

READINGS IN PROPERTIUS

To ANDREAS THIERFELDER on his seventieth birthday

1. 1. 29 Ferte per extremas gentes et ferte per undas
qua non ulla meum femina norit iter.

NORMALLY, if A knows B, B knows A, and 'Lake Garda knows me' is a poetic way of saying 'I know Lake Garda'. The exchange of subject and object elevates diction and sentiment, but it can also help with the metre, especially where nouns such as *gloria* and *femina* are concerned. Thus in 1. 8. 46 the poet says *ista meam norit gloria canitiem* when in strict logic he should have said *istam mea norit gloriam canities*. Similarly here what he really wants to say is *qua dum iter faciam feminam nullam norim*. He must have been aware that the relationship is reciprocal, and something like *oblitusque mearum, obliuiscendus et illis* may well have been in his mind. But his main desire was to forget and not to know anything of women any more.

In 1. 2. Propertius advises Cynthia not to use elaborate hairstyle, dress, or cosmetics but to rely on her natural beauty (1–8). Nature left to herself is more beautiful than art can make her (9–14). Phoibe and Hilaira, Marpessa and Hippodamia did not attract their lovers by the use of cosmetics. Their loveliness owed nothing to jewelry, their complexion had the freshness of Apelles' colours (15–22).

- 23 non illis studium uulgo conquerere amantes:
illis ampla satis forma pudicitia.

uulgo is wholly impossible because it does not provide the contrast required by *ampla satis forma*. What an absurd thing to say, in any case, and how tangential to the theme of the poem, that these women were not anxious to prostitute themselves! As though the poet were here openly accusing Cynthia of doing just that. The point, and the only point, of what the poet is *saying* is that they contented themselves with the beauty which their chastity lent them. The obvious correction is van Eldik's *fuo*.

- 25 non ego nunc uereor ne sim tibi uilior istis.
uni si qua placet culta puella sat est.

Any idea that the poet might be *uilior* to Cynthia, whatever *istis* may be supposed to mean—lovers, of whom we have never heard, or the things said by Propertius (!)—utterly fails to connect with what precedes and what follows. The great beauties of the past did not use cosmetics: why should Cynthia feel that she needs them? Surely you do not consider yourself inferior to them: *ne sis tibi uilior istis*, an absolutely certain correction by Wehle, and yet one which, but for my intercession with the Oxford editor, would not even have been mentioned in his apparatus.

And why should Cynthia feel inferior? Has she not attracted her lover, which is all she needs, and have not Phoebus and Venus and Minerva bestowed all their gifts on her, gifts which will make Propertius love her for ever (25–32)?

What curious turns and twists commentators such as A. W. Allen, *Crit. Essays on Roman Lit.*, ed. J. P. Sullivan (1962), 139 ff., and Brooks Otis, *H.S.C.P.* lxx (1965), 16, have given to this simple poem, which, though the idea of other lovers is not wholly absent, yet in what it *says* never strays from the theme of 'no artificial aids to beauty'.

1. 3. 13 et quamuis . . . iuberent
 hac Amor, hac Liber . . .
 subiecto leuiter positam temptare lacerto
 osculaque admota sumere et arma manu.

The zeugma assumed by many editors which subjoins both *oscula* and *arma* to *sumere* has a worthy counterpart in 'He took his hat, his leave, a pistol and his life'. The parallels adduced by H. Tränkle, *Herm.* xcvi (1968), 578, seem to me somewhat different in kind. Retention of *arma* may more impressively be defended with the observation that the commands of Amor and Liber would suggest something more drastic than kisses; but that point seems to be taken care of in the hexameter. Scaliger's *sumere tarda* is a certain correction. Shackleton Bailey finds 'a lengthy embrace' unsuitable here. But why 'lengthy'? Scaliger and Propertius meant that he should have kissed her earlier.

- 21 et modo soluebam nostra de fronte coronas
 ponebamque tuis, Cynthia, temporibus;
 et modo gaudebam lapsos formare capillos;
 nunc furtiua cauis poma dabam manibus;
 omniaque ingrato largibar munera somno,
 munera de prono saepe uoluta sinu.

