A BOOK MADE NEW: READING PROPERTIUS READING POUND. A STUDY IN RECEPTION*

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In situations in which understanding is disrupted or made difficult, the conditions of all understanding emerge with the greatest clarity. Thus the linguistic process by means of which a conversation in two languages is made possible through translation is especially informative. (Gadamer)

This article was prompted by a reading of Pound's *Homage to Sextus Propertius*, and, in particular, by a basic question: why might the argumentative, edgy poet Pound have been drawn to Propertius? What might he have seen in him? Some of the attraction, no doubt, lay in Propertius' slightly marginal status as a Classical author, part of the main tradition but on the edge. But it does not seem to have been the romantically agonized version of Propertius that Pound saw. Nor the merely clever, witty, light and playful Propertius[1] — though he saw more of the second figure than the first.[2] It is a more argumentative, penetrating Propertius, the 'modernist' Propertius, the poet of what Pound[3] called 'Logopoeia':

> the dance of the intellect among words . . . (which) employs words not only for their direct meaning, but takes count in a special way of habits of usage, the context we expect to find with the word, its usual concomitants, of its known acceptances and of ironical play. It holds the aesthetic content which is peculiarly the domain of verbal manifestation, and cannot possibly be contained in plastic or in music. It is the latest come, and perhaps most tricky and undependable mode.
>
> Logopoeia does not translate; though the attitude of mind it expresses may pass through a paraphrase. Or one might say, you can *not* translate it "locally", but having determined the original author's state of mind, you may or may not be able to find a derivative or an equivalent.

'Logopoeia', then, includes 'ironical play', but, more widely, it opens out the gaps between the different aspects of words which normally hang together. It is on the argumentative energies generated by these gaps in Propertius and between himself and Propertius that Pound concentrated,[4] to the exclusion of any narrative. The key term is argument: argument as the engagement with, and addressing, other views and voices; argument as implicated in translation, indeed in reading itself;[5] argument, finally, as book.[6] It is to this, the sense of the book as argument, in particular of Propertius Book 3 as argument, that I now turn.

That there is more than one way of reading an individual poem is readily accepted today.[7] It would seem only logical to extend this approach to a collection of poems, to

* Although not everything this article has to say about Propertius is to be found precisely in Pound's *Homage to Sextus Propertius* my argument is in various ways deeply charged by a reading of that work. Hence the title.

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[1] The Propertius emphasized by, e.g., P. Veyne, *Roman Erotic Elegy* (1988), *passim*, but especially chs 2, 3, and 4.

[2] As T. S. Eliot says of the *Homage*: 'It is not a translation, it is a paraphrase, or still more truly (for the instructed) a *persona*. It is also a criticism of Propertius, a criticism which in a most interesting way insists upon an element of humour, or irony and mockery in Propertius, which Mackail and other interpreters have missed' (*Selected Poems*, ed. T. S. Eliot (1928), 19).

[3] 'How to read', *Literary Essays* (1960), 25.

[4] 'A regrounding of the original in a contemporary sensibility', as J. P. Sullivan (*Ezra Pound and Sextus Propertius: A Study in Creative Translation* (1964), 20) calls it.

[5] As Auden points out in his essay 'Reading' (*The Dyer's Hand and Other Essays* (1963), 3–4), 'to read is to translate, for no two persons' experiences are the same. A bad reader is like a bad translator: he interprets literally when he ought to paraphrase and paraphrases when he ought to interpret literally'.

[6] The book is currently a very fashionable issue. Cf. G. Nunberg (ed.), *The Future of the Book* (reviewed by D. P. Fowler, *TLS* 10 May 1996, 11–12).

[7] Even in the ancient world Horace reads Homer ethically (*Epist.* 1.2.1–5); Ovid playfully suggests that you *could* read both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as love stories (*Trist.* 2.374–82). Cf. U. Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation* (1990): 'The limits of interpretation coincide with the rights of the text.'

possible patterns of connection, juxtaposition and balance of poems in a book. For it seems not inherently unlikely that there should be such patterns discernible in a book,[8] that recontextualization of an independent poem in a collection would generate new and different meanings, contribute to a variety of patterns. At the same time, it seems inconsistent with other ways of reading to assume only one pattern rather than several.[9] Not a pattern, therefore, that is inert, mechanical, univocal.[10] Not a means of closing down meaning, as is often the case with the concept of the book, the static concept that is a standard weapon in the critical armoury: single, authorial, a one-way process disdainful of the reader.[11] Rather the book as part of an interpretative dialogue, the book as dynamic release for a plurality of meanings. This article proposes only one of many possible patterns in Propertius to which a reader might respond.

The Neoteric and Augustan poets were very self-conscious about poetry as poetry,[12] and Propertius was no exception. There are fifteen occurrences of *carmen* and *carmina* in Book 1 alone, and three of *versus*. And, like Virgil's *Eclogues*, Book 1 is carefully structured as a book.[13] The opening words neatly set things up in several ways: *Cynthia prima*. Cynthia is both the first[14] love of Propertius' life and the first word of his book,[15] thus initiating the identification of life, love, and poetry that is crucial for Propertius. Cynthia is also a kind of Muse,[16] something which becomes quite explicit in Book 2.1.1–4. And finally Cynthia is the book.[17]

[8] cf. G. O. Hutchinson, *JRS* 74 (1984), 99–106; J. McKeown, *Commentary on Ovid's Amores* (1987–), Vol. 1; M. Santirocco, *Unity and Design in Horace's Odes* (1986).

[9] cf. C. O. Brink, *Horace On Poetry* ii, '*The Ars Poetica*'(1971), 445–67; K. W. Gransden, *Commentary on Virgil's Aeneid viii* (1976), 4–11. As James Joyce, unsurprisingly privileging authorial intention over reader-power, said of *Ulysses*, 'I've put in so many enigmas and puzzles that it will keep the professors busy for centuries over what I meant, and that's the only way of ensuring one's immortality' (quoted by D. Bordwell, *Making Meaning* (1989), 249).

[10] Like that suggested for Propertius by H. Dettmer in *Horace: a Study in Structure* (1983). Cf. the reviews by G. O. Hutchinson, (*JRS* 75 (1985), 313–14), and by H. P. Syndikus (*Gnomon* 57 (1985), 11–15). Cf. also J. van Sickle, *The Design of Virgil's Bucolics*, Filologia e critica 24 (1978), and the review by R. G. M. Nisbet (*JRS* 69 (1979), 231).

[11] cf. Nunberg, op. cit. (n. 6), 20: 'Raffaele Simone. . . sees in the future of the book a dissolution of the membrane that has surrounded the historically constructed "closed text" — original, authorial, perfected, a space that resists all intrusion — and a return to the medieval notion of the "open text", an object that is "penetrable, copiable, limitlessly interpretable".'

[12] Note the prominence, for example, of poetry and song in Virgil's *Eclogues*.

[13] cf. O. Skutsch, *CP* 58 (1963), 239: 'A symmetry such as that shown here arises neither by accident nor even by careful arrangement of matter created previously: a certain amount of writing must have been done to meet the demands of the symmetry intended.' Skutsch gives his schema on p. 238. See also Camps on the arrangement of the contents in Book 1 (*Commentary* (1961), 10f.). M. Hubbard's remarks on this issue (*Propertius* (1974), 28–9) are characteristically perceptive: 'The second half of the book is much less tightly knit. One motif is recurrent, the exploration of love in absence, but though recurrent it is not dominant. A letter to Cynthia at Baiae (11) establishes it, and it is then developed in two poems, one (12) probably to Ponticus . . . , one to Gallus (13); both poems have something mechanical about them, and there is something mechanical too in their placing, followed as they are by another once more contrasting Propertius with Tullus (14); this placing seems designed to link the two parts of the book . . . '

[14] Significantly, there is no equivalent for *prima* in Propertius' 'model', the Meleager epigram *A.P.* 12.101.

[15] cf. 1.12.20: 'Cynthia prima fuit, Cynthia finis erit'. And indeed she will be. For, the last mention of Cynthia is in the elegy preceding the book's three-poem coda (cf. Skutsch, op. cit. (n. 13)), 1.19, where the poet envisages his own death. Note too that Cynthia ends Book 3, so that Books 1–3 retrospectively become a unit. On closure, see D. P. Fowler, *M & D* (1989), 75–122; also D. Roberts, F. Dunn, and D. P. Fowler (eds), *Classical Closure: Reading the End in Greek and Latin Literature* (1997).

[16] Cynthia comes from Cynthius, a cult title of Apollo, as is Tibullus' Delia. Gallus' Lycoris, from Lycoreus, is also a cult title of Apollo, notably in his poetical aspects, cf. R. D. Anderson, R. G. M. Nisbet, P. Parsons, *JRS* 69 (1979), 148.

[17] cf. Martial 14.189: 'Cynthia, iucundi carmen iuvenale Properti'. And if Cynthia is the book, then 1.2, in which the poet exhorts Cynthia to renounce cosmetics and luxurious adornment in favour of natural beauty, is a coded statement of adherence to Callimachean principles, cf. Callimachus, *Iambus* 3; cf. D. Ross, *Backgrounds to Augustan Poetry* (1975), 102 n. 2. For the motif of make-up, see Prop. 1.15. Also *A.P.* 5.123 and Tib. 1.8.9–16. On the whole topic, see especially M. Wyke, *JRS* 77 (1987), 47–61. Also eadem, *PCPhS* 33 (1987), 153–78; *Helios* 16 (1989), 25–47; and in A. Cameron (ed.), *History as Text* (1989), 111–43.

