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Structure and Meaning in Propertius Book 3

HOWARD JACOBSON

Like many others who have discovered new approaches to old problems, Otto Skutsch has not always been fortunate in his *epigoni*. His key to the elaborate, intricate, and complex structure of the Propertian *Monobiblos* has since been appropriated by others.¹ One scholar has recently attempted, following Skutsch, to disclose the structure of Propertius' third book but has met with little success. In a brief article published in 1967, A. Woolley argued that Book 3 shows an interlocking paneled structure of essentially the same sort as Skutsch revealed for the *Monobiblos*.² The relationships that Woolley sees between poems are often contrived and forced and unlikely to convince anyone not already a believer in the virtual omnipresence of the Skutschian *schema*. In contrast, E. Courtney's article in *Phoenix*, 1970, disagree as one may on specific points, is entirely persuasive in its general view that the movement of Book 3 is linear.³ Using Courtney's essay as a starting point, I shall examine in some detail the nature of direct and immediate linear continuity in this book by focusing on two groups of poems within it, namely, 12-13 and 21-24, in each of which the meaning of any individual poem is defined and developed by the poem or poems which immediately follow.

In this connection, W. R. Nethercut has argued that 3.12-14 are a unified group, bound together by the theme of female participation in

¹ *CP*, 58 (1963), 238-239. I am indebted to Professors David F. Bright and John Vaio who read an early draft of this paper and made helpful suggestions.

² *BICS*, 14 (1967), 80-83. More recently, H. Juhnke, *Hermes*, 99 (1971), 91-125, has made an elaborate and complex attempt to combine the architectonic view with a linear one.

³ *Phoenix*, 24 (1970), 48-53.

military exercise and by the "war" between *aurum* and *fides*.⁴ Though Nethercut sees the group as interlocked, with 12 and 14 framing 13, the linear movement from the problems posed in 12 and 13 to the "solution" in 14 is apparent in his scheme. Leaving aside the question of the validity of this thesis, I would like to suggest a quite different relationship between 12 and 13.

"*Postumus* has gone with the army to the East. Propertius reproaches him for leaving his *Galla* (1-14); affirms that *Galla* will be faithful to him in his absence (15-22); and compares her . . . with Penelope (23-38)." So Camps in his introduction to 3.12.⁵ But this summary oversimplifies and misses the poem's nuances and colorings. The matter is not so clear-cut. The opening rebuke, with the distance between the two lovers made concrete by the separation of their names, is rather light-hearted and may contain a note of humor in the combination of plosives and liquids: *Postume, plorantem potuisti linquere Gallam* (1). Little more serious in tone is the juxtaposition of the generalization that soldiering implies avarice (5-6) to the precise portrait of poor Postumus wrapped in a cloak and compelled to drink wearily from a helmet (7-8). A brief catalogue of the possible disasters that may befall Postumus in the East, as *Galla* imagines them, follows (9-14). Here a sharp break occurs, and *modo Propertiano* we are abruptly wrenched into a new world: *ter quater in casta felix, o Postume, Galla!* (15). No connection to the preceding is immediately apparent. Until now the focus has been on the villain Postumus and his disloyalty to the erotic ideal. Now *Galla* becomes prominent, and the focus, unexpectedly, is on her chastity. We sense suddenly that in Propertius' rebuke and warning of Postumus there is more than meets the eye: "Postumus," runs the unspoken message, "by venturing off to the East you risk losing *Galla*." And from this point the poem wavers between two poles, the explicit declaration that *Galla* is a paragon of virtue, and the implicit suggestion that *Galla* is not more trustworthy than any other woman.

If *moribus his alia coniuge dignus eras* (16), then the inverse is equally true—*Galla* deserves another lover, one who will not abandon her. Indeed, *quid faciet nullo munita puella timore, cum sit luxuriae Roma magistra suae?* (17-18): there is little reason for Postumus to expect *Galla* to be faithful. The irony in *munita* is clear: Postumus goes off to war—but it is *Galla* whom he should be defending! Propertius then seems to back away and cheer

⁴ *CP*, 65 (1970), 99-102. For an interpretation of 3.12 that is completely different from mine, see F. Cairns, *Generic Composition in Greek and Roman Poetry* (Edinburgh, 1972), 197-201.

⁵ W. A. Camps, *Propertius: Elegies Book III* (Cambridge, 1966), 112-113. I have used Camps' text of Propertius throughout.

