

CAESARIS IN NOMEN  
(PROPERTIUS IV, vi)

The traditional view of Propertius as a eulogist of Augustus in Elegies IV, vi<sup>1</sup>) has become the object of an increasingly jaundiced gaze in recent years. Gordon Williams' assessment of the piece as "one of the most ridiculous poems in the Latin language"<sup>2</sup>) is so often quoted with approval as to have become something of a commonplace of Propertian criticism in some quarters<sup>3</sup>). It is true that Williams' view has lately been subjected to vigorous attack by W.R. Johnson for its failure to appreciate the poetic merits of the piece; but for Johnson too the real measure of the poem's successful appeal is the extent to which the poet's talents have been turned to parody of Augustan patriotic poetry<sup>4</sup>). "Can any man now believe that Propertius meant to honour Augustus in IV, 6...?" is the question posed by

---

1) See, e.g., W.A.B.Hertzberg, *Sex. Aurelii Propertii elegiarum libri quattuor*, I (Halle, 1843), p. 28; H.E. Butler and E.A. Barber, *The Elegies of Propertius* (Oxford, 1933), p. lxvi; R. Syme, *Roman Revolution* (Oxford, 1939), p. 467; H. Bardon, *Les Empereurs et les lettres latines d'Auguste à Hadrien* (Paris, 1940; 2nd ed. 1968), pp. 75-78; P. Fideli, *Properzio Elegie Libro IV* (Bari, 1965), pp. xxii-xxiii; W.A. Camps, *Propertius Elegies Book IV* (Cambridge, 1965), pp. 2-3.

2) "Poetry in the Moral Climate of Augustan Rome", *J.R.S.*, 52 (1962), p. 43.

3) J.P. Sullivan, "Propertius: A Preliminary Essay", *Arion*, 5 (1966), p. 22, n. 10, and "Politics of Elegy", *Arethusa*, 5 (1972), p. 34, n. 11; K. Galinsky, "The Triumph Theme in the Augustan Elegy", *W.S.*, 3 (1969), p. 86; S. Commager, *A Prolegomenon to Propertius* (Cincinnati, 1974), p. 64, n. 62. See now most recently Sullivan, *Propertius: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge, 1976), p. 71, n. 8.

4) "The Emotions of Patriotism: Propertius 4.6", *C.S.C.A.*, 6 (1973), pp. 151-180. See now also P.J. Connor, "The Actian Miracle: Propertius 4.6", *Ramus*, 7 (1978), pp. 1-10: "The tone is often cramped and bitter, and I am of a mind that the seriousness that Johnson claims as lacking ... is very much present, and that the total effect of the poem is so unsettling and unnerving (as parody can never be, since it deals in confidence and certainty) that the reader is forced to consider the whole question of Actium - and Augustus and the poets - in rather an earnest way and is compelled to view the whole procedure with despondency and alarm" (pp. 3-4).

a recent translator, with obviously rhetorical intent<sup>5</sup>). Let me, therefore, record at the outset that I am a man who has for a number of years held precisely that belief<sup>6</sup>), and that I have yet to be persuaded to abandon it. In this article I propose to examine some of the bases on which Williams' assessment seems to have been made, and to question some of the more recent interpretations of what Propertius was about in writing IV, vi – interpretations which take Williams' brisk dismissal of the poem as their starting point.

It is interesting to note that where Williams discusses the poem more fully, recording a muted but essentially similar version of his earlier judgement<sup>7</sup>), he launches straight into a comparison between Propertius' poem and Vergil, *Aeneid* VIII, 675–713. That Propertius was influenced by the Vergilian depiction of Actium at the centre of Aeneas' shield seems certainly true. Ten years or so earlier he had recorded his interest in the genesis of the *Aeneid* and his awareness of some of the themes of its eighth book, including the Actium theme<sup>8</sup>). Commentators have not failed to indicate the Vergilian echoes in Propertius IV, vi<sup>9</sup>); and it seems to me that the probabilities are against, and little other than its proponents' predisposition – reinforced by Ezra Pound's "paraphrase (and embellishment)" – in favour of the view that Propertius II, xxxiv, 65–66 betokens only a perfunctory and ironical expression of admiration for Vergil's forthcoming work<sup>10</sup>). I see no evidence in the text itself, as distinct from the light of Pound's insights, for any other view than that "he contrasts his own poetic talent with that of Virgil, complimenting Virgil with deference but concluding with the affirmation that his kind of poetry too has its honour and can

5) J. P. McCulloch, *The Poems of Sextus Propertius: A Bilingual Edition* (Berkeley, 1972), p. 4.

6) Cf. R. J. Baker, "Miles annosus: the Military Motif in Propertius", *Latomus*, 27 (1968), pp. 344–346, and "Laus in amore mori: Love and Death in Propertius", *Latomus*, 29 (1970), p. 694.

7) *Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry* (Oxford, 1968), p. 51: "Propertius is generally judged to have written a thoroughly bad poem".

8) See Prop. II, xxxiv, 61–66; also H. E. Pillinger, "Some Callimachean Influences on Propertius, Book 4", *H.S.C.P.*, 73 (1969), pp. 194–195. Cf. Baker, *Latomus*, 27 (1968), p. 330.

9) So, e.g., Butler and Barber, *op. cit.* (n. 1), p. 355; W. A. Camps, *op. cit.* (n. 1), p. 104.

10) Sullivan, *Arion*, 5 (1966), p. 14. Now also at *Propertius*, pp. 24–25. Cf. Commager, *op. cit.* (n. 3), pp. 54–55, n. 39 (also through Poundian spectacles).

confer immortality”<sup>11</sup>). Indeed, on this point Sullivan’s view seems to have hardened under Pound’s influence; his earlier position was much closer to the one held by Camps and myself<sup>12</sup>). In any case, Vergilian influence on Propertius IV, vi seems undeniable.

In a general way, however, it seems not altogether fair to compare the two treatments, as Williams has done, and find Propertius wanting as though because his treatment of the Actium theme is un-Vergilian<sup>13</sup>). Vergil was writing an epic poem, whereas Propertius took some pride in having remained an elegist even in his national poetry; hence the *novum iter*, v. 10<sup>14</sup>). The very device that Williams sees as contributing most to the success of Vergil’s account of the battle of Actium – the representation of the scene on the shield of Aeneas – is a necessary part of Vergil’s epic inheritance. In this, as in much else, the two poets were working with quite different tools and from different blue-prints. Even on general grounds we would expect different sorts of workmanship, producing quite different artefacts<sup>15</sup>).

A particular injustice done to Propertius in this comparison arises from the constant assumption that the elegy is a “celebration of the battle of Actium”<sup>16</sup>). To see the relevant lines (vv. 15–68) of the poem thus, as “a battle-piece”<sup>17</sup>) involving a “narrative of the battle of Actium”<sup>18</sup>), is to invite an unfavourable view of the poet’s performance from the start, for the poem

11) Camps, *Propertius: Elegies Book II* (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 322–223.