After the Monobiblos, where there are only two references to *libellus*,[18] Propertius seems to have seen the possibilities in laying greater stress on the book itself *as* book, in foregrounding the materiality of the text.[19] The opening of Book 2, for example:[20]

Quaeritis unde mihi totiens scribantur amores,
  unde meus veniat mollis in ora liber.
non haec Calliope, non haec mihi cantat Apollo:
  ingenium nobis ipsa puella facit.
sive illam Cois fulgentem incedere †cogis†,[21]
  hoc totum e Coa veste volumen erit.[22]

You ask me how it is I write so often of love
  And how my verses come soft on the tongue.
These no Apollo, no Calliope sings to me;
  My only inspiration is a girl.
Suppose she steps out glittering in silks from Cos,
  Her Coan gown speaks a whole volume.[23]

The focus on the book sharpens in Book 3, and it is with Book 3 that the bulk of this article will now be primarily concerned. More specifically, it will explore the Book's structure and design, briefly considering patterns of verbal correspondance and the arrangement of poems into sequences before moving on to a fuller treatment of the complex and challenging argument that is teasingly interwoven throughout.

I. READING PROPERTIUS

Verbal Patterns

The last two poems of Book 3, 24 and 25, in their renunciation of Cynthia, designedly pick up and reverse the opening poem of Book 1. Cynthia thus provides a frame around Propertius' first three books.[24] Precise verbal frames also encircle Book 3 and mark it out as a unit. So, 3.1.18 *pagina nostra* is strikingly echoed by 3.25.17 *mea pagina*. Similarly, 3.2.18 *formae* corresponds to 3.24.1 *formae*,[25] just as 3.4.10 *historiae*[26] corresponds to 3.22.20 *historiae*, and 3.6.36 *curre* to 3.20.10 *curre*.

There are, therefore, suggestions here of chiastic arrangement, ring composition around Book 3. But these are only suggestions; Propertius eschews anything so neat and

[18] At 1.9.3 and 1.11.19.

[19] For a similar stress in earlier Latin poetry, cf., e.g., Catullus 1; Virgil, *Eclogues* 6.9–12; later, cf., e.g., Martial 1 *Praef.* 2 (with Howell), 118, 11.1, 108. The topic is much discussed. On Hellenistic bookishness, see, e.g., P. Bing, *The Well-Read Muse: Present and Past in Callimachus and the Hellenistic Poets*, Hypomnemata 90 (1988).

[20] Text: Fedeli unless otherwise stated.

[21] The old conjecture *vidi* is preferable to the MS tradition's *cogis* here (dittography of *cois*).

[22] Elsewhere in Book 2, in addition to nineteen occurrences of *carmen* and *carmina* and six of *versus*, there are the following references to books, tablets or pages: *liber*: 3.4, 24a.1, 34.27. *libellus*: 13.25, 25.31. *tabellae*: 6.27, 20.33. *pagina*: 21.1, 34.89. And Book 2 as it stands is framed by two elegies (1 and 34) which state the poet's literary aims and intentions. Or do these poems top and tail two separate books, or the remains of two separate books? Lachmann's view (maintained by M. Hubbard, *Propertius* (1974), 41–2) was that 2.10 was the opening poem of a new, third book. S. J. Heyworth (diss., University of Cambridge (1986), 126ff.; and *PLLS* (1995), 165–85) also argues that Book 2 originally comprised two books, but that 2.10 was closural, and that a new book begins with 2.13. G. P. Goold (Loeb edn, 1990, 16ff.) agrees. But despite the mention at 2.13.25 of *tres ... libelli* (possibly a reference to the first three books of Propertius' *Elegies* as we have them, see Hutchinson, op. cit. (n. 5)) the issue must remain *sub iudice*. (See now also R. O. A. M. Lyne in this present volume, pp. 21–37.)

Book 3 contains seven occurrences of *carmen* and *carmina* and two of *versus* as well as the following references to books, tablets, or pages: *liber*: 21.28. *libellus*: 2.17, 3.19, 9.43. *tabellae*: 23.1, 23.11. *pagina*: 1.18, 3.21, 25.17.

[23] All translations are by Guy Lee (1994).

[24] See n. 15 above and pp. 53–4 below, with n. 91.

[25] *formae* is further repeated at 3.25.18. For the view that 3.24 and 3.25 constitute a single poem, see n. 90 below.

[26] cf. Gallus *fr.* 3: 'maxima Romanae pars eris historiae' (*editio princeps*: R. D. Anderson, P. J. Parsons, and R. G. M. Nisbet, *JRS* 69 (1979), 125–55). Cf. E. Courtney, *The Fragmentary Latin Poets* (1993), 265. For a full bibliography, see J. Blansdorf's 1995 Teubner of *Fragmenta Poetarum Latinorum*, 252–5.

tidy, so utterly predictable. *Pagina* also appears in 3.3.21, *historia* in 3.20.28. And *Marcius . . . liquor* at 3.2.14, which should have been echoed by 3.24, is pointedly *not* balanced by *Marcius umor* at 3.22.25.

Sequences[27]

'The order of the elegies in the book is evidently considered, but not in any important sense significant.'[28] How true is this?

3.1 and 2 form a pair;[29] 3.4 and 5 also form a pair.[30] These two pairs frame the manifesto poem, 3.3. Similarly, 3.21 and 22 form a pair (journeys to and from Greece and Italy) and 3.24 and 25 form a pair (they are both *renuntiationes amoris*). These two pairs frame 3.23, which, as Cairns has shown,[31] is an oblique manifesto. Thus the two manifestos, 3.3 and 3.23, correspond.

The correspondences continue. In 3.6 Propertius questions Lygdamus on the imagined laments of his unnamed girl that Propertius has broken his faith to her and left her alone for another. Propertius tells Lygdamus to report that he is equally tormented and has been faithful. This is mirrored by 3.20 in which Propertius entices an unnamed girl[32] away from her current lover, promising eternal fidelity. And the link is confirmed by the repetition of *curre* at 3.6.36 and 3.20.10. Again, however, there is no neat fit overall. For example, the two laments 3.7 and 3.13, do *not* exactly correspond in position.

Argument and Themes

3.1 and 2 attempt to fix the relationship between poet, poem, and audience.[33]

> Callimachi Manes et Coi sacra Philitae,
> in vestrum, quaeso, me sinite ire nemus!
> primus ego ingredior puro de fonte sacerdos
> Itala per Graios orgia ferre choros.
> dicite, quo pariter carmen tenuastis in antro?
> quove pede ingressi? quamve bibistis aquam? (3.1.1–6)

[27] For some suggestions of book-arrangement in Callimachus' *Aetia*, see A. Kerkhecker, *ZPE* 71 (1988), 16ff. On the sequence of 'Roman Odes' in Horace, see the monograph by C. Witke, *Horace's Roman Odes* (1983).

[28] Camps, *Commentary* (1966), 4.

[29] After the *Editio Aldina* (1515), older editors (e.g., Muretus, Scaliger) print them as one poem on poetry and immortality, and Pound follows this in his *Homage*. The *Editio Gryphiana* (1573) detaches the opening couplet from 3.2 and makes it the final couplet of 3.1, and many editors find this attractive (Camps, ad loc. points out that this would leave 3.1 consisting of exactly 20 + 20 lines, and 3.2 exactly of 8 + 8 + 8). See also M. Rothstein, *Die Elegien des Sextus Propertius* (2nd edn, vol. 1, 1920; vol. 2, 1924).

[30] Compare the opening and closing couplets of each:

3.4.1–2:

> Arma deus Caesar dites meditatur ad Indos
> et freta gemmiferi findere classe maris.

> Caesar the God plans war with wealthy India,
> To furrow with his fleet the pearl-bearing seas.

3.5.1–2:

> Pacis Amor deus est, pacem veneramus amantes:
> stat mihi cum domina proelia dura mea.

> Love is the God of peace; we lovers venerate peace:
> Enough for me tough battles with my mistress.

3.4.21–2:

> praeda sit haec illis, quorum meruere labores:
> me sat erit sacra plaudere posse Via.

> The spoil be theirs whose hardships have deserved it;
> I'll be content to applaud on the Sacred Way.

3.5.47–8:

> exitus hic vitae superest mihi; vos, quibus arma
> grata magis, Crassi signa referte domum.

> For me life's outcome shall be this, but you to whom
> Wars are more welcome, bring Crassus' standards home.

[31] *Generic Composition in Greek and Roman Poetry* (1972), 76ff.

[32] Cynthia is hinted at, though she is not actually named in this book until 3.21.9. Cf. 3.20.8, the girl's illustrious ancestry, with 2.13.10, Cynthia's illustrious ancestry.

[33] Significantly, Pound placed these two elegies first in his *Homage*.

Shade of Callimachus and sacrifices of Coan Philetas,
Pray grant *me* admission to your grove.
I enter first as priest of pure fountainhead
To offer Italian mysteries in Greek dances.
Say in what grotto did you both refine your song?
On what foot entering? What water drinking?

The appeal at first is not to poems, but to the spirits of the writers, in a tone of perhaps exaggerated respect. Implicit is a contrast between two kinds of poetic greatness, a revered, classic stature and a living, therefore less absolute status.

Later, another version of greatness and the poet's role develops:

Scriptorumque meas turba secuta rotas. (3.1.12)

A crowd of writers following my wheels.

The quiet landscape becomes crowded: this is contemporary greatness, another kind of contrast with the opening classic values. This noise and confusion are the results of the poet's attempt to assert his stature in his immediate world.

Propertius soon moves to a quieter ideal:

non datur ad Musas currere lata via. (3.1.14)

It's no broad road that runs to the Muses.

And he rejects Roman martial themes:

multi, Roma, tuas laudes annalibus addent,
qui finem imperii Bactra futura canent. (3.1.15–16)

Many will add your praises to their *Annals*, Rome,
Singing of Bactra as the Empire's future bound.

