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# Propertius on the Site of Rome

Kenneth S. Rothwell Jr.

*University of Massachusetts Boston*, [kenneth.rothwell@umb.edu](mailto:kenneth.rothwell@umb.edu)

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EXTRAIT

# LATOMUS

REVUE D'ÉTUDES LATINES

FONDÉE PAR

M.-A. KUGENER, L. HERRMANN ET M. RENARD

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Carl DEROUX

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## Propertius on the Site of Rome

The image of the site of Rome when it was hills, marshes and meadows, not yet spoiled by urban intrusion, was a favorite of Virgil and the Augustan elegists (1). In this paper I would like to examine the site as it appears in Propertius 4,1 ; 4,4 and 4,9. Although Propertius was following precedents from Tibullus 2,5 and *Aeneid* 8, his departures from the topography they mapped out need to be systematically examined. I will suggest (a) that Propertius generally offered a darker view of the site of Rome by endowing it with morally ambiguous qualities and by populating it with unappealing characters. Moreover (b) in fashioning this landscape Propertius settled on a view of the workings of nature — consistent with other poems in Book 4 — in which nature undermines human progress. This view of nature is further underscored by the suppression of the theme of the Golden Age.

### 1. *The Landscape of Rome in Tibullus and Virgil*

It was probably inevitable that Augustan poets should have been drawn to the primordial setting of Rome. Part of the attraction was political : Augustus portrayed his rule as a period of renewal by claiming to emulate ancestral virtue (2) and by promoting the imagery of natural fertility, such as vines and garlands (3). The early, unspoiled site of Rome was the obvious intersection of history and nature. After all, for the Augustan poets nature was a convenient poetic vehicle for discussing civilization, technology, politics,

(1) I have used E. A. BARBER, *Sexti Properti Carmina*, Oxford, 1960 ; K. W. GRANSDEN, *Virgil : Aeneid Book VIII*, Cambridge, 1976 ; F. W. LENZ and G. K. GALINSKY, *Albii Tibulli aliorumque carminum libri tres*, 2nd ed., Leiden, 1971.

(2) Augustus reportedly considered taking "Romulus" as a title before settling on "Augustus" : SUETONIUS, *Augustus* 7 ; DIO CASSIUS 53, 16, 7 ; R. SYME, *The Roman Revolution*, Oxford, 1939, p. 313-314, suggested that Romulus' career was thought to resemble too closely that of Julius Caesar the Dictator. For the restored *casa Romuli* on the Palatine see DIONYSIUS OF HALICARNASSUS, *Antiquitates Romanae* I, 79, 11 and G. BINDER, *Aeneas und Augustus. Interpretationen zum 8. Buch der Aeneis*, Meisenheim am Glan, 1971, p. 137-141 and 162-169.

(3) P. ZANKER, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, trans. A. SHAPIRO, Ann Arbor, 1988, p. 172-182.

human character, the moral worth of *labor* and *fructus*, or poetic inspiration (4). A further factor prompting the attention of Augustan poets was poetic. Hellenistic poets — above all Callimachus — wrote about *aetia* and the foundations of cities (*ktiseis*) (5). Romans emulating the Hellenistic poets frequently followed suit (6).

Of the two most important treatments of the landscape before Propertius — Tibullus 2,5 and *Aeneid* 8 — we cannot be certain which was following the lead of the other (7), but the two can be profitably compared. We will see that Tibullus and Virgil, in different ways, used their depictions of Rome to raise issues of *labor* and *otium*, the vitality and benevolence of nature, the efficacy of Aeneas, the progress of history, and Augustus' Golden Age.

Tibullus 2,5 was occasioned by the appointment of M. Valerius Messalla Messallinus, the son of Tibullus' patron Messalla, to the *quindecimviri sacris faciundis*. Most of the poem is devoted to recounting visions and revelations bearing on Roman history; in the first of these Tibullus describes the site of Rome as Aeneas might have found it (23-38). Cows graze on the Palatine, shepherds worship pastoral deities (Pan, Pales and perhaps Silvanus, who is honored with a Panpipe, *fistula* 30), and a *puella* crosses the marshy Velabrum in a skiff to visit her *iuuenis*. Although Livy (writing in the 20s) had envisioned the site a wilderness (*uastae solitudines* 1,4,6), Tibullus' Rome is instead a hospitable retreat, a virtual *locus amoenus* where lovers can feel at home. Certainly the presence of the *fistula* sets the bucolic and erotic atmosphere of the place — and signals Tibullus' familiarity with Theocritus and the *Eclogues*. At the end of the poem (81-104) Tibullus recounts the Parilia, a festival that celebrated the foundation of Rome and that recreates the life of shepherds in the early days (23-38) (8); we should consider both of these passages as descriptions of the same experience.

(4) In general see C. SEGAL, *Landscape in Ovid's Metamorphoses*, Wiesbaden, 1969, p. 1-3 and 86-94.

(5) The foundation of Zancle was told in *Aetia* Book 2; see R. PFEIFFER, ed. *Callimachus*, I, Oxford, 1949, fr. 43,581ff.; the titles of five poetic *ktiseis* are also attributed to Apollonius of Rhodes: J. U. POWELL, *Collectanea Alexandrina*, Oxford, 1925, 5ff. fr. 4-11.

(6) In general consult W. WIMMEL, *Kallimachos im Rom. Die Nachfolge seines apologetischen Dichtens in der Augusteerzeit*, Wiesbaden, 1960; W. V. CLAUSEN, *Callimachus and Latin Poetry in GRBS* 5, 1964, p. 181-196; F. CAIRNS, *Tibullus: A Hellenistic Poet at Rome*, Cambridge, 1979, p. 11-24 and 68-70; J. F. MILLER, *Callimachus and the Augustan Aetiological Elegy in ANRW* II.30.1, Berlin, 1982, p. 371-417.

(7) Useful are: V. BUCHHEIT, *Tibull II 5 und die Aeneis in Philologus* 109, 1965, p. 104-120; F. della CORTE, *Tibullo II 5 e l'Eneide in Maia* 36, 1984, p. 247-253; see also M. MCGANN, *The Date of Tibullus' Death in Latomus* 29, 1970, p. 774-780.

(8) The Parilia thus unites the urban and rustic dimensions of Rome's site, as Varro noted, *Res Rusticae* II,1,9. See further W. WIMMEL, *Tibull II 5 und das elegische*

The *otium* of the landscape in 2,5 is all the more apparent when set against the landscapes of other Tibullan elegies. Tibullus did not consistently idealize the countryside as a pastoral retreat, for he also respected *labor* and was satisfied with a life spent cultivating his plot. Such, at least, is the programmatic life in 1,1 and 1,10<sup>(9)</sup>. But in 2,5 the landscape has less to do with agricultural reality than with poetic ornament; the site of Rome described here could be anywhere — Italy, Sicily, or Arcadia. The fact that Tibullus describes the Velabrum as having enough water for the *puella* to row across seems calculated to enhance the charm of the locale. In later times the Velabrum was an important commercial center, but Tibullus passes over that jarring contrast between then and now in silence. Apart from the Palatine and Velabrum, scarcely a single shrine, landmark or topographical feature of the urban site is identified. Aeneas seems not to have visited the city at all; very few heroes are named and we hear nothing of Pallanteum or earlier settlers.

To be sure, the Sibyl foretells the war of the Trojans with the Rutili (45-50), but the city's site will be unaffected. For Tibullus the transcendent characteristic of the site is its pastoral tranquility; the Rome of wars and heroes will be an aberration, a transitional phase. The structure of the poem emphasizes this by framing the omens of war (39-80, *passim*) with pastoral peace (23-38 and 81-104)<sup>(10)</sup>. Even when Mars appears in this poem it is to make love on the riverbank with Ilia. Indeed, from Tibullus' account one would not guess that she had been raped (51-54). Tibullus' Rome is essentially the world of Tityrus in *Eclogue* 1: pastoral, escapist, static and immune from history. If there is an eternal Rome it is the city celebrating the Parilia<sup>(11)</sup>. In many ways the world of the poem even resembles a Golden Age. There is little need for *labor* but more than sufficient *fructus* here<sup>(12)</sup>; it is an existence of "soft primitivism". The celebration at the Parilia of the *felix et sacer annus* (82) suggests that some cyclical pattern is at work, probably the *aureum saeculum*<sup>(13)</sup>. Tibullus mentions the defeat of Saturn by Jupiter (*Saturno rege*

*Rombild* in *APARCHAI 4: Gedenkschrift für G. Röhde*, Tübingen, 1961, p. 227-266, especially p. 247.

(9) B. WEIDEN BOYD, *Parva Seges Satis Est: The Landscape of Tibullan Elegy in 1.1 and 1.10* in *TAPA* 114, 1984, p. 273-280.

(10) W. WIMMEL, *Tibull II 5* [n. 8], p. 264-265; also D. BRIGHT, *Haec Mihi Fingebam: Tibullus in his World*, Leiden, 1978, p. 90-92.

(11) CAIRNS, *Tibullus* [n. 6], p. 83.

(12) The only *labor* I can find is peasants trampling grapes (85-86); K. KUBUSCH, *Aurea Saecula: Mythos und Geschichte. Untersuchungen eines Motivs in der antiken Literatur bis Ovid*, Frankfurt am Main, 1986, p. 172, n. 46.

