Ennius and the Elegists

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Ennius ingenio maximus, arte rudis. This pentameter from Ovid’s Tristia (II. 424) is often cited by historians of literature as a capsule summary of the Augustans’ ambivalent attitude toward Ennius.¹ He had a powerful literary talent worthy of respect (ingenio maximus), but represented an archaic crudeness of style which they above all others had refined (arte rudis). Thus, Horace in his Satires once quotes a line and a half from the Annales to illustrate great poetry, while he criticizes Ennius’ tragic metrics in the Ars Poetica and his Annales more generally in Epistles II. 1.² Virgil too, while he probably never actually said that his reading of Ennius was a search for gold in a dungheap,³ nevertheless substantially refined the many Ennian passages which he imitated.⁴ Some would say he even casts ironic light on the original at times.⁵ Similarly, Propertius attributed to Ennius a hirsuta corona (IV. 1. 61), the crown perhaps signifying some degree of literary achievement, but only a rough one (hirsuta) compared with his own.

Of the two poles in this ambivalent attitude, the Augustan elegists Propertius and Ovid leaned heavily toward the negative. As poets who

¹E.g., C. O. Brink, “Ennius and the Hellenistic Worship of Homer,” American Journal of Philology 93 (1972), p. 547: “the simple Augustan picture of the father of Roman poetry, Ennius ingenio maximus, arte rudis.”


³Cassiodorus, Inst. div. I. 1. 8 = [Donati] vit. Verg., p. 31 (Brummer).

⁴For a sample of the ancient testimonia on the subject see E. Norden, P. Vergilius Maro. Aeneis Buch VI (Leipzig 1903), p. 359, note 1.

largely defined their genre, after Callimachus, in opposition to epic, they would of course tend to cast the acknowledged father of Roman epic in a bad light. After all, they were heirs of neoteric poetics in its purest form, a stance expressed by Cicero as the contempt of the can- tores Euphorionis for his revered Ennius (*Tusc. disp. 3. 45), and one illustrated by Catullus’ scorn for a related work, the *Annales Volusi cacata carta* (36. 1 and 20; cf. 95. 7-8).

While these elegists’ estimates of Ennius within these schemes are well-known — indeed, they are the stuff of histories and handbooks of literature — it is not often that their mentions and evocations of Ennius are studied closely in context and in relation to one another. This is the aim of the present paper, which seeks thereby to clarify some points in, and note some significant differences between, these two elegists’ presentations of Ennius.

Propertius only mentions or evokes Ennius in pivotal programmatic poems, poems which somehow prepare for or announce a change in the direction of his poetry. The first explicit mention occurs in III. 3, the central elegy in the programmatic cycle opening the third Book in which Propertius seems to be re-examining the nature of his poetry. The re-examination is actually a restatement of his Callimachean ideals, but here it is much more formal, more self-conscious than in Books I and II, the use of Callimachean terminology more elaborate than before. At the opening of a book full of experimentation which greatly expands the limits of his elegy beyond the intensely subjective love-elegy of Books I and II, Propertius takes great pains to assert that his poetry will be no less Callimachean. In III. 3, another *recusatio* or rejection of epic in favor of his elegy, he goes so far as to picture himself in a situation like that of Callimachus in the *Aitia*-prologue: a dream of his consecration as a poet on Mount Helicon. The details of this imitation of Callimachus’ prologue are well-known, if in part controversial,⁶ and need not be dwelt on here. Suffice it to say that Propertius’ scene is as much *aemulatio* of his Hellenistic mentor as *imitatio*. Apollo, for example, appears as a warning figure in both Callimachus and Propertius, but is part of the dream on Helicon only in Propertius. What is particularly significant, though, for the present investigation is that alongside the classic neoteric and elegiac initiation-scene⁷ is placed the similar programmatic scene of the inspiration received by Ennius.

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⁷Cf. Virg. *Ecl. 6. 3-5* and *64-73*, Prop. II. 10, Hor. *Sat. I. 10. 31-35*; later Ovid *Am. III. 1, Ars I. 25-28.*
the father of Roman epic. In this, the most formal and elaborate of Propertius’ recusationes, he contemplates the fictional origins of both the Callimachean poetics he embraces (the famous non inflati somnia Callimachi that he had recommended to Lyceus, II. 34. 32) and the tradition of Roman epic he rejects (the dream of Ennius).

The poem actually begins with Propertius in a situation reminiscent of Ennius’ dream at the opening of the Annales, a scene to which he here explicitly refers (6). Ennius had dreamed that the shade of Homer appeared to him either on Helicon or on Parnassus, where he was informed that he was Homer reborn. Although we can be far from certain, his initiation may also have included a meeting with the Muses, and perhaps even a drink from the sacred fount of inspiration. Propertius dreamed that while he rested beside the fountain Hippocrene on Helicon he felt himself able to begin an epic on the Alban kings (1-4: Visus eram...posse...). Though the situation roughly parallels that of Ennius, we are aware from the very outset that this is the world of neoteric and elegiac poetics. Visus eram molli recubans Heliconis in umbra (1). The opening line suggests a bucolic scene reminiscent of Virgil’s Eclogues, which are here echoed, and the word mollis too frequently appears as a catchword in elegiac poetics (e.g., I. 7. 19; II. 1. 2; III. 1. 19). More importantly, the elegist is immediately struck by the awesomeness of his contemplated task — tantum operis (4) — a condition which is further heightened by the following contrast (5) of his tiny mouth (parva ora) with the mighty fountain it approaches (magnis fontibus), the fountain “from which thirsting father Ennius drank” (6) the inspiration for his epic poem. Propertius never actually drinks from Hippocrene, and is anyway soon checked from such attempts at epic by the Callimachean Apollo (13 ff.). After instruction from Apollo, and then Calliope, the latter confirms his poetic status as an elegist with the

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9 Ennius’ prominence in III. 3 (and III. 1) may be a further hint that in Book III “the same poet, writing essentially the same sort of poetry as before, relying on the same sources of inspiration, will be turning to Roman subjects”: D. Ross, Backgrounds to Augustan Poetry. Gallia, Elegy and Rome (Cambridge 1975), p. 129, with reference to Prop. III. 11 and III. 13.