Then, in a somewhat strained construction, the poem (*nostra pagina*) comes to the forefront as the poet recedes, and again tradition becomes the framework:

sed, quod pace legas, opus hoc de monte Sororum
detulit intacta pagina nostra via. (3.1.17–18)

But my page has brought down this work from the Sisters' mount
By a new-found path for peacetime reading.

He attempts, with a wonderfully light touch, to evoke a kind of greatness which combines stature and delicacy:

mollia, Pegasides, date vestro serta poetae: (3.1.19)

Vouchsafe your poet, Pegasids, a soft garland;

However, with a restlessness crucial for Pound's experiment, the poem moves on, and questions the whole nature of tradition which has so far been the stable element:

Omnia post obitum fingit maiora vetustas: (3.1.23)

Everything after death is magnified by age:

After *post obitum* the 'I' fades for a time, and the poem passes on to another side of the question:

exiguo sermone fores nunc, Ilion, et tu,
Troia, bis Oetaei numine capta dei. (3.1.31–2)

Small mention now there'd be of Ilium and Troy
Twice captured by the might of Oeta's God.

Having rejected the public large-scale world as a context for the poet's greatness, he now asserts that it is not the scale of the subject which makes the poem great. The argument is challenging:

nec non ille tui casus memorator Homerus
posteritate suum crescere sensit opus. (3.1.33–4)

Great Homer too, remembrancer of Troy's downfall,
Has found his work grow with posterity.

This clearly echoes the theme of the deadpan *omnia post obitum*. The line almost says that it is the poet not the subject which makes the work great, but the echo of the earlier dark-tinged thought undercuts *this* ideal and forces the poem on.

A change has occurred: *suum opus* has a life independent of the poet. The 'I' returns:

meque inter seros laudabit Roma nepotes: (3.1.35)

Rome shall applaud me also among her later grandsons;

But quickly the poem detaches, with a vital touch of mockery, the greatness of the poem from the poet:

ne mea contempto lapis indicet ossa sepulcro,
provisum est Lycis vota probante deo. (3.1.37–8)

It is decreed, the Lycian God approving my prayer,
That no dishonoured tombstone mark my bones.

It is part ideal, part bitter joke that the poet cannot in his life have the greatness of his poems. So the poem returns to the connection between death and greatness.

The struggle for a living greatness continues in 3.2:

Carminis interea nostri redeamus in orbem: (3.2.1)

Let us return meanwhile to our song's familiar round:

3.1 began with the poet entering the grove of the Greek poets; now he enters the world of his own poem. It is as if he seeks refuge from the death at the end of 3.1. The line itself is enclosed *carminis . . . in orbem*. Then he moves outward, but now the audience is much smaller:

gaudent in solito tacta puella sono. (3.2.2)

To touch and delight a girl with its music.

The theme of the song's power becomes a generalized development, backed by myth. The 'I' disappears altogether, and a network of patterns forms:

Orphea detinuisse feras et concita dicunt
flumina Threicia sustinuisse lyra; (3.2.3–4)

Orpheus, they say, bewitched wild animals and held
Back rushing rivers with his Thracian lyre.

The power of song governs animals, then the moving (*concita*) but inanimate river, then stones:

saxa Cithaeronis Thebas agitata per artem
sponte sua in muri membra coisse ferunt; (3.2.5–6)

Cithaeron's rocks, hustled to Thebes by music's art,
Of their own accord combined to bond a wall.

This is a fine image of the poem itself at this point: the poet has withdrawn, and different elements seem to form patterns *sponte sua* without any 'palpable design'. The poet ceases to possess the poems:

at Musae comites et carmina cara legenti
nec defessa choris Calliopea meis. (3.2.15–16)

Still the Muses befriend me, my songs are dear to readers
And Calliope unwearied by my dances.

They belong to their inspiration (*Musae*) and their audience. They will keep alive the figures within them, not the poet:

> fortunata, meo si qua es celebrata libello! (3.2.17)
>
> Lucky the girl who is celebrated by my book;

Then they will sustain not even the people within, but only their beauty:

> carmina erunt formae tot monumenta tuae. (3.2.18)
>
> Each song will be a reminder of her beauty.

The values enshrined in the massive memorials of the physical world will fade with it:

> aut illis flamma aut imber subducit honores (3.2.23)
>
> Or flame or rain will dispossess their honour.

The poem withdraws any claim to a place in the physical world:

> at non ingenio quaesitum nomen ab aevo
> excidet: ingenio stat sine morte decus. (3.2.25–6)
>
> But age will not destroy the name achieved by talent;
> Talent's glory stands — immortal.

At the start of 3.1 the ideas of poetry were expressed by images from the physical world. By the end of 3.2 the ideal of poetry itself belongs to the world of words (*quaesitum nomen*) and then to the mind (*ingenio*). 3.1 ended with an ironic balance between life and death; 3.2 finds a living centre once the poem has been freed from the poet, from the contemporary world, from its subject.

These two restlessly probing elegies introduce a book that is vitally concerned with the investigation[34] of what sort of poetry (Callimachean, Roman) Propertius should be writing, what sort of subject matter (Greek, Italian[35]) he should be drawing on, what sort of ownership he can exercise over his output. Just as Book 1 explores Cynthia and Book 2 explores Propertius and the life of love, so by Book 3 Propertius seems confident enough to embark on a more complex argument investigating the nature of the book itself.[36]

(a) The Callimachean at Rome: from Literature to Life[37]

Propertius Books 1 and 2 had been heavily Greek with their references to Milanion, for example in 1.1, Theseus in 1.3, Tyro and Hebe in 1.13, Calypso, Hypsipyle, Evadne,

[34] *Via*, at 3.1.14 and 3.1.18 (cf. Pindar, *Paeans fr.* 7b. 11–12, Callimachus, *Aetia fr.* 1. 25–8, Lucretius 1.926–7), initiates the notion of journey or voyage, cf. 3.21 and 3.22. The journey may be fatal, as at 3.7, infernal, as at 3.18, or mock-dangerous, as at 3.16. Book 3 itself is, of course, a kind of poetic journey (an investigation is, after all, a tracking). There are nineteen occurrences of *via* in the Book as a whole (Book 1 has six, Book 2 thirteen, Book 4 twelve). *Via* is, of course, a word that can be metaphorically applied not only to a way of life, but also to a way of poetry (*OLD* s.v. *via* §7, §10). Cf. also O. Becker, *Das Bild des Weges und verwandte Vorstellungen im fruhgriechischen Denken*, dissertation, University of Leipzig (1937).

[35] cf. 3.1.4: '*Itala* per *Graios* orgia ferre choros'. Propertius has inverted the order of precedence of Greek and Italian in the Horatian intertext, *Odes* 3.30.13–14:

> princeps Aeolium carmen ad Italos
> deduxisse modos.

Horace claims as *his* achievement the formal blending of Greek with Italian rhythms. Propertius trumps this: *he*, so it would seem, is going to bring Italian content to Greek form. See Camps, ad loc.

[36] cf. 3.1.18 *pagina nostra* ~ 3.25.17 *mea pagina*. In Book 4 Propertius goes on to explore Rome present and Rome past.

[37] The Callimachean aesthetic had taken an oppositional stance to the literary authority of epic and tragedy. When translated to Rome, this meshed with an oppositional stance to social and political authority: a choice of literary style could now also represent a choice of life style. Cf., e.g., F. Cairns, *Tibullus: A Hellenistic Poet at Rome* (1979), 32–4.

and Alphesiboea in 1.15, and Hylas in 1.20. There are even Greek forms:[38] e.g., *heroine* at 2.2.9 (also *heroinae* at 1.19.13, *heroinis* at 1.13.31, and *heroidas* at 2.28.29); *Cytaeines*[39] at 1.1.24. It is a shock, therefore, when the contemporary world of Italy enters in 1.21 and 1.22, and the metaphorical soldier of love of, for example, 1.3.16 and 1.6.29–30, is transformed into a 'real' dead soldier in the final two poems of the book.[40] It was Book 1 of Tibullus (published in or shortly after 27 B.C.) which made a crucial contribution to Italianizing the genre.[41] Propertius takes up the challenge in Book 3.[42]

3.3 is a literary manifesto. The details point unmistakeably to a Callimachean[43] allegiance: a dream, Apollo, water. Water imagery is particularly prominent. Propertius envisages himself on Mount Helicon.[44] He had just[45] attempted to apply his puny lips to the mighty waters of Hippocrene,[46] the fountain at the mountain top from which the epic[47] poet Ennius drank in the inspiration to sing[48] of Roman history. But Propertius is

[38] cf. P. Boyancé in *L'influence grecque sur la poésie latine de Catulle à Ovide,* Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique ii, Fondation Hardt (1956), 184–93.

[39] At least, there appears to be a Greek form here. The reading is uncertain. The mss. read *cythalinis*, or something similar. *Cytaeines* is Hertzberg's conjecture (Medea is called *Cytaeis* at 2.4.7), and this is approved by Prinz (*WSt* 54 (1936), 87). Leo offers *Cytaeiadis*, which Fedeli finds attractive on the basis of Apoll. Rhod. 2.399, 4.511, and 2.1267. Other conjectures include Hertzberg's alternative *Cytinaeis*, read by Camps, and Guyet's *Cytaeaeis*.

[40] The concept of *militia amoris* is probably more Roman than Greek. Although the idea would seem already to have been in Gallus (cf. Virgil, *Eclogues* 10.44–5 with Coleman, and also Clausen, ad loc.) it was probably Propertius who further developed it. Cf. A. Spies, *Militat omnis amans. Ein Beitrag zur Bildersprache der antiken Erotik*, dissertation, University of Tübingen (1930); K. Galinsky, *WSt* 82 (1969); R. J. Baker, *Latomus* 27 (1968); McKeown on Ovid, *Amores* 1.9; also D. F. Kennedy, *The Arts of Love* (1993), 53ff.; and M. R. Gale, *JRS* 87 (1997), 77–91.

