THE VERTUMNUS ELEGY OF PROPERTIUS

THOMAS A. SUITS

University of Connecticut

Three words spoken by the god Vertumnus toward the end of Propertius 4.2 have given rise to some remarkable hypotheses.[1] Robinson Ellis could understand "sex superant versus" (57) only as an indication that some numerical system underlay the structure of the poem: "Cur sex definiverit, non video nisi propter constitutum aliquem versuum numerum quo tamquam meta quadam carminis ordo ac cursus regeretur."[2] Going farther, O. L. Richmond found the clause "the strongest piece of internal evidence" for the view that Propertius composed all of his poems according to numerical schemes; he comments on 57–58: "The understanding reader will know at this point that the scheme is incomplete without a group of eight verses to balance vv. 1–8 of the true text. These are two of them, *and six remain.*"[3] Apart from the fact that to obtain the "true text" Richmond characteristically transposes 49–56 to precede 5, the weakness of this interpretation is apparent. If, at the beginning of 57, the poet had wished to pad his elegy with an announcement of the number of lines remaining, we should have expected him to say that eight, not six were left.[4]

Somewhat more recently Pierre Grimal too was struck by what he terms "les vers mystérieux." In addition to giving an elaborate

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[1] Some of the views expressed in this paper formed part of my dissertation, "Studies in Structure of the Propertian Elegy, Books I–III," presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Yale University in 1958.

[2] R. Ellis, *Catulli Veronensis liber*[2] (Oxford 1878) 250–51.

[3] O. L. Richmond, "Towards a Reconstruction of the Text of Propertius," *CQ* 12 (1918) 73. Cf. Richmond, *Sexti Properti opera quae supersunt* (Cambridge 1928) 7.

[4] The truth of this was sensed by L. Herrmann, *L'âge d'argent doré* (Paris 1951) 165, who saw in "sex superant versus" an indication that 59–60 were out of place where the manuscripts give them and proposed that they be placed after 2 or 46. Again the remedy resorted to is transposition.

numerical analysis of the poem's structure, he is lured into the realm of Pythagorean numerological symbolism: observing that the total number of lines in the poem—sixty-four—is at once a square and a cube, he finds in it the marriage of dyad and triad, of even and odd, of feminine and masculine, whereby "Vertumne ... se trouve élevé à la dignité de principe cosmique: le principe même du changement." The entire procedure is justified by an appeal to lines 57–58: "A cette analyse numérique, le poète nous convie lui-même lorsqu'il écrit, à la fin de son élégie: 'il ne me reste que six vers ... , telle est la limite imposée à ma course dans la carrière.' Par conséquent, le *nombre* des vers revêt ici une importance particulière."[5]

Some voices of caution have been raised. Shackleton Bailey implies strong skepticism as to the structural significance of 57 when he supplies examples of similar numerical statements in other poets "which assuredly signify nothing of the sort."[6] The passages he adduces, however, are not entirely satisfying as parallels, since they lack any expression corresponding to *superant*, which is understood by Richmond and Grimal to mean "remain in order to make the structure of the poem complete." We might with equal profit cite Propertius' own "et duo sint versus" (2.13.35).

Laura Celentano frankly discounts the importance of the specific number. Rejecting Grimal's interpretation, she writes of 57–58: "Per me, quei versi sono solo una formula di passaggio, un modo di dire (corrispondente alle nostre espressioni: 'in quattro parole,' 'ancora due parole e ho finito,' ecc.), in cui il numero '6' entra forse solo per ragioni metriche (la struttura a distichi richiedeva un numerale pari e tra i numerali pari solo 'sex' è monosillabico)."[7] But while

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[5] P. Grimal, "Notes sur Properce I: La composition de l'élégie à Vertumne," *REL* 23 (1945) 110–19. The interpretation is cited with approval by L. Alfonsi, "Note properziane," *Humanitas* 2 (1948–49) 184. Grimal's structural scheme is $(6+6+6) + (7 \times 2) + (7 \times 2) + (6+6+6)$. In his discussion of it he makes several attractive points, but the pattern appears somewhat forced. Thus, in the series of etymologies each statement of the derivation of the name Vertumnus belongs naturally with the examples or explanation to which it relates: 9–10 with 7–8, 11–12 with 13–18, and 47–48 with 19–46. Grimal, however, divides after 12 and 46. (At 47 *at* does not indicate a strong break any more than it does at 61 or at 9, where, just as at 47, it joins the statement of derivation to the explanation or examples.)