Postumus: *sed securus eas: Gallam non munera vincent,| duritiaequae tuae non erit illa memor* (19–20). Yet even here the explicit is confronted by the implicit. *Non munera vincent* suggests the picture of lovers wooing Galla in Postumus' absence and is hardly calculated to raise his hopes. *Vincent* is pointed: while Postumus is away playing soldier, others in Rome are usurping his role as soldier-lover. Similarly, verse 20 skillfully hints quite the opposite of what it says. The condemnation of Postumus' *duritia* gives Galla the justification to be faithless as a kind of revenge; and if Propertius cannot forget Postumus' *duritia*, it is unlikely that Galla will. But again any qualms Postumus may have are allayed: *nam quocumque die salvum te fata remittent,| pendebit collo Galla pudica tuo* (21–22). *Galla pudica*, as earlier *casta Galla* (15) and later *casta uxor* (37; an implicit reference to Galla). If Postumus (or the reader) feels that Propertius doth protest too much, who can blame him?

Here the theme of chastity takes a new form. Galla will prove to be an *altera Penelope*. Lines 23 ff. recount at length the heroic adventures of the original Penelope's husband during the period of her virtuous endurance, a passage which Rothstein considered totally alien to the main topic of the poem.⁶ But the elaborate narrative of Ulysses' exploits, emphasizing at once the vast and manifold difficulties he encountered and also the greatness of his achievement, is quite to the point. For while Propertius *prima facie* presents Postumus as a modern-day Ulysses, he subtly undermines the equation by the specific and detailed account of the Greek warrior's feats. That Postumus is another Ulysses cannot be taken seriously. But if Postumus is no Ulysses, there is one inescapable inference. As little as he could be another Ulysses, so little could Galla be another Penelope. Postumus would hardly leave a Calypso, if he found one, nor would he be able single-handed to overwhelm a crowd of suitors.⁷ And Galla would not endure loneliness and reject the attractive offers of her seducers. The poem ends with another ambiguity, in which the explicit points in one way, the unspoken in another: *vincit Penelopes Aelia Galla fidem* (38). This bald-faced assertion is made all the more brazen and ridiculous by its direct simplicity, its complete lack of artifice and grand language. Thus we leave 3.12 with an unresolved doubt, debating whether to accept the assertions at face value or to consider the poem a playful piece in which the explicit declarations are designed to be denied and rejected in favor of the underlying implications.

3.13 resolves the issue. As Camps observes, this poem is a "discourse on a

⁶ M. Rothstein, *Die Elegien des Sextus Propertius* (Berlin, 1924²), vol. 2, p. 102. Camps too (pp. 112–113) expresses dissatisfaction with this section of the poem.

⁷ The reference to the suitors in 35 suggests, as did verse 19, that Galla is being wooed.

general theme.”⁸ Yet, it is not—as he also implies—association run wild, because the generalization here grows out of the preceding poem. Rome is corrupt, especially her women. The condemnation is all-inclusive—Galla cannot escape. The leitmotif of 3.12, that Galla is another Penelope, is shown here for what it is worth. Even if she were another Penelope, it would not matter: *haec etiam clausas expugnant arma pudicas,| quaeque gerunt fastus, Icarioni, tuos* (9–10). Not even Penelope can maintain her virtue in Rome. At all events, Galla is no Penelope: *hoc genus infidum nuptiarum, hic nulla puella| nec fida Euadne nec pia Penelope* (23–24)—no Roman lady can make such a claim. This is the essential interplay between poems 12 and 13. But the relationship is maintained in many details too. The theme of the greedy soldier, exemplified in 12 by Postumus, is translated here into that of the greedy girl, *Quaeritis, unde avidis nox sit pretiosa puellis,| et Venere exhaustae damna querantur opes?* (1–2); and by the poem’s end we are quite ready to identify this girl with Galla.

Mention of a *puella* eliciting gifts from her prospective lovers recalls the hint of such gifts to Galla at 12.19. The elaborate catalogue of luxuries in 5–8 contains just the sort of *munera* that indeed *vincent* Galla. Verses 9–10 are to be interpreted in the light of the similar language of poem 12. Not only are the girls *pudicae*, like Galla, but the military language parallels that used in 3.12: *haec etiam clausas expugnant arma pudicas* (3.13.9)| *nullo munita puella timore* (3.12.17), *Gallam non munera vincent* (3.12.19). Neither the girls of 13 nor Galla of 12 can defend and maintain their virtue.⁹ In a final summation, the theme is reiterated: *aurum omnes victa iam pietate colunt* (48). *Pietas* suggests Penelope (cf. 3.12.37; 3.13.24) and *victa* recalls the *vincent munera* of Galla. In Rome there is no *pietas*, no Penelope, and of course no longer a faithful Galla.¹⁰

