altered the text to read *nec quaecumque . . . haec sciat*, and Phillimore emended to *quaecumque . . . nesciat*. Stahl's reconstruction grows from his acceptance of the reading *ne* in line 6, "*ne soror acta tuis sentiat e lacrimis*." "Does it not," asks Stahl rhetorically, "on his part reveal a degree of love rarely expressed, if he, himself at the point of dying, asks that his beloved bride be *not* informed about the tragic circumstances [i.e., that he had almost made it to safety] because he wishes to spare her the increase in pain and despair which awareness (*sentiat*, 6) of the facts (*acta*, 6; detailed in 7/8) would add to her mourning?" Rarely expressed, indeed; or rather, never expressed. This idea, too, runs counter not only to literary but to ordinary human experience.¹⁶ The notion that Gallus wishes the fact but not the manner of his death to be reported can find support only in the mistaken assumption, which Stahl rightly rejects, that his death was in some way shameful.¹⁷

This projection of modern ideas onto the Latin text results in a complete misunderstanding of the military situation. It seems to be assumed that Gallus' action was equivalent to desertion, or that his death occurred after a rout in pitched battle. First, let us note that saving oneself from a slaughter was not in itself a disgrace, if we are to judge by Aeneas (cf., for the sense of *ereptus*, Verg. *Aen.* 6. 110). If we must reconstruct a complete background for this epitaph—a need that Propertius does not feel—let us at least get the facts right. Perusia was under siege, and we are told of the numerous attempts at a breakout (Cass. Dio 48. 14, App. *BCiv.* 5. 36–37). In such a case, making a successful sortie through the battle lines (7) is the soldier's greatest duty and glory; to fall afterwards to search-and-destroy parties (8) hunting for such soldiers, his most ironic tragedy. Yet this wholesale importation of modern military ideology, together with the creation of circumstances not found in the poem in order to explain it, is symptomatic of a widespread approach to ancient poetry.

Stahl seems to feel that Gallus' wife will somehow find comfort in not being able to bury her husband: "This is in agreement with Gallus' purpose to spare her feelings as much as possible: she must be told ('*know*') that he is no longer among the living, and she has to *know* also that she cannot expect to receive the customary confirmation of his death, viz., an identified corpse to be buried."¹⁸ Exactly how his refusal to let her know where his bones lie will spare her feelings I cannot imagine.

16. To take only one example, cf. Germanicus' instructions to tell his father and brothers of all the horrors attending his death: Tac. *Ann.* 2. 71.

17. *Propertius*, pp. 113–14: so Postgate, *Select Elegies*, p. 105, Reitzenstein, *Wirklichkeitsbild*, p. 7, and P. J. Enk, *Sextii Propertii Elegiarum Liber I (Monobiblos)* (Leiden, 1946), pp. 194–95; rightly criticized by D. R. Shackleton Bailey, *Propertiana* (Cambridge, 1956), p. 60; still found in Quinn, "Practical Criticism," p. 20, A. La Penna, *L'Integrazione difficile: Un profilo di Propertio* (Turin, 1977), p. 9, and R. I. V. Hodge and R. A. Buttmore, *The Monobiblos of Propertius* (Cambridge, 1977), p. 213 (who try to have it both ways: "This was not a noble way to die, though he was not actually disgraced").

18. *Propertius*, p. 117.

This is not how Antigone, whom Stahl quotes, felt (Soph. *Ant.* 450–70). Nor, more to the point, is it how Propertius felt about the bones of this relative, whose lack of burial is a *praecipuus dolor* (1. 22. 6); nor about the bones of his father (4. 1. 127–8): “ossaque legisti non illa aetate legenda / patris”; nor his own (1. 17, 1. 19, 2. 13b, 3. 16). We are given a picture of a man who says with his dying breath that he prefers to rot in the open and then be buried, if at all, in a mass grave; who prefers to cause his wife immeasurable pain by cheating her of the rite of burying his body, merely in order to spare her the possible additional grief of knowing that he nearly made it back to her; who tells a comrade the circumstances of his death, only to ask him not to reveal those circumstances to his wife; who does not wish her to know the whereabouts of his body, but forgets to tell his comrade to hide that fact also. This is as inhuman as it is incredible. Mercifully, it is also unnecessary.