[41] The very first elegy swiftly makes the point: v. 15 *Ceres*; v. 18 *Priapus*; v. 20 *Lares*; v. 36 *Palem*. On the diminution of Greek mythology in Tibullus, see J. Lightfoot, *Parthenius*, unpub. D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford (1995), 68.

[42] The Book's opening sequence of five poems, with projections from more general reflections on poetry into a more specific manifesto and then into society, politics, and life, also bears an ironic relationship to Horace, *Odes* 3.1–6, the Roman Odes, cf. J. P. Sullivan, *Propertius: A Critical Introduction* (1976), 12ff., and Witke, op. cit. (n. 27). It is clear, too, that in 3.1 and 2 Propertius has his eye on Horace, *Odes* 3.30. He caps Horace, however, by putting his claims to immortality at the start, not the end of the book. Such affinities with Horace incidentally suggest a (somewhat shaky) *terminus post quem* for the book of 23 B.C., the publication year of *Odes* 1–3, just as the Parthian settlement gives a *terminus ante quem* of 20 B.C. The Horatian dimension in Propertius has apparently caught the attention of Pound. In *Homage* ii he renders Propertius 3.3.7 'et cecinit (Pound follows the *cecini* of Muller's Teubner text. See n. 48 below) Curios fratres et Horatia pila' as:

I had rehearsed the Curian brothers, and made
remarks on the Horatian javelin
(Near Q. H. Flaccus' book-stall).

Pila is, of course, neuter plural, but there is another Latin word, *pila*, feminine singular, meaning a book-stall. See N. Rudd, *The Classical Tradition in Operation* (1994), 122. Cf. also Pound's comments in a letter to his old professor, Dr Felix E. Schelling (*Selected Letters* (1950), 178): '[Mackail] doesn't see that S.P. is tying blue ribbon to the tails of Virgil and Horace, or sometime after his first "book" S.P. ceased to be the dupe of magniloquence and began to touch words somewhat as La Forgue did.'

[43] Callimachus, *Aetia frr.* 1 and 2. Cf. W. Wimmel, *Kallimachos in Rom,* Hermes Einzelschriften 16 (1960); W. Clausen, *GRBS* 5 (1964) 181–96 = K. Quinn (ed.), *Approaches to Catullus* (1972), 269–84.

[44] The poetic topography ultimately derives from Hesiod, *Theogony ad init.*

[45] Reading Guyet's *iam* for the MS. *tam.*

[46] cf. G. Luck, *The Latin Love Elegy* (1959), 132–3; M. Hubbard, *Propertius* (1974), 79–80.

[47] For the symbolic correlation of height of water with height of literary genre, see Virgil, *Eclogues* 6 (with Clausen). There Gallus is first shown as an erotic elegist wandering (*errantem*) by the Permessus at the foot up the mountain. He then goes higher up Helicon in connection with his learned, aetiological elegy on the Grynaean Grove (vv. 64–73). Cf. Propertius 2.10.25–6. But see further D. O. Ross, *Backgrounds to Augustan Poetry* (1975), 31–6 (on *Eclogue* 6). Note also the commentary on the *Aetia* dream (*Aetia* Fr.2) in Pfeiffer's Addendum (*Callimachus* vol. 2 (1953), 102ff.).

[48] Or did Propertius write *cecini*, the reading offered by *codices deteriores*? Cf. O. Skutsch, *Annals of Quintus Ennius* (1985), 408, 502–3, with T. J. Cornell's review, *JRS* 76 (1986), 244–50, esp. 248; S. J. Heyworth, *CQ* 36 (1986), 199–211, esp. 201–2. Skutsch believes that Ennius told a story of the Gallic Sack in which the Gauls actually took the Capitol, and thus there were no geese, cf. *JRS* 43 (1953), 76–7, and *JRS* 68 (1978), 93–4. Hence *cecini* (which is also the reading Pound found in Müller's 1892 Teubner text). But a list of Ennian themes would in any case surely be intended (cf. D. R. Shackleton Bailey, *Propertiana* (1956), 139), and the tense is awkward. *Cecinit* appears preferable in every way.

not up to Epic,[49] and Apollo intervenes to direct him to a *grotto* lower down. There he will drink the water that will consecrate him as a love poet, water from the same[50] source, Hippocrene, but tamer, more civilized.

Apollo is the voice of Callimachean slightness and artistry:[51]

> Quid tibi cum tali, demens, est flumine? quis te
> carminis heroi tangere iussit opus?
> non hic ulla tibi speranda est fama, Properti:
> mollia sunt parvis prata terenda notis;
> ut tuus in scamno iactetur saepe libellus,
> quem legat exspectans sola puella virum.
> cur tua praescriptos evecta est pagina gyro<s>?
> non est ingenii cumba gravanda tui.
> alter remus aquas alter tibi radat harenas,
> tutus eris: medio maxima turba mari est. (3.3.15–24)

> Idiot, what right have you to such a stream? And who
> Told you to turn your hand to epic?
> There's not a hope of fame, Propertius, for you here;
> Your little wheels must groove soft meadows.
> Let your slim volume be displayed on bedside tables
> And read by lonely girls waiting for their lovers.
> Why has your page diverged from its appointed round?
> You must not overload the rowboat of your wit.
> With one oar feather water, with the other sand,
> And you'll be safe. Most flounder in mid-ocean.

Apollo's words of advice are matched later by those of the Muse Calliope. But with a significant shift of emphasis: Apollo concentrates on form, Calliope concentrates on content. Propertius must avoid the martial themes of Roman epic and write love poetry instead. But, in a teasing twist for Roman morality, his love poetry too will have a socially useful purpose:

> ut per te clausas sciat excantare puellas,
> qui volet austeros arte ferire viros. (3.3.49–50)

> So those who wish to steal a march on strict husbands
> May learn from you to charm girls from internment.

So saying, she dedicates him to the task by moistening his lips with the water of Philetas.

Make love, not war: the challenge to Roman values continues with the next two poems, 3.4 and 3.5. 3.4 is a brilliant example of Propertian tongue-in-cheek,[52] a wittily skewed version of Horace, *Odes* 3.14,[53] in which the private, instead of being effortlessly

[49] He may even have made a deliberate chronological error. In 3.3.8, he ascribes to Ennius' *Annales* (reading *cecinit*, see preceding note):

> regiaque Aemilia vecta tropaea rate.

But the famous triumph of L. Aemilius Paullus over Perses of Macedon took place in 167 B.C., i.e., two years after Ennius' death. Unless the reference is to the victory of L. Aemilius Regillus over the Syrian fleet at Myonnesus in 190 B.C., cf. Butler and Barber, ad loc.; M. Mantina, 'Ennio, poeta cliens', *Quad. di fil. class. dell'Univ. di Trieste* 1 (1979), 45–61; Skutsch, op. cit. (n. 48), 552. It is possible that Propertius was simply confused. Cf. Shackleton Bailey, op. cit. (n. 48), 140; Goold, ad loc. It is also quite plausible, however, that Propertius is demonstrating his unsuitability for Roman epic by a telling anachronism. If the line-order of the MSS is correct — and there is no evidence that it is not — an event of the second century B.C. (v. 8) is certainly made to precede an event of 390 B.C. (v. 12, the geese saving the Capitol from the Gauls), cf. Camps, ad loc.

[50] As is made clear by *Gorgoneo* in v. 32.

[51] Note also the stress on artifice at vv. 27–30:

> hic erat affixis viridis spelunca lapillis.
> pendebantque cavis tympana pumicibus.
> orgia Musarum et Sileni patris imago
> fictilis et calami, Pan Tegeaee, tui;

> Here was a grotto green embellished with mosaics
> And from its tufa vault hung tambourines
> The Muses' *orgia*, Father Silenus' effigy
> In clay, and your reed pipes, Tegean Pan;

[52] Cairns, op. cit. (n. 31), 185ff., categorizes it as a propempticon that includes, as a generic sophistication, a triumph-poem, in anticipation of the event. He apparently detects in it no insincerity at all. But that is difficult to sustain. Hubbard's barbed reading (*Propertius*, 103ff.) is surely far more persuasive.

[53] Horace's poem has its own ironies. The last line (*consule Planco*) takes us back to a time when not all of Horace's disputes and quarrelling were about love, precisely to the year 42 B.C., when Plancus was consul and Horace fought against Octavian at Philippi.

subsumed under the public, is seen to strain against it. In the one, a private party is prepared to celebrate the return of Augustus; in the other, a lover reclines in his girl's arms as the triumphal procession goes by. In the one, subtle, jaunty eulogy; in the other, deftly controlled sauce:

> Arma deus Caesar dites meditatur ad Indos,
> et freta gemmiferi findere classe maris.
> magna, viri, merces! parat ultima terra triumphos;
> Tigris et Euphrates sub tua iura fluent;
> sera, sed Ausoniis veniet provincia virgis;
> assuescent Latio Partha tropaea Iovi.
> ite agite, expertae bello date lintea prorae
> et solitum, armigeri, ducite munus equi!
> omina fausta cano: Crassos clademque piate!
> ite et Romanae consulite historiae! . . .
> praeda sit haec illis, quorum meruere labores:
> me sat erit Sacra plaudere posse Via. (3.4.1–10, 21–2)

> Caesar the God plans war with wealthy India,
> To furrow with his fleet pearl-bearing seas.
> Big booty for his men. The world's end offers Triumphs.
> Tigris and Euphrates will flow under his rule.
> Belatedly Ausonian rods will gain a province;
> Parthian trophies will get used to Latium's Jove.
> Go speedily, spread sail, you prows proven in war!
> Armed cavalry, lead on — your usual duty!
> The signs, I foretell, are lucky. Wipe out Crassus' defeat.
> Go and stand up for Roman history! . . .
> The spoil be theirs whose hardships have deserved it;
> I'll be content to applaud on the Sacred Way.