Furthermore, two important themes of 13 are related to the “irrelevant” account of Ulysses’ adventures in 12. First, the list of exotic, foreign places in 13.5–8, the lands producing those gifts which plague and please Roman womanhood, corresponds to the catalogue of Ulysses’ exploits in which strange people and places are prominent. The following correspondences may be noted: *cinnamon* (13.8) is an auditory doublet of *Ciconum mons* (12.25),¹¹ and “mountain” may be present again in *cavis . . . metallis* (13.5). The allusion to the “Red Sea” (13.6) recalls Ulysses’ desperate swimming (12.32), and the *pastor . . . Arabs* (13.8) will make us think of

⁸ P. 115. ⁹ We might also note the theme of *spolium* at both 12.3 and 13.12.

¹⁰ One is tempted to see a double entendre in *sed nulla fides* (13.61) and read 12.38 in its light.

¹¹ Camps reads *mors*, but there seems to be no substantial reason for doubting the genuineness of the MS tradition. (Camps *ad loc.* thinks *mons* “colourless.”)

Lampetie tending (*paverat*) the cattle of the Sun (12.29-30). The people and places enumerated in 3.12 prove to be obstacles which hinder Ulysses (*prima facie* = Postumus), those of 3.13, temptations and evils which persecute Penelope (*prima facie* = Galla).

On the other hand, the Ulyssean catalogue is also mirrored in the panegyric of the Indian women who undergo self-immolation out of devotion to their lost husbands. Like the Greek hero the virtuous Indian wife *sequatur coniugium* (19-20); indeed, both Ulysses and the Indian women pursue their devotion to the ultimate degree, by willingly going to the Land of the Dead (note *viva sequatur*, 3.13.19, just as Ulysses travels alive to the Land of the Dead; cf. 3.12.33). It is, in the end, only these inhabitants of an alien world who can be likened to the great heroes and heroines of mythological Greece, not the corrupted heroes manqués of Augustan Rome.

Finally, the link between 3.12 and 3.13 is further developed by the concluding association of Propertius' Rome with the ancestral fatherland, Troy (3.13.60-66). For, like Troy, Rome stands on the verge of decay and collapse. But more than the genetic connection between Troy and Rome is involved here. The mention of Troy's fall inevitably restores us to the world of Ulysses and Penelope (3.12), most notably in the calculated allusion to the wooden horse (64), Ulysses' stratagem which overthrew Troy. Far in the mythological past it was Ulysses who negotiated the destruction of Troy from without. Now it will be those within the city who fail to measure up to Ulysses (and Penelope) who will precipitate the death of Rome.

In sum, there is an interaction between 3.12 and 3.13 which compels us to interpret each in the light of the other. Thus, the generalizations of 13 prove directly relevant to the limited subject of 12 and demonstrate the validity of interpreting the latter as ironic. But the interaction is reciprocal, for 12 clarifies and expands the context within which 13 is set and thereby provides the framework for its interpretation.

We turn now to the latter part of Book 3, specifically elegies 21-24. Here Courtney has made some brief but important observations on the interrelation of these poems, and my arguments take off from his.¹²

In 3.21 Propertius declares his intention to break off with Cynthia and travel to Athens. 3.22 is an appeal to his friend Tullus to return home to Rome from Cyzicus. In 3.23 the poet laments the loss of his writing tablets, and in 3.24 he proclaims his final liberation from Cynthia. Though these poems appear somewhat disconnected, Courtney notes that they are tied together, in linear progression, by the theme, explicit or implicit, of

¹² See too R. J. Baker, *AJP*, 90 (1969), 333-337.