The commentators who defy common sense by making Propertius offer gifts with hollow hands (could a Laevius have said *manibus date lilia cauis*?) overlook the sequence of *temporibus*, *capillos*, *manibus*: her brow, her hair, *her* hands, all there for him to play with. And why do they overlook it and defy common sense? Because in the beginning of the poem Cynthia is said to breathe in gentle slumber, *non certis nixa caput manibus*. Now if Propertius were *un visuel*, as many others and in particular J.-P. Boucher, *Études sur Properce* (Paris, 1965), 41 ff., want to make us believe, he might still remember how she was portrayed in the beginning. But since he is not at all *visuel* but entirely *verbal*, as will be shown below under 2. 12, he has by now forgotten the posture which he, or rather his Greek model, gave her (so rightly Shackleton Bailey, *C.Q.* xliii [1949], 23). He followed the epigram which Paul the Silentiary, *A.P.* 5. 275, imitated with his *ἐκχυτος ὕπνῳ κείτο περὶ κροτάφων πῆχυν ἐλιξαμένην*.

In passing a word about a recent interpretation which makes the apples roll from Propertius' *sinus*. Would the poet stagger home late at night with a *sinus* full of apples (*saepe uoluta*)? Would Cynthia sleep through a heavy bombardment of apples, to be wakened by the rays of the moon? And does not the sentimental ring of the anaphora indicate that the pentameter too describes the presents as given in vain?

1. 5. 1 Inuide, tu tandem uoces compesce molestas
 et sine nos cursu quo sumus ire pares.

This couplet was recently given a new interpretation by L. A. Moritz, *C.P.* lxiii

(1967), 106 f. He argues that Propertius and Cynthia were not 'well-matched lovers', and that *pares* if referred to them must bear that sense because of 1. 1. 32 *sitis et in tuto semper amore pares*. He concludes that *nos* here means Propertius and his friend Gallus. The premiss is hardly valid, and the conclusion impossible. *pares* in 1. 1. 32 receives the notion of 'well-matched' only from *semper* and *in tuto amore*, and in poem 5 it is precisely the course which Propertius warns his friend *not* to take which will make them weep *pariter miseri* in each other's arms (29 f.). Above all, however, poem 5, 'Leave Cynthia to me', is known to be the deliberate counterpart to 4, 'Leave me to Cynthia' (*C.P.* lviii [1963], 238), and since 4 begins with *Quid (me) . . . domina cogis abire mea*, the corresponding *sine nos . . . ire pares* of 5 must refer to Propertius and Cynthia.

The use of *pares* in the sense of *pariter* is well illustrated by Enk. Dare one add another example, which, despite its illustrious setting, has remained strangely unknown? Virg. *eccl.* 7. 5 'et cantare pares et respondere parati': a contrast is required by *et . . . et*, and 'equal in song' makes none. Which, then, is the sensible contrast to 'singing in reply to each other': 'singing in a match' (in a poem in which *respondere* constitutes the match!) or 'singing together'?

In 1. 6. 7 the Oxford text prints

illa mihi totis argutat noctibus ignis.

I do not believe there is any manuscript evidence for *ignis* as opposed to *ignes*, but even if the paradox were *ignis* it would have to be changed. Ten years ago I pointed out, *B.I.C.S.* xi (1964), 73 ff. that in some lines of Horace's Odes the avoidance of 'unrelated rhyme' enabled us to decide whether to write *-es* or *-is*. Since then K. Zelzer, *W.St.* lxxix (1966), 465 ff., has examined the rhyme behaviour of the elegists and has shown that especially in the Monobiblos unrelated rhyme is very rare. His list (p. 471) requires some adjustments (e.g. 1. 1. 29 *ferre per extremas gentis et ferre per undas* does not show unrelated but attributive rhyme, since the adjective goes with both *gentis* and *undas*), but there can be no doubt that such rhyme is avoided, and that Propertius would have avoided it here by writing *ignes*.

1. 6. 26 hanc animam extremae reddere nequitiae.