12) Sullivan, *Ezra Pound and Sextus Propertius* (London, 1965), p. 76: “Of course, contrary to Pounds’ reading of ii. 34, Propertius does admire Virgil and wishes simply to claim a place in the Roman poetic tradition along with him, and this he tries to do by minimizing the difference between them”.

13) This sort of comparison recalls the tone of the comments by A. Guillemin, “Properce, de Cynthie aux poèmes Romains”, *R.É.L.*, 28 (1950), pp. 192–193, the injustice of which I tried to suggest at *Latomus*, 27 (1968), pp. 322–323, 349, n. 1. Cf. now the comments of Johnson *art. cit.* (n. 4), pp. 152–153, 158 ff., who also finds the comparison unfair.

14) Cf. Camps, *ad loc.*: “a new and bold enterprise for an *elegiac* poet”.

15) See the remarks of P. Grimal, “Les intentions de Properce et la composition du livre IV des Élegies”, *Latomus*, 11 (1952), pp. 324–325.

16) Williams, *J.R.S.*, 52 (1962), p. 43, and *Tradition and Originality*, pp. 52–53.

17) Camps, *Propertius: Book IV*, p. 105.

18) *Ibid.*, p. 140.

turns out to contain "no account of the battle"<sup>19</sup>). Nor should it be expected to, for the poem is not about a battle but about a victory wrought by the intervention of the god Apollo<sup>20</sup>). This fact is worth stressing, not least because scholars seem unable to make up their minds on the point. For example, F. Sweet has the matter both ways within a single paragraph: he sees IV, vi as an elegant, sophisticated, clever treatment of "a weighty subject – the victory of Augustus over the forces of Antony and Cleopatra at the battle of Actium", but goes straight on to refer to "the description of the battle of Actium (15–68)"<sup>21</sup>). Sullivan refers sometimes to "the notorious elegy 6 on the battle of Actium"<sup>22</sup>), and on other occasions, with greater accuracy, to "the long and strange elegy on the victory at Actium"<sup>23</sup>).

The truth is that these lines constitute, at the most, a highly abstract and impressionistic battle setting (vv. 15–26), for Apollo's appearance (vv. 27–36), speech (vv. 37–54), and action (v. 55). That it is a setting drawn with considerable exercise of poetic talents, and to an effect quite favourably to be compared with *Aeneid* VIII, 671 ff. has been well demonstrated by Johnson<sup>24</sup>). But if a battle account must be found in this poem it is at vv. 55–56, and there alone<sup>25</sup>). For no battle has commenced before the god has finished speaking; *committe* (v. 53) gives the order to engage, but *ducam* (v. 54) is future tense. And at v. 57 victory is achieved: *vincit Roma fide Phoebi*. So the battle of Actium is not in this poem anywhere "narrated". The action is merely signified – one might almost say symbolized – by the single flash of martial co-operation between the god and Caesar at vv. 55–56:

*dixerat, et pharetrae pondus consumit in arcus:  
proxima post arcus Caesaris hasta fuit.*

19) Williams, *Tradition and Originality*, p. 53. Cf. F. Sweet, 'Propertius and Political Panegyric', *Arethusa*, 5 (1972), p. 172: "But the description of the battle, for which the reader is mentally poised, does not follow".

20) So, correctly, Butler and Barber, *op. cit.* (n. 1), p. 355: "Propertius sings the praises of Augustus and his victory at Actium".

21) Sweet, *art. cit.* (n. 19), p. 170.

22) *Arion*, 5, (1966), p. 19; now repeated at *Propertius*, p. 144.

23) *Arethusa*, 5 (1972), p. 30. Cf. *Propertius*, p. 71.

24) For a discussion that does excellent justice to Propertius, vv. 15–20, in the face of Williams' strictures see Johnson, *art. cit.* (n. 4), p. 157 ff.

25) Cf. G. P. Goold, "Noctes Propertianae", *H.S.C.P.*, 71 (1966), p. 70: "the battle does not begin till v. 55 where it is opened by the shafts of Apollo and then 'proxima post arcus Caesaris hasta fuit'".

For this reason alone, if for no other, it seems to me rather unreasonable of Johnson to object, on the grounds that it is "hardly fair"<sup>26</sup>), to Propertius' comparison between the two fleets as he deploys them in his battle setting (vv. 21-24). As a premonition of the god's action it is natural enough to see Antony's forces in the pejorative terms of a fleet doomed for destruction. And in any case, how can Propertius be "fair" on either this point or the allied point that offends Johnson – the complete lack of reference to Antony or Agrippa<sup>27</sup>) – if his treatment of the Actium myth is faithfully to reflect, as I believe it does, the way Augustus wanted it treated? More perceptive about this, I think, is the view of Pillinger which recognises omissions such as these as designed precisely to heighten the concentration on Apollo's divine participation<sup>28</sup>). Thus, far from Propertius' "talking immediately of the battle of Actium" which Williams invites us to envisage<sup>29</sup>), and the absence of which Johnson, by implication, bids us deplore<sup>30</sup>), the poet can be seen not to have talked of the actual battle at all, except as it is conceived of in this couplet as an act of co-operation by Apollo in the *res gestae* of Augustus. This is what I take to be the fairly simple truth behind what Williams seeks to describe when he writes that Propertius IV, vi "reads as if he started, not with the real battle of Actium in mind, but with a conception of it which had already undergone a considerable process of abstraction"<sup>31</sup>).

The co-operation between Caesar and Apollo that is thus signified is, to be sure, at the very heart of the matter of IV, vi: *Actius hinc traxit Phoebus monumenta* (v. 67). It is for celebration of this fact, the *αἴτιον* of the temple of Apollo Palatinus, rather than the celebration (to say nothing of the narration!) of the battle of Actium, that Propertius strikes the ambivalent vatic pose assumed at vv. 1-10. So the poet has already told us, in the lines directly following those ambiguously ritualistic verses:

---

26) Johnson, *art. cit.* (n. 4), p. 161.

27) *Ibid.*, p. 163.

28) Pillinger, *art. cit.* (n. 8), p. 195.

29) Williams, *Tradition and Originality*, p. 56.

30) Johnson, *art. cit.* (n. 4), p. 166.

31) Williams, *Tradition and Originality*, p. 56. For the reasons just advanced I also find less than accurate the remark of Galinsky, *art. cit.* (n. 3), p. 86: "The actual details of the battle are exaggerated to the point of silliness". It is the effectiveness of Apollo's intervention that is exaggerated – whether to the point of silliness, or not, in the context of a victory hymn is a matter of taste.