Propertius' decisive and in the end successful struggle to free himself from Cynthia. Courtney's general argument is convincing, and I should like to develop more specifically the view that this calculated sequence of poems is also unified by a leitmotif (or leitmotifs) that links all four poems. To summarize briefly my general argument, I do not think that Propertius here ever contemplated—or meant his readers to think he did—a journey to Athens. The voyage is a metaphor with a double significance. The ship of poetry and the ship of love coalesce in the metaphorical assertion that Propertius is at once rejecting Cynthia and the writing of love poetry. The metaphors (ship of love, ship of poetry) have a long history and go back at least to Pindar and Theognis.¹³ More relevant, they are part of the stock-in-trade of the Latin love poets of the first century. When Ovid comes to the end of the *Remedia amoris* he describes it as the conclusion of a sea voyage (811–812), and when he refers to his propensity for the lesser genres of verse he does it with images of small bodies of water and humble crafts (*ex Ponto*, 2.5.21–22; *Trist.*, 2.329–330). Horace, when on the verge of composing epic, is confronted by Apollo: *ne parva Tyrrhenum per aequor/vela darem* (*Carm.*, 4.15.3–4). No less frequent is the ship of love. Catullus' lovers are sometimes, so to speak, shipwrecked (64.97–98; 68.3, 63–64). So, too, Horace saved from Pyrrha (*Carm.*, 1.5.13–16). When Ovid tries, to no avail, to give up love, *Ut subitus prope iam prensa tellure carinam/ tangentem portus ventus in alta rupit,| sic me saepe refert incerta Cupidinis aura/ notaque purpureus tela resumit Amor* (*Am.*, 2.9.31–34). Similarly, when a young man, intent on ridding himself of love, attempts to follow Ovid's advice, he almost succeeds *inque suae portu paene salutis erat* (*Rem. am.*, 610) before falling back again. Of the same metaphorical order are verses 368 and 373 in the *Ars amatoria* Book One. Propertius 2.14.29–30 is a fine instance of his use of this metaphor. Examples need not be multiplied. The Roman audience was clearly attuned to mentions in Latin poetry of seas, ships, sailors, voyages, and the like which were not meant to be taken literally but often enough as metaphors for poetic creation and for the world of love.¹⁴ Often the metaphor will involve details of concreteness and precision, e.g., the name of the sea, the rigging of the ship, that have in fact no one-to-one correspondence with the general realities being suggested; yet this was an accepted aspect of the utilization of such metaphor. It is then around this metaphor and allied themes that these

¹³ Theognis 457 ff.; Pindar, *Pyth.* 11.38 ff., etc.

¹⁴ We should remember that there is not a consistent set of correspondences between the various nautical facets of the metaphor and the different aspects of the worlds of love and poetry. The poets did not practice strict uniformity in applying these metaphors.

four poems find their focus, connection and unity.¹⁵ Nor would a somewhat novel application of the metaphor have escaped Propertius' audience, especially since Propertius alternates the metaphor here with explicit declarations of his rejection of Cynthia.

In the opening lines of 3.21 Propertius declares his intention to take a *magnum iter ad doctas Athenas* and hopes by so doing to end his love affair with Cynthia. At line 11 details sharpen: *nunc agite, o socii, propellite in aequora navem, remorumque pares ducite sorte vices, iungiteque extremo felicia lintea malo: iam liquidum nautis aura secundat iter* (11-14). The language is of the same order as in Propertius' address to Maecenas, *quid me scribendi tam vastum mittis in aequor* (3.9.3), where the metaphor is obvious: Maecenas impels Propertius in a certain poetic direction. *Propellite in aequora navem* need be no more literal.¹⁶ In this poem, however, the intimate connection between Cynthia, Propertius' darling, and Cynthia, Propertius' inspiration (cf. 2.1.4: *ingenium nobis ipsa puella facit*) unites the two potential facets of the metaphor. This is a journey away on the one hand from Cynthia and on the other hand from the genre of erotic elegy. The ship voyage is at once Propertius' poetic creativity and his career as a lover. When the ship is launched he is on his way in his attempt to reject both Cynthia and erotic elegy in favor of new worlds. In his valedictory, *Romanae turres et vos valeatis, amici* (15), Propertius declares his farewell to the friends who have been associated with his relationship to Cynthia since the very first poem of the *Monobiblos*.

But why Athens? Perhaps we need not ask this question. After all, the ship metaphor in Latin poetry often uses concrete details which transcend the system of precise correspondences. Still, here we may note an interesting parallel. There is good reason for believing that Horace's *propemptikon* addressed to Vergil (*Carm.* 1.3) is not literal, that Horace addresses Vergil as he prepares to embark on some new path of poetic endeavor.¹⁷ As in Propertius 3.21, Horace describes the difficulties of the journey and calls attention to the Adriatic. Most remarkably, Vergil, like Propertius, is sailing to Athens. Just as one can conjecture why Vergil's metaphorical journey ends in Athens, so one can with that of Propertius. As the revered seat of artistic creativity, Athens symbolizes and represents many forms of art, but erotic elegy was certainly not one—as is also indicated by the

¹⁵ In support of this view one notes that Propertius was especially interested in the ship/poetry-love metaphor when writing Book 3. See, e.g., 3.9.3-4, 35-36; 17.1-4. For additional examples of the ship/love metaphor in Hellenistic and Roman poetry, see A. La Penna, *Maia*, 4 (1951), 202-205.

¹⁶ Similarly, the *fessa vela* of verses 19-20 reminds one of Ovid's *fessa carina* (*Rem. am.*, 811), his poem-ship.