(13) CAIRNS, *Tibullus* [n. 6], p. 85. *Sacer* is preferred by LENZ and GALINSKY [n. 1], M. C. J. PUTNAM, *Tibullus: A Commentary*, Norman, Okla., 1973, and by K. F. SMITH, *The Elegies of Albius Tibullus*, New York, 1913 (repr. 1979), whereas *satur*, less millenarian in tone, is adopted by J. P. POSTGATE, trans., rev. by G. P. GOOLD, *Catullus, Tibullus and Pervigilium Veneris*, Cambridge, Mass., 1988.

*fugato*, 11), and Virgil stated clearly that the Golden Age in Latium occurred after that defeat (*Aeneid* 8, 319-320).

All of this should reflect well on Augustus and the principate. Tibullus, however, never directly connects the Golden Age with the rule of Augustus<sup>(14)</sup>. The site of Rome is pleasant enough, but completely unprepared for the city that will be superimposed on it.

To turn from Tibullus to the *Aeneid* is to step into a rushing stream of history and narrative. Virgil's Rome, especially in Aeneas' visit to the site (8,1-369), is clearly a city with a past. As soon as Aeneas arrives he is told the tale of Cacus and Hercules; what remained of the cave itself was there for all to see. The site has been settled before: still visible are the ruins of the Golden Age city founded on the Capitoline by Saturn, who collected the scattered aboriginals and gave laws; visible too are the ruins of the town of Janus on the Janiculum (*uirum monimenta priorum*, 310-325 and 355-359). Evander had already founded Pallanteum. History is therefore conspicuous here; Rome is anything but a timeless retreat<sup>(15)</sup>.

If Virgil's Rome has a past, it also has a future. It is as if the site has been surveyed and the ground prepared<sup>(16)</sup>. Virgil inserts early landmarks that would have been familiar to Romans of his day. Aeneas sees the Carmental gate and shrine (337-338), the grove of the asylum on the Capitoline (342), the Lupercal, where Romulus and Remus would be suckled and which had been restored by Augustus (343, cf. *Res Gestae* 19), the Argiletum, a busy thoroughfare in Virgil's day (345-346), the Tarpeian rock (347), the Janiculum (358), the Forum and Carinae (361). Virgil showed that the city he lived in was an organic continuation of the settlement seen by Aeneas; Virgil has drawn a direct line from the past to the present<sup>(17)</sup>. Although there are a number of bucolic touches, this is not a fictional landscape or imaginary Arcadia but a very specific locale on the Latin side of the Tiber.

Virgil's site is lush with greenery: the verdant river bank (83), forests (96), pools and fountains (74-75), groves (104, 125, 342, 351), grass (176), and brambles (348). But nature here is more than just ornamental greenery; it literally comes alive. Here are fauns and nymphs (71, 314) and the waves and woods marvel at Aeneas' fleet as it works its way up the Tiber to Pallan-

(14) KUBUSCH, *Aurea Saecula* [n. 12], p. 168.

(15) Although there is much to marvel at, it is no pastoral retreat; see M. C. J. PUTNAM, *The Poetry of the Aeneid*, Cambridge, Mass., 1966, p. 109.

(16) This may almost literally be true: Virgil alone of Augustan poets omits the marshy Velabrum and it may be that we are to imagine it already drained, with the earth ready for foundations.

(17) On this see H. MERKLIN, *Zu Aufbau und Absicht der Messalinus-Elegie Tibulls* in W. WIMMEL, ed., *Forschungen zur römischen Literatur: Festschrift zum 60 Geburtstag von Karl Büchner*, Wiesbaden, 1970, p. 301-314.

teum (91-92). The god Tiberinus actually speaks to Aeneas (36-85) and later sees to it that the river will offer no resistance to the Trojans sailing up it. (By contrast, the speaking groves and cattle in Tibullus [2,5,74-78] were *unnatural* omens of doom.) But, the greenery notwithstanding, this is no leisurely *locus amoenus*. Evander points out the ruined cave of Cacus (190-192); the Lupercal is situated on a chill cliff (*gelida monte*, 343); the Capitoline is overgrown and bristly (*siluestribus horrida dumis*, 348) — a reminder that much of this land has not been tamed<sup>(18)</sup>. The native religion of the place was stern and instilled fear (*religio terrebat dira loci*, 349-350); a thunderous god lives in a *nemus* on the Capitoline.

Missing in the *Aeneid* are the peaceful shepherds of Tibullus. *Labor* was a fact of life in Virgil's early Rome. Tiberinus explains that Evander and his Arcadians have had to wage war continuously since their arrival (55). The Hercules-Cacus episode is another *exemplum* of the *labor* necessary for subduing *furor* by imposing order and creating civilization<sup>(19)</sup>. But Virgil strongly suggests that *labor* will be efficacious and he gives us good reason to expect that the path the Trojans have embarked on will be successful, for Carmenta has prophesied that Aeneas' offspring will be great (338-341). The Capitoline, after all, was the site of a Golden Age settlement where Saturn gave laws and ruled in peace (320-325) and we are told explicitly in Book 6 that Augustus will reestablish a Golden Age in Latium (*aurea condet saecula*, 6, 792-793). A glorious future can be achieved by renewing the past. Virgil associates Aeneas with Hercules when Evander invites Aeneas into the same humble home into which Evander had invited Hercules (362-368).

Of course when we consider the episode in the context of the *Aeneid* as a whole fundamental ironies appear. For example the *Aeneid* never really demonstrates that the *aurea saecula* promised by Anchises will arrive. And Aeneas falls short of the civilizing model of Hercules; as Wiesen has pointed out, Aeneas passes through Book 8 as if in a trance, barely registering greater knowledge for all his experience. He is conspicuously uncomprehending (*ignarus* 730) of what his shield depicts<sup>(20)</sup>. The world of nature, which offered itself to assist the Trojans in Book 8, will face destruction<sup>(21)</sup>. Even the rule of Saturn was in danger of succumbing to degeneration (*decolor aetas* 326)<sup>(22)</sup>.

(18) WIMMEL, *Tibull II* 5 [n. 8], p. 256, suggests Virgil is indebted to Lucretius' depiction of hard primitivism (*De Rerum Natura* 5, 925-1457).

(19) B. OTIS, *Virgil. A Study in Civilized Poetry*, Oxford, 1963, p. 330-335.

(20) D. WIESEN, *The Pessimism of Eighth Aeneid in Latomus* 32, 1973, p. 156; A. J. BOYLE, *The Chaonian Dove*, Leiden, 1986, p. 167-172.

(21) R. THOMAS, *Tree Violation and Ambivalence in Virgil* in *TAPA* 118, 1988, p. 261-273.

(22) OTIS, *Virgil* [n. 19], p. 337; R. THOMAS, *Lands and Peoples in Roman Poetry. The Ethnographic Tradition*, Cambridge, 1982, p. 98-100.

Yet this danger is remote and theoretical ; when all is said and done the episode of Aeneas' visit is as optimistic as any in the *Aeneid*.

It should be clear that Tibullus' and Virgil's representations of early Rome differ dramatically. In its vegetation, population, settlement, livelihood, and religion Tibullus' landscape is a pastoral, timeless retreat with little connection to Rome's past or future. Existence there resembles a bucolic Golden Age. Virgil's Rome, by contrast, is cluttered with public artefacts, institutions, leaders, buildings, and ambitions. The urgent forces of history drive Aeneas and Evander toward a well ordered future. Romulus cannot come soon enough. Of course the discrepancies between Tibullus and Virgil are in some measure due to the differences between elegy and epic. Although Propertius seems to have looked to both models of early Rome in his fourth book (ca. 16 B.C.), it is a third model of his own making that suited his purposes best <sup>(23)</sup>.

## 2. Propertius, Nature and the Site of Rome in 4,1

A preliminary issue should be raised : one of the striking things about Propertius' pre-urban landscapes is that they should exist at all. Compared with Virgil, Horace, and Tibullus, Propertius usually shows little interest in nature, whether wild or tame <sup>(24)</sup>. It is true that nature imagery appears in a variety of his elegies and that he had even already written of the Palatine as a pasture for bulls (*decerpta palatia tauris*, 3,9,49). We hear of the Italian landscape in 3,22, but Propertius tends to lead the reader back to the city of Rome rather than linger, as does Virgil, over the workings of the countryside <sup>(25)</sup>. The pastoral spot in 1,14,1-6 where one might enjoy wine is the bank of the Tiber. Other poems by Propertius that enlist the world of nature turn out to be heavily dependent on Hellenistic literary sources <sup>(26)</sup>. His

(23) Already in the 20s B.C. Propertius had known that Virgil was working on the *Aeneid* ; see PROPERTIUS 2,34,66 : *nescio quid maius nascitur Iliade* ; cf. *Vita Donati* 30. For verbal echoes of the *Aeneid* in Propertius see H. TRÄNKLE, *Die Sprachkunst des Properz und die Tradition der lateinischen Dichtersprache*, Wiesbaden, 1960, p. 53-57 ; K.-W. WEEBER, *Properz IV 1,1-70 und das 8. Buch der Aeneis in Latomus* 38, 1978, p. 489-506, especially 489 n. 1 ; J. VAN SICKLE, *Propertius (vates) : Augustan Ideology, Topography, and Poetics in Eleg. IV,1 in Dialoghi di Archeologia* 8, 1974-5, p. 116-120. But caution is in order ; 4,3 seems to assume that a campaign against Parthia is underway and would thus seem to have been written, at the latest, in 20 B.C.

