

least fresh, and in all, though he means no more and says no more than "Snow-white and Rosy-red," what lady would not prefer her complexion to be celebrated with the elaboration of grammatical, geographical and metrical artifice? This is, however, dangerous. Antithesis as an aid has a certain value; as an end in itself it is valueless. Two or three examples will serve to show the of degeneration.

Qui dare multa potest multa et amare potest.

Hujus ero vivus, mortuus hujus ero.

Calve, tua venia, pace, Catulle, tua.

For valuelessness the last line would be hard to match. Cynthia becomes in the end something like the string in barley-sugar, an object round which verses may crystallize, all crystalline and much alike.

Again a poet of wide reading has another resource. Propertius like many fops and fribbles was a great reader. He had the *Chronique Scandaleuse* of Olympus at his finger's ends, and he had ample lessons in the use of it in his favourite poets of Alexandria. The proper name in poetry—in Virgil, Milton and a dozen others—switches the reader off on to old associations (if he have any), and beguiled by these he returns to read on and attribute to the new the witchery borrowed from the old. In moderation as used by a master, this trick is really happy and lawful. In the hands of a botcher or a pedant (and they are the same) it becomes terrible. Propertius deluges us with a flood of such allusions till witchery is replaced by boredom. It is no longer art, it is pure ostentation. Postumus had in Galla a very Penelope—it was apparently good taste for a Roman to congratulate a friend on his wife's chastity—the allusion here is graceful and happy.

Postumus alter erit miranda conjuge Ulixes:

Vincet Penelopes Aelia Galla fidem.

A pretty couplet, but—not Propertius', for between the two lines he interposes fourteen, in which he tells after his manner the story of Ulysses' wanderings, which are irrelevant at best, and as here told obscure. The oxen of the Sun are *Lampetie juveni* and he adds a note to explain that Lampetie was the Sun's daughter, who fed them. Calypso is *Ataca puella*; and we have some geography of the voyage which is more mystifying still—and all this is digression, not merely pointless and centrifugal but fatal to the reader's interest in Galla, for he gets lost in a mythological and geographical tangle.

He is not always so unsuccessful. Now and again he mints a phrase or turns a line of admirable quality. Could the degenerate Roman be more scathingly described than in the line

Nil patrium nisi nomen habet Romanus alumnus?

or Augustan Rome than in this,

Luxuriae Roma magistra suae,
(where the sting is in the tail) or this

Fictilibus crevere deis haec aurea templa?

Yet even this faculty runs to seed. To speak of Roman walls being grown from the she-wolf's milk (*qualia creverunt moenia lacte tuo*) is pushing things too far. In the poem on the death of Paetus he has some fine pictures of the drowning man,

Cum moribunda niger clauderet ora liquor;

and of his weltering in the deep,

Sed tua nunc volucres astant super ossa marinae,

Nunc tibi pro tumulo Carpathium omne mare est:

But now the wheeling gulls hang over thee,

For tomb thou hast the whole Carpathian sea:

but he can also write of a friend

Et nova longinquis piscibus esca natas:

Floating a novel meal for foreign fish!

Another weakness is his pitiful ambition. Horace, in his epilogue to three books of odes unequalled except in Greek, claims immortality. Virgil keeps more in the back-ground, and Homer and the author of the Psalms quite forgot to reveal their own names at all. Propertius devotes a great deal of time and thought to his future glory. Umbria shall be known as *his* country—the land of the Roman Callimachus. But I fear even here he is disappointed, for his native town is better known for St. Francis of Assisi than for the erotic poet it was blest enough to produce. Still at least there is elegiac poetry for his monument, which he first wrote in Latin (forgetting Tibullus for the moment) and which will be his eternal achievement. And a great achievement it was for a boy of nineteen or twenty to produce even so spluttering a book as his first—the Cynthia Monobiblos—in a metre Catullus had failed in but which now metrically and musically proved itself as strong and pliant as any yet known to Latin poetry, for the odes of Horace were not yet published and Virgil's hexameter we must set by itself. The medium as developed by Propertius is nervous and forceful—and had he had anything great to say, it might have had a better fate. For here, too, disappointment overtook him or his Manes. Ovid went further and produced something neater, nattier and nicer, and ever since elegiacs have been written after the Ovidian model.

The doctrine is sometimes propounded that Art has nothing of necessity to do with Morality—that as fine work may be done by the immoral as by the moral artist—that the moral worth of a poem or a picture is no index to its artistic worth—in other words that a Cynthia may be as good as a Beatrice in nerving, inspiring and uplifting a poet. From the work of such men as Homer, Virgil and Shakespeare the presumption is surely against this, but here we have a test case, and few I suppose will set Dante