*Musa, Palatini referemus Apollinis aedem:  
res est, Calliope, digna favore tuo.  
Caesaris in nomen ducuntur carmina: Caesar  
dum canitur, quaeso, Juppiter ipse vaces.*

11-14

By means of a cross-reference to the final section of Horace, *Epistles* II, i, Johnson offers a witty analysis, in terms of chasuble, chalice and inkwell, of Propertius' vatic pose in vv. 1-10 as parody of poetic convention for the sake of fun at Augustus' expense<sup>32</sup>). This is all very entertaining, but in the end serves to throw more light on Johnson's view of the Actium myth than on the view of it that Propertius here seeks poetically to promote. Both Sullivan and Johnson find vv. 12-14 difficult to accept on any other reading than that which takes them as deliberately humorous. In particular, the way Caesar and Jupiter are mentioned together would worry them if taken seriously. Sullivan finds the juxtaposition less than "seemly"; Johnson comes right out and finds the phrase *Juppiter ipse vaces* "rather disrespectful"<sup>33</sup>). His further pious hope that maybe a Roman would not have minded is rather wide of the mark. The point is that the particular Roman who mattered in this case was certain not to have minded. It was long ago shown how the phrase exploits Horace's playfulness in the final stanza of the *Carmen Saeculare*, and how accurately it reflects Augustus' own designs in promoting the Apollo cult<sup>34</sup>). Much more recently Pillinger has drawn a comparison between Propertius IV, vi and Callimachus' hymn to Apollo to show that Propertius' desire to achieve a wit and lightness of treatment worthy of his model is sufficient to explain the playing with the ambiguity of vv. 1-10. His discussion also demonstrates that even the political aspects of Propertius' theme have their counterpart in Callimachus' hymn<sup>35</sup>).

32) Johnson, *art. cit.* (n. 4), pp. 154ff.

33) *Ibid.*, p. 154; Sullivan, *Propertius*, p. 146. Cf. Galinsky, *art. cit.* (n. 3), p. 87, n. 33

34) E. H. Haight, "An 'Inspired Message' in the Augustan Poets", *A. J. P.*, 39 (1918), p. 359: "Propertius strikes even more daringly the note which Horace sounded at the end of the C. S.: Jupiter himself is to give ear to the Apollo-Caesar theme". Cf. also p. 345: "Although the Palatine temple was *in solo privato* and was not an *aedes publica*, still Apollo as the patron god of the Emperor gained more and more prestige as the monarchy grew more deeply rooted and at last did not yield precedence among the state gods even to Jupiter himself".

35) Pillinger, *art. cit.* (n. 8), pp. 191ff.

What the Callimachean *vates* of Apollo has offered, as a sequel to the sparkling ritual prelude of vv. 1–10 and within the aetiological framework of vv. 11–12 and 67–68, is a victory hymn in honour of Apollo Palatinus and to the reflected glory of Augustus, “the glory of Augustus being prefigured in the brilliance of Apollo”<sup>36</sup>).

Viewing the poem thus as a victory hymn, rather than as a battle-narrative flawed by Hellenistic allusiveness, I cannot agree with Williams that Propertius’ treatment is fundamentally unserious or that the poem fails to communicate an emotion to the reader<sup>37</sup>); nor with Sullivan that Propertius does not have his talents engaged in this poem<sup>38</sup>). An emotion of fear and insecurity is quite powerfully conveyed throughout Apollo’s appearance and speech, as also is an answering emotion of relief evoked by the god’s reassurances and promises of aid. In the paragraphs that follow I shall be trying to demonstrate how fully the poet’s talents have been engaged in the evocation of these emotions so long after the event which gave rise to them<sup>39</sup>).

This keynote of release from fear is first sounded in the *se vindice* phrase at v. 27, in the description of Apollo’s arrival on the scene at Actium. And though reference to the stabilization of Delos may in general represent a regular feature of descriptions of Apollo in classical literature<sup>40</sup>), it is especially appropriate to the reassuring tone of Apollo’s speech in this particular elegy that his first appearance should show him as the *vindex* under whose championship the island of Delos was rescued from insecurity<sup>41</sup>). The phrase itself is echoed in the same

36) *Ibid.*, p. 195.

37) *Tradition and Originality*, p. 53.

38) *Propertius*, p. 416.

39) Probably fifteen years elapsed between Augustus’ victory at Actium and Propertius’ celebration of it in this poem. See Butler and Barber, *op. cit.* (n. 1), pp. xxvi–xxviii; also Pillinger, *art. cit.* (n. 8), p. 190.

40) So Pillinger, *ibid.*, p. 195. He notes that this is a canonic motif of Apolline lore, and also the contrast between the warlike and peaceful aspects of the god. Both the Delos motif and the twofold aspect of the god, however, have particular roles to play in this poem.

41) It seems not unlikely that Vergil’s likening of the ships of the rival fleets to *revulsas Cyclades* (*Aeneid* VIII, 691–692) as part of his imagery conveying the fearsomeness of the conflict will have had some influence on Propertius’ reference to the stability of Delos at the beginning of the passage where he introduces his motif of release from fear. In any case, I cannot agree with P. J. Connor, *art. cit.* (n. 4), p. 8: “an otiose reference to his stabilizing Delos”.

metrical position by *te vindice* at v. 41, where Apollo's former task of championing victims of fear and insecurity devolves upon Augustus. It seems to me, furthermore, that Propertius has deliberately drawn attention to this echo of the *vindex* idea by including it, in its initial statement at v. 27, in an ablative absolute construction which is strictly speaking ungrammatical. From the echo thus highlighted I draw the inference that the *patria*, adrift on a sea of prayer-filled fear (vv. 41-42), will soon have its reliance on Caesar rewarded by the sort of stability and security that Apollo conferred upon Delos<sup>42</sup>).

Between these two occurrences of the *vindex* phrase that mark this devolution of the role of champion from the god to the man come two expressions denoting the elimination of fear which are based on the verb *solvere*. The god's removal of the peace-loving Muses' past fear of the Python (*solvit Pythona ... imbelles quem timuere deae*, vv. 35-36) is echoed by *solve metu patriam* (v. 41) where the task of removing the present fear experienced by the *patria* is imposed upon Augustus by divine injunction and the prayers of the populace (*publica vota*, v. 42). I take it that such verbal repetition is an artistic device to highlight the contrast between fear and fear's removal<sup>43</sup>).

Likewise I take it that the chiasmic pattern of *vindex* (v. 27) – *solvere* (v. 35) – *solvere* (v. 41) – *vindex* (v. 41) was designed by the poet, thus engaging his talents in the task of imparting prominence to the motif of fear and reassurance which the pattern embraces. Within the structure of the chiasmus itself, at v. 37, the god's speech begins. There the opening salutation of Augustus as *mundi servator* (v. 37), the salutary reminder of his Alban and Trojan ancestry (vv. 37-38), and the promise of aid towards victory at sea from Apollo's bow and arrows (vv. 39-40) stand in reassuring contrast to the helpless subjection to fear on the

42) The repetition of *vindex* is Propertius' very accurate revival, well calculated to please Augustus, of the motif *Libertatis P. R. Vindex* appearing on coins shortly after Actium. See, e.g., M. Grant, *Roman History from Coins* (Cambridge, 1958), plate 6, no. 8.

