

BOOK REVIEW

Introspection and Engagement in Propertius: A Study of Book 3. By JONATHAN WALLIS. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018. Pp. 241. Hardback, \$99.99. ISBN: 978-1-108-41717-4.

Wallis presents Propertius' third book as a collection that revises elegiac expectations and values to adapt them to the changing socio-political landscape of Rome under Augustus. He demonstrates how Propertius expands the capacities of elegy by putting it in competition with (or assimilating it to) Vergil (epic) and Horace (lyric). The book began as a doctoral thesis and has been revised over the course of a decade. Wallis regularly engages with bibliography from the intervening years, particularly Heyworth's 2007 new edition (while sticking to Fedeli's Teubner as his text) and Heyworth and Morwood's 2011 commentary. References to the latter are complemented by frequent engagement with the work of, e.g., James, Wyke and Keith. Wallis acknowledges but does not engage with some secondary scholarship that would nicely complement some of his points: Veyne's 1983 *L'élégie érotique romaine*, for instance, or the theoretical angles of Janan (e.g., *The Politics of Desire*, 2001) and P. A. Miller (e.g., *Subjecting Verses*, 2003).

There are several threads running through this monograph. For Wallis, many of the seemingly "unelegiac" elements of Book 3 have elegiac origins or, at least, latent elegiac sympathies. Elegy's approach to *fides* is less about infidelity itself than about an extreme paranoia about possible infidelity and, in turn, a performance of *fides*. Following on the "typical elegiac slippage between literal and literary" (57), the author is also interested in metapoetics. Another of Wallis' reading strategies is to focus on the poem's audience: Propertius (or another character) speaks to other characters or his beloved with one purpose, but we overhear it with another idea in mind. This is important as it allows us, as readers, to think our way around Book 3's stream of apparent generic paradoxes.

The author gives 14 of the 24 poems in the collection thorough consideration, treating 8 poems in individual chapters and devoting a chapter each to the triads 3.1-3 and 3.9-11. Engagement with the remaining 10 poems ranges from

mention to omission. It is strange to read the claim that “a focus on linear reading remains fundamental” (5), for instance, and then see no references to 3.5 or 3.7 in the chapter on 3.6. Each chapter is readable on its own, though the chapters on 3.6, 3.12, and 3.20 should be read together for Wallis’ view of the evolution of *fides*. Some omissions are surprising in light of the sustained interest in fidelity: there is no real engagement with 3.13, for instance, which seems to have a lot to say about *fides*.

One of the pleasures in reading Wallis is his ability to recognize and explore verbal repetitions within Book 3 that demonstrate significant developments (e.g., reading *mirabar* 3.10.1 with *mirare* 3.11.1, where private becomes public (84)). We also regularly encounter interesting explorations of references between texts, like 3.1.23-4’s use of *maior* with *Aeneid* 7.44-5 (28). Sometimes the weight placed on allusions and wordplays is more than they can hold: on page 67f., for example, we read about how Lucretius’ phrase *te duce* (*DRN* 6.95, of Calliope) frames Propertius’ address of *te duce* (3.9.47) to Maecenas as a poetic invocation, but the phrase does not seem like an altogether unique formulation (cf. Horace, *Odes* 1.2.52 or 1.6.4).

I found Chapters 4 (on 3.12) and 7 (on 3.18) the most compelling. In 3.12, Postumus breaks all the rules of the elegiac lover, and Galla defies all the expectations of the elegiac beloved. Wallis demonstrates how Propertius reformulates a version of *fides* poetry that he had first put forward in poems like 1.11 and 2.29. Propertius is put in dialogue with Horace (100-104, 111-116), whose lyric reassurances about fidelity are the prompt for Propertius’ reconfigured elegiac *fides* that no longer needs second guessing. Productive engagement with Horace’s *Odes* can also be found in Chapter 6 (on 3.17), where the author addresses the generic and political implications of writing a hymn to Bacchus.

At the beginning of 3.18, Cynthia’s significant absence from Book 3 is emphasized through the setting at Baiae, which seems to recall 1.11—only to continue to keep us waiting as we find Marcellus in her place (169-173). 3.18 seems both to support Propertius’ claim from 3.17 that he was done with erotic elegy and also to present a case study of the potential for a new kind of public elegy. Wallis shows how Propertius is in dialogue with the *Aeneid* to celebrate Marcellus; however, by keeping him a Claudian (with emphasis added through wordplay), the elegist “undermines Marcellus’ role in nation-building myth” (184). In a similar fashion, Wallis arrives at a largely ironic reading of the Augustan praise in 3.11 in Chapter 3.

Chapters 2 (on 3.6), 3 (on 3.9-11), 5 (on 3.16) and 8 (on 3.20) are especially heavy on metapoetry. With its overt literariness in mind, Wallis’ reading of 3.10 is

as much about Cynthia verse as it is about Cynthia herself (76). 3.20 is presented to us as a poem where the reader, who could have been forgiven for forgetting Cynthia (not mentioned yet in Book 3), is like the rival lover, who can't remember the beloved's *figura* (192). Wallis does metapoetics well, but there is a risk here of absolving both poet and reader of any real responsibility to the ideas in the poems and their effects in the world. Since these are the very effects that the author elsewhere is keen to explore, I found some of the metapoetic interpretations slow going.

In Chapter 9 (on 3.24), with a look back to Catullus and ahead to Ovid (especially *Amores* 3.11), Wallis shows how the failed renunciation of love is itself an elegiac move. Despite the surface claims of a change in what elegy is about, the Propertian *fallax opus* continues to trick lover, beloved and reader alike. Wallis' Propertius is certainly not pro-Augustan, but he does not seem quite anti-Augustan, either. Elegy is a convenient generic framework: it allows Propertius to claim (or allows us to read) ironic deception as it suits. Book 3 expands the universe of this generic possibility from intense personal relationships to the public sphere, and the author succeeds at leading us through some ways that this happens. As Wallis omits some poems from his discussion, there is room for others to keep building here.

AARON PALMORE

College of Charleston, agpalmore@gmail.com