[6] D. R. Shackleton Bailey, *Propertiana* (Cambridge 1956) 229.

[7] L. Celentano, "Significato e valore del IV libro di Properzio," *AFLN* 6 (1956) 66.

this view contains much good sense, it is too strongly stated. The figure six is not altogether meaningless. It does in fact correspond to the number of verses following the distich in question.

It is my view that, while certain of Propertius' elegies exhibit quantitative balance or symmetry,[8] the piece under consideration is not one of these, and that the words "sex superant versus" offer no special clue to its structure. Instead, for the explanation of these words we must turn to one of the principal literary forms which influenced the poem.

At first sight, the dramatic form of 4.2, in which the statue of the god is made to speak and, in particular, to address the passer-by, is apt to recall a common situation in the short poems concerned with the god Priapus. It is, in fact, very likely that what suggested the basic plan of this piece to Propertius were the inherent similarities between Priapus and Vertumnus. Both were minor deities belonging, according to Fulgentius, to the ambiguous category of *semones*.[9] Figuring prominently in the cult of both gods was the dedication to them of various fruits, vegetables, and flowers in all seasons of the year.[10] In the case of Priapus this aspect is reflected in many of the *priapea*, the first three pieces of the *Catalepton* all providing good examples. In the case of Vertumnus it is so important that Propertius deals with it extensively in two separate passages of his poem, relating it to two different etymologies of the god's name. On the one hand (11–18), he gives the explanation that Vertumnus is so called because the first fruits of the turning year (*vertentis . . . anni*, 11) are offered to him. But this etymology is vigorously rejected by the god (19–20):

> mendax fama noces: alius mihi nominis index.
> de se narranti tu modo crede deo.

He proceeds to disclose that the true explanation is his ability to assume countless guises (*vertebar . . . omnis*, 47): woman as well as man (this

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[8] Cf. T. A. Suits, "Mythology, Address, and Structure in Propertius 2.8," *TAPA* 96 (1965) 437.

[9] Fulg. *Serm. ant.* 11: "semones dici voluerunt deos quos nec caelo dignos ascriberent ob meriti paupertatem, sicut sunt Priapus Epona Vertumnus, nec terrenos eos deputare vellent pro gratiae veneratione."

[10] The similarity is pointed out by G. Wissowa in Roscher, *Lex.* 6 (repr. Hildesheim 1965) 220 (s.v. "Vertumnus").

is made much of by Grimal), haymaker, soldier, harvester, pleader, etc. (21–40).   The end of the long series is introduced climactically (41–42):

> nam quid ego adiciam, de quo mihi maxima fama est,
> hortorum in manibus dona probata meis?

There follows another list of first fruits in 43–46.   In other words, Vertumnus rather whimsically interprets the cult practice to prove that he is a master gardener in addition to his other accomplishments.[11] (Priapus too is constantly associated with gardens, generally in a custodial capacity.)   Further incidental references to the decoration of Vertumnus' statue with rustic offerings may be seen in "torto frontem mihi comprime faeno" (25), "possum . . . sirpiculis . . . ferre rosam" (39–40),[12] and "non datur unus honos" (64).[13]

Some of the apparent similarities between Priapus and the Vertumnus of our poem may actually be the result of Propertius' having taken suggestions from the *priapea*.   Thus, Priapus is regularly represented as being carved crudely of wood, with the specific wood often named.[14] Likewise, Propertius describes a primitive stage of the Vertumnus statue before it was cast in bronze (59):

> stipes acernus eram, properanti falce dolatus.[15]

So too the sickle (*falx*), which is a common attribute of Priapus,[16] appears as part of Vertumnus' equipment in 25.

While the basic dramatic treatment in the poem, then, and a few of its details as well probably owe something to the literature concerned

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[11] The functions of the two passages 11–18 and 41–46 are thus entirely different, and there is no need to resort to transposition in an effort to unite them.   (Lines 41–46 are placed after 18 by Schrader, after 12 by Luetjohann.)

[12] This apparently provides the transition to 41–46.

[13] See below, note 29.

[14] E.g. Verg. *Cat.* 2.1–2 (poplar), 3.3 (oak), Hor. *Serm.* 1.8.1 (fig), *Priap.* 10.4, 63.9–12. Mart. 6.73.1 ("non rudis indocta fecit me falce colonus") clearly marks itself as exceptional.