11 Cf. Ecl. 1. 1 (Tityre, tu patulae recubans sub tegmine fagi), noted by Wimmel (above, note 6), p. 244.
appropriate symbolic water. Rather than drinking deep and directly from Hippocrene, Propertius receives on his lips a sprinkling of what is called "the water of Philitas" (51-52; the poet is always associated by Propertius with Callimachus; cf. II. 34. 31-32; III. 1. 1). This water seems to come not straight from the gushing Hippocrene, but from a quiet pool of the same water in the Muses' grotto. The inspiration demanded for elegy is lighter, but also more rarified and civilized, than that required for epic. The main theme of the poem, then, is that of the earlier recusationes II. 1 and II. 10: the elegist's inability, however much he might allegedly wish, to compose epic poetry. With the motif of the initiatory dream on Helicon and Propertius' elaborate water imagery the theme is here applied to the relevant great exemplars of the contrasted poetic genres. For the elegist the dream of Ennius must be corrected; it must become a Callimachean experience.

The sharp contrast drawn by Propertius between Ennian and Callimachean inspiration is by no means fair to Ennius, since, as recent studies have shown, Ennius was himself deeply influenced by Hellenistic poetry, including that of Callimachus. In fact, in Ennius' own dream-scene there was most probably intended an allusion to the well-known dream of Callimachus, and that allusion may well have aimed to express Ennius' own debt to the great Alexandrian master or to Hellenistic literature in general. Elsewhere he seems to point to his affinity with the later Greek tradition when he boasts of himself as dicti studiosus (Ann. 216 V), a phrase that seems to latinize the Alexandrian ideal of the φιλόλογος. It is of course also possible that such an allusion to the Aitia-prologue was to some extent a counter-polectic or anti-Callimachean allusion, since the dream-vision of alter Homerus directly counters Callimachus' influential rejection of the long, grand epic poem. We know of Ennius' capacity for such literary polemic from his harsh remarks on his Latin predecessors in the prologue to Annales VII (213-17 V); and one need not have fully embraced Calimachean aesthetics to be dicti studiosus. If this view is correct, then Propertius here can be seen as rephrasing the same polemical contrast

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14 See Suerbaum (above, note 10), pp. 271-75.

15 Aet. fr. 1 Pf. For this view see especially W. Clausen, "Callimachus and Roman
found (perhaps only implicitly) in Ennius’ prologue, though from his Callimachean and Augustan point of view.

In the text before us that point of view is discerned especially in the lines devoted exclusively to Ennius (6-12):

6  unde pater sitiens Ennius ante bibit;  
et cecinit Curios fratres et Horatia pilae,  
regiaque Aemilia vecta tropaeae rate,  
victoriesque moras Fabii pugnamque sinistram
10  Cannensem et versos ad pia vota deos,  
Hannibalemque Lares Romana sede fugantibus,  
anseralemque pater nostri laudem et tutum voce fuisse lovem.

On the face of it, the passage appears to set forth in a straightforward fashion a complimentary description of the poet and his poem which might have been written by Cicero. Ennius is called pater as the honored originator of the Roman epic tradition, and the six-line list of the Annales’ contents emphasizes their historical and nationalistic character: the Horatii and Curiatii of early Rome, the splendid triumphant return of an Aemilius, Fabius Cunctator, whose treatment by Ennius is echoed elsewhere in Augustan literature, the catastrophe of Cannae, and Rome’s miraculous salvation from disaster at the hands of Hannibal and the Gauls. All of these events either were or could have been included in the Annales. The naming of several Roman heroes by their family names together in the first half of the list may also suggest the widely alleged encomiastic quality of Ennius’ epic narrative. To Propertius’ parade of Roman worthies, the Curii and Horatii, Aemilius and Fabius, may be compared Cicero’s assessment in his speech for Archias (22): omnes denique illi Maximi, Marcelli, Fulvii non sine communi omnium nostrum laude decorantur. All of this seems to suggest an entirely positive estimation of Ennius on the part of Propertius. As Homer was for Callimachus, Ennius is for him admirable, but inimitable.

Yet the reader of these lines must also experience a certain befuddlement. Half of the events here mentioned from one of Rome’s most famous poems seem somehow wrong. The family known elsewhere only as the Curiatii are here the Curii; the most natural interpretation

Poetry,‘' Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies 5 (1964), pp. 185-87.
18For the testimonia and a full discussion see Suerbaum (above, note 10), pp. 198-215 and 248.
of the victory in verse 8 took place after Ennius' death;19 the Lares are nowhere else said to have driven Hannibal from Rome.20 Commentators generally view these problems as arising from our, or Propertius', defective knowledge of the text of the Annales. Another possibility rarely considered is that Propertius has intentionally skewed his summary of Ennius' poem to ironize, however slightly, his apparently straightforward, laudatory account. Since Propertius has jumbled the chronology of the events to produce his own artistic arrangement - glorious Roman victories followed by tempora graviors and Rome's rescue therefrom21 - it is not unlikely that some at least of these incongruities have an intended literary effect. Propertius elsewhere introduces discordant touches into a list of topics for an epic. In II. 1 his inclusion of civilia busta and eversos focos antiquae gentis Etruscae (27 and 29) among the emperor's praiseworthy exploits undercuts, though in a different way than that suggested for our passage, the entire epic catalogue. Furthermore, the reference to Ennius himself "thirsting" (sitiens, 6) seems immediately to make the Propertian admiration of pater Ennius ironic. This detail makes him humorously primitive or naive, especially when contrasted with the refined sensibilities of the elegiac parva ora. To go to Hippocrène thirsty suggests not only larger capabilities, but a lack of anything to begin with.22