This entire structure springs from the mistaken idea that *quaecumque* must be the relative to *haec*. Housman quickly disposed of this: “*quaecumque* and *haec* are not relative and antecedent. *haec* is purely demonstrative and means ‘these bones here.’” He cited Lucretius 1. 670–71 as a similar “deceptive collocation”: “nam quodcumque suis mutatum finibus exit, / continuo hoc mors est illius quod fuit ante”, where *hoc* refers not to *quodcumque* but to the notion of the clause, *tò exire*.¹⁹

So far I have been dealing with the reasons that *haec* and *quaecumque* should not be taken as correlative. Yet there is an additional reason, which to the best of my knowledge has not been advanced before. This is all the more surprising since the syntax of *quicumque* is relatively straightforward. As the standard grammars state, *quicumque* (as well as the reduplicated pronouns, *quisquis*, *quodquod*, etc., and all compounds of *-cumque*), “being essentially Iterative Relatives, take the Indicative according to the principles of Iterative action.”²⁰ However, like any other subordinate relative clause, the mood is subjunctive when in indirect discourse (either complete or partial).²¹ Since this fact seems to have been neglected, I feel I may need to belabor the point. A few examples (mostly taken from the *OLD*) may help illustrate: Cicero *De oratore* 2. 60 “est oratoris . . . , *quaecumque* res . . . posita sit, . . . dicere,” *In Pisonem* 99 “*quicquid increpisset* pertimescentem . . . videre te volui,” *Ad familiares* 5. 19. 1 “quod te mecum, *quodcumque cepissem* consili, polliceris fore,” 13. 18. 2 “te . . . ita existimare volo, *quisbuscumque* officiis . . . Atticum *obstrinxeris*, iisdem me tibi obligatum fore,” Livy 1. 59. 1 “iuro . . . me L. Tarquinium Superbum . . . stirpe, ferro, igni, *quacumque* dehinc vi *possim*, exsecuturum,” 3. 12. 6 “iuvenem . . . maximum momentum rerum eius civitatis in *quamcumque* venisset, suum quam alienum mallet civem esse,” Velleius Paterculus 2. 128. 3 “senserunt, in *cuiuscumque* animo virtus *inisset*, ei plurimum esse tribuendum.” Nor is this purely a prose usage: compare, e.g., Lucretius 2. 20–21

19. “The Manuscripts,” p. 184 = *Classical Papers*, 1:295, and cf. id., *Lucan: “Belli Civilis” Libri Decem* (Oxford, 1927), p. 173 (ad 6. 550).

20. B. L. Gildersleeve and G. Lodge, *Gildersleeve’s Latin Grammar* (London, 1895), p. 400 (§625); cf. pp. 364 (§567) and 169 (§254 R. 4); cf. also A. Szantyr, *Lateinische Syntax und Stylistik* (Munich, 1972), p. 562 (§302); R. Kühner and C. Stegmann, *Ausführliche Grammatik der lateinische Sprache*⁵, vol. 2: *Satzlehre* (Hannover, 1977), pp. 197–203 (§182), 542–49 (§239).

21. Or when dependent on an infinitive or subjunctive (attraction of mood). The subjunctive, in later Latin, spreads at the expense of the indicative. The indicative, however, does not spread at the expense of the subjunctive.

"ergo corpoream ad naturam pauca videmus / esse opus omnino, *quae demant cumque* dolorem."²²

Now, if *haec* and *quaecumque* really were correlatives—"Let her know that whatever (= all the) bones she may find are mine"—the *quicumque* clause would, of course, be a dependent clause in indirect discourse, reflecting the thought of someone other than the narrator, and as such the verb would have to be subjunctive. It may be useful to make explicit the structure that is being assumed when commentators take the *haec* as antecedent to *quaecumque* by bracketing the clauses: "et sciat (*haec* esse mea [*quaecumque* super dispersa *invenerit* ossa montibus Etruscis])." The indicative, on the other hand, is used only when the *qui* or *quicumque* (or similar) clause is purely parenthetical, reflecting the thought of the narrator, and so is not genuinely part of the indirect discourse.²³ Commentators who assume the embedded structure have been misled by the use of *haec*, and perhaps also by the mere order of the clauses. But, of course, *invenerit* is not a perfect subjunctive, it is a future perfect, following the usual rules for iteratives in nondependent clauses: "When one action is repeated before another, the antecedent action is put in the Perfect, Pluperfect, or Future Perfect; the subsequent action in the Present, Imperfect, or Future [or an equivalent], according to the relation."²⁴ Consequently, *quaecumque* simply cannot be correlative to *haec*.

The indicative *invenerit* shows that *haec* is purely deictic, and *quaecumque* is purely parenthetical, a comment by the narrator; as such it has its usual concessive force. Recasting in direct discourse may make the structure clearer. Gallus is not saying that his wife should think "Any bones I may find are all his"; rather he says "And whatever other bones she may find, let her know for certain: 'These bones are his.'" There is a close syntactic parallel to Propertius' usage in Vergil, which shows the partitive meaning that this sort of parenthetical *quicumque* with the indicative can have. Juno speaks to Juturna (*Aen.* 12. 143–45):

scis ut te cunctis unam, *quaecumque* Latinae
magnanimi Iovis ingratum *ascendere* cubile,
praetulerim caelique libens in parte locarim.