[15] Wissowa (above, note 10) 219, calls the story of an original wooden statue "freie Erfindung."   Perhaps he is too skeptical; cf. Pliny, *N.H.* 34.34: "mirumque mihi videtur, cum statuarum origo tam vetus Italiae sit, lignea potius aut fictilia deorum simulacra in delubris dicata usque ad devictam Asiam, unde luxuria."

[16] E.g. Tib. 1.4.8, *Priap.* 6.2, 11.2, 30.1, 33.6, 55.1.

with Priapus,[17] the scope for imitation here was necessarily limited; ithyphallic jests, which figure so importantly in Priapic poems, would scarcely be appropriate to Vertumnus. But with the address to the passer-by thus suggested, the way was pointed to another, richer source of influence: the sepulchral inscription and its outgrowth, the literary epigram.[18]   Here too, in an extremely common situation, the deceased is imagined to address the wayfarer (παροδίτης, ξένος; viator, hospes).[19] Typical is an epitaph of the Caesarian age which begins (Carm. Epigr. 960.1-4):

> Tu qui secura spatiarus mente, viator,
>   et nostri voltus derigis inferieis,
> si quaeris quae sim, cinis en et tosta favilla,
>   ante obitus tristeis Helvia Prima fui.

The formulaic nature of the opening is shown by Carm. Epigr. 995.1-2:

> Tu qui secura procedis mente, parumper
>   siste gradum quaeso verbaque pauca lege.

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[17] V. Buchheit, in Studien zum Corpus Priapeorum (Munich 1962) [= Zetemata 28], argues persuasively that the priapea of the principal Latin corpus, except for the two attributed to Tibullus and the three from the Catalepton (Priap. 82–86), comprise a liber by a single author, written shortly after Martial. He warns, moreover (p. 69), against forming an exaggerated idea of the number of priapea in existence before this. Nonetheless, it is clear from demonstrably early examples that the chief features of such poetry, as they concern our discussion, had been established by the time of Propertius. For Priapus as speaker addressing the passer-by, cf. A. P. 10.1 (Leonidas of Tarentum), Verg. Cat. 2 and 3. (Other examples have Priapus as addressee, and Tibullus unites the two forms in the dialogue of 1.4.)   For dedications of various fruits and flowers to Priapus, cf. (in addition to Verg. Cat. 1–3, mentioned above) A. P. 6.232 (Crinagoras). For the crude wood carving, see above, note 14; for the falx, above, note 16.   Finally, it should be observed that if Buchheit's dating of the Corpus Priapeorum is correct, the parallel to Propertius 4.2.43 in Priap. 51.17–18 (cucurbitas . . . cucumeres) provides perhaps an instance of influence in the reverse direction—of the Vertumnus elegy upon Priapus literature.

[18] That Propertius developed motifs from sepulchral epigrams in other elegies is shown by A. La Penna, "Movimento e ritmo epigrammatico nelle elegie di Properzio," Maia 3 (1950) 9–15, and R. Helm, "Properz I.21," RhM 95 (1952) 272–83.

[19] R. Lattimore, Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs (Urbana 1962) [originally Vol. 28, Nos. 1–2 of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature] 230–37, gives a brief survey and useful representative examples.

Very much the same effect is produced by the introductory lines of our poem (1–4):

> Qui mirare meas tot in uno corpore formas,
> 　accipe Vertumni signa paterna dei.
> Tuscus ego: Tuscis orior, nec paenitet inter
> 　proelia Volsinios deseruisse focos.

As in the second example above, a second-person relative clause is followed by an imperative. The pattern (with an imperative or jussive) is a common one and is found at the beginning of at least a dozen other verse inscriptions.[20]

A very important theme in the sepulchral inscriptions is the providing of certain biographical information regarding the deceased.[21] Name, father, and country are the details that form the barest skeleton of such a life-story, as announced in a fourth-century Attic inscription (*Epigr. Gr.* 52.1–2):

> Οὔνομ]α μὲν τοὐμὸν καὶ ἐμοῦ πατρὸς ἥδ' ἀγορεύ[ει
> στήλη] καὶ πάτραν.