¹⁷ See, e.g., C. W. Lockyer, Jr., *CW*, 61 (1967), 42-45.

list of artists and arts enumerated in verses 25ff. So perhaps the trip to Athens signifies an abandonment of the uniquely Roman genre of erotic elegy¹⁸ for some other genre of poetry more commonly represented by Greek poets. The association of Theseus with Athens in the metonymical use of the adjective *Theseae* (24) = Athenian may reflect essays into epic or aetiological poetry. That Athens is immediately identified as *doctas Athenas* (1) and two of its representatives are called *docte* (26, 28) gives some indication that the journey is a creative voyage into a new form of artistic activity (as perhaps evidenced in Book Four).¹⁹

In brief, I shall argue that 3.21-24 are unified by the metaphor of the ship voyage and by a network of related themes that are associated with it, e.g., home/foreign land, place names, travel, bodies of water, and water.²⁰ To see the unity of the last poems of Book 3 in these terms is particularly suggestive when one considers that Nethercut has argued that the *opening* poems of this book (1-5, 7, 9) are unified by a number of themes, one of the most important of which is (again) water.²¹

On the surface 3.22, which calls on Tullus to return to Rome from Cyzicus, seems unrelated to the preceding poem. But Courtney observes that beneath the apparent dissimilarity there are important ties: Propertius is being driven from Rome, Tullus can return with happy prospects. The Greek world which appeared so appealing to Propertius is now a land of monsters, while Italy is attractive. The contrast between 21 and 22 emphasizes the humiliation love has brought on Propertius. All this is insightful, but I should like to approach the question in a somewhat different manner and also to elaborate the problem and solution.

In the first place there are so many verbal and substantive echoes of 21 in 22 that it is clear that the two poems are meant to be considered together and not as isolated pieces. The very opening distich picks up a number of themes from 21. The reference to the *isthmus* of Cyzicus recalls

¹⁸ I forgo becoming involved in the question of the relation of Latin erotic elegy to Greek genres of verse and think it suffices in this context merely to note that there is no evidence for a form of erotic elegy as found in the first century Latin elegists before them.

¹⁹ Is it possible that the crossing of the Isthmus (21-22) into the Saronic gulf, within sight of Attica, may be a metaphor within a metaphor, the isthmus perceived as a symbol of that which separates two worlds, two kinds of life, two forms of poetry? The only metaphorical use of *isthmus* I know before Propertius is at Soph. fr. 145 N² = 568 P. For later instances of *isthmus* as a poetic image, see the similes at Lucan 1.99-106 and Silius 15.152-157, and the discussion by M. v. Albrecht, *Hermes*, 91 (1963), 364-365. Perhaps of interest is Lucretius' strange metaphorical use of *fretum* (4.1030).

²⁰ Water, even without the theme of voyage, is an important image for the realm of ancient Greco-Roman poetry because of the waters of inspiration the poet imbibes. See, e.g., Prop. 2.10.25-26; 3.3.51-52.

²¹ TAPA, 92 (1961), 389-407.

the Corinthian *isthmus*; the mention of a long period of time in absence from home recalls 21.31, *spatia annorum*, and the allusion to water re-introduces an important theme of 21 (*Propontiaca . . . aqua* occurs in essentially the same position in the pentameter as *placida . . . aqua*, 21.20). That *frigida* (22.1) sometimes has erotic connotations may be more than a coincidence given the final verse of the poem and the poem's connection to the preceding elegy which dealt with an *amor* now *frigidus*. Verse 3 mentions one of Cyzicus' marvels, a statue of Cybele carved from a vine stock. As sculpture, this returns us to the art of Athens mentioned at 21.30, *sive ebore exactae, seu magis aere, manus*.²² And it might not be stretching the probable too far to suggest that the allusion to a *raptoris . . . via* (22.4: Pluto's rape of Proserpine) looks back to the *Theseae viae* at 21.24, because, even more than Pluto, Theseus was a famous *raptor* of women (Helen, Ariadne), among whose exploits was an attempt to steal Proserpine. Further, the rape of a woman seems particularly significant in relation to the theme of 21, the rejection of a woman. Thus Cyzicus has been miraculously transformed by the proximity of 3.22 to 3.21 into another Athens, a city noteworthy for its works of "art" and associated with famous woman-seizers.