(24) Propertius is closer to Catullus in this respect ; see S. G. P. SMALL, *Catullus*, Lanham, MD, 1983, p. 76 and 158-159.

(25) M. C. J. PUTNAM, *Propertius 3.22 : Tullus' Return in Illinois Classical Studies* 2, 1977, p. 240-254.

(26) In 1,20 Propertius vividly describes the spring where Hylas was seized by nymphs, following THEOCRITUS 13 and APOLLONIUS of RHODES 1,1182-1272. See L. RICHARDSON, Jr., *Propertius : Elegies I-IV*, Norman, Okla., 1977, p. 201. M. ROTH-



tendency to avoid straightforward, objective narrative and to slip from the concrete to the ambiguous are phenomena that no reader of his poems can overlook. No poet, it must be conceded, described nature purely for its own sake, but Propertius seems a bit more ready than others to subordinate nature to the larger issues at stake or to distance himself from "what stands before him in real life" (27).

His distaste for landscape outside of the city is sometimes explicit: the woods and countryside are at best boring, at worst a place for grief, isolation or fear. This outlook, which is announced almost programmatically in 1,1,9-14, where Milanion's tortured efforts to win love take place in a rocky wilderness, is reasserted in poems such as 1,18; 2,19 and 3,16 (28). If there is a typical Propertian landscape it is the bedroom. Yet in fact the setting is usually secondary: the real action is often the inner, subjective meditation of Propertius (29). In view of his preference for the city over the country, the recurrent descriptions of the natural landscape in Book 4 are all the more remarkable and suggestive of intentional design (30).

Elegy 4,1 falls into two halves (31). In the first half (4,1a, lines 1-70) Propertius guides a visitor through Rome; in the second half the Babylo-

STEIN, *Die Elegien des Sextus Propertius*, I, Berlin, 1898, p. 133 thought the extensive description of the spring here was in striking contrast to the usual brevity of Propertius' accounts.

(27) W. R. NETHERCUT, *Recent Scholarship on Propertius* in *ANRW* II.30.2, Berlin, 1983, p. 1845-1846; see also E. W. LEACH, *The Rhetoric of Space. Literary and Artistic Representations of Landscape in Republican and Augustan Rome*, Princeton, 1988, p. 210; M. HUBBARD, *Propertius*, New York, 1975, p. 164-169.

(28) Literary imitation is at work here, too; the motif of solitude in nature may be drawn from Gallus. See *Eclogue* 10 and D. O. ROSS, JR., *Backgrounds to Augustan Poetry*, Cambridge, 1975, p. 70-74; R. WHITTAKER, *Did Gallus Write "Pastoral" Elegies?* in *CQ* 38, 1988, p. 454-458. The motif of writing one's mistress' name on trees in the wilderness (PROPERTIUS 1,18,22 and VIRGIL, *Eclogue* 10,53-54) in turn can be traced to CALLIMACHUS, *Aetia* fr. 73 (Pfeiffer).

(29) D. T. BENEDIKTSON, *Propertius: Modernist Poet of Antiquity*, Carbondale, 1989, p. 107-108.

(30) The reader's awareness of the prominence of nature in Book 4 is reinforced in a subtle way. Book 4 has a very large number of adjectives ending in *-osus*, which indicate a special abundance or richness in a quality (see TRÄNKLE *Sprachkunst des Properz* [n. 23]); a large number of these adjectives describe the world of nature: *aquosus*, 4,3,52; 4,8,1; *harenosus*, 4,1,103; 4,4,19; *hederosus*, 4,4,3; *herbosus*, 4,11,8; *nebulosus*, 4,1,123; *paludosus*, 4,6,77; *pecorosus*, 4,9,3; *plumosus*, 4,2,34; *ramosus*, 4,4,5; 4,7,81; *saetosus*, 4,1,25; *umbrosus*, 4,9,24. Three (*hederosus*, *plumosus*, *saetosus*) evidently are of Propertius' own coinage. The pictorial quality of Book 4 is also due to the fuller narrative of these elegies, suggests J. WARDEN, *Fallax Opus: Poet and Reader in the Elegies of Propertius*, Toronto, 1980, p. 97-114.

(31) I assume that the two parts constitute one poem; see WARDEN, *Fallax Opus* [n. 30], p. 137, n. 27, and C. W. MACLEOD, *Propertius 4.1* in *Collected Essays*, Oxford, 1983, p. 202-214.

nian astrologer Horos urges Propertius to avoid public themes in his poetry (4,1b, lines 71-150, which is discussed in § 5 below). 4,1a itself falls into three parts: in the first part (1-38) Propertius shows a visitor Roman monuments, contrasting their present state with their humble beginnings. He begins with Rome's earliest days, itemizing a series of primitive rites, heroes and institutions; we hear that senators and farmers wore hides (*pellitus*, 12 and 25), that farmers and shepherds celebrated crude rituals, and that soldiers fought with hardened stakes. In the second part (39-55) he hails the coming of Aeneas and recounts auspicious prophecies that the city would rise from the ashes of Troy. He concludes 4,1a (55-70) by announcing that he will write on national and aetiological themes as "Callimachus Romanus": "I shall sing of rites and days and the ancient names of places" (*sacra diesque canam et cognomina prisca locorum*, 69).

The pastoral setting of Rome is most conspicuous in the beginning of 4,1a:

*Hoc quodcumque uides, hospes, qua maxima Roma est,  
ante Phrygem Aenean collis et herba fuit;  
atque ubi Nauali stant sacra Palatia Phoebos,  
Euandri profugae procubuerunt boues.  
Fictilibus creuere deis haec aurea templa  
nec fuit opprobrium facta sine arte casa* (4,1,1-6).

The hill, grass, cattle and a meeting of the senators in a meadow (*prato*, 14) give an initial bucolic, Tibullan coloring to the picture. Yet this Rome is no *locus amoenus*; there are neither woods, shade, nor spring. If there is a constant reality to this Rome it is not of pastoral peace but of *labor* and *negotium*. This is not solely the realm of the *pastor* (24) but also of the ploughman (*arator*, 25). Instead of a shepherd's *fistula* calling flocks to water, 4,1 has a horn (*bucina*, 13) calling citizens to assembly. This Rome knows little of the pastoral world; what is most significant about the cows of Evander and the hill and grass (1-4) is that they all are superseded by an orderly society, with religious and political institutions (the senate, 11-14), and a busy citizenry who anonymously perform their public duty: *patres* (12), *quirites* (13), *pastor* (24), *arator* (25), *miles* (27). The inescapability of habitual actions is reinforced by eleven verbs in the imperfect tense in lines 13-30: the sounding horn, cattle bearing sacred objects, farmers worshipping, and a soldier sparring<sup>(32)</sup>. The festivals being celebrated are the Parilia (19), Vestalia (21), a *lustratio* at the Compitalia (23), and the Lupercalia (25-26). To be sure, the Parilia was also celebrated in Tibullus 2,5, but in the company of Pan and of Silvanus — peaceful, pastoral deities — and the celebration occasioned leisure and feasts.

(32) *cogebat*, 13; *erat*, 14; *pendebat*, 15; *gaudebant*, 21; *ducebant*, 22; *lustrabant*, 23; *litabat*, 24; *mouebat*, 25; *radiabat*, 27; *miscibat*, 28; *erat*, 30.

Here, however, the emphasis falls on the dutiful performance of mandatory rituals. In fact Propertius describes so many rituals that it is hard to imagine any *otium* in his Rome.

Propertius says little of Rome before Aeneas. All we know of Evander is that he had cattle. Yet although there is little in the way of a past, there is certainly a future for Rome. Propertius exhibits buildings and institutions at the site that were embryonic versions of ones that would become quite grand in the imperial city<sup>(33)</sup>. Even more than Virgil ever did, Propertius explains to his guest what buildings have grown from what modest origins. Propertius describes in almost every couplet in the first part of 4,1a the difference between now and then and links the two with relative pronouns or adverbs, never allowing us to lose sight of the connection (*qua* 1, *ubi* 3, *qua* 9, *quae* 11, *nunc* 11, *cum* 18, *nunc* 20, *hinc* 31, *nunc* 34, *huc* 39). Heroes prominent in Rome's growth are introduced here: Evander (4), Aeneas (2), Remus (9, 50), Tatius (30), Romulus (32), Decius and Brutus (45), and Caesar (46). This imparts a firm sense that the progress of the city has depended on their support. Rome has been created from scratch (no previous settlements pave the way), is populated by inhabitants engaged in *labor*, and grows with the sanction of the gods.

But Propertius, to a degree that Tibullus or Virgil did not, emphasizes the moral disparity between the simplicity of the past and the luxury of the present. Both Tibullus and Virgil portrayed the past as simple, though Tibullus' simplicity was more a matter of *otium* than of simple sufficiency; Virgil stressed the simplicity and poverty of Evander's town, yet rarely contrasted it explicitly with the Augustan city<sup>(34)</sup>. In Propertius 4,1a the disparity is pronounced. The opening couplets contrast *maxima Roma* with the *collis et herba*; further contrasted are the golden temples with the wooden or terracotta images of gods (5). There was no shame in a humble house (6), a hearth is the entire domain of Romulus and Remus (10); senators who wore hides now wear togas (11-12); there were no foreign gods — an unnatural and artificial intrusion (17); lean cattle led a procession for paltry sacrifices (*uilia sacra*, 22); a soldier did not even wear armor (27-28); Tatius' wealth consisted of sheep (30); once-formidable neighbors such as Bovillae, Gabii, Alba, and Fidenae are now nothing by comparison (33-36). Virtually everything in the first 38 lines of 4,1 is designed to emphasize the contrast between "then" and

(33) Propertius chooses buildings that have been built or restored by Augustus in order to make the contrast between now and then more striking: WEEBER, *Properz IV 1,1-70* [n. 23], p. 492.