The dative is defended by Camps, following Shackleton Bailey, with the parallel of Val. Max. 3. 5. 3 'foedae ac sordidae intemperantiae spiritum reddidit'. But I am not sure that the sense of the poet is not somewhat distorted by the parallel. Valerius' statement about young Clodius begins: *auide enim abdomine deuorato*, i.e. his *intemperantia* was the cause of his death. Propertius need not, and probably does not, mean it so at all. It is perhaps more to the point to remember that he has a way of concentrating and thus intensifying a phrase by subordinating to the verb what might have been expressed more prosaically by an ablative of attending circumstance. Thus in 1. 3. 7 he has *mollem spirare quietem* for 'to breath in gentle slumber'; similarly in 1. 12. 15 *praesenti flere puellae* for *flere puella praesente*, and thus *flere* often with the dative. Therefore probably not 'bring myself through profligacy to an early death' (Camps), but 'let me die in utter *ignavia*'. *nequitia* is a metrical substitute for *ignavia* and was chosen, in preference to *desidia*, because, compared to his friend's vigorous virtue, *ignavia* appears as wickedness.

Another metrical substitute:

6. 32 Lydia Pactoli tingit arata liquor.

'*arata*: a term used for ploughland in technical prose. Here it may stand, by an extension of meaning, for land in general; or the poet may really have in mind the picture of a river flowing between cultivated fields' (Camps). Hardly the latter, and why the technical term? If his verb had been *tinxerit* Propertius would have said *arua*. As it was *tingit*, he reached for a word not too far away which had the required metrical shape.

6. 31 ff. at tu seu mollis qua tendit Ionia, seu qua
 Lydia Pactoli tingit arata liquor,
 seu pedibus terras seu pontum carpere remis
 ibis et accepti pars eris imperii:
 tum tibi si qua mei ueniet non immemor hora,
 uiuere me duro sidere certus eris.

To the arguments supporting the substitution of *remige carpes* for *carpere remis* (*Mnem.* v [1952], 232), which restores the disjointed sentence (how otherwise does *et . . . eris* fit in?) and lends to *ibis* the emphasis which its position suggests and which its contrast to Propertius' *iacere* (25) requires, I would add that the penultimate pentameter thus forms the climax of the poem, precisely as it does in poem 7.

1. 7. 1 ff. Dum tibi Cadmeae dicuntur, Pontice, Thebae
 armaque fraternae tristia militiae,
 atque—ita sim felix—primo contendis Homero
 —sint modo fata tuis mollia carminibus—

On *ita sim felix* Camps rightly remarks that it may have an affectionately ironical tone. Banteringly the phrase is used also in Augustus' letter to Tiberius cited in the commentaries, Suet. *Vit. Tib.* 21: 'iucundissime et—ita sim felix—uir fortissime et dux νομύωτατε, uale.' Here, however, the banter is barbed because, although taken at its surface value it is meant to flatter Ponticus as *alter Homerus*, *primo contendis Homero* clearly echoes the sentiment of Theocr. 7. 47 f. ὅσοι ποτὶ Χίον ἀοιδὸν ἀντία κοκκύζοντες ἐρώσια μοχλίζονται. Since, then, it is a question of the poetic genre adopted by Ponticus, rather than of the individual subject, I see no need to assume that Propertius thought of the early *Thebaid* as a work of Homer. Ponticus' poems, as epic poetry, are *fortia*, not *mollia* as Propertius' elegies: is this the reason why Propertius speaks of *mollia fata* for them? *Sint modo carminibus fata benigna tuis* would be more normal diction, although *durum* is a common attribute of fate.

15 f. te quoque si certo puer hic concusserit arcu
 —quod nolim, nostros euiolasse deos—

I regret that Mr. Camps here resorts to an emendation—heu, uoluisse deos—which seems ruled out by Ovid, *her.* 19. 99, a passage cited by Rothstein and disregarded by Shackleton Bailey: 'nihil est uiolentius illa [Artemide] cum sua—quod nolim—numina laesa uidet'. Ovid's *numina laesa* makes it impossible to remove *uiolasse*: 'a thing which I would not wish to happen: that you had given

offence to the gods I serve'. I do not see that ambiguity as to whether *te* is subject or object can be held against the old correction *te uiolasse*.