The convention had a long history and is represented in the Augustan period by the following epitaph (*Carm. Epigr.* 1013):

> Si grave non, hosp[es, fuerit,] remorare viator:
> 　sic tibi sit [fel]ix quod properatur iter.
> hic situs Eudaemo Scribonius.　unde requiris
> 　forsam: [B]utroti sacra domus patria.

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[20] Cf. *Carm. Epigr.* 371, 434, 457, 465B, 513, 1037, 1055, 1083, 1084, 1110, 1111, 1178B, 1198. The first word of Propertius 4.2 is given as *quid* by all the principal manuscripts and is so printed by some editors. More follow the *deteriores* in correcting to *qui*, "quod sententiam multo concinniorem praebet" (P. J. Enk, *Ad Propertii carmina commentarius criticus* [Zutphen 1911] 300). The present discussion lends additional support to *qui*. Indeed, some form of *qui* occurs so frequently in the opening line of sepulchral epigrams that one might speak of an "epitaphic relative." There are several variations: *qui* (e.g. *Carm. Epigr.* 986, 1110, 1198); *tu qui* (960, 995, 1083, 1084; cf. Prop. 1.21.1); *quicumque* (1037, 1055, 1056); *tu quicumque* (457, 465B, 1111, 1178B). In Prop. 4.2.1, *quid mirare* might have come into the archetype by reminiscence of *quid mirare* in 3.11.1, which also begins its line. So at 3.9.44 all manuscripts have *dure poeta* (restored conjecturally to *Coe poeta*), perhaps by reminiscence of *dure poeta* in 2.34.44 at the same place in the line.

[21] See Lattimore (above, note 19) 266–74.

(Instead of the father's name, we find here in the case of a freedman the gentilician name inherited from the former owner of the deceased.) [22] Propertius was thoroughly familiar with the motif and used it in the epigram which concludes his first book and which is itself strongly reminiscent of funerary inscriptions (1.22.1–2, 9–10):

> Qualis et unde genus, qui sint mihi, Tulle, Penates,
>   quaeris pro nostra semper amicitia. . . .
> proxima supposito contingens Vmbria campo
>   me genuit terris fertilis uberibus. [23]

So in the Vertumnus elegy, the god gives his name, promises *signa paterna*, and proceeds to state that he is an Etruscan, was born of Etruscans, and came originally from Volsinii; like the freedman Eudaemo, Vertumnus is vague concerning his actual parentage. The phrase *signa paterna* has generally been found difficult and has prompted several emendations, but in this context it must be the approximate equivalent of "indicia patris vel patriae." The immediate reference is to the biographical details of 3–4. [24]

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[22] For the "*pater*" of a freedman, cf. the jesting account in Hor. *Serm.* 1.5.53–56:

> Musa velim memores . . . quo patre natus uterque
> contulerit lites.   Messi clarum genus Osci;
> Sarmenti domina exstat: ab his maioribus orti
> ad pugnam venere.

[23] Cf. Vergil's epitaph (Suet. *Verg.* 36): "Mantua me genuit"; *Carm. Epigr.* 1175.1: "Gallia me genuit"; 1111.5: "Roma mihi patria est."

[24] M. Rothstein, *Die Elegien des Sextus Propertius*[2], Vol. 2 (Berlin 1924) 219, refers the expression *signa paterna* to the statue itself, pointing out that it was popularly known as the "signum Vertumni," but the awkward poetic plural, the weakened sense of *paterna*, and the forced construction given to *accipe* all combine to rule out this explanation. What I consider to be essentially the correct interpretation was proposed by F. A. Paley, *Sex. Aurelii Propertii Carmina*[2] (London 1872) 225: "the proofs of the parentage or paternity, *i.e.* of the native land of the god Vertumnus." J. P. Postgate, *Select Elegies of Propertius* (London 1884) 197–98, in following the main lines of Paley's explanation, properly stresses the ambiguity of *paterna*, which may mean "of one's country" as well as "of one's father," as shown by Hor. *C.* 1.20.5 and Ov. *H.* 13.100. Instructive for the present discussion are Plaut. *Men.* 1107–10: "Est tibi *nomen* Menaechmo? . . . *Patrem* fuisse Moschum tibi ais? . . . Esne tu *Syracusanus*? . . . Optime usque adhuc conveniunt *signa*"; and *Carm. Epigr.* 420.6–7:

> qu]atinus hoc volgo persuasum credimus, hospes,
> in]*dicia* ut *vitae* titulo conscripta relinquat.