If the interpretation outlined here is not wide of the mark, then Ennius in III. 3 corresponds, in the Callimachean scheme of things, more to cyclic or historical epic, which is to be rejected outright, than

19 "It is hard to believe that 8 refers to any lesser occasion than the return of L. Aemilius Paullus, the victor of Pydna...": D. R. Shackleton Bailey, Propertiana (Cambridge 1956), p. 139; "No other return of an Aemilius approached this in splendor, and it must be what P. has in mind..." (Richardson ad loc.). Other suggestions are the victories of Aemilius over Demetrius of Pharos in 219 and Antiochus in 190.

20 Elsewhere the retreat of the Carthaginian forces is attributed to one of two minor deities, Tutanus or Rediculus. See Rothstein ad loc.


22 If a picture came to mind here, it would no doubt be the extravagant one in Lucrètius' description of a man who, also in a dream, sits beside a stream or fountain thirsting (sitiens), and all but swallows the whole river (IV. 1024-25; a comparison made by S. Commager, A Prolegomenon to Propertius [Norman, Okla. 1974], p. 68, note 72). With sitiens Propertius may also be obliquely (and humorously) alluding to Ennius' apparently famous capacity for wine (an emblem of his superior ingenium), even though the inspirational beverage in the present instance is water. Horace comically refers to this at Ep. I. 19. 7-8: Ennius ipse pater numquam nisi potus ad arma / prosilit dicenda. For this interpretation see W. Richter, Römische Dichter (Frankfurt 1958), p. 79, note 1, cited by Suerbaum (above, note 10), p. 234, note 690, and Wimmel (above, note 6), p. 244.
to the inimitable Homer. In the context of the whole poem this sample of the *Annales*’ contents thus foreshadows the list of epic topics in Calliope’s admonitory address (40-46), where martial Roman historical subjects are emphatically decried.

Ennius is recalled in a similar context, though in a different fashion, in Propertius III. 1, the first poem in the cycle and one which in many ways prepares for III. 3. Again developing the contrast between epic and elegy, Propertius weaves Callimachean terminology into a magnificent sequence of travel images which proudly assert his own poetic achievement (9 ff.). Inverting the epic associations of the Roman triumph, he rides like a general *triumphants*, the Cupids at his side, a crowd of writers close behind (9-12). Next the chariot is successfully racing against his poetic rivals (13), whom he tells, transferring an image of Callimachus (fr. 1. 25-28 Pf) to a novel context, that it is not possible to ride to the Muses by a wide road (*non datur ad Musas currere lata via*, 14). At the conclusion to the section he identifies the sort of poets who travel the *lata via*, and he sharpens the contrast between their poetry and his own (15-20):

15 multi, Roma, tuas laudes annalibus addent,  
qui finem imperii Bactra futura canent.  
sed, quod pace legas, opus hoc de monte Sororum  
detuit intacta pagina nostra via.  
mollia, Pegasides, date vestro serta poetae:  
non faciet capiti dura corona meo.

Many, O Rome, will add praises of you to the annals, singing that Bactra will be the limit of your empire. But my page has brought this work down from the mount of the Muses by an untrodden path, that you may read it in peace. Give soft garlands to your poet, Muses; a harsh crown will not suit my head.

The “many” here are of course the writers of encomiastic historical epic who will follow in the footsteps of Ennius. In the present pro-grammatic context the word *annalibus* would almost certainly call Ennius’ own epic to the Augustan reader’s mind.23 But the contrast here is not simply the Callimachean contrast of styles. As Clausen and others have pointed out,24 the rejection of epic by Roman poets was often moral as well as stylistic, as is brought out here by the mention of the contemporary Parthian campaign (16) and by Propertius’

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24 Clausen (above, note 15), pp. 193-96; see further Commager (above, note 22), pp. 46 ff.
characterization of his own as a poetry of peace (17).

There is a fuller evocation of Ennius in this passage, however, than that in the single word annalibus. The Gedankengang and language of the following two couplets again call Ennius to mind, this time through an allusion to Lucretius’ description of Ennius’ achievement in epic. 25 In what must have been a well-known passage Lucretius referred to “our Ennius...who first brought down from Helicon the crown of eternal leaves, that it might have glorious renown throughout the Italian tribes of mankind” (Ennius...noster...qui primus amoeno / detulit ex Helicone perenni fronde coronam / per gentis Italas hominum quae clara clueret, I. 117-19). From the context we know he is speaking chiefly of the Annales. There is no way to tell whether the image derives from Ennius himself or is simply Lucretius’ own figurative language, ultimately based on Hesiod’s descent from Helicon with a wondrous staff (Theog. 30-31). In either case, Propertius seems clearly to allude to the Lucretian passage. The echo one might think one perceives in the similar combination of a crown with a return from the Muses’ mountain is enhanced by the appearance in both of initial detulit and the word corona, and this after annalibus just above. The effect of this echo is a quite striking one and can be fully appreciated only in the light of one of the poem’s major thematic patterns. Propertius seems to appropriate to his elegy the image applied by Lucretius to the great exemplar of Roman epic, just as he arrogates to himself the heroic role of the triumphantor, and just as later in the poem he illustrates his claim to immortality with the example of Homer (33-34). 26 The point of all this is an insistence on his elegy’s equality with, if not its superiority to, epic poetry. By evoking Ennius here, then, Propertius challenges Ennius’ alleged return from Helicon with that of his own pagina. It is Propertius who is primus here, while Ennius is associated with the multi traveling the lata via. 27 Likewise, Propertius asks the Muses for a crown, but