43) Contrast Johnson, *art. cit.* (n. 4), pp. 164-165, who thinks such repetitions should cause us to giggle at Propertius' sublime wit – the alternative being a giggle at his "radical incompetence". Just what is radically incompetent about repetition of key words and phrases by an Augustan poet to emphasise a thematic point, or a court poet to emphasise a point of Augustanism, is left fairly unclear.



part of the Muses (v. 36), which is the last image evoked before the god's speech commences<sup>44</sup>).

The transfer of the nation's burden of fearful prayers to Caesar at vv. 41-42 is followed by the equally salutary Romulean reference at vv. 43-44 with its implication that Augustus' obedience to the divine injunction will establish him as a *Romulus alter*<sup>45</sup>). As second founder and *princeps* (v. 46), it is Caesar's duty to assume willingly at the god's behest the burden entrusted to him by the state; that is, the task of dealing with the shameful threat of invasion by the Egyptian queen. For, largely for the reasons advanced by Camps<sup>46</sup>), I accept Markland's correction *Latinos* for *Latinis*, the reading of the manuscripts at v. 45, and see it as a reference to the threat of invasion of Italy<sup>47</sup>). I find Johnson's reading of *et nimium remis audent prope* rather too subtle to be true: "It sounds rather as if Antony was getting ready to attack Octavian's fleet and as if Apollo intuited that Octavian was seized by terror at this threat" – this being offered as the indirect manner in which Propertius imagines Augustus frightened by Antony's big ships; whence the essential wit of this passage<sup>48</sup>). There is nothing indirect here; Augustus is afraid, as well he might be, not simply of an attack on his fleet but of the threat of invasion of Italy itself, which by its oath of allegiance has placed the fearful responsibility of *dux* upon him<sup>49</sup>).

In this way Propertius has sharpened the focus of fear to beam on the person of Augustus himself: *nec te ... terreat* (vv. 47-48). Here I think that *remiget* at v. 47, the reading of the best manuscripts, is preferable to *remigat*, the correction offered by

44) See J.P. Postgate, *Select Elegies of Propertius* (London, 1884), p. 215: "Observe how this passage [vv. 35-36], both in metre and expression realises the peculiar horror of the serpent's movements, the slow sinuous progress through all its length".

45) Cf. Dio, LIII, 16, 7: ὁ Καῖσαρ ἐπεθόμει μὲν ἰσχυρῶς Ῥωμύλος ὀνομασθῆναι – at least until wiser counsels prevailed. See R. Syme, *Roman Revolution* (Oxford, 1939) pp. 313-314.

46) Camps, *Propertius: Book IV*, p. 110.

47) Cf. Prop. III, xi, 39ff., for such invasion vividly envisaged; see R. J. Baker, "Propertius, Cleopatra and Actium", *Antichthon*, 10 (1976), pp. 56-62.

48) Johnson, *art. cit.* (n. 4), p. 165; cf. Connor, *art. cit.* (n. 4), p. 7. Why does Johnson keep making reference to Antony when, on his own showing (p. 161), Antony is "never present in the poem"?

49) Cf. *Res Gestae* 25.2: *Iuravit in mea verba tota Italia sponte sua, et me belli quo vici ad Actium ducem depoposcit.*

the *deteriores*<sup>50</sup>). The subjunctive mood (“the thought that...” conveying Caesar’s own fearful realisation of the burden he has assumed is precisely the sort of sensitive poetic touch that the context calls for at this point<sup>51</sup>). But Apollo is there with the consoling message that the fleet posing the threat is foredoomed (*invito labitur ... mari*, v. 48), thus confirming the poet’s prophetic insight (v. 21) as he set the scene for the god’s epiphany. Caesar himself will now discover (*experiere*, v. 50) that military might exercised in an unjust cause (vv. 51–52) can constitute nothing but an illusory terror (*pictos ... metus*, v. 50) to the righteous. The fact that the opposing fleet consists of empty hulks and painted terrors is, in the unfolding of this poem, privileged information known only to the Delphic god, until he imparts it to his *alumnus*; heaven has concurred with affronted mankind in recognising the unrighteousness (cf. Vergil’s *nefas*) of the rival cause<sup>52</sup>). That the cause which Caesar has undertaken is a righteous one is guaranteed by the final couplet of the god’s speech. Apollo himself, as appointer of the time for the leader of the better cause to engage (v. 53), can in the same breath offer the final reassurance against fear, with his promise of victory (*laurigera ... manu*, v. 54). Johnson’s reference at this point to Apollo as the “musical fop”, in a bid to undercut the dignity with which Propertius invests what is, on any reckoning, a commonplace, is once again entertainingly spirited<sup>53</sup>). But it will not do. As Johnson himself has rather acidly pointed out, it is emphatically *not* in the guise of the Citharoedus that Propertius has Apollo intervene at Actium (*non ille... v. 31*)<sup>54</sup>).

The extent of Apollo’s intervention on the side of Caesar’s cause – the action suited to the promise of victory and sufficient

50) The Oxford text has *remigat*. Camps also prints this in his text, but acknowledges in his note *ad loc.* that the manuscripts’ *remiget* may be right.

51) For the subjunctive see Postgate, *op. cit.* (n. 44), p. 216 (citing Roby 1744).

52) Thus it is not necessary to see with Johnson that Propertius’ motive in magnifying the threat posed by Antony is to have some fun at Augustus’ expense (*art. cit.* [n. 4] p. 165). It serves just as well to measure the extent of Augustus’ sense of responsibility as leader, and of Apollo’s capacity to reassure.

53) *Art. cit.* (n. 4), p. 166.

54) *Ibid.*, p. 163: “The rather effete chanteur, with the flawlessly coiffed hair and his long fingers fondling the lyre, stood outside the Palatine Temple, near the Library, where he belonged”. Johnson can hardly be allowed to have it both ways at once.

to achieve that victory – is measured by the *pharetrae pondus* (v. 55). The word *pondus* itself answers to *hoc onus omne* which expressed Apollo's promise of aid at v. 40 at the beginning of his speech. This correspondence tempts me here to suggest a point in the odd turn of phrase at both places to express a quiver of arrows. In the light of the stress thus far on the motif of a burden of fear that is transferred from *patria* and *populus* to the *princeps*, and made bearable for him by the god's assurances and promise of assistance, it seems possible that the *onus* and the *pondus* of the god's arrows constitute, allusively and almost literally, a counterweight to the cumulation of *metus*, *terror* and *minae* in vv. 41–50. That is to say, the weight and burden of Apollo's active intervention measure up to his promise of aid and are more than sufficient to outweigh the threat against which his aid is plied.

It is almost as though the total expenditure of the god's burden of arrows (*consumit*, v. 55) signals Caesar's release from the weight of the fearful prayers of the nation with which he had been burdened (*imposuit*, v. 45). Such a view seems to find support in the alacrity with which the now confident Caesar comes second only to the bowmanship of Apollo with his own spear-cast (v. 56). As we have already seen, vv. 55–56 constitute the only passage in the whole poem that qualifies for characterisation as a battle account. But as much as anything else the couplet also constitutes a further statement in the development of the motif of release from fear that informed the speech of Apollo which precedes it.