1. 7. 21 ff. tum me non humilem mirabere saepe poetam,
tunc ego Romanis praeferar ingenii;
nec poterunt iuuenes nostro reticere sepulcro:
'Ardoris nostri magne poeta iaces'.

To begin with a detail: most editions print a comma before *iaces*. They are wrong, because *iaces* alone, without predication by either a nominative or *hic*, makes no sense here. Rothstein correctly explains that the predication is to be found in *magne poeta*, which shows the familiar attraction, metrically so convenient, of the nominative into the vocative. Enk omits the comma and compares Ovid, *am.* 2. 6. 20 'infelix, auium gloria, nempe iaces', but would probably have said a word about the attraction if he had considered it to be present here. Perhaps he took *iaces* in Ovid to be unpredicated, but even if this should be correct it is no parallel to Propertius. In Ovid 'you are dead' following upon *quid iuuat . . . nostrae placuisse puellae?* is a satisfactory statement; in Propertius it would be inept.

The transition from Ponticus' opinion of Propertius to the tribute accorded to him by the youth of Rome has seemed harsh, and transpositions have been attempted. Those of Housman (23-4 after 10) and Baehrens (23-6 after 14) are well refuted by E. Courtney (*Phoenix* xxii [1968], 250), but his own attempt to place 23-4 before 3. 1. 35 is misguided. Not only does the distich in the place now assigned to it disrupt the obvious connection between *posteritate* (34) and *nepotes* (35) but its removal from 1. 7 seems to me to tear the heart out of that poem. 'The main prophecy of vii is not Ponticus' misery but Propertius' future greatness', I wrote in *C.P.* lviii (1963), 239, and indeed, whereas the superiority of his own poetry over the sort of epic written by Ponticus, and the fame which will come to him after death are serious topics to Propertius, the suggestion that Ponticus will be let down by the seven armies of Thebes when he falls in love is mere humorous embroidery. The admiration which Ponticus will then feel for him (21-2) makes the transition from the playful to the serious tone. The claim *erweitert sich* (Rothstein) from 'then you will admire me' to 'and after my death all the youth of Rome will say that I was a great poet, who gave expression to what they feel'. This powerful claim, the climax of the poem, is followed by another distich which sums up the poem as a whole. In the same way, as suggested above, p. 319, in poem 6 the powerful predication of his friend's valour and glory to come is followed by a final distich dwelling on the poet's own wretchedness, restating in the contrast the essence of the poem. For a somewhat different defence of 23-4 in the transmitted position see F. Solmsen, *A.J.Ph.* lxxxvi (1965), 77, who also refers to some earlier work.

But Mr. Courtney believes that he is proved right by the absolute numerical equality of the B panels resulting from his removal of 23-4. When I pointed out (*loc. cit.*) the panelled structure of the book and showed that panel A¹ (1-5) was equal in length to panel A² (15-19), and panel B¹ (6-9) equal to panel B² (10-14), I was content to let B¹ have one distich more (71) than B² (70) and accepted Housman's insertion of one distich in poem 1, which gave to panel A¹ one distich more (89) than panel A² (88). Brooks Otis, *H.S.C.P.* lxx (1965), 7, accepted my figures for the B panels but rejected Housman's insertion and

thus made the A panels absolutely equal. Mr. Courtney, refusing to accept Housman and deleting 7. 23-4, achieves absolute equality in both A and B panels. This to modern thinking is an advantage and might appear so particularly if in Book 4 Propertius had made the two panels consisting of poems 2-5 and 7-10 exactly equal in length, giving each 153 couplets (that the panels are equal in length was first pointed out by A. Woolley in *B.I.C.S.* xiv [1967], 82 n. 1). But a strong body of opinion (see C. Becker, *Herm.* xcix [1971], 471) now favours retention of 5. 55-6, which gives the first panel one distich more than the second. It must also be borne in mind that the most famous single book of the Augustan age, though it aims at symmetry, does not show absolute equality of its parts: the groups of four eclogues surrounding the central poem, 5, have 330 and 331 lines, and whereas of the four rings laid around the core the two consisting of eclogues 2 and 8 and 3 and 7 have 181 lines each, the outermost ring, 1 and 9, has 150 lines as against 149 of the innermost ring, 4 and 6. In the circumstances the slight inequalities in the *Monobiblos*, to which I referred as a parallel when discussing symmetry in the *Eclogues*, *H.S.C.P.* lxxiv (1970), 168 f., seem not only acceptable but in no way inferior and perhaps even preferable to absolute equality.