Housman, who proposed emending to *regna paterna*, has had recent emulators. Shackleton Bailey (above, note 6) 227, finding *paterna* an "obscure and pointless epithet"

In the following distich (5–6) there is an allusion to the statue's location near the point where the Vicus Tuscus met the Forum Romanum:

> haec me *turba* iuvat, nec templo laetor eburno:
> *Romanum* satis est posse videre Forum;

and this in turn provides the transition to the first of the etymologies: "The Tiber once ran here, and I am said to have got the name Vertumnus from the turning of the river" (*verso . . . amne*, 10). There follow the etymologies, already mentioned, which link the name with the turning year and with the god's changing appearance,[25] as well as a subsidiary αἴτιον (49–54) explaining how the Vicus Tuscus received its name. In this long discussion Vertumnus has gone far beyond the limits of what would normally be inscribed on a grave stele. Also, although there are instances of direct address to a second person, these are very general in nature, and the concept of the *viator* seems largely forgotten. But with the topographical reference in the mention of the Vicus Tuscus, the poet recalls to the reader the opening situation and prepares to return to the original fiction. A single distich (55–56), alluding again to the statue's location, marks the structural break by echoing the wording of 5–6:

> sed facias, divum Sator, ut *Romana* per aevum
> transeat ante meos *turba* togata pedes.[26]

and expecting in the opening distich an introduction to the whole poem, tentatively suggests: "accipe Vertumni signa, fatente deo." F. H. Sandbach, "Some Problems in Propertius," *CQ* 12 (1962) 272–73, retains *quid* in 1 by emending 2 to read "accipe Vertumni signa patere dei," which he explains: "Understand that those varying shapes are plain pointers to the fact that I am the god Vertumnus," and defends as providing an introduction to the main theme and responding well to *quid mirare*: "Why are you surprised? The answer is looking you in the face." But such ingenuity is unnecessary. For the relevance of *signa paterna* to the whole poem, see below, p. 486.

[25] The etymologies occupy 4, 8, and 30 lines respectively, and thus the pattern is in accord with a principle observed by Propertius in his use of mythical examples in series: the number of lines devoted to each example may remain constant, it may decrease, or it may increase; but it may not both decrease and increase. (See H. Renz, *Mythologische Beispiele in Ovids erotischer Elegie* [Würzburg 1935] 66–68.) This makes improbable the two-line lacuna after 10 postulated by Barber, in which he supposes Vertumnus to have mentioned the etymology *ex mercibus vertendis*. However, it would not preclude, for instance, a four-line lacuna.

[26] Cf. the desire that the tomb may never be deserted, but remain forever in safe hands (*Carm. Epigr.* 371.7–8):

> ne deserta vacent ignotis devia busta,
> sed tuta aeterno maneant, si dicere fas est.

There is an explicit address to the passer-by in 57, and in these four concluding distichs lapidary themes, language, and style again predominate: in 59, the words "stipes acernus eram" resume the capsule biography which was interrupted after 4;[27] in "tellus artifices ne terat Osca manus" (62) we see an adroit literary variation of "sit tibi terra levis";[28] and the last line, "unum opus est, operi non datur unus honos" (64), is a jingle with epigrammatic point.[29]   Nowhere, however, is the spirit of the funerary epigram more apparent than in 57–58:

> sex superant versus: te qui ad vadimonia curris
>   non moror: haec spatiis ultima creta meis.

One of the most persistent motifs in the epitaphs is the plea that the hastening wayfarer stop and read the inscription through to its end, coupled with a promise to be brief and to cause no long delay.   Typical examples are Carm. Epigr. 52.1, 513.2, 1142.3:

> hospes, quod deico paullum est, asta ac pellege.

> cur tantum proper(as)? non est mora dum leg(is), audi.

> accipiat paucis, ne sit mora longior aequo.

The theme is found also in literary treatments of epitaphic situations, as in Prop. 4.7.83–84:

> hic carmen media dignum me scribe columna,
>   sed breve, quod currens vector ab urbe legat,

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[27] There is perhaps a debt here to the type of dedicatory epigram in which the dedicated object gives a brief account of its history; see E. Fraenkel, Horace (Oxford 1957) 121–22, on Hor. Serm. 1.8.1: "Olim truncus eram ficulnus" (spoken by Priapus).

[28] For a survey of the formula's history, see Lattimore (above, note 19) 65–74.