So there is no account of the battle of Actium in this poem. Rather does the poet present us with a carefully sustained balance of divine reassurance to the *princeps* and, through him, to the *patria*, against the burden of fear assumed by Augustus on his country's behalf. It is not the fighting at Actium but the victory won there that is the subject of the poem, whether it be seen as an elegiac hymn to Apollo or an aetiological elegy on the temple of Apollo Palatinus. The nub of the piece under either guise is the resounding *vincit Roma fide Phoebi* (v. 57); confidence in the reassurances of the god brought as its reward complete victory. It was the woman, Cleopatra, whose unnatural command over Roman soldiers (v. 22) and royal power (v. 46) had made her the occasion of all that fear, who paid the price of her presumption (*dat femina poenas*, v. 57).

The completeness of the destruction of the enemy queen's royal power is arrestingly depicted in a single line:

*sceptra per Ionias fracta vebuntur aquas* 58

The highly effective brevity of this statement of the rout that gave the victory is enhanced, it seems to me, by the fact that this verse recalls, with some reflection in sound and image but stark contrast in sense and significance, an earlier verse:

*armorum et radiis picta tremebat aqua* 26

Williams has some interesting remarks about v. 26 as an example of Propertius' powers of description used for an unexpected effect derived from intellectualizing his pictures beyond mere visual observation. But in its context this was the verse which described the battle-line at Actium in terms that went "beyond a simple visual effect into a more conceptual picture of the waters coloured variously by the weapons reflected in it"<sup>55</sup>), as a prelude to Apollo's baleful entrance as the *deus vindex*. So a highly artistic point that I wish to suggest as operating here is that the picture is thus intellectualized because the poet already has in mental view the contrasting picture of the selfsame waters more sombrely marked by the wreckage of queenly power as a result of the same god's actions.

Johnson has noted the "delicacy and beauty" of v. 26<sup>56</sup>); but somewhat strangely, it seems to me, can see only that the corresponding v. 58 shows "a silly, overdone lilt", which he renders by "and her scepters were broken and bobbed on the sea" – further enhancing the lilt with his alliteration<sup>57</sup>). But is this either silly or overdone? How long is it since Johnson has watched flotsam bobbing on the sea? The fact is that it usually does so with a pathetic visual "lilt" which Propertius' line has nicely captured in sound and image. Thus these two starkly different conceptions of the waters at Actium stand like a frame around the passage of the poem that begins with Apollo's intervention and ends with the accomplishment of what his intervention promised.

Within the economy of this poem there is, I think, also more point in the next pair of couplets than the deliberately comic overstatement that is all but universally seen in them these days:

55) Williams, *Tradition and Originality*, p. 655.

56) *Art. cit.* (n. 4), p. 163.

57) *Ibid.*, p. 167.

*at pater Idalio miratur Caesar ab astro:*  
*"Sum deus; est nostri sanguinis ista fides".*  
*prosequitur cantu Triton, omnesque marinae*  
*plauserunt circa libera signa deae. 59-62*

It has been acutely observed recently by Sweet that in these lines (Apollo having already told us that the land belongs to Augustus at v. 39) sky and sea now hail the victor "in somewhat precious fashion"<sup>58</sup>). Preciosity notwithstanding, I see no sign here that Julius Caesar is surprised at the proof of his own divinity afforded by what happened at Actium<sup>59</sup>). Rather does it seem to me that the divinity of Julius is asserted; what the events at Actium prove is that Augustus is a worthy son of a divine father. I am still of the opinion that the elder Caesar's admiring utterance from heaven in the moment of Augustus' victory is a reminder that the victory itself is a pledge that the *princeps* is not only the *alumnus* of one god but the son of another<sup>60</sup>). The tone I still hear in the Propertian verses puts me in mind of a similar utterance from heaven of divine approval for a proudly acknowledged son: οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα<sup>61</sup>).

Nor do I see the next couplet about Triton and the sea goddesses as best appreciated in its context when seen in the light of absurd exaggeration that is cast upon it by scholars nowadays<sup>62</sup>). There is, for one thing, a not unpleasing stylistic balance in the device of having Triton to lead the applause for the propitious resolution of the battle-line that had been drawn up by Nereus (vv. 25-26). There is also the further point that Triton's business is to signal with his conch-shell trumpet a calming of the waves<sup>63</sup>). As Postgate saw, this couplet indicates that the storm of battle

58) F. Sweet, *art. cit.* (n. 19), p. 172. Johnson's cavil (*art. cit.* [n. 4], p. 164) at the distance between the claim of *iam terra tua est* (v. 39) and literal truth misses the point that as Augustan eulogy it is sufficiently consonant with the *tota Italia* etc. of *Res Gestae* 25.2 to be in tune with the Actium myth.

59) So Johnson, *art. cit.* (n. 4) pp. 168-169. His reference to "the befuddled *divus* Julius" is colourful, but quite without textual warrant as far as I can see.

60) Cf. Latomus, 29 (1970), p. 694.

61) *Gospel according to Matthew*, xvii. 5. Cf. Mark xi. 7; Luke ix. 35.

62) See, e.g., Sullivan, *Propertius*, p. 146; Johnson, *art. cit.* (n. 4), p. 167. Cf. Galinsky, *art. cit.* (n. 3), p. 87: "the somewhat scurrilous scene with the triumphant Nereids and Triton"; also Connor, *art. cit.* (n. 4), p. 6.

63) See Ovid, *Met.* I, 331-342.

is over and the victorious fleet sails on a *mare pacatum*<sup>64</sup>). After the air has been cleared of the fear that filled it at the clash of the *mundi ... manus* (v. 19), the waters of Apollo's bay of Actium become what they were at the outset: *nautarum votis non operosa via*, v. 18. The *marinae ... deae* recall the *imbelles ... deae* of v. 36 who represented the strong statement of the fear motif just before Apollo's speech commenced.

It seems necessary to point out, furthermore, that Triton and the sea goddesses are not "applauding Octavian's victorious standards"<sup>65</sup>). Octavian's standards are victorious, of course; but that is not how they are described in the text at this point. The reference there (v. 62) is to *libera signa*, standards that are "free". Inasmuch as this might refer to Augustus' standards at all, it can only mean that they have been freed from the fear of threatened domination by Cleopatra. But Propertius must have had in mind primarily the standards on Antony's side. Before the victory just won these were emphatically not free but, like the *pila* of v. 21, shamefully under the command of the foreign queen<sup>66</sup>). Thus reconciliation of Roman forces just lately at each other's throats in civil war will be what Propertius has Triton and his train applauding here. One is reminded straight away of the *corona civica* conferred on Augustus for this very reason, and closely associated in his own record with his laurels of victory<sup>67</sup>). We should remember too the coins with the legend *ob cives servatos* that were issued in the years between the victory at Actium and the composition of Propertius' elegy<sup>68</sup>). I must say that I find it difficult to accept that such a faithful reflection of the Augustan propaganda of the years after Actium, handled in what turns out to be a fairly subtle and oblique manner, can validly be regarded as "a parody of court poetry"<sup>69</sup>).