26For this interpretation see especially Commager (above, note 22), p. 43. He also
thinks, along with Nethercut (above, note 23), that verse 24 (maius ab exsequiis nomen in
ora venit) imitates Ennius’ epitaph (Varia 18 V: ...volto vivos per ora virum). But if Ennius
comes to mind in verse 24, he most probably does so through the mediation of Virg.
Georg. III. 8-9 (tempanda via est, qua me quoque possim / tollere humo victorque virum voli-
tare per ora; the beginning of his triumph), the first half of which is recalled at the open-
ing of Propertius’ triumph (9: quod me Fama levat terra sublimis...). The phrase in ora
venire is found elsewhere in Propertius (II. 1. 2; III. 9. 32, where Ennius’ epitaph is
definitely echoed).

27It is this that differentiates Propertius here from Lucretius at I. 921 ff. and Virgil
in Georgics III. 8 ff., both of whom echo and / or evoke Ennius in declarations of their
own originality, but without the Propertian contrast with Ennius. Both passages are re-
not the sort Ennius would have brought down from Helicon. The elegist should be wreathed with *mollia sertis*, soft garlands of flowers, appropriate to the delicate private world of love and peace and the slender style which describes that world. No *dura corona* for him, perhaps a wreath of laurel or a gold crown like those of the Roman *triumphator*, in any case suggestive of the severe matter and manner of epic, a genre which Propertius elsewhere calls *durus versus* (II. 1. 41). Since Ennius is in mind here, we may not be wrong to follow Camps’ suggestion (*ad loc.*) that *dura corona* may also obliquely allude to the technical roughness of early Roman epic, and so reinforce Propertius’ demand above for poetic refinement (*exactus tenui pumice versus eat*, 8).

A more explicit reference to the unrefined quality of Ennius’ verse, of which Ovid will make so much, occurs in a later programmatic elegy of Propertius. This is a passage near the end of IV. 1A, the first in the pair of introductory poems to Book IV, and the one in which the poet announces a new elegy devoted to Roman themes, his aetiological elegies. The context is worthy of close scrutiny, both because of the difficulty of the passage and because it combines the ideas and images in the two earlier evocations of Ennius. After reflecting on early rural Rome and its contrast with the city’s present splendor, and expressing his amazement at the providence that allowed the Trojans to reach Italy, Propertius concludes by announcing his intention to write on national Roman themes (55-58):

55  optima nutricum nostris, lupa Martia, rebus,
    qualia creverunt moenia lacte tuo!
    moenia namque pio coner disponere versu:
    ei mihi, quod nostro est parvus in ore sonus!

He speaks of such a program as equivalent to writing an epic. His wonder at the greatness of Rome’s walls immediately suggests to him the greatness of the poetic task he contemplates. To write of Rome’s walls demands epic ability! The image of laying out the walls was perhaps partly designed to refer to the topographical focus of the aetiological poems, all of which are concerned with monuments or places in the city, but it is also charged with epic associations. In the *recesatio* III. 9 the *caeso moenia firma Remo* (50) were among the epic topics listed, and we remember *altae moenia Romae* at the opening of the *Aeneid* (I. 7). The same is true of *pio versu*, to which we may compare, for example, the *laudes* of Rome in III. 1. 15 which many will add to the annals. He also speaks of this project as an attempt, *coner* (which I
called in our poem: on Virgil’s see above note 26; cf. Lucr. I. 929 (*insignemque moe capiti petere inde coronam*) and Prop. III. 1. 20 (*non faciet capiti dura corona meo*).
take to mean "let me try" rather than "should I try"), just as in III. 3 he attempted to drink from the mighty fountain with his parva ora. Here too the poet is struck by the inappropriateness of an elegist’s parvus sonus tackling such topics. Tantum operis!

At this point the reader of Propertius’ earlier books waits for the excusatio to become a recusatio. But Propertius’ trepidation before the present task leads instead to a reaffirmation of his resolve to write pio versu: sed tamen exiguo quodcumque e pectore rivi / fluxerit, hoc patriae serviet omne meae (“But nevertheless, whatever stream flows from my tiny breast, all this will be devoted to my country,” 59-60). As always in Propertius, the self-deprecation here is only apparent. We realize this when we notice that the slight stream from a small breast alludes to the οἵτινες λαβῶσ at the end of Callimachus’ Hymn to Apollo (2. 112). The stream is slight, but it is the choicest of waters, far preferable to the broad ocean and the muddy Euphrates signifying cyclic epic. The allusion suggests that, though his inspiration is small, it is still what he prefers. His pius versus will be Callimachean.

It is the undertone provided by this allusion which gives rise to the following couplets, where the oblique reference becomes a proud declaration of his Callimachean style (61-64):

Ennius hirsuta cingat sua dicta corona: 
mi folia ex hedera porrigte, Bacche, tua, 
ut nostris tumefacta superbiat Vmbria libris, 
Vmbria Romani patria Callimachi!