(34) The only instances in Virgil are *quae nunc Romana potentia caelo aequavit* (8,99-100), the Capitol is *aurea* (348), and the site of the fashionable neighborhood Carinae has cattle in it (361): see WEEBER, *Properz IV 1,1-70* [n. 23], p. 494-495.

“now.” This all shows what advances Rome, built from scratch, has made, but it also alerts us to the danger of moral decay<sup>(35)</sup>.

Propertius’ Rome is morally problematic in another way: the site he describes is witness to a good deal of violence. I begin with religion. Like Virgil, Propertius speaks of a stern native religion: “Tarpeian Jupiter thundered from a bare rock” (*Tarpeiusque pater nuda de rupe tonabat*, 7), “the crowd trembled in suspense at the ancestral rites” (18). But Propertius also highlights the violence of the other rituals we have already mentioned, that is, the mutilated horse at the Parilia (20), the blood sacrifice of pigs at the Compitalia (23), and the inspection of entrails (24). As normal as slaughter was, this is a one-sided description of these rituals. Furthermore, the heroes populating early Rome are warriors: Aeneas, Tattius, Romulus (who, of course, killed his brother), Decius (who sacrificed himself to insure his soldiers of victory), and Brutus (who liberated Rome — and put to death his own sons, as the word *secures* [“axes”] 45 reminds us). Divine support for Rome is largely martial: Venus brings the arms of a resurgent Troy (46); Cassandra foretells Jupiter bringing arms to the Trojan survivors (53-54). The wolf that nursed Romulus and Remus is a *lupa Martia* (55) and the walls of Rome will grow from this wolf’s nourishment (*qualia creuerunt moenia lacte tuo*, 56). If being descended from wolves implied moral hardness at lines 37-38, here it is a sign of perversity. The Romulus and Remus theme is treated more directly as well. Remus’ name is used where we might expect Romulus’ (*domus Remi*, 9) and the Sibyl prophesies that “fields will be sanctified by Aventine Remus” (*Auentino rura pianda Remo*, 50), evidently referring to Remus’ death as an act of expiation for his leap over the walls. Richardson suggests that we see the murder as a religious necessity<sup>(36)</sup>, but the fact remains that this is a more explicit treatment of Remus’ death than we find in either Tibullus or Virgil. If nothing else, this act underscores the darker side of ritual in the city.

(35) 4,1a implicitly critiques *labor* in another way. In lines 1-32 human agents abound and successfully accomplish what is needed. A darker note, however, enters in lines 33-36, where Propertius lists the towns that have been destroyed by Rome or that are depopulated; towns built by human *labor* are destroyed. Thereafter activity in the poem shifts from a plane of human activity to a plane of divine prophecy, as if humans no longer matter (esp. 41-53). Only at the end of 4,1a is human *labor* efficacious again; it is Propertius’ poetic creativity. Similarly in 4,1b human activity works only with Horos’ connivance — or results in victimization and suffering — though by the end of the poem Propertius’ *labor* (4,1,139) will be to capture a girl. Not surprisingly, most instances of the word *labor* in Propertius are in amatory contexts: 1,1,9; 1,1,20; 1,6,23; 2,17,7; 2,20,32; 2,22,22; 2,23,7; 2,24,29; 2,24,34; 4,1,139; other instances refer to Hercules: 3,18,4; 4,9,17; military activity: 3,4,21; 4,10,24; or travel: 3,21,21.

(36) RICHARDSON, *Propertius* [n. 26], p. 419; cf. PROPERTIUS 3,9,50.

This, then, is not a Tibullan celebration of *otium*; Propertius 4,1a affirms an association between *labor* and *militia*. Neither does it resemble the world of *Aeneid* 8, because the site Aeneas visited was an *escape* from the martial activity Propertius portrays. Propertius has magnified the unhappy consequences of Aeneas' visit in ways that Virgil only hinted at in *Aeneid* 8, for pastoral Rome was lost as soon as the Trojans arrived.

### 3. *Tarpeia and the 'Locus Amoenus' of 4,4*

The fourth elegy tells the story of the Vestal virgin Tarpeia: making a trip to a well, she saw and fell in love with Titus Tatius, the commander of the besieging Sabines. Such was her passion for him that, after a long soliloquy in which she contemplated how to win him over (31-66), she decided to betray the citadel to him. This was easily accomplished because the Romans were celebrating the Parilia and Romulus had allowed sentinels to relax their guard. In the end, however, even Tatius saw fit to punish her for her treachery and ordered his soldiers to crush her beneath their shields.

The setting described in the opening lines is, in view of the treason and unrequited love in 4,4, deceptively idyllic:

*Tarpeium nemus et Tarpeiae turpe sepulcrum  
labor et antiqui limina capta Iouis.  
lucus erat felix hederoso conditus antro  
multaque natiuis obstrepit arbor aquis  
Silvani ramosa domus, quo dulcis ab aestu  
fistula poturas ire iubebat ouis.  
Hunc Tatius fontem uallo praecingit acerno  
fidaque suggesta castra coronat humo (4,4,1-8).*

Shade, trees, spring and a *fistula*: not even Tibullus conjured up such a cool and relaxing scene in 2,5. We have here, for the first time, a genuine and complete *locus amoenus* (37). Commentators have had difficulty fixing its location, but I suggest that this is because it is a fiction. We know of no shrine of Silvanus in the area; the spring and *lucus* could have been either at the *Tullianum* or at the *fons Iuturnae* under the Palatine (38). Propertius is far less precise than was Virgil, who seemed to pride himself on identifying the location

(37) It has virtually all the components in the prescription of E. R. CURTIUS, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. W. TRASK, Princeton, 1953, p. 195-200. The natural setting in TIBULLUS 2,5 was much sketchier.

(38) One solution is to imagine two springs in the area, which would mean that Tatius walled off a spring opposite the spring in the *locus amoenus*. This, however, requires emending *fontem* (7) to *contra*, as do W. A. CAMPS, *Propertius: Elegies Book IV*, Cambridge, 1965, and G. P. GOOLD, *Propertius*, Cambridge Mass., 1990.

of natural landmarks such as this. Furthermore the *lucus* and its spring were not among the traditional elements of the topography of Rome as we have seen it. I suggest that they never existed and are literary contrivances. Indeed, on one level the *lucus* and its spring may symbolize poetic creativity (note the presence of the *fistula*) (39).

Yet the relaxed setting serves a more immediate purpose as a contrasting backdrop to the cruder one that follows (40). The description of the grove (3-6) is brought to an abrupt halt when the spring is callously walled off: "Tatius surrounded these springs with a maple palisade (*uallo... acerno*) and encircled his camp with heaped-up earth" (7-8). Once the palisade has fenced off the spring Propertius continues to sketch in the site of Rome, and it is not a hospitable place. In the passage quoted above Propertius has alluded to the heat (*aestus*, 5) outside of the grove. The *fistula* may have been summoning sheep, but it was a war-horse that came to drink (*bellicus equus*, 14). The fields Tarpeia saw Tatius on were sandy (*harenosis... campis*, 19); no other description of the site of Rome that we have seen included sandy — and presumably less fertile — areas. Rough brambles scratch Tarpeia's arm as she returns from the spring (*hirsutis...rubicis*, 28; cf. *spinosi*, 48). A pleasance has therefore been juxtaposed with a battlefield. This anticipates Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in which settings of sensuous beauty can serve as backdrops to sinister violence (41). The *locus amoenus* may be superficially attractive, but offers false security.

Perhaps this is as it must be. The context of the Tarpeia story is the siege of Titus Tatius and warfare permeates 4.4: Tatius' walls (7-8), javelins in the Forum (12), the war horse (14), *arma* (20, 62), *castra* (31-32, 37), sentries (79), and the walls of Rome (74). We could characterize this as an Iron Age existence, were it not that an Iron Age implies an earlier Golden Age, and in fact the site of Rome in the poem seems not to have any past at all; here, as in Tibullus 2.5, no earlier settlements are mentioned. (As Tibullus knew, a *locus amoenus* is frozen in time and yields no progress or growth.) "Hard primitivism" might more aptly describe the existence we see here. Apart from gates, walls, palisades, and military encampments, there are no buildings in this Rome. The backdrop to Tarpeia's story is spare and harsh. In her soliloquy, which she speaks at night, watch-fires and the night sky (never very comforting features in any landscape) are as conspicuous as any topographical detail (*omina lunae*, 23; *ignes castrorum*, 31; *sidera*, 64). Although Propertius

(39) R. KING, *Creative Landscaping: Inspiration and Artifice in Propertius 4.4* in *CJ* 85, 1990, p. 225-246, especially p. 226-227.

(40) H.-P. STAHL, *Propertius: Love and War*, Berkeley, 1985, p. 285-300.

(41) H. PARRY, *Ovid's Metamorphoses: Violence in a Pastoral Landscape* in *TAPA* 95, 1964, p. 268-282; SEGAL, *Landscape* [n. 4], p. 1-27 and 72-89.

has introduced a number of new details, it is, on the whole, a site that Livy would recognize : *uastae solitudines*.