The national bogey from whose power the Roman standards on both sides have thus been rendered *libera* is picked up in the next verse – not by name but in the studied anonymity of *illa* (v.

64) *Op. cit.* (n. 44), p. 219.

65) Sullivan, *Propertius*, p. 146.

66) This is precisely the complaint that Horace had to make at *Epodes*, ix, 11–14. Cf. G. G. Ramsay, *Selections from Propertius and Tibullus* (Oxford, 1887), p. 350.

67) *Res Gestae* 34.2: *laureis postes aedium mearum vestiti publice coronaque civica super ianuam meam fixa est*. Cf. Dio, LIII, 16, 4, explaining the significance of the crown: *τοὺς πολλὰς σώζοντι*.

68) See, e.g., M. Grant, *op. cit.* (n. 42), p. 22 and plate 7, no. 1.

69) Sullivan, *Propertius*, p. 147.

63). Thus is sounded the scornful note which shows that, in terms of the motif of fear which has informed this poem since Apollo's entry on the scene, the tables have been well and truly turned. We may well regret Propertius' lack of chivalry compared, say, with the noble tribute Horace pays at the end of *Odes* I, xxxvii. But it seems idle to mourn with Johnson that this is not one of the tragic heroines who have passed from Euripides via Hellenistic poetry into the literature of western Europe: "this is not Vergil's Cleopatra or Dido, nor Myrrha, nor Francesca, nor Shakespeare's Cleopatra, nor Phèdre, nor even Emma Bovary"<sup>70</sup>). Of course not. This is Propertius' Cleopatra, drawn in such a way as to represent a psychologically true enough picture of popular reaction to a national bogey whose fangs have just been drawn. By such devices as this do I think Propertius succeeds in evoking our responses – first of fear, now of relief – with as great a sense of seriousness and immediacy as is consistent with a victory that had been achieved probably fifteen years before the poem was written<sup>71</sup>).

It is from this perspective too that we can, it seems to me, best view the couplet 65–66:

*di melius! quantus mulier foret una triumphus,  
ductus erat per quas ante Iugurtha vias!*

Certainly it seems mistaken to see this as in any sense a belittling of Octavian by the device of belittling his opponent<sup>72</sup>). I should prefer to see the couplet as a recreation of the mixture of relief and jingoistic triumphalism in Rome that must have greeted the news of Actium in 31 B.C. There is also, let it be said, an element of tact in this rather unlovely recreation. The fact remained that Cleopatra had not been available to grace Augustus' triumph. So, rather than finishing with emphasis on the size of the fish that got away, for Propertius to say forthrightly that she would not have been worthy of the tradition of the Roman

<sup>70</sup>) Johnson, *art. cit.* (n. 4), p. 167.

<sup>71</sup>) See above, n. 39. How apposite the evocation of this emotion of release from fear is to a recreation of the mood of the aftermath of Actium is confirmed by, e.g., the *Fasti Amiternini* under August I recording the official reaction to the fall of Alexandria: *feriae ex s(enatus) c(onsulto) q(uod) e(o) d(ie) imp(erator) Caesar divi f(ilius) rem public(am) tristissimo periculo liberat* (CIL I<sup>2</sup>, p. 244).

<sup>72</sup>) So, e.g., Galinsky, *art. cit.* (n. 3) p. 87. Cf. Johnson, *art. cit.* (n. 4), p. 161; also W.R. Nethercut, "Propertius 3.11", *T.A.P.A.*, 102 (1971), pp. 439–442.

triumph was probably as tactful a way as any, so long after the event, around a delicate point<sup>73</sup>).

The long tradition of embarrassed reaction to v. 68, represented recently by Sullivan's sneer "the god manages the record of ten ships per arrow" seems to me to have been misconceived also<sup>74</sup>). Indeed there are reasons of both a general and a particular kind why we ought not so to react. In general, once a poet has chosen, as Propertius has done in this poem, that his victory celebration should in its central section constitute an epiphany hymn to Apollo in the fearsome guise of the Ἐκηβόλος, it is hardly reasonable to deprecate the concomitant exaggeration and lack of realism. One might just as well take Vergil to task for the inherent air of exaggeration and unreality in the picture of his (at one level) conventionally epic intervention by deities in the fighting at his Actium (VIII, 698 ff.). Even if we allow for the difference in the literary genres, can this passage – especially its last three verses:

*Actius haec cernens arcum intendebat Apollo  
desuper: omnis eo terrore Aegyptus et Indi,  
omnis Arabs, omnes vertebant terga Sabaei*      704–706

– when judged by the touchstone that Sullivan applies to Propertius' v. 68, any more successfully escape the charge of being exaggerated, unreal, or even slightly comic? Perhaps even more comic in the Vergil: here whole nations turn tail at the mere sight of the god's drawn bow, in the place of Propertius' ten ships destroyed per arrow actually fired. Even to pose the question in this way will, I hope, suggest again the indelicacy of continuing to raise it, whether about Vergil's passage, or Propertius' single line, of divine intervention<sup>75</sup>).

If one is going to deny, or even seriously to question, that Propertius' version of Apollo's intervention can be meant as a serious poetic stroke, it had better be on the basis of what the text of the poem actually conveys. For example, Sullivan refers

73) For some good remarks on Propertius' tact as a panegyrist in this poem see Pillinger, *art. cit.* (n. 8), p. 199.

74) Sullivan, *Arion*, 5 (1966), p. 19. Cf. Galinsky, *art. cit.* (n. 3), p. 86: "the record achievement of sinking ten ships per arrow". See also Johnson, *art. cit.* (n. 4), p. 168; Connor, *art. cit.* (n. 4), p. 9.

75) Cf. Postgate, *op. cit.* (n. 44), p. 220: "We need not speculate, as some of the commentators do, how many arrows he had in his quiver, nor whether this was an average or exceptional shot".



to "the picture of Apollo on Augustus' poop firing arrows", and finds "the whole tone of his *subsequent* speech is high-pitched and slightly absurd"<sup>76</sup>). This, however, overlooks the fact that in the actual text of the poem the order of events is reversed. Apollo takes his stand on Augustus' poop at v. 29 (*astitit Augusti puppim super*); then, following the brief description of his martial demeanour assumed for the occasion (vv. 31-36), comes the speech (vv. 37-54). Not until *after* the speech, as the tense of *dixerat* makes clear in quasi epic style, is there any firing of arrows<sup>77</sup>):

*dixerat, et pharetrae pondus consumit in arcus*      55

Now, if the order of events were as Sullivan represents them, if Apollo had fired his arrows first and had spoken afterwards, the speech would indeed be not only high-pitched but also quite absurd.