As before, an acceptance of Callimachus means a rejection of Ennius. Here the two are both mentioned by name, conspicuously framing the sentence. The contrast of crowns in III. 1 is repeated, but here the emphasis is on stylistic refinement. “Let Ennius wreathe his verses with a shaggy (or rugged) crown, for me the ivy of Bacchus,” the latter suggestive of his Callimachean inspiration. This is Propertius’ most direct and his rudest dismissal of Ennius. Although corona does admit of some achievement on Ennius’ part, its positive connotations are all but obliterated by hirsuta. If III. 1 and its allusion to Lucretius are in mind here, then the rejection is more contemptuous still. “Let Ennius

28 For Propertius’ association with Bacchus see II. 30. 38-39 (also ivy; cf. II. 5. 26); III. 2. 9; III. 17; IV. 6. 76; cf. Call. ep. 7 Pf and the discussions of E. Maass, "Untersuchungen zu Properz und seinen griechischen Vorbildern," Hermes 31 (1896), pp. 375 ff. and P. Boyancé, "Properce," in L’influence grecque sur la poésie latine de Catulle à Ovide (Fond. Hardt: Entretiens 2, Geneva 1953), pp. 169 ff. C. W. Macleod argues differently that the address to Bacchus here (compared with Call. ep. 7) and tumefacta in line 63 reverse Callimachean motifs ("Propertius 4.1, "Papers of the Liverpool Latin Seminar, 1976, ed. F. Cairns, pp. 144-45).
wreathe his poems with that shaggy crown he brought back from Helicon.” Alfonsi would make it even more scornful, since he sees in sua dicta a playful reference to Ennius’ claim to be dicti studiosus (Ann. 216 V). But while dictum is used of poetry only here by Propertius, such usage is not unparalleled elsewhere outside of Ennius (e.g., Lucr. I. 126; V. 56).

The reason for the particular vehemence of this dismissal is that Propertius in the present circumstances realizes his closeness to Ennius, or to what Ennius represented in III. 1 and III. 3. Propertius has now accepted topics of national significance, which he refers to in epic terms, and in this and three of the other aetiological poems he speaks in a solemn patriotic persona suggestive of epic. Yet for all this he insists that his model will be Callimachus, not Ennius. He will write antiquarian elegies along the lines of the Aitia: sacra diesque canam et cognomina prisca locorum (69). And above all else, his style will be Callimachean, in contrast not only to primitive epic poetry — which is the primary reference of hirsuta corona — but also to the “rough” style of epic in general. The hirsuta corona would share this connotation with the dura corona of III. 1. 20. As Margaret Hubbard recently pointed out, the Roman elegies of the Callimachus Romanus are all consciously and aggressively modern (and so anti- or counter-epic) in their application of the elegiac manner to national Roman topics. That aggressiveness is here embodied in the flat rejection of the great exemplar of Roman epic.

When we turn from Propertius to the more voluminous and varied elegiac corpus of Ovid, our investigation must immediately take a new factor into account, namely, that Ovid makes greater use than Propertius did of Ennius’ actual poetry. It should be further noted in this connection that these Ennian reminiscences in Ovid are not restricted to the Annales. Ovid had a considerable interest in tragedy, an interest that included the archaic Latin tragedians as well as their Greek

predecessors. He himself composed a Latin Medea, following the precedent of Ennius. Regarding his nondramatic works, it has been shown not only that several Republican tragedies had a strong influence on certain portions of the Metamorphoses, as they had on Virgil's epic earlier, but also that the epistles of Paris and Helen in the Heroides are indebted to Ennius' Alexander. As one might expect, however, the latter indebtedness seems also to contain a humorous application of the model. Howard Jacobson has noted that the Ennian treatment of the burning firebrand in Hecuba's dream, signifying that Paris would bring fiery destruction upon Troy, is in Ovid's story also echoed in the elegiac, erotic context of Paris' burning passion for Helen.

This example brings to mind a second reason for the occasional Ennian touches in Ovid's elegiac works. Ovid is a master of parody who ranges widely in his mock-solemn echoes of serious ancient literature. This is particularly true of the Ars amatoria, where a favorite example is the use of the Ennian phrase Romana iuventus. In the remains of the Annales the phrase occurs three times at line's end. The young Roman soldiers are courageous (cum pulchris animis, 550 V); they approach the walls (537), perhaps in some battle; they — in a bold Ennian phrase — "dry themselves off from sleep" (469). In Ovid we find: discе bonas artes, moneо, Romана iuventus (I. 459). The noble Roman youth of today are solemnly enjoined by the magister amoris to get a good liberal education, because of its efficacy in love. The high-sounding Ennian phrase accentuates the already mock-serious situation. A similar example is found in Amores II. 11, which begins with echoes of the opening lines of Ennius' Medea (Sc. fr. 246-54 V) as well as of their later rendition in Catullus 64 (1 ff.). Ovid bewails the sea voyage of his mistress Corinna with the language of the tragic nurse lamenting the departure of her very different sort of mistress.

Such Ennian echoes in the amatory elegies are few and play but a small role in the very broad parody of other literature. The same is true of the Ennian reminiscences in Ovid's poetic calendar, the Fasti, his version of Propertius' Roman elegies. Ovid's poem shares some of the Annales' topics, such as Egeria (III. 261 ff.; cf. Ann. 119 V) and


3516. 3-8; op. cit. (above, note 34), p. 302.