If the past and present landscapes offer little comfort in 4,4, neither does the future. Propertius twice invokes the “now-then” motif (*ubi nunc*, 11 and 13), but in neither case do we see anything of the *aurea Roma* that Propertius described in 4,1a. Instead : “And where now laws are dispensed for conquered lands, Sabine javelins were standing in the Roman Forum. Hills formed the wall : where now the Curia is hemmed in by buildings, a war horse was drinking from that spring” (11-14). In both instances prominent Roman institutions (the Forum and the Curia) appear to have grown from a military parade ground ; in neither instance does Propertius promise moral improvement, however much he recognizes material progress. Dispensing laws to “conquered lands” (*subactis...terris*, 11) rings more of *imperium* than it does of *pax*.

If, then, there is a permanent, innate characteristic of the city depicted in 4,4, it is brutality. There is no room for Tibullan picnickers, very little Virgilian sense of the progress of history, nor even the busy rustics of Propertius 4,1a who piously and conscientiously applied *labor* to their duties. The *labor* in 4,4 is destructive and bears no *fructus* ; moreover, Tarpeia’s treachery is an especially insidious way of annulling the *labor* of others. As in Tibullus, Virgil, and 4,1a, the native Romans are performing festival rituals, but in 4,4 their celebration of the Parilia only succeeds in letting down their guard and making themselves vulnerable to the Sabine ambush. No matter whether this ritual is dutiful *labor* or festive *otium* its outcome opens the door to violence.

The characters of this poem complement this. We could speak of *uastae solitudines* in a moral sense as well. No figure here will match the benevolence or integrity of Evander. The poem begins with a disparaging play on Tarpeia’s name (*turpe / Tarpeia*)<sup>(42)</sup>, and after she has met her death Propertius complains that the “Tarpeian Rock” does not even deserve to bear her name (4,4,93-94). Propertius had asked, “Could one death suffice for that evil girl, who wished to betray your sacred flames, Vesta ?” (17-18). Propertius departs from a more standard version of her legendary treachery (Livy 1,11,5-9) by offering a possibly mitigating factor : her motivation is love, not greed. Yet love in her case may be less tender than it is unbalanced ; she is compared to an Amazon and Bacchant (71-72)<sup>(43)</sup>. Moreover, Dionysius of Halicarnassus (2,38-40) records a version of the Tarpeia legend that had it that Tarpeia’s plan was a patriotic ruse to trick the Sabines into surren-

(42) B. WEIDEN BOYD, *Tarpeia’s Tomb : A Note on Propertius 4.4* in *AJP* 105, 1984, p. 85-86.

(43) J. WARDEN, *Another Would-be Amazon : Propertius 4,4,71-2* in *Hermes* 106, 1978, p. 177-178.

dering their shields, so that they would be more vulnerable to attack by the Romans. Tarpeia was thus a heroine. Measured against this tradition Propertius' Tarpeia looks worse. Clearly Propertius has no intention of exonerating her. Moreover, by making her a Vestal virgin and setting the occasion on the Parilia, Propertius reinforces her perfidy.

But her executioner's justice is harsh. Tatiüs — who took advantage of Tarpeia's infatuation — is himself no exemplar of higher purpose. And Romulus receives unflattering attention; he was nourished, mocks Tarpeia, by the "harsh teat of an inhuman wolf" (4,4,54) (44). The traitress is punished, but no redeeming value is affirmed. Even the world of nature is no moral center; the landscape of Rome participates in the moral and psychological torment of the poem.

#### 4. *Hercules and the Landscape of 4,9*

4,9 uses the site of Rome as a backdrop for the story of Hercules and Cacus. Hercules, tired and thirsty from the exertion of killing the monster Cacus and rescuing his cattle, begs to drink water from the spring at the shrine of the Bona Dea. He explains that he is exhausted and lists the labors he has performed. The priestess at the shrine refuses to let him enter on the grounds that entry was forbidden to men, but Hercules breaks into the shrine anyway and then dedicates on the site the Ara Maxima, which women will be forbidden to enter.

The story had been told by Evander in the *Aeneid* (8,184-301), where Hercules, a heroic opponent of anti-social *furor* and *uiolentia*, imposed civilized order on chaos. Virgil, by omitting details such as Hercules' weariness, raised the story from its bucolic kernel — Hercules herding cattle home — to a tale of heroic and epic stature (45). In the *Aeneid* the story focusses on Hercules' destruction of Cacus and concludes with the foundation of the Ara Maxima (the aetiological occasion). Propertius, on the other hand, gives only a perfunctory account of the Cacus episode and then focusses on Hercules' behavior at the Bona Dea shrine — an incident that casts Hercules in a less flattering, irreverent and even humorous light. The wit of "Callimachus Romanus" may be at work here, but the implications of this violence are serious. By smashing the doors of the shrine Hercules becomes the personification, not the opponent, of anti-social *uiolentia*. Hercules is no longer a civilizing model for Aeneas and Augustus. He might make better sense as the *exclusus amator*

(44) The prowess of Romulus that one finds in Livy's narrative plays no part here; nor does the elegy look forward to the reconciliation of the Romans and Sabines: M. WYKE, *The Elegiac Woman at Rome* in *PCPS* 33, 1987, p. 163.

(45) OTIS, *Virgil* [n. 19], p. 335.



of elegy than as an epic hero, for what caught his attention about the shrine, after all, was the laughter of the girls within<sup>(46)</sup>. Propertius, by reintroducing amusing bucolic touches such as Hercules' weariness, makes Hercules resemble rustics from the *Eclogues* or even the Cyclops of Theocritus (*Idyll* 11); Hercules the glutton was a stock feature in Hellenistic poetry<sup>(47)</sup>.

How does the landscape of Rome fit into this poem? There are actually two landscapes to be dealt with. The first is rough-hewn. Propertius speaks of Cacus' fearsome cave (*metuendo...antro*, 9; *antra*, 12) with forbidding doors (*implacidas...fores*, 14; touches borrowed from Virgil?) and the battle with Cacus seems to have been fought on a dry, dusty plain; after the battle Hercules is thirsty, hot (*aestum*, 63) and has a "beard dry with accumulated dust" (*in siccam congesta puluere barbam*, 31). Where it is not dry the land is still untamed. The swampy Velabrum (5) had not yet been drained of water. Whereas for Tibullus the Velabrum contributed to a charming vignette of a *puella* and her lover, for Propertius (with a swipe at Tibullus?) the Velabrum was simply a pool of standing water (*stagnabant*, 5); "urban waters" (*urbanas...aquis*, 6), as Propertius says, calling attention to the incongruity between the ancient swamp and the modern city. The Palatine is evidently undeveloped, for it is fit for pasture (*pecorosa Palatia*, 3; cf. *arua*, 19; *pascua*, 20).

A second, very different landscape in 4,9 is the *locus amoenus* that encloses the shrine:

*Sed procul inclusas audit ridere puellas,  
lucus ubi umbroso fecerat orbe nemus,  
femineae loca clausa deae fontisque piandos  
impune et nullis sacra resecta uiris.  
deuia puniceae uelabant limina uitae,  
putris odorato luxerat igne casa,  
populus et longis ornabat frondibus aedem  
multaque cantantis umbra tegebat auis* (4,9,23-30).

In no previous description of Rome have we heard of this grove. Although Ovid placed it at the eastern end of the Aventine (*Fasti* 5,147-153), Propertius never indicates where he imagines it to be. There may be a good reason for this. The details have a literary feel to them and are perhaps drawn more from the *Eclogues* or Theocritus than from historical reality. This artificiality is reinforced by the contrived style; lines 27-29 are all golden lines<sup>(48)</sup>. Like

(46) See W. S. ANDERSON, *Hercules exclusus: Propertius IV.9* in *AJP* 85, 1964, p. 1-12.

(47) CALLIMACHUS, *Hymn to Artemis* 142-163 and APOLLONIUS OF RHODES, *Argonautica* 4,1393-1450; H. E. PILLINGER, *Some Callimachean Influences on Propertius, Book IV* in *HSCP* 73, 1969, p. 185-186.

(48) J. WARDEN, *Epic into Elegy: Propertius 4,9,70f.* in *Hermes* 110, 1982, p. 235-236.

the grove in 4,4, this is a full-blown *locus amoenus* with shade, trees, water and singing birds. The elaborate description of this cool refuge heightens, by contrast, the sense we have of the heat and dryness of the field of battle. The *locus amoenus* is all the more obvious and vulnerable a target for Hercules' violence. Furthermore, there is a distinctly erotic tone to Hercules' assault. While he has been performing his *labor* fighting Cacus, it was the laughter of the girls playing in the grove that had attracted him (*luditis*, 33), so that his violent entry into the grove has unmistakable sexual symbolism<sup>(49)</sup>.

If the literary qualities of the landscape are important it is because the poem is ahistorical. The story is largely self-contained, with reference neither to the future of Rome nor to its past. Apart from describing the establishment of the Ara Maxima, Propertius traces few continuities between "then" and "now". No landmarks are described beyond what is strictly necessary to the plot; there are no *monimenta* of earlier settlements. Evander is conspicuously absent.

