

NOTES AND DISCUSSIONS

PROPERTIUS, "FOUNTS DIVINE"

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IN HIS DISCUSSION OF PROPERTIUS 1.18 in *Phoenix* 33 (1979) 45–58, J. N. Grant confessed that he had "little to say" about the *divini fontes* of line 27:

*pro quo divini fontes et frigida rupes
et datur inculto tramite dura quies.*

Possibly, he suggested (53, note 19), these springs are the springs of poetry, which appear elsewhere in Propertius: *nondum etiam Ascraeos norunt mea carmina fontes* (2.10.25), *primus ego ingredior puro de fonte sacerdos* (3.3.1), *parvaeque tam magnis admoram fontibus ora* (3.3.5);¹ the poet, then, complains that in spite of—in return for—his good behaviour, he must console himself with poetry, the traditional balm for unrequited love (cf. Theocr. 11.1–3), and endure a chilly night's sleep in the woods.² Unlike those other *fontes*, however, these lack an obviously poetic context, and, besides, there would seem to be little room for metaphorical springs in a couplet which contains also a *frigida rupes*, an *incultus trames*, and a *dura quies*.

But if the *fontes* are to be thought of as real springs, the adjective *divini* is difficult. As P. T. Eden observed: "The sacredness of springs is inalienable. But if that is what is here referred to by *divini*, its position in the company of its syntactic peers *frigida*, *inculto*, and *dura*, whose function is exclusively descriptive of physical attributes, produces an intolerable semantic category confusion."³ His solution was to take *divini*, not as a synonym of *sacri* or *sancti*, but as an "adjectival equivalent" of the adverbial *sub divo*, "under the

¹Grant cites also Lucr. 1.927, *invat integros accedere fontis*, and Virgil G. 2.175, *sanctos ausus recludere fontis*.

²It is assumed here that Grant would read *divini fontes* as nominative rather than vocative. Against the latter, "ye founts divine" in H. E. Butler's Loeb version (1912), see P. J. Enk, *Sex. Propertius Elegiarum Liber I (Monobiblos) pars altera* (Leiden 1946) *ad loc.* ("coniunctiones et . . . et sic nimium pondus habent"). For its defence, see R. I. V. Hodge and R. A. Buttimore, *The 'Monobiblos' of Propertius* (Cambridge 1977) 54 and 193, n. 7, who explain et . . . et as "indignant," and P. Fedeli, *Sesto Propertio. Il Primo Libro delle Elegie* (Florence 1980) *ad loc.*

³P. T. Eden, "Propertius 1, 18, 27f.," *BICS* 28 (1981) 122. D. O. Ross supposed that Cornelius Gallus was Propertius' source for both 1.18.27–28 and 1.20.13–14 (*ne tibi sit duros montes et frigida saxa, / Galle, neque expertos semper adire lacus*), and thought that *divini* might allude to the water nymphs of 1.20 (*Backgrounds to Augustan Poetry: Gallus, Elegy, and Rome* [Cambridge 1975] 77, n. 1); the adjective then would not be merely "ornamental." Eden's objection still stands.

sky," "exposed to the weather."⁴ But while one may readily grant Propertius' tendency "to extend the usual meaning of adjectives," it is hard to believe that he would have wished or dared to extend or distort the meaning of *divinus* in that way.

W. R. Smyth recorded more than two dozen conjectural emendations of *divini* or *divini fontes* in his *Thesaurus Criticus ad Sexti Propertii Textum* (Leiden 1970). *Haud sine dubio*, therefore, let me propose yet another. Read:

*pro quo mi, divi, frondes et frigida rupes,
et datur inculto tramite dura quies.*

"... and in return for that, ye gods, I have leaves and a chilly rock, and am granted a hard night's sleep" Propertius now is speaking very much as the *exclusus amator*; cf. 1.16.21–22, *nullane finis erit nostro concessa dolori, / turpis et in tepido limine somnus erit?* For the use of leaves as bedding, compare 1.20.21–22, *hic manus heroum, placidis ut constitit oris, / mollia composita litora fronde tegit.*⁵ It is the leaves and the chilly rock which afford the lover a hard night's sleep: the pentameter is now epexegetic.

Propertius uses the contraction *mi* in a dozen or so other lines (e.g., 1.12.19, 2.5.3, 2.29.21, 4.1.62, 4.11.47). For the vocative *divi*, compare 2.2.13 (*cedite iam, divae*) and 2.14.27 (*ante tuas tibi, diva*).⁶ Corruption of *mi, divi, frondes* into *divini fontes* began with the inversion of *mi* and *divi*;⁷ when *divi mi* had become *divini, frondes* was changed to *fontes* in deference to the gender of the adjective.⁸

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⁴So, too, R. Hanslik, *Sex. Propertii Elegiarum Libri IV* (Leipzig 1983), who glosses *divini* with *sub divo positi* in his critical note on the line.

⁵Cf. also Virgil *Ecl.* 1.79–80, *hic tamen hanc mecum poteras requiescere noctem / fronde super viridi*; Ovid *Her.* 5.13–14, *saepe greges inter requievimus arbore tecti, / mixtaque cum foliis praebuilt herba torum*.

⁶*Di*, but not *divi*, had been proposed in several of the earlier conjectures (e.g., the anonymous Italian's *di, vivi*, Palmier's *o di, vinum*, Shackleton Bailey's *di magni!*); for details, see Smyth's *Thesaurus Criticus*, cited above.

⁷For the propensity to inversion of a vocative such as this *divi*, see L. Havet, *Manuel de Critique verbale* . . . (Paris 1911) 243.

⁸I must thank two *Phoenix* referees for their helpful criticisms of an earlier draft of this note.