Romulus and Remus (II. 365 ff.; cf. Ann. 73-75), and once he quotes an entire line which most scholars take to be from the Annales: unus erit quem tu tolles in caerula caeli (Ann. 65; II. 487; cf. Met. XIV. 814), spoken by Jupiter to Mars concerning the apotheosis of Romulus, where it probably also appeared in Ennius' poem. Otherwise the few Ennian echoes are mostly of phraseology, simply a part of the epic idiom which Ovid is here adapting to elegy. Along with the many more similar reminiscences of Virgil and Lucretius, they add a certain epic flavor and dignitas to the treatment of national topics, as did Tibullus' one imitation of Ennius to the solemn praise of Messala in I. 7. But there is no evidence of extended imitation of Ennius in the Fasti of the sort found in the Aeneid, which is only to be expected. For, although Ovid speaks of the Fasti as a major work (II. 3; IV. 3 and 10), as did Propertius of his Roman elegies in IV. 1, he also follows his elegiac predecessor in adopting as his major model Callimachus' Aitia (I. 1: Tempora cum causis Latium digesta per annum).

For all this, the presence of even these few Ennian touches in the Fasti may be significant, as compared with their apparent absence in Propertius IV. They of course reflect the wider orbit of Ovid's literary interests; he was writing the "epic" Metamorphoses and the Fasti at about the same time. They can also be associated, I believe, with a difference in the two elegists' methods for achieving an elegiac equivalent to epic narrative. As was noted above (p. 287), the aitia of Propertius are aggressively counter-epic in their style, relentlessly applying the techniques and modern attitudes of elegy to his Roman themes. Ovid's approach achieves a similar modernization of Roman history and legend, but does so in part by incorporating the traditional features and

37See F. Bömer's commentary, vol. 2 (Heidelberg 1957), Index s.v. Ennius.

38Often it is difficult to determine whether the "Ennianisms" come directly from Ennius or from an intermediary. For example, in Ovid's description of the famous battle of the Fabii (II. 195 ff.), which earns three references to Ennius in Bömer's commentary, the phrase celeri passu (205) is attested elsewhere only in Ennius Ann. 71 V, while the couplet 235-36 (una dies Fabios ad bellum miserat omnes: / ad bellum missos perdit una dies) reflects Lucr. V. 999-1000 (at non multa virum sub signis milia ducet / una dies dabat exitio) at least as much as it does Ennius Ann. 287 (multa dies in bello conficit unus); similarly, Ovid's concluding reference to Fabius Cunctator (241-42: scilicet ut posses olim tu, Maxime, nasce, / cui res cunctando restituenda foret) is closer to Virgil's imitation at Aen. VI. 845-46 (...tu Maximus ille es, / unus qui nobis cunctando restituis rem) than to the Ennian original (above, note 17).

language of epic, which would include those of *pater* Ennius. Where Propertius ignores or twists the features of epic, Ovid adapts them to the more accommodating world of his elegy.

With the fact that Ovid uses Ennius’ poetry, however sparingly, one might be tempted to associate his somewhat more favorable estimation of Ennius. For, in spite of the fact that Ovid shared the Propertian (and Horatian) view of the archaic poet as artless, he also explicitly acknowledged the powerful poetic talent of Ennius (*ingenio maximus*). But one should not make too much out of these few echoes, nor should one exaggerate the positive aspects of Ovid’s explicit references to Ennius. The Ovidian treatment of Ennius certainly differs in important respects from that of Propertius, but the latter’s view is broadened and to some extent qualified, rather than actually contradicted.

Ovid mentions Ennius or the *Annales* by name four times, twice in Book II of the *Tristia*, once each in the *Ars* and *Amores*. For him Ennius is perhaps above all else the quintessential, venerable Roman classic. In the *Ars amatoria*, for instance, Ennius’ burial next to Scipio is cited as evidence of the great honor formerly bestowed upon poets (III. 405-12). That Ennius “earned” (*emeruit*, 409) this respected position illustrates the *sancta* maiestas and *venerabile nomen* (407) readily given in olden times, but so sorely lacking in Ovid’s own day. To some readers it may seem ironic that a love-elegist unabashedly appeals to the *fama* of the great exemplar of historical Roman epic. But such is the irony of literary history, not of the text itself. Ennius is not marked out here as the poet of war or history or epic, or even tragedy. He is the exemplary, famous old poet, a Roman classic. Likewise, Ovid in this passage, which is a digression, does not speak as *praecceptor amoris*, nor as elegist, but simply as a contemporary poet.

A more complex mention of Ennius, again without reference to his genre or subject matter, is found in *Amores* I. 15. The elegy is the last in Book I, and so is appropriately programmatic, having as its topic Ovid’s immortality through his poetry. He alludes to Propertius’ treat-

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40See, e.g., Hubbard (above, note 31), p. 134, comparing Propertius and Ovid’s *Fasti*.

41As was done recently by F. Bertini, “Ov. am. 115, 19 e il giudizio ovidiano su Ennio,” *Bollettino di Studi Latini* 2 (1972), pp. 3-9; see earlier Zingerle (above, note 32), 2, pp. 1-2.

42It is interesting to note that Cicero reports that Ennius himself called poets *sancti* (*Pro Archia* 18): *quae suo ture noster ille Ennius sanctos appellat poetas, quod quasi deorum aliquo dono atque munere commendati nobis esse videantur*. See Suerbaum (above, note 10), pp. 263-64.
ment of the theme in III. 1 analyzed above, thereby helping to perpetuate his predecessor's memory, but also inviting comparison with the earlier elegist's presentation of Ennius (and Callimachus). The reference to Ennius is brief, but significant. At the opening of a list of Roman authors who have achieved immortality through their works is put *Ennius arte carens* (19). F. Bertini attempted to prove that the phrase *arte carens* here is laudatory, and means *sine artificio*, "without artifice" or "simple." But the words certainly mean "without art" or "unpolished" and should be read concessively. **"Though unrefined, Ennius will always be famous."** As a refutation of the positive interpretation one need but recall the assessment of Callimachus a few lines above (13-14): *Battiades semper toto cantabitur orbe: / quamvis ingenio non valet, arte valet.* In the pentameter's contrast, involving the common juxtaposition of *ingenium* and *ars, arte* is the positive member, which makes the phrase *arte carens* negative, an Ovidian equivalent of Propertius' *hirsuta corona.*