1. 12. 1 ff. Quid mihi desidia non cessas fingere crimen
quod faciat nobis conscia Roma moram?
tam multa illa meo diuisa est milia lecto
quantum Hypanis Veneto dissidet Eridano.

Cynthia's visit to Baiae has made her discard Propertius, and the fear of poem 11 is confirmed, just as the fear expressed in 8^A was shown in 8^B to have been groundless. The subject is introduced by a distich attributing to a person unnamed the suspicion that it is his affair with Cynthia which keeps the poet at Rome. That Rome should be called *conscia* in this context seems utterly pointless. The conjectures attempted are too numerous to be reviewed, but from W. R. Smyth's excellent *Thesaurus Criticus* it would appear that the easiest correction imaginable remains to be proposed:

quod faciat nobis, conscie, Roma moram.

conscie next to *Roma* was almost bound to become *conscia*. A friend, real or imaginary, would here be addressed as *conscie*, just as in 5. 1 another friend is addressed as *inuide*. That in poem 5 the *inuide* in the end (31) is identified as Gallus, whereas here the *conscius* remains unnamed is in order. 8^B and 12, answering poems 8^A and 11 which are addressed to Cynthia, both with good reason remain without a definite addressee.

A serious difficulty, however, and one which may account for the fact that this proposal was never put forward, is still to be mentioned. We may infer from Gellius 14. 5 that Roman authors could not decide what was the correct vocative of adjectives ending in *-ius*, and that they therefore avoided these forms. The vocative of *pius* appears first in the name of Antoninus Pius (*J.R.S.* liii [1963], 245), *impie* is not attested before Commodianus (once), Ausonius (twice), and Prudentius (once), and *inscie* not before Corippus. If *conscie* were transmitted here, we should probably defend it with the observation that 'einmalige, in der ganzen lateinischen Literatur nicht mehr belegte Formen bei Properz nicht ungewöhnlich (sind)' (H. Tränkle, *Die Sprachkunst des*

Properz, *Hermes Einzelschrift* xv [1960], 62). Can the same point be urged in defence of a conjecture which of all those proposed is the most economical?

1. 12. 9 inuidiae fuimus. non me deus obruit? an quae
lecta Prometheis diuidit herba iugis?

non (plerique) must be replaced by *num* (F4 V in ras.). Butler and Barber maintain that *non(ne)* can be followed by *an* and quote Cic. *Sest.* 47 'nonne ad seruos uidetis rem uenturam fuisse? an mihi ipsi . . . fuit mors . . . oppetenda?' The parallel is hardly to the point: in Propertius we have a true alternative, in Cicero the expectation of the answer 'yes' is confirmed by a rhetorical question to which the answer is 'no'. Enk proposes to take *quae* as an indefinite pronoun, rather than as a relative, and remarks 'eadem uersus clausula Catalept. 11. 1 *Quis deus, Octaui, te nobis abstulit? an quae.*' The remaining part of that distich, *dicunt—ah—nimio pocula ducta mero*, renders his suggestion very improbable.

- 15–16 felix qui potuit praesenti flere puellae:
non nihil aspersis gaudet Amor lacrimis.