[29] It is not clear precisely what the point is.   Ostensibly, "non unus honos" refers to the multiple offerings of first fruits: for honores in the sense of rustic bounty, cf. Hor. C. 1.17.16, Serm. 2.5.13, and (with specific application to offerings) Verg. Cat. 3.17. But "unum opus est" remains somewhat flat.   G. Dumézil, "Propertiana," Latomus 10 (1951) 289–93, discusses the implications of the reference to Mamurrius and suggests that there is in the last line a subtle allusion to his myth: in the case of the sacred ancile, Mamurrius had made many copies having a single appearance, to which a single honor was shown; Vertumnus, on the contrary, is singular, but his forms are many, and the honors paid him many and varied.   The explanation is ingenious and may well be right.

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and (with a different request) in Hor. *C.* 1.28.35–36:

> quamquam festinas, non est mora longa, licebit
> iniecto ter pulvere curras.[30]

The words "sex superant versus," then, are actually no more than part of an epigrammatic promise to be brief, much as in *Carm. Epigr.* 1005.1:

> hospes ades, *paucis* et perlege *versibus* acta.[31]

In his garrulous fashion, Vertumnus makes even this promise in three different ways.[32] We have seen that if the much-discussed phrase had the expletory function which Richmond assigns to it ("as you know, I have six more lines to fill"), it would naturally form part of the final six lines—which it does not. But as matters stand, the god acts quite in character when he pleads with his hearer to stay for six more lines and then begins the count only after the plea is finished.

It therefore appears that the structure of the piece is based not on a quantitative, but on a thematic balance, with the sections dominated by sepulchral motifs forming a frame for the rest. The scheme may be represented as follows:

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\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{1–4} \quad \text{Introduction (epigram motifs)} \\ \text{5–6} \quad \text{Transitional distich } (\textit{turba} \ldots \textit{Romanum})\end{array}\right\}\text{Location}
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\left.\begin{array}{ll} \text{7–10} & \textit{verso} \ldots \textit{amne} \\ \text{11–18} & \textit{vertentis} \ldots \textit{anni} \\ \text{19–48} & \textit{vertebar} \ldots \textit{omnis} \\ \text{(49–54} & \text{Vicus Tuscus)}\end{array}\right\}\text{Etymologies}
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\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{55–56} \quad \text{Transitional distich } (\textit{Romana} \ldots \textit{turba}) \\ \text{57–64} \quad \text{Conclusion (epigram motifs)}\end{array}\right\}\text{Location}
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The absence of any clear reinforcing numerical pattern can be seen from the summary $(4 + 2) + [(4 + 8 + 30) + 6] + (2 + 8)$.[33]

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[30] *Curro*, used in both of these passages as well as in Prop. 4.2.57, appears to be a literary variant of *propero, praetereo*, etc.

[31] Possibly there is also intended in the word *versus* another play on the name Vertumnus.

[32] The parallels in the sepulchral epigrams show that this is the primary meaning of "te ... non moror" here. Rothstein (above, note 24) 227, suggests the accessory idea, "I don't care about you."

[33] Cf. above, note 5.

Two other thematic strands introduced early in the poem are picked up toward the conclusion.   One involves the time and circumstances of Vertumnus' coming to Rome.   His own words (3–4),

> nec paenitet inter
> proelia Volsinios deseruisse focos,

at first sight can scarcely indicate anything but a transfer to Rome at the fall of Volsinii; and the strong word *deseruisse* further suggests that he was invited according to the ritual of *evocatio*, in the formula for which the term figures prominently.[34]   No *evocatio* of Vertumnus can be proven conclusively, but it is known that in 264 B.C. the consul M. Fulvius Flaccus triumphed over the Volsinienses,[35] and that the same Flaccus was pictured in triumphal garb in the temple of Vertumnus on the Aventine.[36]   Since the vowing of a temple was part of the ritual, an *evocatio* is at least plausible.[37]

Despite the apparent allusion to an *evocatio* in 264 B.C., however, in lines 49–54 Vertumnus expressly states that he was already at Rome in the time of Romulus, and he condemns the Sabine rout in terms ill-suited to one who had deserted his own city in wartime.   It is now possible, in retrospect, to refer the *proelia* of 4 to the honorable

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[34] See Macr. *Sat.* 3.9.7–8: "... peto ut vos populum civitatemque Carthaginiensem deseratis, loca templa sacra urbemque eorum relinquatis ... proditique Romam ad me meosque veniatis, nostraque vobis loca templa sacra urbs acceptior probatiorque sit.... si ita feceritis, voveo vobis templa ludosque facturum." Vertumnus' insistence on his happiness in Rome ("haec me turba iuvat," 3; "grata ... in urbe," 60) may be a further allusion to the formula; cf. "nostra ... urbs acceptior probatiorque sit."