3.4 just about gets away with its risky balancing act when taken in isolation. 3.5, however, immediately dispels all doubts.[54] Nagging suspicions of cheeky sarcasm are confirmed, and Roman imperialism is firmly put in its place:

> Pacis Amor deus est, pacem veneramur amantes:
> stant mihi cum domina proelia dura mea.
> nec tamen inviso pectus mihi carpitur auro,
> nec bibit e gemma divite nostra sitis,
> nec mihi mille iugis Campania pinguis aratur,
> nec miser aera paro clade, Corinthe, tua. (3.5.1–6)

> Love is the God of peace; we lovers venerate peace:
> Enough for me tough battles with my mistress.
> But then neither does my heart crave hated gold
> Nor my thirst drink from precious jewels
> Nor do a thousand yokes plough fat Campania for me
> Nor do I buy bronzes from the ruins of poor Corinth.

The poet goes on, at vv. 19ff., to assert a dedication to the Muses and to love when young, reserving for his old age the study of philosophy.[55] Particularly noticeable is the leisurely listing of the topics of philosophical and scientific speculation, expressed largely in Greek terms, and the vigorous final rejection of imperialist adventures like the projected expedition against Parthia:

> exitus hic vitae superest mihi: vos, quibus arma
> grata magis, Crassi signa referte domum! (3.5.47–8)

> For me life's outcome shall be this, but you to whom
> Wars are more welcome, bring Crassus' standards home.

[54] And, incidentally, an intended *ordo legendi* is thereby unequivocally established: 3.5 is clearly to be read after 3.4, cf. Hutchinson, op. cit. (n. 8).

[55] Propertius here seems to have a mischievous eye on Virgil, *Georgics* 2.475ff. See also v. 4 *bibit e gemma*, and *Georgics* 2.506.

The ground work has now been laid for a poetic debate concerning the relative merits of Greek and Italian subject matter.

(b) Leaving the Scent of an Argument

The next poem to consider is 3.9,[56] a key poem in the book but one that does not fit into any neat division of sequences. The point is not that everything in the book should mechanically fit in, but that Propertius has cut a sufficiently well-marked path for the reader to begin to (re)construct a possible argument. But there are gaps.[57]

3.9 is another hit at an Horatian poem, *Odes* 1.1. Both poems open with a grand periphrastic address to Maecenas. And both poems develop a series of contrasts between different talents and pursuits of men in the form of a priamel. But Propertius includes a cunning twist by linking himself explicitly to Maecenas: it is Maecenas whose way of life he takes as his model. The controlling image of the poem is that of the *eques*:[58] the title of *eques* given to Maecenas at the beginning is echoed by the figure of the charioteer at the end. Maecenas, Propertius wishes to stress, is an *eques*, a member of the politically unambitious wing of the upper class.[59] Maecenas is content with his station. He shuns political office and rejects the limelight. He keeps himself to himself:

at tua, Maecenas, vitae praecepta recepi,
  cogor et exemplis te superare tuis.
cum tibi Romano dominas in honore securis
  et liceat medio ponere iura foro,
vel tibi Medorum pugnaces ire per hastas
  atque onerare tuam fixa per arma domum
et tibi ad effectum vires det Caesar et omni
  tempore tam faciles insinuentur opes,
parcis et in tenuis humilem te colligis umbras:
  velorum plenos subtrahis ipse sinus. (3.9.21–30)

But it's your rule of life that I accept, Maecenas,
  And must prevail by quoting your example.
When you might in Roman office move imperial axes
  And legal rulings in mid-Forum,
Or march among the aggressive lances of the Medes
  And hang up trophies to adorn your home,
And Caesar's power would further your success, and all
  The time wealth come your way so easily,
You hold back, humbly restrict yourself to modest shadow
  And choose to reef your swelling sails.

Propertius identifies with Maecenas. He too is an *eques*. He too wants to keep himself to himself. In a subtle re-working of the Callimachean *recusatio*, keeping oneself to oneself is extended from the political to the poetical sphere.

But what exactly is Propertius ruling out and ruling in as possibilities for poetic composition? It is difficult to tell. It is not even clear, for example, if several of the verbs

[56] Otherwise, the only trace of the Greek/Italian theme between 3.5 and 3.9 is 3.7, where Paetus, lost in the Carpathian sea between Rhodes and Crete on a business trip to Alexandria, prays for his corpse to be cast up on the coast of Italy:

at saltem Italiae regionibus evehat aestus:
  hoc de me sat erit si modo matris erit. (3.7.63–4)

At least let the tide cast me up on Italy's coast.
  Enough if my remains can reach my mother.

[57] cf. Hubbard, op. cit. (n. 13), 19: 'It is more characteristic of Propertius to look for variation as well as an underlying harmony.'

[58] cf. C. Macleod, *Greece and Rome* 26 (1979), 23 = *Collected Essays* (1983), 227; B. K. Gold in B. K. Gold (ed.), *Literary and Artistic Patronage in Ancient Rome* (1982), 103–17; also, B. K. Gold, *Literary and Artistic Patronage in Greece and Rome* (1987), 166ff.

[59] Maecenas, of course, was not really unambitious, cf. R. O. A. M. Lyne, Introduction to *Propertius The Poems*, trans. G. Lee (1994), xiii.

in the first-person singular are futures or subjunctives.[60] Yet vv. 47ff. do seem to suggest that Propertius may indeed be considering at least *some* Roman material:

te duce vel Iovis arma canam caeloque minantem
Coeum et Phlegraeis Eurymedonta iugis;
celsaque Romanis decerpta Palatia tauris
ordiar et caeso moenia firma Remo,
eductosque pares silvestri ex ubere reges,
crescet et ingenium sub tua iussa meum;
prosequar et currus utroque ab litore ovantis,
Parthorum astutae tela remissa fugae,
c<l>a<u>straque Pelusi Romano subruta ferro,
Antonique gravis in sua fata manus.
mollia[61] tu coeptae fautor cape lora iuventae,
dexteraque immisis da mihi signa rotis.
hoc mihi, Maecenas, laudis concedis, et a te est
quod ferar in partis ipse fuisse tuas.

But lead the way and I'll sing Jove's arms and Coeus threatening
Heaven and Eurymedon on Phlegrean heights.
I'll tackle the lofty Palatine grazed by Roman bulls
And the walls that Remus' murder strengthened
And the pair of princes reared on a woodland udder.
My wit will grow to do your bidding.
I'll also track triumphal cars from either shore,
The Parthian darts shot back in crafty flight,
Pelusium's fortress undermined by Roman steel,
And Antony's hands intent on his own doom.

As backer, though, of early manhood choose loose reins
And signal your approval of my racing wheels:
You grant me that much praise, Maecenas, and thanks to you
I too shall rate as one of your coterie.

The hints that Propertius may not entirely have set his face against Roman themes are reinforced at the start of the next poem, where, for the only time in the whole of Propertius, the Camenae appear, the Italian Muses invoked by Livius Andronicus.[62] A change of emphasis is possibly being signalled thereby.[63] And 3.11 does, in fact, turn out to be a spicy blend of love elegy and Roman patriotism. As the culminating parallel to the powerful woman who rules his life, Propertius wittily gives none other than Cleopatra, appending a passage of praise and gratitude to Augustus for saving Rome from her foul menace. Political correctness, however, is wickedly undermined; for if Cynthia is Cleopatra, then surely it follows that Propertius must be Antony?[64] Yet any expectations of continuing in a straighforward direction are artfully frustrated. Or rather Propertius toys with these expectations. He challenges, intrigues, lures the reader on by leaving a teasing trail of clues to an implied argument. Thus:

3.12 upbraids Postumus for following *Augusti fortia signa* and abandoning Galla to the temptations of Rome. Her fidelity, however, is more than a match for Penelope's.

[60] *Canam*, v. 47; *ordiar*, v. 50; *prosequar*, v. 53. Cf. Hubbard, op. cit. (n. 13), 111–12. Camps, ad loc., would prefer to read *crescat* in v. 52 and take them all as present subjunctives.

[61] Brockhuizen's palmary emendation, cf. Virgil, *Georgics* 3.41:

tua, Maecenas, haud mollia iussa;

and *n.b. sub tua iussa*, v. 52 above. See C. Macleod, *ZPE* 23 (1976), 42–3 = *Collected Essays*, 216–17.

[62] cf. Livius Andronicus, *Odissia, fr.* 1:

Virum mihi, Camena, insece versutum

(where *Camena* pointedly occupies the same position as Homer's ἔννεπε).

Apparently Naevius too, in his *Carmen Belli Punici*, had invoked Camenae, who may owe their connection with poetry to an etymology linking their name with *carmen*. The Greek Musae were first invoked in Latin by Ennius at the opening of the *Annales*, possibly coinciding with his patron M. Fulvius Nobilior's association with their cult. Cf. Skutsch, op. cit. (n. 48), at 1.1 (pp. 144–6).

[63] It may be significant that all the references to the Muses in Book 3 occur in the first five poems: 1.10; 1.14; 2.15; 3.29; 5.20.

[64] cf. J. Griffin, 'Propertius and Antony', *Latin Poets and Roman Life* (1985), 32ff. = *JRS* 67 (1977), 17–26.

3.13, the central poem in the book, mixes a nudging knowingness with Roman moralizing. It opens with the question: why are girls so expensive nowadays? and then launches into an ironic treatment of a well-worn theme:[65] the attack upon the luxury and decadence that is invading Rome. Picking up and contradicting the previous poem, Propertius points out that there is no longer any loyal Penelope to be found. And at v. 60:

frangitur ipsa suis Roma superba bonis[66]

Proud Rome is rotten with her own prosperity.