But we have already seen that the only battle action described in the poem is opened with Apollo's marksmanship<sup>78</sup>); that this comes after the speech of Apollo. We have also seen that this speech is carefully woven into its context in the structure of the poem from vv. 25 ff., so that Apollo's appearance and utterance convey on the one hand a powerful emotion of fear and insecurity, and on the other the corresponding sense of relief and reassurance implicit in the god's promises in the speech itself. The speech may fairly enough be described as high-pitched. But so it ought to be; it records the imposition of great war-time burdens of tension on *patria*, populace and *princeps*, and the resolution of the tension by the promises of divine assistance. In my view neither this speech nor the action by the god commensurate with his promises needs to be seen as absurd in the economy of this elegy<sup>79</sup>).

76) *Propertius*, p. 146 (with my emphasis).

77) Johnson, *art. cit.* (n. 4), p. 166, succeeds in suggesting the note of absurdity that Sullivan seeks here, with this rendition: "He spoke, and his quiver was emptied, and his bowstring twanged". But again, there is no twanging bowstring in the Latin text.

78) See above, p. 156 with n. 25.

79) Commager, *op. cit.* (n. 3), p. 64, finds that Propertius saw fit "to elaborate the conceit [the attribution of victory to Apollo's aid] to grotesque lengths in his description of the battle". But as we have seen, there is no "description of the battle". In a poem which constitutes a hymn to honour Apollo and his aid such elaboration is not so grotesque.

Nor, in my view, does v. 69 involve simply a "hasty disclaimer"<sup>80</sup>). The verse is too often thus cited as though *bella satis cecini* were all it said, whereas it goes on for another three and a half feet to end with the name Apollo. More accurate is Com-mager who, quoting the couplet 69-70 in full, observes that "Propertius with an almost audible sigh of relief, welcomes Apollo back in his accustomed role"<sup>81</sup>). For once, too, I am in agreement with Johnson: this is a most brazen *praeteritio cum recusatione*<sup>82</sup>). In earlier poems Apollo had come round to accepting patronage of Propertius' persistent loyalty to love elegy<sup>83</sup>). Thus it was Apollo's authority that the love elegist invoked in his *recusatio* at III, i, 7 to fortify his cleaving to Callimachean principles. This was reaffirmed at v. 38 of that poem, and was taken up more elaborately at III, iii, 13 ff.:

*cum me Castalia specularans ex arbore Phoebus  
sic ait aurata nixus ad antra lyra:  
quid tibi cum tali, demens, est flumine? quis te  
carminis heroi tangere iussit opus?*  
etc.

But for the very reason that the reappearance of the Citharoedus now at v. 69 of the Actium elegy does thus constitute a brazen *recusatio*, it can hardly be either random or clumsy as Johnson opines<sup>84</sup>). Matters are more subtle than that suggests, I think. As both love elegist, in what he regards as the Callimachean tradition<sup>85</sup>), and as poet celebrant of the victory hymn for Actium, Propertius owes a loyalty to Apollo<sup>86</sup>). The junction of both these poetic currents in the one poet is his title to the

80) Sullivan, *Arion*, 5 (1966), p. 19. Cf. Galinsky, *art. cit.* (n. 3), p. 87: "the poet hastily breaks off (*bella satis cecini* 69)"; Connor *art. cit.* (n. 4), p. 9.

81) *Op. cit.* (n. 3), p. 64.

82) *Art. cit.* (n. 4), p. 169.

83) I say "had come round", because in Propertius' first *recusatio* to Maecenas (II, i) it is *ipsa puella* (v. 4) and Callimachus (v. 40) who dictate his refusal, not Apollo (v. 3)

84) *Art. cit.* (n. 4), p. 169. Again Johnson supports his opinion with the importation of his own particular *color*: "Well, I guess I've sung enough now of warfare".

85) See R. J. Baker, "Propertius III, i, 1-6 again. Intimations of Immortality?", *Mnemosyne*, IV, 21 (1968), pp. 35-39.

86) Neither from the point of view of the eulogist of Augustus nor from that of the disciple of Callimachus can Johnson's contempt for Apollo Citharoedus ("the musical fop", p. 166; "the rather effete chanteur, etc.", p. 163) be apposite.

claim to be the Romanus Callimachus<sup>87</sup>); this loyalty to both callings has led to the fulfilment of wish to become the *vates* of IV, vi. That wish was clearly expressed at II, x:

*iam libet et fortis memorare ad proelia turmas  
et Romana mei dicere castra ducis.* 3-4

*haec ego castra sequar; vates tua castra canendo  
magnus ero: servent hunc mihi fata diem!* 19-20

The wish was realized, it becomes plain, by Propertius' reflecting in his poetic personality the change of character undergone by his divine patron at IV, vi, 31 ff.<sup>88</sup>). Johnson's disapproval of "this disparity between Apollo *heroicus* and Apollo *doctus*" seems very shortsighted<sup>89</sup>). I still stand by my earlier suggestion that just as Apollo's appearance in martial guise enabled Augustus to gain the victory at Actium, so, as Propertius' patron too, his change from Apollo Citharoedus to the *deus vindex* inspires in the elegiac poet of love and peace a celebration of the victory in a manner worthy of it<sup>90</sup>).

There need be no thought that juxtaposition of these two extremes in Apollo's character "deflates whatever reverence and awe the images of the ruthless Archer might have been expected to evoke"<sup>91</sup>). The point is that Apollo was important to Augustus in *both* his aspects; the performance of Horace's *Carmen Saeculare*, probably the year before the composition of this elegy, had made that clear enough. Even more shortsighted, however, is the strange notion to which Judith P. Hallet subscribes, that Propertius "discredits Augustus in the moment of his greatest triumph by attributing his victory at Actium solely to Apollo's intercession"<sup>92</sup>). This flies right in the face of the evidence showing Augustus' deliberate policy, for politico-religious reasons, of identifying himself with the protective patronage of

87) See Prop. IV, i, 57-64. Cf. *Latomus*, 29 (1970), p. 698.

88) At IV, i, 133 ff. the clairvoyance of Horos makes Apollo still stand for love elegy in Propertius' case.

89) *Art. cit.* (n. 4), p. 163.

90) Cf. *Latomus*, 27 (1968), pp. 345-346.

91) Johnson *art. cit.* (n. 4), p. 164. His further reference there to what Ovid will be doing to the "musical fop" in about twenty years is not evidence, I think, for anything in Propertius' attitude.

92) From the summary of her *Book IV: Propertius' Recusatio to Augustus and Augustan Ideals* (diss. Harvard, 1971), *H.S.C.P.*, 76 (1972), p. 288.

Apollo<sup>93</sup>). In the light of such evidence I find much more cogent the diametrically opposite view expressed by Pillinger "that without slighting the person of Augustus or the honour of the Julian house Propertius has placed the major emphasis on the agency of Apollo in the events of Actium"; that "such an idea would not have been unwelcome in official circles"<sup>94</sup>).