[35] *Act. Triumph. Capit.* for A. U. C. 490 (*CIL* I², p. 172).

[36] Fest. 228 (Lindsay).   For the Aventine temple, see the several *fasti* for Aug. 13 (*CIL* I², pp. 217, 240, 244).

[37] V. Basanoff, *Evocatio* (Paris 1947) 56, flatly postulates an *evocatio* of Vertumnus. W. Eisenhut, *RE* 8A.2 (1958) 1675 (s.v. "Vertumnus") is far more cautious: "Von einer evocatio des Gottes aus Volsinii ist aber nirgends etwas überliefert, und es ist doch sehr zweifelhaft, ob man den Dichter, der im gleichen Gedicht eindeutig von sehr früher Übernahme des Gottes nach Rom spricht ... als Zeuge für eine evocatio im J. 264 anrufen darf, zumal bei ihm ausschliesslich von der Statue im Vicus Tuscus die Rede ist, während es sich bei der evocatio um die Tempelgründung handeln soll!—Nun wird man freilich bei einem Dichter wie Properz auf manches gefasst sein dürfen, jedoch kann ich mich nicht entschliessen, dem Dichter in der aetiologischen Elegie diesen Widerspruch zuzutrauen.   Die evocatio ist aus Properz einfach nicht beweisbar; um sie wahrscheinlich zu machen, muss man in die Elegie IV 2 erst Widersprüche hineinlegen (oder, was ebenfalls geschehen ist, so tun als seien die Verse 49 ff. nicht vorhanden)."   But see below.

occasion of Romulus' war with the Sabines, when Vertumnus' Etruscans brought aid, instead of to the sack of Volsinii. But the suggested paradox remains. The explanation may be this: There would certainly have been a cult statue of Vertumnus in his Aventine temple, perhaps one brought from Volsinii among the two thousand of which Pliny makes mention.[38] By alluding to this second statue, our statue is actually distinguishing himself from it and stressing his own greater antiquity in Rome. It is clear that the words "nec templo laetor eburno" (5) could have this function. Similarly, lines 3–4 could be ambiguous: (1) because Vertumnus is happy in Rome, he is not sorry to have left Volsinii; (2) this particular statue feels no regret over having left Volsinii in time of siege, because it did not come to Rome under those circumstances.

A related paradox is that of Vertumnus' *patria*. In 3, the *signa paterna* begin: "Tuscus ego: Tuscis orior";[39] yet in 47–48 Vertumnus states that his country's tongue (*patria lingua*) gave him his name because of his ability to assume many forms (*vertebar . . . omnis*). In other words, he says that his *patria lingua* is Latin. The god's naturalization as a Roman thus becomes the last in the long series of his transformations, and thereby the nationality motif is united with the poem's principal theme of change.[40] What is more, the etymologies —all Latin ones—have become in a real sense *signa paterna*, indications of Vertumnus' country. It follows that the opening distich,

> Qui mirare *meas tot* in uno corpore *formas*,
> accipe Vertumni *signa paterna* dei,

contrary to what has on occasion been alleged,[41] does have relevance to the subject of the poem as a whole, and emendation is unnecessary.

[38] *N.H.* 34.34: "propter MM statuarum Volsinios expugnatos."

[39] Varro (*L.L.* 5.46) styles him "deus Etruriae princeps."

[40] Vertumnus' naturalization provides an appropriate beginning to the series of Roman aetiological poems in Book 4. The theme has been introduced in the previous elegy by the similar paradox of Propertius' own *patria*. In 4.1.59–60,

> sed tamen exiguo quodcumque e pectore rivi
> fluxerit, hoc patriae serviet omne meae,

he uses *patria* in its broad sense to mean the Roman state. Only four lines later (64),

> Vmbria Romani patria Callimachi,

he uses it in the restricted sense, while at the same time calling attention to his farther-reaching loyalties by the use of *Romani*.

[41] See above, note 24.