3.14, a poem that roguishly praises the Spartan system of athletics for making girls exercise naked,[67] closes with the couplet:

quod si iura fores pugnasque imitata Laconum,
    carior hoc esses tu mihi, Roma, bono (vv. 33–4)

But had you copied the rules and contests of Laconia,
    I'd like you better, Rome, for that attraction.

3.15 has a Greek subject, the story of Dirce, but the charming and witty midnight journey of 3.16[68] is given a specifically Italian setting:

Nox media, et dominae mihi venit epistula nostrae:
    Tibure me missa iussit adesse mora,
candida qua geminas ostendunt culmina turris
    et cadit in patulos nympha Aniena lacus (vv. 1–4)

Midnight, and there has come a letter from my mistress
    Commanding my immediate presence at Tibur,
Where white hilltops display twin towers and the Anienan
    Nymph dives down to spacious pools.

3.17 a prayer to Bacchus, is again Greek, but with reminiscences of Horace.[69] 3.18, however, is an elegy on the untimely death in 23 B.C. of Augustus' nephew, Marcus Claudius Marcellus. Baiae, where he died, is reproachfully apostrophised in vv. 1–10, v. 12 refers to his marriage to Augustus' daughter in 25 B.C., and the poem concludes by promising Marcellus translation to heaven, like his ancestor, who conquered Syracuse in 212 B.C., and like Julius Caesar, whose departing soul appeared in the form of a comet during his funeral games in the summer of 44 B.C. Yet even this very Roman poem has a leavening of Greek mythology: Nineus, Achilles, Croesus, and, if vv. 29–30 are kept,[70] Agamemnon. And the next poem, 3.19, which develops the rhetorical topic of whether a woman's lust is greater than a man's, shifts the balance back again to Greece.

There is, then, an irregularly winding thematic thread that can be discerned running through a number of poems, namely a struggle between Greece and Rome.

The closing sequence of six poems gathers up the various strands in the book. To turn, finally, to these.

3.20[71] urges an unnamed girl, who can if we wish be read as Cynthia,[72] to embark upon a love affair with the poet. The institutional language of Roman marriage[73] is reminiscent of Catullus, though the setting is now somewhat grubbier. Possibly also reminiscent of Catullus is the late position of a poem celebrating the beginning of an

[65] cf. J. Griffin, *Latin Poets and Roman Life* (1985), 1ff. = *JRS* 66 (1976), 87–105.

[66] cf. Horace, *Epodes* 16.2; Livy, *Praefatio* 4. The sentiment probably goes back to the lost preface to Sallust's *Histories*. See A. J. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography* (1988), 131–2.

[67] E. Rawson (*The Spartan Tradition in European Thought* (1969), 107ff.) documents how Sparta was the admired paradigm of Roman Stoical moralists, which gives these remarks a nice edge.

[68] cf. R. O. A. M. Lyne, *The Latin Love Poets* (1980), 133ff.

[69] *Odes* 2.19, also addressed to Bacchus and also containing references to Pentheus and Lycurgus.

[70] cf. Shackleton-Bailey, op. cit. (n. 48), 200–1.

[71] On the unity of the poem, see G. W. Williams, *Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry* (1968), 413ff.

[72] At least, her beauty and her illustrious ancestry, cf. 2.13.10, would seem to point in that direction.

[73] *foedera*, v. 15; *foedere*, v. 21; *foedera*, v. 25; *iura*, v. 15; *lex*, v. 16; *pignora*, v. 17; *omina prima*, v. 24; *sacra marita*, v. 26.

affair.[74] Literary pedigree, however, is not the central issue. For Propertius, to go back to the beginning of his love is to go back to the beginning of his poetry.[75] The early dramatic date introduces a self-reflexive poetic re-view.[76] And also a re-assessment.

Two journeys follow. Their significance is unmistakeable. In 3.21, Propertius proposes to escape Cynthia, named here for the first time in the book, and go to study, pointedly, in Greece. The Greek study-topics, which are wittily arranged in order of decreasing difficulty,[77] correspond to the study-topics of 3.5. But attention is primarily directed back to the propempticon of 1.6,[78] in which Propertius is being prevented by his love for Cynthia from accompanying Tullus, the man of action, on his journey to Asia Minor. Immediately another propempticon, 3.22, reinforces the sense that things may possibly be reaching a new phase. For Propertius is this time begging Tullus to leave Cyzicus and *come back* to pursue his career in Italy. And Italy is here contrasted *very* favourably with anything that Greek mythology has to offer. Italy beats all the wonders of the world:

> Omnia Romanae cedent miracula terrae:
> natura hic posuit, quidquid ubique fuit (vv. 17–18)
>
> The Roman land beats all the wonders of the world;
> Here Nature has placed them all from everywhere.

It is a place of high moral virtue:

> armis apta magis tellus quam commoda noxae:
> famam, Roma, tuae non pudet historiae. (vv. 19–20)
>
> Fitter for war than friend of felony this land.
> Fame is not ashamed of Roman history.

It is a land free from the monsters of Greek legend (vv. 27–38). It can also, of course, boast a great many physical beauties. In a central passage, vv. 23–6, Propertius lists some of these, selecting only rivers or lakes or springs.[79] The last beauty-spot mentioned is the *fons Iuturnae*:[80]

> potaque Pollucis nympha salubris equo. (v. 26)
>
> And the healthy spring that Pollux' charger drank.

This strikingly allusive phrase recalls similar language used earlier at 3.3.2 of another spring, Hippocrene:

> Bellerophontei qua fluit umor equi
>
> Where runs the rill named for Bellerophon's horse

Crucially, Italy now even has *its own* Hippocrene, *its own* native source of poetic inspiration. And, moreover, it is a source of inspiration that is actually in the Forum.[81] Uncertainties still remain, however. Will Propertius go off to Greece? Will Tullus come back to Italy? Who will take up the Italian option? And in what way?

[74] cf. Catullus 51.1f. If, that is, the arrangement of Catullus' poems owes anything at all to the poet himself. For suggestions that it might, see, e.g., K. Quinn, *Catullus: The Poems* (2nd edn, 1976), 9–20; J. Ferguson, *LCM* 11 (1986), 2–6, 18–20; T. P. Wiseman, *Catullus and His World* (1985); E. A. Schmidt, *Philologus* 117 (1973), 215–42. Also, C. W. Macleod, *CQ* 23 (1973), 304–9 (on Catullus 116). On the whole question, see H. P. Syndikus, *Catull* (1984–1990), 1. 52–62. It is anyhow quite likely that Propertius' text of Catullus would already have looked much like the one we have, even if the arrangement is that of an editor.

[75] For the equation of amatory and poetic career, see above.

[76] cf. R. J. Baker, *AJP* 90 (1969), 333–7.

[77] cf. Hubbard, op. cit. (n. 13), 90 n. 1.

[78] cf. also 1.1.29–30.

[79] Water again, like 3.3, and recalling Hesiod, *Theogony ad init.*, and Callimachus, *Hymn* 2.105–12. On water imagery, see R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship* (1968), 1.125–6 (and *Excursus* on p. 284); also, Alan Cameron, *Callimachus and His Critics* (1995), 363–6.

[80] Significantly, this appears in neither of the *laudes Italiae* that lie behind Propertius: Virgil, *Georgics* 2.136–76 and Horace, *Odes* 1.7.1–20.

[81] *KP* 3, 25.

In 3.23 Propertius laments the loss of his writing-tablets.[82] 'An amiable *jeu d'esprit*', according to Hubbard.[83] It is, in fact, a lot more than that. Firstly, the poem an oblique Alexandrian literary manifesto:[84] the tablets are learned; they are small; they are heavily used; they have an individuality of their own; they are plain; and they have power over women. It is also a poem that marks the book's publication: v. 23 closely echoes the epilogue to Horace, *Satires* 1, a line that clearly refers to publication.[85] Publication here becomes wryly imaged as losing tablets,[86] with the sense of the poetry evading the ownership of the poet harking back to the concerns that are raised at the very beginning of the book.[87] And, finally, the poem prompts one question in particular: is Propertius going to write any more poetry? More specifically, is Propertius going to write any more love poetry? For, of course, the lost tablets *are* his poetry. Perhaps, however, it is a little unsafe to jump to conclusions. After all, the tablets *might* still turn up.[88] Or the girl *might* simply not have returned them.[89]

The loss of Propertius' tablets, the materials for his writing, leads directly into two closely connected elegies, 3.24 and 3.25,[90] which reject Cynthia, the subject of his writing, (*versibus insignem te pudet esse meis*, 3.24.4 (I'm ashamed my verses brought you fame), cf. 3.2.17–18), the same Cynthia announced as the only love of his life in 1.1.[91] Does Propertius really mean it? Does this finally bring down the curtain on poetry as well as love? There are some intriguing loose ends. For one thing, the very delight that 3.24 takes in its own pyrotechnic display of images[92] hardly suggests a man who has finished with poetry. For another, the passionately angry farewell of 3.25 does not fully accord with Propertius' declaration in 3.24 that he has been cured of love and is now sane.[93] And, of course, he does go on to write further poetry, namely Book 4, for which Rome itself, Rome present and Rome past, provides the central theme. He even goes on to write further, though different,[94] poems about love (4.3, 5, 7, 8).

There is, then, a pattern of argument traceable through Book 3. It is, however, an argument that beckons only to refuse, that sinuously investigates issues of content and

[82] There is a possible connection with Catullus 42, cf. Williams, op. cit. (n. 71), 492. The Propertian poem is imitated by Ovid, *Amores* 1.12.

[83] op. cit. (n. 14), 90.

[84] Persuasively analysed by Cairns, op. cit. (n. 31), 76ff.