Lacking this larger historical framework, it is not easy to make a moral assessment of Hercules' actions. *Labor* is surely one of the themes of this poem; after all, the killing of Cacus is part of one of the Twelve Labors, the fetching of Geryon's cattle. Hercules broke into the shrine, but has killed Cacus, drunk water, and dedicated the Ara Maxima. Did the dedication of the Ara Maxima redeem his violence? Did he act justly in breaking into the sanctuary and in drinking water capriciously denied to him, or was it unjust for him to violate the prohibition against men entering? The priestess invokes a divine privilege of sorts when she reminds Hercules about Tiresias' punishment for seeing Athena bathing (57) whereas Hercules claims that even Juno would support him (43-44, cf. 71). Which appeal is the more powerful? There is no clear answer to any of these questions; his *labor* is morally ambiguous. This may be intentional, of course, since Propertius' aim is perhaps as much a matter of Callimachean wit as of morality.

We might also detect some philosophical polemic in this poem. Virgil, as we have seen, depicted Hercules as a cornerstone of civilization. Yet for Lucretius the great victories of civilization were not defeating monsters and beasts but overcoming the passions (5,22-54). If the *Aeneid* was intended, in part, to reaffirm the importance of Hercules' role in founding Rome<sup>(50)</sup>, surely Propertius has undercut this reaffirmation by showing Hercules to be a creature of his natural desires. He acts more in response to his thirst than to any higher reason (note *sitis*, 62, 70) and uses violence when persuasion fails. (The grim truth of the *Aeneid*, of course, is that Aeneas eventually responds this way too — though not at the site of Rome).

(49) WARDEN, *Epic into Elegy* [n. 48], p. 239, n. 30.

(50) P. R. HARDIE, *Virgil's Aeneid: Cosmos and Imperium*, Oxford, 1986, p. 213.

It is true that Hercules dedicates the Ara Maxima, though it may be that the aetiology that Propertius is interested in expounding is simply how it came to be that women are excluded from it<sup>(51)</sup>; the accomplishment, then, is a small one. Another aetiology that the poem explains — the origin of the name of the Forum Boarium — also seems a bit silly. The name, it develops, comes from the sound of the cattle; he tells the cattle to “hallow with long lowing the Bovarian fields” (*aruaque mugitu sancite Bouaria longo*, 19). This, too, belittles what Hercules has accomplished.

### 5. *Patterns of Nature and History*

For poets and artists through the centuries the city of Rome has symbolized some immortal or transcendental quality. For Tibullus it was a pastoral Golden Age; in *Aeneid* 8 it was the site of converging historical forces, culminating in an Augustan Golden Age. Since the fall of Rome the image of the ruined city — especially the Forum, with sheep grazing in it — has been an emblem of *uanitas*, the transience of earthly wealth and power. For Byron, the overgrown site signified a reconciliation between nature and art: the architectural remains had survived to transcend human limitations, and the vegetative growth had only enhanced the spectacle (“Oh, Time! the beautifier of the dead, / Adorner of the ruin...” [*Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* CXXX]). Propertius, I suspect, saw a Rome that was subject to a process of natural decay. Various factors in 4,1; 4,4 and 4,9 point in this direction: (a) his suppression of the Golden Age and (b) his view of nature as resistant to, or even overwhelming, human accomplishments. This view is in harmony with other poems of Book 4 as well.

Propertius' suppression of the Golden Age is especially conspicuous if it is set in the religious and literary context of the late first century B.C., when interest in the Golden Age reached its apogee. Of course it had been a feature of Roman religious thought for some time: *Ludi Saeculares* had been held in 249 B.C. and in 146 B.C.; presumably new ones would have been scheduled in either 49 or 46 B.C.<sup>(52)</sup>, but they were finally held in 17 B.C. and were the greatest religious festival of Augustus' reign<sup>(53)</sup>. The notion that a new *saeculum* had been ushered in was buttressed not only by the Parthian settlement of 20 B.C. but by the success of the principate in maintaining order and prosperity. The program of the *Ludi* was worked out in great detail under the supervision of the *quindecimviri sacris faciundis* (Messallinus'

(51) MILLER, *Callimachus* [n. 6], p. 388-389.

(52) This is traced in S. WEINSTOCK, *Divus Julius*, Oxford, 1971, p. 175-196.

(53) Augustus included these *ludi* in the *Res Gestae* (22,2); see P. A. BRUNT and J. M. MOORE, ed. *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, Oxford, 1967, p. 64-65.

priesthood, celebrated by Tibullus in 2,5). Because a comet was expected in 17 B.C., coins were issued with the *sidus Iulium* in that year<sup>(54)</sup>. The notion of a new Golden Age deeply influenced art: the Tellus relief of the Ara Pacis (13-19 B.C.) depicted babies, fruit, corn, herds, flocks — all within a lush landscape<sup>(55)</sup>; in this spirit the *Ludi Saeculares* had required a ritual offering of first fruits from the people of the Aventine, as if they were peasants of bygone times.

The Golden Age was ubiquitous in poetry. *Eclogue* 4 (ca. 40 B.C.) described a Saturnian Age and a Golden Race (*gens aurea*, *Ecl.* 4,9). Horace, of course, had imagined such a utopian existence only possible in the Isles of the Blessed, not at Rome (*Epode* 16,41-66). But once the principate of Augustus had been established, a Saturnian or Golden Age no longer seemed as remote. We have already considered *Aeneid* 8 and Tibullus 2,5; Tibullus also gave a picturesque account of the Saturnian Age in 1,3. In the *Georgics* (29 B.C.) Virgil associated the Saturnian Age with Italian country life and the seven hills of Rome (2,532-540, cf. 1,125-128); Varro thought that Saturn gave his name to country-dwelling "sowers" (*sator*, *Res Rusticae* 3,1,4-5). Horace's *Carmen Saeculare* was certainly written in the same spirit<sup>(56)</sup>. Later (ca. 7 B.C.) Dionysius of Halicarnassus recounted the legend of Saturn's rule in Italy: he knew it was a myth, but it explained the abundance of the Italian countryside (1,36,1-3). Ovid, too, related the tradition that Saturn had settled in Italy (*Fasti* 1,235-238). All of these writers, in large ways or small, integrated the Golden Age into the grand scheme of Roman history.

Except Propertius. Nothing in Propertius IV points to a Golden Age. This is not because Propertius was ignorant of the myth; he invoked it twice in earlier books. At 2,32,49-56 he complained that the chastity which girls observed in the age of Saturn was gone. But he said nothing about a return of a Saturnian Age; his point was to inveigh against the corruption of the present. So too in 3,13,25-47 he recites the traditional elements of the myth — a simple life in the country when lovers were at ease and the earth gave up fruit spontaneously — but he contrasts this with the present, when shrines are deserted and gold is worshipped. (The only gold here represents corruption.) In neither 2,32 nor 3,13 did Propertius associate the myth of Saturn with the site of Rome; the poems recall the pessimistic retreat to the Isles of the Blessed in *Epode* 16.

(54) On the comet see Suetonius, *Divus Iulius* 88 and Virgil, *Eclogue* 9,47-50; Zanker, *Power of Images* [n. 3], p. 108; Weinstock, *Divus Julius* [n. 52], p. 196.

(55) Zanker, *Power of Images* [n. 3], p. 167-182; E. Simon, *Ara Pacis Augustae*, New York, 1970, p. 13-14, 26-29.

(56) For the *ludi* and the *Carmen Saeculare* see E. Fraenkel, *Horace*, Oxford, 1957, p. 365-382.

In the fourth book only one phrase could be construed as a reference to the Golden Age: Propertius calls the temples of Rome "golden" (*aurea templa*, 4,1,5). There is, however, no firm reason to see in this an allusion to a Golden Age under Augustus. It may simply be a way of indicating how much at odds contemporary Rome was with the simple rusticity of the past, as Propertius did elsewhere in 4,1. Furthermore, an examination of the thirty instances of *aurum*, *auratus* and *aureus* in Propertius suggests that in only a few instances is gold valuable (a sacred object, the golden fleece and Cynthia); the clear majority of uses suggest corruption or decline — the extravagances of 3,13 are good examples<sup>(57)</sup>. Finally, the expression need not even be figurative, for the roof tiles of the temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline had literally been gilded by Propertius' time<sup>(58)</sup>.

The absence of the Golden Age from Propertius' depictions of Rome has important consequences. Propertius cannot avail himself of a mythical model for the *locus amoenus* to which Tibullus retreats; neither, however, can he rely on the framework of the cyclical forces of history which are so prominent in the *Aeneid*. Even if the *Aeneid* concedes the eventual arrival of an inferior age (*decolor aetas*, 8,326) there is at least the possibility of yet another Golden Age to succeed it. Nor has Propertius contrived any divine guidance to take the place of a Golden Age. The Saturn who gives laws is absent from Book 4; gods and goddesses are most conspicuous in 4,1a by bringing *arma* and offer no clear counsel in 4,4 or 4,9. Rejection of the Golden Age also implies rejection of an important plank in Augustus' claims to leadership, since, as we have seen, the renewal of Rome was cast as a Golden Age. Wallace-Hadrill has suggested that Augustus, as a Saturnian king, could erase the *scelus* of the Roman people, provided that they willingly submit to him<sup>(59)</sup>. For Propertius to ignore the Golden Age is to reject this avenue of redemption and to leave the city vulnerable to stagnation and decay.