Let me briefly consider a few more allusions and themes present in 22 that at least appear to recall motifs of 21 or to be in counterpoint to them. Verses 7–10 are usually—and rightly—taken to refer to hypothetical journeys to North Africa and points west where the recounted wonders took place. But the language is suggestive. No verb indicates any movement or travel; there is only *aspicias*. Further, many of the objects of *aspicias* are puzzling since no contemporary of Propertius, even traveling to the said locations, could actually see them (not Atlas, unless this refers merely to the mountain; not the Gorgon's head or the *choros* of Hesperides, unless one understands this to mean not choruses but dancing places, a meaning *chorus* never has elsewhere in Latin literature). Rather, underlying the passage is the idea of viewing works of art, an idea emphatically suggested by the odd use of *signa*—moreover, Greek (or Athenian) works of art, as is implied by the reference to the Gorgon's head which could be seen in Athens set in Athena's aegis. Thus we return to the world of 21, where Athenian works of art are a seductive highlight of the Greek *polis* (29–30). But here, in a reversal that dominates the whole poem, the "Greek" attractions and wonders are deemed inferior to the Roman alternatives.

When the language becomes that of a nautical voyage (11 ff.), we

²² *Fabrico*(r) is indeed found as a term for artistic creation, e.g., Cic., *Off.* 1.147; Ov., *Fast.* 5.137.

again sense a mirror image of 21. Tullus' craft is launched with the same language as was Propertius' (*propellite navem/ propellas Phasim*). When Tullus' voyage calls to mind that of the Argo, this archetypal journey is seen to have a contemporary analogue in Propertius' venture (*rudis vehar, 21.17; rudis natat, 22.13*).²³

But probably the most striking coincidence of the poems is in regard to bodies of water. We have noted already the similar phrases *placida aqua/ Propontiaca aqua*. To this we might add the references to the Cayster (15) and the Nile (16) where *unda* (again at 28) may make us think of *undisonos* at 21.18. But the significance of this emphasis on water (especially in 22) lies deeper. Consider some of the poem's mythological allusions. The region of Cyzicus is termed *Helles Athamantidos urbes* (5), which will recall for the reader at least the story of Helle, who drowned in the strait, and perhaps even the legend about Athamas who pursued Melicerta and Ino into the sea. These are the first hints in this poem of the very real and frightening dangers of the sea and of sea travel, a theme of little relevance here but of importance in 21. Then there is Andromeda (29), exposed to die at the hands of a sea monster, and the Greek fleet waiting to set sail for Troy (34), an expedition fraught from the very beginning with death and destruction.²⁴ Finally, the allusion to Sciron (37-38) once again may involve violent death by drowning. In the context of poem 21 all this is of real import. Whereas in 3.21 Propertius is quite prepared to make little of the perils of sea travel, in this poem both the language and the mythological allusions emphasize its dangers, notably in the Greek (Eastern) world—or rather in that world inhabited by Greek myth. And the sea dangers of Greece are magnified by other dangers implicit in 33-38. One major exception is striking and helpful. When Propertius turns to proclaim the virtues of Rome, he describes its beauties strictly in terms of water:

hic Anio Tiburne fluis, Clitumnus ab Umbro
 tramite, et aeternum Marcus umor opus,
 Albanus lacus et socia Nemorensis ab unda,
 potaque Pollucis nympha salubris equo.
 at non squamoso labuntur ventre cerastae,
 Itala portentis nec furit unda novis. (23-28)

²³ Note the similarity of sound between *Romanae terrae* (22.17) and *Romanae turres* (21.15), the latter phrase a vocative like the *Roma* of 22.20.

²⁴ There is almost certainly a lacuna after verse 36. I think it highly likely that it contained a reference to Ariadne. This would produce the following series of "heroines," Andromeda, Bacchant, Io and Ariadne (29 ff.), just as in 1.3.1-20. Further, the movement from Ariadne to Sinis would provide a typically allusive Propertian transition, with both Ariadne and Sinis having close ties to the myth of Theseus.

The inferences are clear-cut. The waters of the world are hazardous and untrustworthy outside Italy; Greek and Eastern waters are menacing and destructive; those near Rome are peaceful and healthful. For the poet of 3.21 this can be but a single message: do not leave Italy, forget your trip to Athens. Or, to translate the metaphor, give up your plans of abandoning Cynthia and erotic elegy.²⁵ We should note that in his praise of Rome's natural splendors, Propertius cites first the Anio, which was tributary to the Tibur. No wonder that this stands first here, for it was a trysting place for him and Cynthia (cf. 3.16.4).

One last aspect of the poem reinforces the view presented here. The protracted account of the wonders of the foreign world (7 ff.) turns out to be, by and large, a résumé of mythological material traditionally used in Epic and Drama (exploits of Heracles, the Argonauts, etc.). This, however, is declared inferior to the Roman possibilities, *omnia Romanae cedent miracula terrae* (17), in literary terms, to erotic elegy. That is, whereas Propertius had in 21 announced his abandonment of Latin love elegy in favor of other genres, here he reverses himself and reaffirms the superiority of his elegy to other forms of literature.