[85] i, puer, atque meo citus haec subscribere libello.
(Horace, *Satires* 1.10.92)
i, puer, et citus haec aliqua propone columna.
(Propertius 3.23.23)

[86] See the motif of the escaping book in Horace, *Epistles* 1.20, and Arrian's preface to the *Discourses of Epictetus* 'which have fallen, I know not how, without my will or knowledge, into the hands of men.' Also Horace, *Ars Poetica* 389–90:

delere licebit
quod non edideris; nescit vox missa reverti

And Ovid, *Tristia* 1.1; Martial 1.3 (with Citroni, and also Howell); Martial 11.1 (with Kay). Cf. Symmachus, *Epistles* 1.31: 'once a poem has left your hands, you resign all your rights, a speech when published is a free entity.' And B. A. van Groningen, *Traité d'histoire et de critique des textes grecs* (1963), 25 (on ἐκδιδόναι, edere): 'They imply the activity not of a publisher or a bookseller, but of the author himself, who "abandons" his work to the public; he gives them the opportunity to read it, to recopy it, to pass it on to others. From that moment the text goes off at random.' Van Groningen may be exaggerating. At least, Cicero's *describas licet*, 'you can copy it' (on releasing the *de Oratore* to Atticus for publication, *ad Att.* 4.16.2) suggests as much. See also Plato, *Phaedrus* 274b–279b (with, e.g., R. B. Rutherford, *The Art of Plato* (1995), 267–71, especially 268: 'It shows naivete to suppose written words worth much, for they cannot defend themselves nor can they choose to whom they speak'). Cf. J. Derrida, 'La Pharmacie de Platon', in *La dissemination* (1972), 71–197. Finally, idem, *De la grammatologie* (1976): Any written text 'is readable even if the moment of its production is irrevocably lost and even if I don't know what its alleged author consciously intended to say at the moment of writing it, i.e. abandoned the text to its essential drift.'

[87] See p. 40 above for the idea of the physical text.

[88] The poem amusingly takes the form of a lost property notice, cf. Cairns, loc. cit. (n. 31).

[89] The situation in Catullus 42. Propertius' jocularity is appropriate to a poem that is part of a retrospective of his earlier life, love, and poetry.

[90] N Vo separate them into two elegies. Other MSS join them together into one, followed by Fedeli and Goold. See Fedeli's note at 3.25.1, p. 211. Also, S. J. Heyworth, *PLLS* 8 (1995), 172 (with n. 22).

[91] There are several clear reminiscences of the opening of Book 1:

3.24.2: *oculis . . . meis* ~ 1.1.1 *suis . . . oculis*

3.24.1, 7–8 refer to beauty and make-up, cf. 1.2 (note also the ring around 3.24 and 25: *falsa est ista tuae, mulier, fiducia formae* 3.24.1 ~ *eventum formae disce timere tuae*, 3.25.18; cf. La Penna, *Maia* 7 (1955), 134ff.)

3.24.9–10 refer to *amici* and to witchcraft, cf. 1.1.19–20, 25–6.

[92] cf. Hubbard, op. cit. (n. 13), 92, 157ff. Hubbard points out the contrast between what she calls 'the new Horatio-Callimachean style' of 3.24 and the earlier manner Propertius employs in the more conventional 3.25.

[93] cf. Williams, op. cit. (n. 71), 417. For conflict of mind within the *renuntiatio amoris*, see Cairns, op. cit. (n. 31), 80ff.

[94] He is no longer the elegiac lover devoted to one woman, cf. W. Suerbaum, *RhM* 107 (1964), 357.

control, that self-probingly examines the competing demands between diverse aspects of a single artistic consciousness: the lover, the Callimachean, the citizen of Rome.[95] A pattern with gaps. Very Propertius. Very Pound.

II. READING POUND[96]

About Pound's *Homage to Sextus Propertius* opinions are sharply divided. For Professor W. G. Hale of the University of Chicago,[97] the Pound version is simply full of the most elementary blunders; for Donald Davie,[98] it is completely autonomous; for Margaret Hubbard, it is only a limited imitation;[99] for Pound himself, it is not to be taken as a translation at all: 'No, I have not done a translation of Propertius. That fool in Chicago took the *Homage* for a translation, despite the mention of Wordsworth and the parodied line from Yeats. (As if, had one wanted to pretend to more Latin than one knew, it wdn't have been perfectly easy to correct one's divergencies from a Bohn crib. Price 5 shillings.)'[100] Such conflicting responses attest to the work's many-sidedness, its rich and dangerous mixture of destructive and productive energies that is closely connected with Vorticist ideas about releasing power by breaking apart.[101] The particular ideal quality which Pound was seeking in the *Homage*, logopoeia,[102] 'the dance of the intellect among words',[103] grows within this emphasis on breaking apart and energy.[104] Gaps are opened up both at the level of language and at the level of poetic organization; energy is released to dance between the separated elements; and the catalyst for this dynamic interaction within the poem is the process of translation itself.[105]

What light, then, does Pound in his *Homage* shed on Propertius' structure? At first sight, it might seem, none whatsoever. But for Pound translation is not just the inert relation of one text to another. Translation is an activity through which the power of the

[95] The issue is pursued into 4.1. Cf. C. W. Macleod, *PLLS* 1976 (1977), 141–53.

[96] cf. J. P. Sullivan, *Ezra Pound and Sextus Propertius*; G. M. Messing in *Poetry and Poetics from Ancient Greece to the Renaissance*, ed. G. M. Kirkwood (1975), 105–33; D. M. Hooley, *The Classics in Paraphrase* (1988); B. Arkins, *Paideuma* 17, 29–44; P. Fedeli, 'La traduzione-pastiche: il Properzio di Ezra Pound', *Lexis* (1988), 225–233; idem, 'Tradurre poesia, tradurre Properzio', *Aufidus, Rivista di scienzia e didattica della cultura classica* iv, 10 (1990), 93–130; N. Rudd, *The Classical Tradition in Operation*, 117–58.

[97] In his Review he counted 'three score errors' in the first four sections alone ('Pegasus Impounded' (*Poetry*, April 1919), reprinted in E. Homberger, *Ezra Pound. The Critical Heritage* (1972), 155–7). These charges are vigorously rebutted by Pound in a letter to Alfred R. Orage (*Selected Letters*, 148–50). The dispute between Pound and Hale is discussed by Rudd in an Appendix (op. cit. (n. 96), 151–8). Rudd also investigates the extent to which Pound's version might actually be a sensitive response to Propertius' innovative use of language (ibid., 140–6).

[98] *Pound* (1975).

[99] op. cit. (n. 14), 160.

[100] *Selected Letters*, op. cit. (n. 97), 178.

[101] My main sources on Vorticism are the Reprints of *Blast*, Stephen Spender's *The Thirties* (Review of Wyndham Lewis's *One-way Song*) and Noel Stock's biography of Pound (1974), especially p. 202 quoting Lewis's *Enemy of the Stars*: 'The earth has burst. . .Our vortex is white and abstract with its red-hot swiftness.' Cf. also Ezra Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska: a Memoir* (1970), 92: 'The image is not an idea. It is a radiant node or cluster; it is what I can, and must perforce, call a VORTEX, from which, and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing.' And Ezra Pound in *Blast* (1914), 153 (quoted in Harriet Zinnes (ed.), *Ezra Pound and the Visual Arts* (1980), 151): 'All experience rushes into this vortex. All the energised past, all the past that is living and worthy to live. ALL MOMENTUM, which is the past bearing upon us.'

[102] cf. *Literary Essays* (1954), 33: 'Unless I am right in discovering logopoeia in Propertius (which means unless the academic teaching of Latin displays crass insensitivity as it probably does). . .'

[103] See p. 39 above.

[104] cf., e.g., The House of Splendour (*Collected Shorter Poems*, 49), in which the idea of poetic creation is symbolized (Pindarically) by the central image of the house, and which strikingly closes:

> and there are powers in this
> Which, played on by the virtues of her soul,
> Break down the four-square walls of standing time.

See also *Literary Essays*, 4: 'It is the presentation of such a "complex" instantaneously which gives that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits. . .'

[105] Sullivan's term, 'creative translation', would seem to be particularly appropriate here.

original can be transmitted,[106] an activity in which even 'misreadings' and 'misunderstandings' may have a crucial part to play.[107] It is the experience of tense, energetic reading that he wants to reproduce, the combination of pattern, gaps, and vitality of argument[108] that he would have responded to and tried to 'make new'. And Pound does shed light. In ways that startle and on under-read features conventional translations do not reach.

The *Homage* opens with Propertius' attempt to fix the relationship between poet, poem, and audience in 3.1 and 2, and closes, excluding 'Cantus Planus', with the end of Book 2, a poem that is also, pointedly, concerned with poetry itself. Implicitly, therefore, questions are being raised about beginnings and endings. But Pound has not remained faithful to Propertius' order. Book 3 before Book 2? 3.16 before 3.6? Placing *Homage* V-XII before I-IV would preserve more of the original order. But that would be taken simply as an inert, unquestioning rendering. By disrupting the sequence, breaking it apart, Pound has drawn attention to the ordering of a book. Questions press forward for the very reason that Pound has so blatantly dis-ordered Propertius' work, re-made it, re-positioned it.[109]

Pound's book is no more a random collection of poems than is Propertius'. Nor is it a mere list.[110] But Pound has 'translated' Propertius' argument into a different one. Pound's argument is much more about an alternative tradition, a dangerous, invigorating pagan tradition whose traces are growing increasingly faint. In *Homage* I the poet is

> Bringing the Grecian orgies into Italy.