It is no accident that the couplet on Callimachus is recalled in the mention of Ennius, since the two authors are, as we have seen, naturally contrasted by an elegist. Ovid further associates the two here by concentrating exclusively on their poetic powers and craft, in contrast to the treatment of most of the other poets in the list. This makes them stand out in an even sharper opposition to one another. As in Propertius, Callimachus is the poet of refinement (*arte valet*), Ennius the one without it (*arte carens*). But what is most striking here and most unlike the Propertian position is that both Ennius and Callimachus are criticized. Indeed, these are the only two authors in the list of thirteen whose mention involves any qualification. Now in spite of Ovid's frequent references to his own *ingenium*, he obviously felt a close kinship with Callimachus. In the present poem he hints at that kinship by making his own wish for immortality correspond exactly to the passage on Callimachus. Compare verse 8 *quaeritur, in toto semper ut orbe canar,* with verse 13 on Callimachus, *Battiades semper toto cantabitur orbe.* Yet he also criticizes Callimachus as lacking *ingenium.* This critique of Callimachus by an admitted Callimachean has bewildered some scholars, but I think that Ovid no doubt intended it to be somewhat shocking. What it does is to set the revered master of elegy in a larger perspective, which is also achieved by placing him in a list of assorted authors. Although this list reflects Callimachean poetics, as in the mention of

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44 Above, note 41, especially pp. 4-6.

45 See Morgan, (above, note 32), pp. 69-70.
Ennius, it does not develop the familiar contrast of epic and elegy found in Propertius and elsewhere in Ovid’s own elegies. Instead — and this is what makes Ovid’s boast even greater than Propertius’ — Ovid sets himself in the broader world of all ancient literature: epic, elegy, comedy, tragedy, pastoral and didactic. And for the Roman that world would of course include Ennius, whom he criticizes, as one would expect of a Callimachean of sorts, but whom he does not here challenge in the Propertian fashion. Ennius heads the list of Roman classics which Ovid proudly asserts he will someday join. Not inappropriately, the initial position of Ennius corresponds to that of Homer (9-10) in the catalogue of Greek poets, an association which reaches back ultimately to alter Homerus himself.

Just as Ennius is an important figure in Propertius’ definitions of his poetry in Books III and IV, so his name is invoked in Tristia II in Ovid’s defense of his poetry, or, more specifically, his carmen, the Ars amatoria. At one point the exiled poet argues that, besides the numerous examples of erotic themes in Greek literature which he has just discussed, Roman literature too has multa iocosa, many playful or frivolous things (421-22). He first mentions serious poetry to suggest that it represents but one side of Roman literature. As befits one elsewhere called pater, Ennius is put first (423-28):

\[\text{utque suo Martem cecinit gravis Ennius ore,} \\
\text{Ennius ingenio maximus, arte rudis:} \]

\[\text{425 explicat ut causas rapidi Lucretius ignis,} \\
\text{casurumque triplex vaticinatur opus:} \]

\[\text{sic sua lascivo cantata est saepe Catullo} \\
\text{femina, cui falsum Lesbia nomen erat.} \]

Just as Ennius sang of battle with the appropriate voice — Ennius mighty in genius, but rude in art — and just as Lucretius explains the origins of the devouring flame and prophesies that the threefold structure of the world will collapse, so playful Catullus often sang of his mistress, falsely called Lesbia.

A long list of other erotic authors follows (429-66). For the first time in Ovid Ennius is characterized as an epic poet writing on martial themes (Martem cecinit), which we recall was significant for Propertius. But here there is no Propertian contrast of the elegy of peace and the historical epic celebrating war. Here war is only important as a serious topic, like the cosmic destruction in Lucretius, and unlike the multa iocosa which follow. In fact, Ovid is not really contrasting epic and elegy here at all, but serious and playful or erotic literature. The latter

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46This is noted by Bertini (above, note 41), p. 4.
is not even restricted to poetry, but includes Sisenna’s prose translations of Aristides’ Milesian Tales (443-44). Again Ovid’s is the broader view of ancient literature. Thus, while Propertius always isolates Ennius as the representative of Roman epic or an unrefined style, thereby making the contrast with himself all the sharper, in the Ovidian passages which contain an evaluation of Ennius the archaic poet is never mentioned apart from other poets. In Amores I. 15 Ennius arte carens was paired with the tragedian Accius and then associated with a larger group of Roman authors. Here and in the final passage to be discussed he is linked with Lucretius.

As suits a formal argument, Ovid’s reference to Ennius here is more plainly expressed than those in Propertius’ elaborate and ironic proclamations of his literary credo. Both praise and blame are set forth directly. Ennius is gravis, a word which suggests the seriousness and elevation of epic, but which refers primarily to his character, “venerable,” “great.”* Matching this impressive stature is his mighty talent — ingenio maximus. Yet he was unpolished, arte rudis, a variation of Ovid’s earlier phrase, arte carens. In the pentameter we have the exact opposite of his evaluation of Callimachus in Amores I. 15, who was weak in ingenium, but strong in ars. Both authors are presented in a balanced fashion, as was Ennius also, if somewhat differently, in the earlier poem. There, though lacking in art, he was immortal. But in both cases Ennius’ lack of art seems to be the most important factor for Ovid.** In Amores I. 15 arte carens suggested a contrast with the admired, if imperfect, Callimachus. Here too arte rudis appears to operate in a wider context. Its qualification of the first mentioned example of serious literature seems to help tip the scales in favor of the iocosus, as does the much more expansive list of “frivolous” authors that ensues, and that we know will ensue before Ennius and Lucretius are mentioned.