Shackleton Bailey's suggestion that Amor rejoices in tears as other gods in sacrificial blood assumes that *lacrimis* is emphatic, which in this position it is not likely to be: the emphasized notion is *aspersis*. All other commentators think of tears shed upon Amor, thus breaking the connection between *praesenti* in 15 and *aspersis* in 16. What Propertius means is that Amor rejoices when a lover's tears fall upon his mistress (and presumably hers on him). As so often in Propertius the pentameter comments upon and explains the hexameter. This couplet and the next one must be printed as follows:

- felix qui potuit praesenti flere puellae:
non nihil aspersis gaudet Amor lacrimis;
aut si despectus potuit mutare calores:
sunt quoque translato gaudia seruitio.

Each couplet, the second much improved by Heinsius's *qui*, propounds a possibility of happiness: both are denied to Propertius.

1. 21. 5 sic te seruato ut possint gaudere parentes.

Since knowledge of metre and prosody seems to be on the way out even among interpreters of Latin poetry it should perhaps be pointed out that the metrical argument put forward by W. R. Nethercut, *C.P.* lxiii (1968), 141 f., against taking *seruato* as an imperative is mistaken. He assures us that the final *o* of the imperative is seldom elided, forgetting that elision of the ablatival *-o* is proportionately rarer still.

I promised above to show that Propertius is not *un visuel*, and I must therefore go beyond the *Monobiblos*, to which the body of these notes is restricted.

2. 12. 1 ff. Quicumque ille fuit puerum qui pinxit amorem,
nonne putas miras hunc habuisse manus?
is primum uidit sine sensu uiuere amantes
et leuibis curis magna perire bona.

idem non frustra uentosas addidit alas
fecit et humano corde uolare deum:
scilicet alterna quoniam iactamur in unda
nostraque non ullis permanet aura locis.

Humano corde in 6 has caused much perplexity. How can a painting show Amor flying in or into the human heart? Emendation has been attempted but is clearly wrong. Comparison with the Cornutus parallel discovered by A. D. Nock, *C.R.* xliii (1929), 126, reveals beyond a shadow of doubt what has happened. Cornutus, *Theol. Gr. Comm.*, ch. 25, apparently following Apollodorus' *περὶ θεῶν*, says that Amor *παῖς μὲν ἐστὶ διὰ τὸ ἀτελεῖ τὴν γνώμην καὶ εὐεξαπάτητον ἔχειν τοὺς ἐρῶντας*: this is echoed in Propertius' first stanza. *πτερωτός* δέ, Cornutus continues, *ὅτι κουφόνουσ ποιεῖ, ἥ ὅτι ὡς ὄρνις αἰεὶ προσίπταται ταῖς διανοίαις ἀθρώως*. Propertius' scheme being that in each stanza a couplet of description is followed by a couplet of explanation, he needed more than *πτερωτός* to fill the first distich of the second stanza; and so he took one of Cornutus' *explanations* of *πτερωτός* and made it part of the *description*. The pictorial impossibility of a large heart and a little Amor flying in or into it does not impinge upon this *visuel* at all. Having now anticipated the first of Cornutus' alternative explanations (*κουφόνουσ*) in the first stanza (*leuibus curis*) and the second one in the descriptive part of the second stanza Propertius is compelled to invent or take from a source other than that of Cornutus a new explanation, and it must be admitted that the wings of Amor causing (or only symbolizing) shifting winds and waves are somewhat incongruous, especially as he has just used them to fly in (or into) the human heart.

Shackleton Bailey (p. 86), in discussing the difficulties of 9 *'et pharetra ex umero Cnosia utroque iacet'*, rightly suspects 'that Propertius is relying on some literary matter for his details rather than describing a picture actually before his eye or mind', and that *umero . . . utroque* is an incorrect rendering of a poetical plural. Taken together these two passages, and the inconsistency of 1. 3. 8 and 24 (above, p. 317), clearly demonstrate that Propertius' inspiration is verbal rather than visual, and the burden of proof rests firmly on those who refuse to accept this view. It is obviously true that Propertius here or there describes something which he has seen, for instance the temple of Apollo in 2. 31. But if I am not mistaken his description of what he has seen is poor. The discovery of the *Tabula Hebana* (H. Last, *J.R.S.* xliii [1953], 27 ff., strangely overlooked by Enk) was needed to make us understand, more or less, what he means.

University College London

OTTO SKUTSCH