[106] cf. *Make It New* (1934), 159–60: 'if a work be taken abroad in the original tongue, certain properties seem to become less apparent, or less important. Fancy styles, questions of local "taste", lose importance. Even though I know the overwhelming importance of technique, technicalities in a foreign tongue cannot have for me the importance they have to a man writing in that tongue; almost the only technique perceptible to a foreigner is the presentation of content as free as possible from the clutteration of dead technicalities, fustian à la Louis XV; and from timidities of workmanship. This is perhaps the only technique that ever matters, the only *maestria*'. And *Literary Essays*, 239: Arthur Golding, the Elizabethan translator of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, 'was endeavouring to convey the sense of the original to his readers. He names the thing of his original author, by the name most germane, familiar, homely, to his hearers. He is intent on conveying a meaning, and not on bemusing them with a rumble. And I hold that the real poet is sufficiently absorbed in his content to care more for the content than the rumble'. Also *Literary Essays*, 268: 'when [Rossetti] says that the only thing worth bringing over is the beauty of the original... he meant by "beauty" something fairly near what we mean by the "emotional intensity" of his original'. See further 'I gather the Limbs of Osiris', in W. Cookson (ed.), *Selected Prose 1909–1965* (1973), 21–43, together with Charles Tomlinson's comment in his Introduction to *The Oxford Book of Verse in English Translation* (1980), xv: 'What Pound's essay implies for a translator of poetry is that he must find a way of so placing his substituted words that the electric current flows and that there is no current wasted. If you fail *here*, at the level of the electric interchange of the words, you fail badly and this is the most common failure in translated poetry'.

[107] cf. *Selected Letters*, 231: 'I certainly omitted no means of definition that I saw open to me, including shortenings, cross cuts, implications derivable from other writings of Propertius, as for example the "Ride to Lanuvium" from which I have taken a colour or tone but no direct or entire *expression*'. The different explanations for Pound's sometimes maverick renderings of Propertius are neatly summarized by Rudd (op. cit. (n. 96), 147–50).

[108] cf. *Homage* iv

> DIFFERENCE OF OPINION WITH LYGDAMUS

Significantly, this is the *only* subtitle in the *Homage*.

[109] Might the treatment Propertius had received from Classical scholars also have acted as some kind of provocation or inspiration here? After all, Pound was only doing what they had been doing: transposing and re-arranging the text.

[110] *Homage* I begins:

> Shades of Callimachus, Coan ghosts of Philetas
> It is in your grove I would walk.

Homage XII ends:

> And now Propertius of Cynthia, taking his stand
> among these.

By 'Cantus Planus',[111] Zagreus[112] is seen to fade from a maximum to minimum emphasis on the page.[113] 'Cantus Planus' is, of course, Medieval Latin, and Christian. *Hesper adest* seems to be a reminiscence of Catullus 62, *vesper adest*. But *Hesper* is neither Latin nor Greek, and the repetition of *Hesper adest* destroys the quantitative metre, thus pointing up the same sorts of loss of contact with a tradition as the mangling of names in *Homage* I:

> And who would have known the towers pulled down by a
> deal-wood horse;
> Or of Achilles withstaying waters by Simois
> Or of Hector spattering wheel-rims,
> Or of Polydmantus, by Scamander, or Helenus and Deiphoibos?
> Their door-yards would scarcely know them, or Paris.
> Small talk O Ilion and O Troad
> twice taken by Oetian gods,
> If Homer had not stated your case![114]

In 'Cantus Planus' the reader has the sense of an ending. And also of a possible new beginning, but one pregnant with misgivings, carrying, as it does, overtones of the metaphorical onset of an intellectual darkness.[115] It is in this way that Pound reproduces the feeling of loss in Propertius. And of Propertius. For Pound's *Homage* is in large part a meditation upon, and an argument enacted within, the gap between himself and Propertius. The *Homage* is suspended between Pound and Propertius, and may be read as a response to the restless tensions and questions in Propertius 3.1 and 2, the struggle to fix the relationship between poet, poem and audience, the concern over the sense in which a work belongs to its author. This idea is emphasized by putting these poems first. But in Propertius there is control and containment. Turning to Pound what becomes evident is a deep anxiety, a fissuring. The key feature is fragmentation. Fragmentation of the poem, of language, of self:[116] the 'I' hovers uncertainly, rootless, dislocated geographically, culturally, linguistically, neither Pound nor Propertius.[117] Tensions within Propertius become more open conflicts in Pound and then threaten to develop into contradictions in the nature of the poem as a whole. For example, Pound has 'translated' the movement in Propertius between Greek and Italian into blatant

[111] Pound's ending to the *Homage*, not in Propertius, and omitted from *Selected Poems* (1975). It is short enough to quote in full:

> The black panther lies under his rose tree
> And the fawns come to sniff at his sides:
>
> Evoe, Evoe, Evoe Baccho, O
> **ZAGREUS**, *Zagreus*, Zagreus,
>
> The black panther lies under his rose tree.
>
> || Hesper adest. Hesper || adest.
> Hesper || adest. ||

[112] An orgiastic figure who merges with Dionysus, cf. *KP* 5, 1446–7.

[113] The treatment of the gods in the *Homage* is interesting, and not in Propertius. There appears to be a shift away from Apollo. (From Apollonian to Dionysian/Zagreusian, perhaps.) Is Apollo a false prophet? Initially what Apollo says is broadly correct, but he is patronizing, censuring. He seems enabling, but is in fact restricting. And he is eventually rejected as too associated with the underbelly of imperialism and war. In *Homage* XII

> Virgil is Phoebus' chief of police.

Propertius, Pound claims (*Selected Letters*, 231)'presents certain emotions as vital to me in 1917, faced with the infinite and ineffable imbecility of the British Empire as they were to Propertius some centuries earlier, when faced with the infinite and ineffable imbecility of the Roman Empire.' The issue of anti-imperialism in Propertius and Pound is treated by Rudd (op. cit. (n. 96), 117–30). Rudd points out (129) that only about a quarter of the *Homage* has anything to do with imperial themes, and that it does not in truth amount to much of a challenge to the British Empire. Nor does he think that Propertius' anti-Augustanism ought to be taken too seriously. For a somewhat different assessment of Propertius' attitude towards Augustus, see J. Griffin, op. cit. (n. 64), esp. 42 with the bibliography in his n. 61.

[114] Polydmantus for Polydamas, Deiphoibos for Deiphobos, Oetian gods for Oetia's god. Propertius is suggesting that the famous myths depend upon their writers: he compresses the myths until they are nearly incomprehensible. Pound makes the touch of absurdity into much more blatant nonsense. He exploits the fact that his audience generally never *has* heard

> of Polydmantus, by Scamander.

Propertius is *nearly* meaningless here, but his compression can be unravelled; Pound becomes meaningless. His poetry makes the point that these myths *have* died. On Pound's rendering of Propertius in this passage, see Rudd, op. cit. (n. 96), 140–1, 143–4.

[115] *Hesper* suggests both evening and the West.

[116] cf. A. Durant, *Ezra Pound, Identity in Crisis* (1981), esp. 34ff.

[117] cf. Hugh Selwyn Mauberley, 'The Age Demanded' IV, *Collected Shorter Poems* (1984), 203:

> A consciousness disjunct,
> Being but this overblotted
> Series
> Of intermittences.

dissonances of language: an archaic, remote, poetic language on the one hand, and contemporary idiom on the other. *Homage* I:

> Shades of Callimachus, Coan ghosts of Philetas
> It is in your grove I would walk,
> I who come first from the clear font
> Bringing the Grecian orgies into Italy and the dance into Italy.
> Who hath taught you so subtle a measure, in what hall have you
> heard it;
> What foot beat out your time-bar, what water has mellowed your
> whistles?
>
> Out-weariers of Apollo will, as we know, continue their Martian
> generalities,
> We have kept our erasers in order.
> A new-fangled chariot follows the flower-hung horses;
> A young Muse with young loves clustered about her ascends with
> me into the aether, . . .
> And there is no high-road to the Muses.[118]

The 'modern' keeps infiltrating the 'archaic'. This, of course, both fits in with, and enacts the sense of a gap between the contemporary and the classical, the living and the dead. In the words themselves, deadness and vitality compete.[119] In fact, almost all of the poems which Pound chooses from Propertius are in some way life/death pieces, with the conflict now being played out on the stage of language. The focus is now on a vital struggle between a dying, fading tradition and a living continuity.[120] 'My job', said Pound, 'was to bring a dead man to life, to present a living figure'.[121]

Homage to Sextus Propertius may not 'come together', but, if a failure at all, it must surely be regarded, at the very least, as a highly significant failure. It comes apart in an important struggle in the course of which it focuses attention on the process of reading itself,[122] and perhaps in the end that is Pound's achievement. And it is an achievement that is lost if the *Homage* is simply dismissed as wrong. If Pound is wrong, he is productively and excitingly wrong. What more can one ask of any poet and translator?

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[118] Also from *Homage* I:

> I ask a wreath which will not crush my head.

And:

> I shall have, doubtless, a boom after my funeral,
> Seeing that long standing increases all things regardless of quality.

And:

> And I also among the later nephews of this city
> shall have my dog's day.

Further from *Homage* VII:

> Me happy, night, night full of brightness
> Oh couch made happy by my long delectations.

[119] cf. from *Homage* I:

> My vote coming from the temple of Phoebus in Lycia, at Patara.

On the one hand 'my vote', an apparently simple-minded response to the sound of 'vota'. On the other the little pedantic footnote 'in Lycia at Patara', an over-academic gloss that sounds like a commentary. These opposite mistakes are poised too symmetrically at each end of the line to be random. Pound is contrasting different mis-translations. This beautifully matches Propertius' idea: the poem is about a hollow future greatness, and Pound is showing how easily its greatness is distorted by the language of a distant time. The poem itself becomes the scene of a battle between vitality and deadness.

[120] cf. H. Kenner, *The Pound Era* (1975), 192–222 (on Cathay).

[121] A comment by Pound to Alfred Orage (*Selected Letters*, 149).

[122] Pound, of course, was the author of *ABC of Reading* (1951), and 'How to read' (T. S. Eliot (ed.), *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, 15–40).