One might reasonably object that such an interpretation extends the poem beyond its obvious bounds, i.e., a simple appeal to Tullus to return from Cyzicus to Rome. But if the scope of the poem is so narrow, why is there so clear a shift from the limited perspective and situation of Tullus in Cyzicus to a view that embraces much of the geographical and mythological worlds? Surely, to move the poem beyond the narrow frame that it *prima facie* inhabits. And the final distich of the poem incorporates an unexpected "erotic" note, which is the explicit bond which links 22 to 21: *coniunx* and *amor*; the very reasons which in 21 motivated the need to leave Rome here become the best inducement to stay.

In sum, we might even think of 22 as a palinode to 21. In the latter Propertius resolves on a journey away from Rome (that is, he seeks to reject Cynthia and love elegy). In the former, under the guise of advice to a friend, he shows himself unable (or unwilling) to act on his plan of 21 and "rationalizing" his change of mind: after all, travel is risky, foreign

²⁵ That such a contrast between Greece (the East) and Italy is present is substantiated by a structural parallel. When Propertius praises the Italian landscape, the language recalls the very opening of the poem with its description of the region of Cyzicus. In both, the key words are *fluit* (*fluis*; 2 and 23); in both, references to divinities and horses are important (3-4, 26). The two passages are thereby linked, but for purposes of contrast. And, by the way, this triad of motifs (water, horses, divinities) can scarcely help but call Hippocrene to mind. Indeed, the very notion of good waters versus improper waters recalls the choice of water the poet must make, i.e., the choice of type of poetry (see Prop. 3.3).

lands have their dangers and, all in all, Italy (= Cynthia and love poetry) is best.

That poem 23 is a metaphor is beyond serious question. While the very fact that the poet still uses and desires his tablets demonstrates the failure of his earlier resolve (3.21), nevertheless the loss of his tablets clearly signifies that Propertius' activity as lover-poet is approaching its end. Moreover, the fact that the tablets' absence can be attributed either to Cynthia's failure to return them or to her loss of them is emblematic of her responsibility for the failure of their relationship.²⁶ In a number of places the language used of the tablets and their condition is such as to clarify the metaphorical value. The tablets had been worn down by *usus* (3), language unmistakably sexual in the erotic context (cf. Ov. *Rem. am.*, 357; Tib., 1.9.55).²⁷ They have always been *fideles* (contrast Cynthia).²⁸ The *poeta disertus* is replaced (note *sine me*, 6) by his tablets (*verba diserta loqui*, 6). In effect, "Propertius" and "Propertius' art" become interchangeable terms, each designating the creative poet.

This metaphoric meaning would probably suffice to explain the poem's place and relevance in this series. If poem 21 was a decision to leave love and love poetry and 22 a rejection of 21, 23 displays the next stage wherein the poet has indeed resumed love poetry but is patently on the verge of breaking off again, though not yet fully resolved. Such a view, while sufficing to clarify the place of the poem on the level of external situation, still leaves us wondering what has happened to the thread of the guiding metaphor that was present in 21 and 22. Perhaps it is not totally unreasonable to see it partially in the very essence of the theme of "being lost," in the question of the relative desirability of different "residences" for different people or things.²⁹ In poems 21 and 22 the fundamental question was whether Propertius and Tullus were in their proper and most suitable places; here the question devolves upon Propertius' tablets: should they best reside with the poet or with some energetic businessman, *his aliquis rationem scribit avarus/ et ponit diras inter ephemeras!* (19-20). At any rate, it is the final verse, with its emphatic geographical note, that restores us to the world of 21 and 22, *et dominum Esquilii scribe habitare tuum* (24). Not only does the poet now opt for the desirability of the tablets' being at the Esquiline but, as the language itself shows, the emphasis is on

²⁶ I do not consider the absence of Cynthia's name in 3.23 of any importance.

²⁷ While I do not know any example of *detero* with erotic value, there are such instances of *tero*, e.g., Prop. 3.11.30; 3.20.6.

²⁸ Note the illuminating parallel of 21.16 (of Cynthia) to verse 9, *qualescumque mihi semper mansere fideles*.

²⁹ A commonplace of sorts among the ancients. Cf. Hor., *Sat.* 2.6, *Epist.* 1.11; Lucr. 3.1057-1070.

where Propertius himself now resides—and the answer must be taken in light of elegies 21 and 22: It is not in Greece; it is not in the East. Propertius remains in residence at Rome.