The omission of the Golden Age brings us to a second, closely related, theme: nature's resistance to human activity. Nature, far from providing the sponta-

(57) Valuable items are: the *crater* of 3,17,37; Phoebus' lyre at 3,3,14; the temple of Apollo on the Palatine at 2,31,1; the golden fleece at 2,26a,6 and 3,1,12; *aurea Cynthia* is surely praise at 4,7,85, and probably means more than just "blonde"; a golden locket at 4,1,131; at 3,23,7 and 21 it is clear that gold is valuable but not as valuable as a book — here gold may symbolize anti-Callimachean poetry: see CAIRNS, *Tibullus* [n. 6], p. 76. Usually gold carries negative connotations, for example: 1,8b,39; 2,1,33; 3,2,12; 3,5,3; 3,12,12; 3,13,5; 3,13,48; 3,13,49; 3,13,50; 3,13,55; 3,13,57; 4,1,81; 4,5,21; 4,5,53; 4,7,40; 4,10,28.

(58) Cf. *Aeneid* 8,348 and BINDER, *Aeneas und Augustus* [n. 2], p. 128.

(59) A. WALLACE-HADRILL, *The Golden Age and Sin in Augustan Ideology in Past and Present* 95, 1982, p. 29-32.

neous nourishment that the Golden Age should foster, generally conspires against human progress in 4,1 ; 4,4 and 4,9.

In 4,1 the world of nature confirms this poem's grim depiction of existence in Rome. In a few initial instances Propertius personifies the earth so it can act in concert with Rome's rise and respond to human efforts : Propertius says that the *felix terra* (48) itself received the Trojan gods ; once Rome is founded the "Ilian land will live" (*Ilia tellus uiuet*, 53-54). Yet more often the site represents something more destructive and less promising than the *labor-fructus* ideal. The *aurea templa* (5), the awnings and incense at the theater (15-16), and the introduction of foreign gods (18) are all unnatural, artificial intrusions on the native simplicity. So too, certainly, is the hardened stake that the soldier fields as a weapon — a tree branch has been turned into an instrument of violence. Ilium may be reborn, as *Ilia uiuet* implies, yet the reborn city receives *arma* (53-54). That a wolf should have nursed Romulus and Remus may seem natural in one sense — the animal world acts in harmony with humans — yet in another sense it is highly unnatural, and the thought that the walls should grow from the wolf's milk (56) perverts nature to a militaristic end. Where nature is put to use, then, it is for ultimately destructive purposes.

4,1b continues to distance the city from the productive growth of nature. In the poem's second half we leave the site of Rome for the lake and mists of the plain of Umbria, Propertius' birthplace. But it was a home he would lose, because the untimely death of his father was followed by the confiscation of his farm.

*ossaque legisti non illa aetate legenda  
patris et in tenuis cogeris ipse lares :  
nam tua cum multi uersarent rura iuueni,  
abstulit excultas pertica tristis opes.  
mos ubi bulla rudi dimissa est aurea collo,  
matris et ante deos libera sumpta toga... (4,1,127-132).*

To equate this with a loss of Eden would be an exaggeration, yet it would be a poetic truth, I suspect, for we will rarely find in Book 4 any sort of harmonious growth of nature and society. But just as the second half of 4,1 turns its attention away from Rome and her setting it also offers a positive alternative to the patriotic and aetiological program Propertius had announced at the end of the first half of 4,1 : elegy. Says Horos to Propertius (continuing the above) :

*Tum tibi pauca suo de carmine dictat Apollo  
et uetat insano uerba tonare Foro.  
at tu finge elegos, fallax opus : haec tua castra !  
scribat ut exemplo cetera turba tuo (4,1,133-136).*

Here the military language (*castra*) is the vehicle, not the tenor. Elegy will be his vocation. If Rome produces soldiers, Umbria produces poets (60).

In 4,4 Tarpeia implicitly detaches the city from its landscape when she speaks of "Roman hills, and Rome that is added to them" (*Romani montes, et montibus addita Roma*, 35), as if they lacked any organic connection with one another. Water lacks the benign connotations that the idyllic spring of lines 3-6 might have initially promised; water is transformed into a symbol of deception. Says Tarpeia, "Capture the dewy (*rorida*) ridges of the thorny hill. The entire path is slippery (*lubrica*) and treacherous (*perfida*), for it hides silent waters (*aquas*) under its deceptive (*fallaci*) track" (48-50) (61). Equally slippery are the lilies (*argentea lilia*, 25) that Tarpeia offers the nymphs. Lilies are not innocent flowers: Hylas was picking them (*candida lilia*, 1,20,37) when he was seized by nymphs — and it was lilies that Proserpina was plucking before she was carried off in Ovid (*Met.* 5,386-392, cf. *Fasti* 4,442) (62). The world of nature in Propertius 4,4, therefore, is ultimately either inhospitable or colludes with darker forces.

Three times in 4,9 Propertius has virtually personified the earth, *terra*. Earth refuses water to the thirsty Hercules: "Though teeming (*feta*) the earth does not supply any water" (*terraque non ullas feta ministrat aquas*, 22); Hercules says that since he held the globe for Atlas, "The earth, once taken back, names me Alcides" (*Alciden terra recepta uocat*, 38); and after he has broken into the shrine and drunk it dry he complains, "This earth barely offers open access to me, tired though I am" (*haec fesso uix mihi terra patet*, 66) (63). Earth has a will of her own in this poem, and in two of these three instances she clearly resents Hercules' presence. If this does not resolve the moral ambiguity of Hercules' actions, it at least reminds us of his destructive relationship with the world of nature. It might be relevant that the homes he destroyed of Cacus and of the Bona Dea, though they have doors (*fores*, 14; *postis*, 61), are said to be "caves" or "groves" (*antra*, 9, 12 and 33) and are therefore natural features. His labors, he reminds the priestess, involved killing animals: "Never did my arrows fly in vain at monstrous beasts" (*numquam ad uastas irrita tela feras*, 40). He is, then, a counterpart to the *arator* in Virgil's *Georgics* who

(60) For this point, I thank an anonymous reader.

(61) For the theme of the cool spring where violence erupts see F. E. BRENK, *Tarpeia among the Celts: Watery Romance, from Simylus to Propertius* in *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History*, I, ed. Carl DEROUX, Brussels, 1979, (Collection Latomus 164), p. 172-174. Water, moreover, is antithetical to Vesta; see H. RUTLEDGE, *Propertius' Tarpeia: The Poem Itself* in *CJ* 60, 1964, p. 68-73.

(62) SEGAL, *Landscape* [n. 4], p. 34, n. 64 and n. 65. Furthermore flowers were forbidden to Vestals, observes WARDEN, *Another Would-be Amazon* [n. 43], p. 108-109.

(63) This line has the same effect whether it is set after 41 or kept at 66. If after 41, the reluctance of the earth to accept him is held against Juno.

by plowing destroys the homes of birds (2,207-211). Hercules' activity, though a necessary step in the founding of Rome, is intrusive, at odds with nature.

A logical extension of this recalcitrant behavior on the part of nature in 4,1 ; 4,4 and 4,9 is the notion that the city would one day be conquered and revert to a state of nature. Such was the fate of Rome's old rival, Veii, which had been destroyed centuries earlier and which appears in Propertius 4,10 :

*heu Vei ueteres ! et uos tum regna fuistis,  
et uestro posita est aurea sella foro :  
nunc intra muros pastoris bucina lenti  
cantat, et in uestris ossibus arua metunt* (4,10,27-30).

The throne had been removed to Rome (Livy 1,8,3) and the pastoral tone immediately recalls the descriptions of Rome in 4,1 ; 4,4 and 4,9. The image of an urban setting reverting to its natural state serves as a reminder of the fleeting nature of fame and is all the more foreboding in 4,10 because this elegy is about the temple of Jupiter Feretrius, which had just been restored by Augustus (*Res Gestae* 19). The countryside at Veii's site is obviously fertile — note the shepherd and grain — but it acts to erase the site of the city. When Virgil imagines the ruins of earlier cities, such as those of Janus or Saturn (*Aeneid* 8,355-358), he sees a landscape that will become another, grander city. Propertius, on the other hand, tends to see an urban landscape that will revert to its former, natural state. In 4,9, before Rome had been founded, we glimpsed the overgrowth of the garlands enveloping the threshold of the crumbling cabin (27-28). This motif was developed in 4,1,33-36 : once-important towns such as Gabii and Fidenae are now depopulated, while Bovillae is a mere suburb and Alba has been destroyed (64). Such a cycle of decline is no comfort to Augustus' visions of a reinvigorated Rome, especially in light of his concerns about the falling birthrate (65). This is a step toward Virgil's *deserta regna pastorum* (*Georgics* 3,476-477) where the earth ran amok when cultivation of fields by humans ceased (*squalent arua*, 1,507), and toward the disintegration of Rome imagined by Horace : "The land will be possessed again by beasts" (*ferisque rursus occupabitur solum*, *Epode* 16,10). Of course

(64) H. E. BUTLER and E. A. BARBER, *The Elegies of Propertius*, Oxford, 1933, p. 325. When in Book 3 Propertius wrote of the "neglected shrines in deserted groves" (*desertis cessant sacra lucis*, 3,13,47) he was attacking the lack of piety in modern times, but perhaps anticipated the theme of encroaching nature.