Sullivan sees in the last eighteen verses of the elegy "a coda as unduly drawn out as the opening, unless we accept it as playful"<sup>95</sup>). This, however, presupposes that the overture by the Callimachean *vates* was unduly long. But the length of vv. 1-14 is by no means disproportionate to the effort implicit in the elegiac poet's determination to become a *magnus vates* worthy to follow Augustus' *castra*<sup>96</sup>). Nor, I think, does what we have in the last lines of this elegy come into the category of parody of Horace and Vergil. We have in this coda the concluding domestic festivities that constitute a convention of the hymnic-panegyric poetry of which this elegy is a type<sup>97</sup>). Any playfulness in these lines can sufficiently be explained as a witty adaptation, in the Callimachean manner, of this convention to serve at the same time as a reassertion of Propertius' confidence in his poetic talent<sup>98</sup>). I shall try to justify this view, which has not, as far as I know, hitherto been expressed.

It seems to me that the view advanced nowadays completely misreads the coda to this poem. So, for example, Sullivan: "he pictures himself and other poets drinking till dawn and compos-

93) See E.H. Haight, *art. cit.* (n. 34), pp. 345-347; J. Gagé, *Apollo Romain* (Paris, 1955), pp. 479 ff.; S. Commager, *The Odes of Horace* (Bloomington, 1967) pp. 187, 200

94) *Art. cit.* (n. 8), p. 192.

95) *Propertius*, p. 146.

96) Cf. II, x, 10-20.

97) E.g., Horace, *Odes* III, xiv; IV, v; Tibullus II. i. Cf. Pillinger, *art. cit.* (n. 8), pp. 196-197.

98) I still maintain (*pace* Commager, *op. cit.* [n. 3], p. 49, n. 38) that Propertius was led to the reconciliation of his Callimachean ideals with poetry in the patriotic manner by a sense of neglect of duty - if only duty to his own reputation: "*Maro (vel Flaccus) potuit, ego non potero?*" I agree with G. Luck, *The Latin Love Elegy* (London, 1969), p. 139, on this point: "Propertius likes to speak about the dignity of his mission. He is proud of what he has achieved, but a little embarrassed by the limitations of his talent. He may have been secretly envious of other members of Maecenas' circle, whose versatility impressed him. Both Vergil and Horace were at home in various provinces of literature".

ing poetry on (what else?) imperial conquests"<sup>99</sup>). My view, however, is that Propertius' involvement in this scene is far otherwise than that. From v. 75 Propertius' prayer is for inspiration for *other* poets and *their* military themes; the subjunctive verbs *memoret* (v. 77), *canat* (v. 78), and *referat* (v. 79) are in the third person. It does not all that much matter if "the collocation of Parthia Aethiopia and the Sygambri involves scraping the bottom of the barrel"<sup>100</sup>). These are not here Propertius' themes (he has, for that matter, often gone over the Parthian ground in his own pre-vatic days)<sup>101</sup>; these are the minor themes that he prays the Muse to move other (lesser) poets, inspired by his patron Apollo with help from Bacchus (v. 76), to take up. The major theme of Apollo's aid to Augustus at Actium has already had full justice done to it by Propertius himself, with priestly sobriety and solemnity. As Pillinger has well observed "the poets' chorus of imperial praise is made to serve as an appropriate refrain to Propertius' more elaborate hymn"<sup>102</sup>). He is president, not a participant, at the poetic contest at this symposium. His hymn for Caesar's victory has fulfilled his prophecy of II, x, 19-20. He has successfully scaled the *laudis... carmen*; the *vilis tura* are now for these lesser men to offer.

On this view, Propertius' situation *vis à vis* these fellow poets is the same as it was at III, i, 9 ff., with just one element to be changed:

*quo [versu] me Fama levat terra sublimis, et a me  
nata coronatis Musa triumphat equis,  
et mecum in curru parvi vectantur Amores,  
scriptorumque meas turba secuta rotas.  
quid frustra missis in me certatis habenis?  
non datur ad Musas currere lata via.*

The change now is that the theme of the poetry is different. He still has a *turba scriptorum* trailing behind the chariot in the poetic race; but he has won the race this time by singing of Actium<sup>103</sup>).

99) *Propertius*, p. 147. Cf. Connor, *art. cit.* (n. 4), p. 9: "Even the account of the party is fundamentally bitter".

100) Johnson, *art. cit.* (n. 4), p. 170, n. 17.

101) See, e.g. III, vi; III, v, 47-48; III, ix, 54.

102) *Art. cit.* (n. 8), p. 197.

103) Precisely because Propertius is such a self-conscious artist so preoccupied with his ranking as a poet I find it impossible to accept the suggestion that IV, vi is "the climax of Propertius' *recusatio*, the defiant proof of Propertius' inability to write the sort of poetry Horace and, latterly,

His triumphal car is military now, rather than erotic as before; his wish at II, x, 3-4 -

*iam libet et fortis memorare ad proelia turmas  
et Romana mei dicere castra ducis*

- has been realised. Indeed the change in character of Propertius' patron god at IV, vi, 31 ff. could be said to be paralleled by the change in literary character undergone by the poet himself to enable him thus to have scaled the heights of eulogy reached in the poem. While the temple of Apollo Palatinus came to be seen as the votive offering from Augustus to his divine patron in thanks for his intervention at Actium, the elegy itself may be seen as Propertius' own offering to Augustus and Apollo - each of them his patron. Thus the development of Propertius' poetic talents, to the point where he no longer needs escape clauses like *quod si deficiant vires* (II, x, 5) but can still be front runner even in this new field, becomes a literary expression of the special relationship cemented at Actium between Augustus and Palatine Apollo.

So he will spend the night in vv. 71 ff. not reciting poetry on these lesser themes, but hearing it recited by these lesser poets. He no more makes the poems that he graciously listens to throughout this night than he makes the wineglass from which he drinks:

*sic noctem patera, sic ducam carmine, donec  
incipiat radios in mea vina dies.* 85-86

The very anaphora and parallel structure of v. 85 convey to me that Propertius is listening to the poetry, just as he is drinking the wine, which whiles away the night. Both these activities of this successful *vates* will fitly pass the anniversary night of his and Augustus' joint triumph arising from the victory at Actium, till the dawning of the birthday of the *pax Augusta*<sup>104</sup>.

The University of New England  
Armidale, Australia

Robert J. Baker

Virgil wrote more successfully" - Sullivan, *Arion*, 5 (1966), p. 19 (Cf. Galinsky, *art. cit.* [n. 3] p. 87; J.P.Hallet, *op. cit.* [n. 92]; Sullivan, *Propertius*, p. 144ff.). For a poet so jealous of his posthumous fame, the risk of having his deliberately "botched job" mistaken for unintentionally bad poetry would be too great.

<sup>104</sup> *exiit arma* (v. 69) has recalled already *condidit arma* at II, xvi, 42. Cf. Commager, *op. cit.* (n. 3), p. 48, n. 26: "Propertius' highest praise of Augustus is for his willingness to sheathe the sword he had drawn: 2.16.41-42".