Finally, let us consider the last elegy of the series which is its ultimate resolution (3.24). Two devices stress the sense of finality here. First is the abrupt and intense opening, *falsa est ista tuae, mulier, fiducia formae* (1); second are the constant reminders of 1.1, which implies that, as that was a beginning, so this is an end. After some ten lines, mostly of castigation, we begin to see where we are: *haec ego non ferro, non igne coactus, et ipsa naufragus Aegaea vera fatebar aqua* (11–12); we are back in the world of sea-faring and shipwrecks. It is hard not to hear in this couplet (whatever its precise meaning, which is a matter of much debate)³⁰ an echo, both in its hint of death and in its structural form, of the final distich of this series' opening poem: *seu moriar, fato, non turpi fractus amore;| atque erit illa mihi mortis honesta dies* (21.33–34). And, to move ahead, the poem ends with a recollection and a resolution of 3.21:

ecce coronatae portum tetigere carinae,
 traiectae Syrtes, ancora iacta mihi est.
 nunc demum vasto fessi respiscimus aestu,
 vulneraque ad sanum nunc coiere mea.
 Mens bona, si qua dea es, tua me in sacraria dono!
 exciderant surdo tot mea vota Iovi. (15–20)

The journey planned in 21, then delayed and postponed, has at length been accomplished: Propertius has reached harbor safely, the love affair with Cynthia is over, as is Propertius' dedication to writing love poetry about her.³¹ Indeed, earlier verses here had anticipated the point of the metaphor:

noster amor talis tribuit tibi, Cynthia, laudes:
 versibus insignem te pudet esse meis.
 mixtam te varia laudavi saepe figura,
 ut, quod non esses, esse putaret amor;
 et color est totiens roseo collatus Eoo,
 cum tibi quaesitus candor in ore foret. (3–8)

³⁰ See recently Camps, *ad loc.*; A. W. Bennett, *CP*, 64 (1969), 30–35; G. L. Koniaris, *CP*, 66 (1971), 253–258.

³¹ I note additionally that *vasto aestu* (17) continues the nautical imagery, while *vulnera* (18) commonly alludes to the "wounds" of love, e.g., Prop. 2.12.12; 2.22.7. *Coronatus* (15) and *corona* are frequently found in contexts of both lovers and poets, e.g., Prop. 3.3.47; 3.1.10. For an example of *Syrtes* (16) in an erotic context, see Ov., *Rem. am.* 739.

It is relevant to observe that H. Akbar Khan, *A.Hung*, 16 (1968), 253–256, has sought to explain Prop. 1.11 in terms of sea symbolism, and E. W. Leach, *TCS*, 19 (1966), 211–232, has discussed the metaphorical nature of the voyage at Prop. 1.17.

At once we discern in these verses the resolve to reject both love and erotic poetry. Each pentameter is a rejection of Propertius' poetry as reflected in the preceding hexameter.

In brief, 3.21-24 can be seen as a metaphoric drama in four acts. On one level, the movement is (1) Propertius resolves to leave Rome, (2) Propertius realizes that it is, after all, best to stay, (3) Propertius affirms explicitly that he still lives at Rome, but there are hints that a change is coming, and (4) Propertius has finally completed his journey.

Or, to translate the metaphor: (1) Propertius decides to leave Cynthia and give up erotic elegy, (2) he changes his mind and affirms that the best course is to continue his relationship with Cynthia and erotic elegy, (3) he affirms that his affair with Cynthia and elegy abides, but there are indications that the end may be in sight, and (4) Propertius resolutely proclaims his rejection of both Cynthia and love elegy.³²

In sum, whatever other structural patterns may be discerned in Propertius' third book, it is clear from an analysis of 3.12-13 and 3.21-24 that, at the least, significant portions of this book are built on the principle of linear progression.

University of Illinois at Urbana

³² I do not wish to enter into the question of the relation of 3.25 to 3.24, but would simply observe that 3.25 seems to me a kind of summary epilogue rather than a part of the sequence of poems beginning at 3.21. It is an explicit farewell that serves, so to speak, as a seal on the Book. It is, however, fascinating to consider, as Professor Bright points out to me, that 3.24 and 3.25 contain together 38 lines, which suggests that the pair may be a counterweight to 1.1 (38 lines) and as such an inseparable poetic couple. The implications could be significant and far-reaching. For discussions of 3.24 and 3.25, see L. Alfonsi, *Orpheus*, 3 (1956), 59-65; E. Burck, *Hermes*, 87 (1959), 191-211.