"You know that, *out of all* the Latin girls who [or: no matter how many] have mounted the ungrateful bed of great-hearted Jupiter, I preferred you alone and willingly allotted you a place in heaven." Here, exactly as in Propertius, the *quicumque* clause is not embedded; it is purely parenthetical and therefore indicative, while *cunctis* plays the role of Propertius' *haec*. So likewise we might translate Propertius' lines: "And *out of all* the bones that she may find on the Etruscan mountains, let her know that these particular ones over here are mine."

Thus, the assumption that *haec* and *quaecumque* are correlative in these lines is both unnecessary and impossible. It has found favor with a few because it seems to make the poet say something that has superficial parallels with modern senti-

22. Cf. also Livy 3. 12. 16, 9. 14. 7, Calp. *Hist.* 18, Curt. 4. 9. 2; for the same grammar with *quisquis*, cf., e.g., Cic. *Fin.* 5. 24; Vell. Pat. 1. 12. 2; for attraction of mood, cf. Caes. *BGall.* 1. 31, 35, *BCiv.* 1. 33. 3; Cic. *De or.* 3. 37, *Top.* 84, *Att.* 8. 11b. 1, Livy 3. 11. 2, 7. 17. 12, 9. 37. 5.

23. Gildersleeve and Lodge, *Grammar*, p. 402 (§628, R.a); Kühner–Stegmann, *Grammatik*, 2:524–45 (§239. 1–2).

24. Gildersleeve and Lodge, *Grammar*, p. 363 (§567).

ment. In the first place, however, it forces an unnatural interpretation ("every bone is mine") that can be defended only by ignoring ancient sentiment and the poet's own words, or else by creating an elaborate set of wholly imaginary circumstances. In the second place, this reading ignores the standard rules that govern Latin. Though Gallus could not be buried, this impossible interpretation can.

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"THESE ARE MY TEMPLES
 IN YOUR HEARTS" (TAC. ANN. 4. 38. 2)

Public clarification of a Roman emperor's policy toward divine honors requires a major address ceremoniously articulated in lofty commonplaces and traditional precedents. Such is the occasion in A.D. 25 when Tiberius responds to the request of a legation from the province of Baetica for permission to construct a temple to himself and his mother in gratitude for the punishment of the cruel ex-proconsul Vibius Senecus. In Tacitus' account (*Ann.* 4. 37. 2–38. 3), Tiberius declines the honor in nobly expressed sentiments that designate the virtues for which he would like to be remembered by posterity, culminating in the striking visual image "these are my temples in your hearts, these are my most beautiful statues" (4. 38. 1–2):

ego me, patres conscripti, mortalem esse et hominum officia fungi satisque habere, si locum principem impleam, et vos testor et meminisse posteros volo; qui satis superque memoriae meae tribuent, ut maioribus meis dignum, rerum vestrarum providum, constantem in periculis, offensionum pro utilitate publica non pavidum credant. haec mihi in animis vestris templa, hae pulcherrimae effigies et mansurae; nam quae saxo struuntur, si iudicium posterorum in odium vertit, pro sepulchris spernuntur.

Although scholars have adduced several literary parallels for the image with which this quotation ends, they ultimately discern the originality of the expression whereby Tiberius boldly identifies his virtues as metaphorical temples in the hearts of his countrymen.¹ One parallel which has not previously been documented, however, both exhibits a precedent for Tiberius' vividness of phrasing and sets his remarks in their proper historical context for Tacitus as an historian. This is a passage in Plutarch's *Life of Cato the Elder* where the biographer states that the citizens of Rome showed their appreciation for Cato's services to the commonwealth

1. R. H. Martin and A. J. Woodman, *Tacitus: "Annals" Book IV* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 189–90, thoroughly discuss the passage. Additional parallels are mentioned by A. Henrichs, "Monumentum aere perennius (zu P.Oxy. 2435)," *ZPE* 4 (1969): 150, who emends a papyrus fragment of the speech Germanicus held before the Alexandrians on a subject very similar to Tiberius' (lines 25–27 ἐμνημόνην δὲ καὶ ὡς ταῦτα πολὺ- | [πλ]ασίονα τεθησαυρισμένα ἐν ταῖς ὑμετέροις | [ψυ]χαῖς εὖρον [εὐχαῖς Turner]). Henrichs makes this emendation on the argument that "dabei handelt es sich um eine verbreiteten Topos, der mit Vorliebe in feierlichen Reden . . . Verwendung fand." The entire papyrus fragment is printed with Henrichs' emendation as the first item of "Appendix 3: Germanicus' Speech and Edicts," in F. R. D. Goodyear, *The "Annals" of Tacitus, Books 1–6*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1981), p. 458.