(65) Although it is unnecessary to consider Propertius anti-Augustan, he can fairly be said to be un-Augustan or anti-political. The relevant poetic considerations are discussed by S. COMMAGER, *A Prolegomenon to Propertius*, Cincinnati, 1974, p. 37-77 ; for possible personal motivations see J. GRIFFIN, *Latin Poets and Roman Life*, Chapel Hill, 1986.



Propertius on the Site of Rome

- Tibullus 2.5 (19-18 B.C. ?)**  
 Pastoral *otium* (esp. 23-28)  
*fructus* with little *labor*  
 shepherds and lovers  
*locus amoenus* ? (25-28)<sup>¶</sup>  
 Nature ornamental : grass, trees
- Aeneid 8 (19 B.C.)**  
 Little *otium, labor* of civilization  
 will be efficacious  
 Hercules-Cacus *exemplum* (185-275)  
 Nature comes alive, assists : Tiber speaks (36-85),  
 waves and woods marvel (91-92)  
 no *locus amoenus*
- Propertius 4.1 ; 4.4 ; 4.9 (16 B.C. ?)**  
*Labor* morally ambiguous : Hercules  
 ruins Bona Dea shrine (4,9)  
 Nature vulnerable or inhospitable ;  
*locus amoenus* used as a  
 background to violence (4,4)  
 Water symbolizes deception (4,4)  
 Rituals : violent, sacrificial, cruel (4,1)  
 Gods give military help (4,1)  
 Silvanus' home fenced in (4,4)  
 Parilia allows Sabine attack (4,4)  
 No Evander or Evander-like figure  
 Many monuments, past simplicity in  
 contrast to present luxury  
 Once powerful cities  
 now insignificant (4,1, cf. 4,10)
- Religio terrebat** (349)  
 gods stern but rewarding
- Palatine already settled by Evander** (98)  
 Many monuments mentioned (337-361)  
 The past is a seed for future greatness  
 Earlier cities on Capitoline, Janiculum  
*uirum monumenta priorum* (312, cf. 356)  
 city past a model for city future
- Palatine grazed by cows** (25)  
 Monuments and topography  
 largely ignored  
 No earlier cities  
 no walls before Romulus
- Aeneas peripheral**  
 Aeneas as Hercules ? (362-368)  
 War omnipresent (55)  
 but decisive  
 Engaged in history's progress
- Omens of war** (speaking groves and  
 cattle, 45-50, 71-78)  
 But war is transitional  
 Escapist, static, outside of history
- Aeneas peripheral**  
 Aeneas peripheral  
 4,1 militaristic : fight to standstill (4,4) ;  
 soldier's horn (*bucina*) replaces  
*fistula* at shady spring (4,4)  
 Natural processes of decay overtake  
 civilization  
 No Golden Age ; Iron-age existence ?  
 But little prospect of improvement
- Saturian Golden Age** (321-325)  
 Golden Age connected with Augustus  
 (338-341, cf. 6,792-793)
- Saturian Golden Age**  
 cyclical : Parilia,  
*felix et sacer annus* (82)  
 Augustus not connected  
 with Golden Age

Propertius is not concerned with the cultivation of fields. Here nature has reclaimed not only fields but buildings and sites of habitation.

That the transience of humans and the endurance of nature are part of a deeper pattern is suggested by its presence in other poems of Book 4 that are not set at the ancient site of Rome. Three poems are about the dead : Acanthis (4,5), Cynthia (4,7), and Cornelia (4,11) all speak to us from the grave. In 4,5 Propertius hopes the earth will cover Acanthis' grave with brambles (*terra tuum spinis obducat, lena, sepulcrum*, 4,5,1), and he ends the poem hoping that a fig tree — because the notorious root growth of the fig tree could destroy monuments (cf. Juvenal 10,144-145) — will press down on her (4,5,76). Near the end of 4,7 Cynthia speaks of the ivy and berries that cover her tomb ; she hopes that an inscription will tell the passer-by she lies in Tibur's soil, near the Anio river (79-86). Only now, in death, and only here in the Propertian corpus, is she *aurea* (85). Cynthia, like the throne at Veii, is golden only when lost (as was the golden locket of Propertius' youth in 4,1b,131). Cornelia laments that the gate of Hades bolts out "grassy tombs" (*herbosos rogos*, 4,11,8). That earth should cover one's bones was a commonplace in poetry and epitaphs, and occasionally flowers grow there also ; but rarely does vegetation flourish so indiscriminately (66). As with cities, so too with human beings : nature reclaims her own. Ironically vines and garlands, frequently repeated on sculpture in the Augustan period, were intended to proclaim fertility (67). We find, then, that the Umbrian poet is sensitive to nature's implacable progress and is prepared to employ it, but not in order to herald the fertility of the countryside. The most sympathetic natural settings Book 4 offers are the *loci amoeni* of elegies 4 and 9 — settings that are in fact neither safe nor peaceful.

Elsewhere in Book 4 nature, even if it does not overwhelm human civilization, remains antagonistic. In 4,2 the deity Vertumnus lists the fruits and vegetables that are offered to him : grapes, corn, cherries, plums, mulberries, apples, cucumbers, and gourds (11-18, 43-44), but Propertius' purpose in describing how these fruits and vegetables grow and ripen is less to herald the benevolence of nature than to emphasize how mutable it is. The theme of the poem is the changeable character of natural phenomena (68). Further-

(66) For the earth covering the bones, see CATULLUS 65,7, TIBULLUS 2,4,50, PROPERTIUS 1,17,24, OVID, *Amores* 1,8,108, 3,9,68 ; consult TRÄNKLE, *Sprachkunst des Properz* [n. 23], p. 98-99. Epigraphical parallels can be found in R. LATTIMORE, *Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs*, Urbana, 1962, p. 65-74 and 130-136.

(67) It was vegetation that caught Shelley's eye as well ; in his visit to Rome he was struck by the overgrowth of olive, myrtle, fig, weeds and grass ; see his letter of 17 or 18 December 1818 in F. L. JONES, ed. *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, Oxford, 1964, p. 57-64.

(68) WYKE, *The Elegiac Woman* [n. 44], p. 156 also sees the changing yet singular nature of Vertumnus as programmatic for the organization of Book 4.

more, not every fruit is suited to the motif of earth's generosity to humankind. For example, the apples grow because their branches have been grafted onto a pear tree, and the pear tree was unhappy about this (*inuito stipite*, 18, with a hint of personified will). This motif of nature subordinated to human use is also at work when Vertumnus indicates that his statue was carved of maple (*acernus*, 59). In poetry (as in life) maple was frequently exploited for human use; the palisade that Tatius erected in the Tarpeia poem was also made of maple (4,4,7); as was the Trojan horse in the *Aeneid* (2,112). In Propertius 4,3 Arethusa, whose husband is on a Parthian campaign, curses the man who pulled a branch from an innocent tree, to be used as a soldier's rampart (4,3,19). This also corresponds to the relationship between Hercules and the earth; we recall that in the *Georgics* human beings and nature were occasionally in a state of war (69).

Thus Propertius' Rome was no idealized past of rustic simplicity, and the lessons to be drawn from this past are not especially encouraging: (1) There will be no Golden Age to return to, no cycle of renewal, no opportunity for Rome to reclaim her lost simplicity. (2) Even if this past were to be reclaimed, it would not be a model for the renewal of human behavior. Instead of the culture heroes Saturn, Evander, Aeneas, and Hercules the killer of Cacus, Propertius offers Tarpeia and a Hercules who breaks into the Bona Dea shrine. These figures of bygone days are too tainted or contradictory to represent the moral superiority of the past. (3) Nature, at the site of Rome and elsewhere, consistently undermines human progress.

In expounding these views Propertius has followed the precedent of the *Georgics*. Perhaps he has also charted the path that Ovid would eventually take, for the idyllic landscapes of 4,4 and 4,9, as we have seen, resembled the *loci amoeni* of the *Metamorphoses*, which were witness to violence. But more often, except for those two pleasancess, Propertius has depicted a natural setting that seems more suited to the Iron Age than the Golden: a rough-hewn, overgrown site that will require thankless *labor* before a semblance of civilization can be brought to it. Ovid, too, tended to depict the early site of Rome as wild and inhospitable. In Book 3 of the *Ars Amatoria* (published between 2. B.C. and A.D. 2) Ovid sneered at the primitive life of early Rome and saw no good reason to return to the crude and rigid morality of ancient rustics, preferring instead the civilized existence (*cultus*) of the modern city (3,113-128) (70). Such a position makes good sense only once the early site of the city had been shown for what it was: a wilderness.

(69) On the violation of nature see THOMAS, *Tree Violation* [n. 21].

(70) See B. OTIS, *Ovid as an Epic Poet*, Cambridge, 1966, p. 18-21 and 126-127;

Book 4, to be sure, is shot through with ambiguity and Callimachean wit ; consequently there is no need to impose a heavy-handed pessimism on it. Yet the imagery that had been so confident in Tibullus and Virgil (however much they differ in other details) becomes decidedly less so in Propertius' hands (71).

*University of Massachusetts at Boston.*

Kenneth S. ROTHWELL, Jr.

E. W. LEACH, *Georgic Imagery in the Ars Amatoria* in *TAPA* 95, 1964, p. 142-154. Even when Ovid contrasts modern immorality with ancient simplicity in the *Fasti*, the pre-urban site is still cast as one with comically rustic conditions (1,197-208).

(71) I would like to thank Charles F. Ahern, Jr., Peter E. Knox, Steven E. Ostrow, and several anonymous readers for their help in shaping this paper.