Some 150 lines earlier in Tristia II Ovid develops another argument involving Ennius which shows that he himself can still be iocosus. He proceeds to answer the objection that, while the Ars amatoria was not intended for matronae, a Roman matron could still use the erotic instruction aimed at others (253-54).

If that is the case, then let her read nothing, because all poetry can provide sinful knowledge. Why, let her take up the Annales of En-

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48For a different view see Zingerle (above, note 32), 2. p. 2, and Morgante (above, note 32), pp. 71-73.
nium — there is nothing ruder than they; she’ll of course read by whom Ilia was made a parent. When she takes up Lucretius’ poem, with its opening Aeneadum genetrix, she’ll ask by whom Venus became Aeneadum genetrix, the mother of the Romans.

(255-62, paraphrased)

Ennius’ poem is again introduced as a classic serious work. Yet Ovid’s argument is obviously not serious at all. Not only is the Ars amatoria in form a lover’s handbook, but Ovid himself elsewhere in Tristia II facetiously claims that other venerable classics are actually erotic works. “What is the Iliad,” he asks at one point, “but an adulteress over whom her lover and husband fought?” (371-72). Thus, although Ovid’s argument here is a reductio ad absurdum of an anticipated objection, its real aim is to perform for the Annales and Lucretius’ work a reductio ad amorem.49 He makes this even more outrageous by singling out two national myths associated with the foundation of Rome. We can imagine from the substantial fragment of Ilia’s dream preserved by Cicero (De div. I. 20. 40-41 = Ann. 35-51 V) and a few other scraps (Ann. 52-59) that her story figured prominently in the Annales. In Ovid’s trivialization of Ennius it is only the rape by Mars that is significant, an erotic event that associates Ennius’ poem with his own. Both could be misunderstood or misused by a naughty woman so inclined.

Most of this is simply good Ovidian fun and offers no judgment on Ennius. But there is an evaluation here, emphatically negative, again stated parenthetically, and again focusing on Ennius’ lack of art. Nihil est hirsutius illis (259). For the third time Ovid singles out the archaic poet’s lack of art, here with an obvious echo of Propertius’ judgment in hirsuta corona (IV. 1. 61). As often happens with such allusions, Ovid’s hirsutius goes beyond the reference to style in Propertius’ phrase to include the content of the Annales as well.50 “Let her take up the Annales — there is nothing shaggier or less appealing, nothing further from the world of my elegies than they.” Since hirsutus and the related hirus frequently appear in rustic contexts,51 there may also be a suggestion of the rustic world of the Annales, as in the narrative of Rome’s earliest days. This would surely be a crowning touch by the

49For the use of this phrase referring to the same Ovidian technique in other works see G. K. Galinsky, Ovid’s Metamorphoses. An Introduction to the Basic Aspects (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1975), p. 30, and J. B. Solodow, “Ovid’s Ars Amatoria: the Lover as Cultural Ideal,” Wiener Studien 90 (1977), p. 112.

50See Luck (above, note 47), 2. 122 ad loc.

51E.g., (hirsutus) Am. III. 10. 7; A.A. I. 108; Met. XIII. 766; Virg. Ecl. 8. 34; Georg. III. 231; (hirus) Met. XIII. 927; Virg. Georg. III. 287.
poet whose urbane love-elegies glorified the cultivated present and often mocked the *rusticitas* of the olden days that was so romantically evoked by his contemporaries.\(^5\)

To sum up briefly, for the elegists the name of Ennius always called forth a contrast, of epic with elegy, or war with peace, solemn with erotic literature, a crude style with their own polish. Propertius uses Ennius as an important negative symbol in programmatic elegies, where he is always set opposite Callimachus or Callimachean ideals. Therefore, he is always associated with images of poetic inspiration or achievement such as the dream of initiation, the return from Helicon, and the poet's crown. Ennius is for Propertius the great exemplar of Roman epic, particularly its martial character, its lofty style, and its technical roughness in the archaic period, all of which Propertius challenges with his elegy. The so-called artlessness of Ennius is even more strongly emphasized by Ovid, who also introduces him into discussions of his own poetry. For Ovid too Ennius is diametrically opposed to Callimachus, but Ovid broadens the Propertian view of both Ennius and Callimachus, as well as of ancient literature in general. Though Ennius is lacking in art, he is also great in genius and immortal. Along with this wider focus comes a more distanced treatment, as compared with that of Propertius, and a diminution of Ennius' importance as a foil in elegiac poetics. But then Ovid in general plays with the poetic problems that Propertius wrestled with. Many Propertian distinctions are levelled or jettisoned, and Ennius, the great Propertian representative of epic and martial themes, becomes, more simply, a defective Roman classic.\(^5\)

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\(^5\) Compare, for example, *Am. I. 8. 39-42* *(forsitan inmundae Tatio regnante Sabinae / noluerint habiles pluribus esse viris; / nunc Mars externis animos exercet in armis, / at Venus Aeneae regnat in urbe sui)*, and a passage particularly relevant to our lines in the *Tristia, Am. III. 4. 37-40* *(rusticus est nimium, quem laedit adultera coniunx; / et notos mores non satis Urbis habet / in qua Martigenae non sunt sine crimine nati / Romulus Iliades Iliadesque Remus).*

\(^5\) I am grateful for the helpful questions and criticisms from the audience and the other speakers at the conference on archaic Roman poetry held at the University of Minnesota in November 1981 where this paper was originally presented.