Artigos

Propertius’ waters and his journey to the sea[1]

As águas de Propércio e sua viagem ao mar

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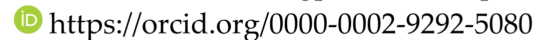
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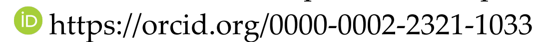
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Classica - Revista Brasileira de Estudos Clássicos vol. 38 1 26 2025

Sociedade Brasileira de Estudos Clássicos
Brasil

Recepción: 12 Agosto 2024
Aprobación: 27 Enero 2025

Abstract: The following article intends to present some general aspects of politics in the work of Propertius and to deepen the discussion about his usage of water formations as metaphors, understanding that there is a line connecting both subjects. There is a great number of arguments about the structure of his four books, either pointing to his intent to support the Augustan political regime, mainly in book four, or to deny it completely. The main goal of this article is to contribute to the reading of Propertius’ books and their politics, analysing the subtext of the water’s metaphors.
Keywords: Propertius, Water Imagery, recusatio, Augustan regime.
Resumo: Este artigo pretende apresentar aspectos políticos gerais na obra de Propércio e aprofundar a discussão sobre o uso metafórico das águas, entendendo haver uma linha conectando os dois assuntos. Existem diversos argumentos sobre a estrutura de seus quatro livros, alguns apontam para uma progressiva aproximação de Propércio ao regime Augustano, enquanto outros negam essa acepção. O objetivo aqui é contribuir para a leitura da obra de Propércio, entender os aspectos políticos nela envolvidos e analisar o subtexto das metáforas relativas à água.
Palavras-chave: Propércio, Imagens das águas, recusatio, regime Augustano.

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I. The Political Scenario

I.1. Introduction

Even though Ennius was the one to introduce the elegiac distich in Rome, it is from Gallus to Ovid that we have what is considered the Roman erotic elegy. This form of poetry seems to have been made only for a short period of time; considering both these authors the boundaries of Roman elegy, it only survived about half a century: the second half of the first century BC.

As Luck (1969, p. 47) puts it, it is quite certain that erotic poems were written by and for an aristocracy, at the beginning, and highly influenced by Greek and Hellenistic authors. It took a while for Roman elegy to develop to what we know it for: a young boy of high social stratum[2] suffering from love of his beloved one – woman of dubious life[3] – and living a life of debauchery; mostly, people with no concern to the *mosmaiorum*. These *auctores* (the ones who are acting in the poetry) are either being subjected to a bohemian lifestyle, or building their own unfamiliar environment, in which their lustful behaviour is decorous.

As Heyworth and Morwood (2011, p. 8) say, "Love and poetry are two of the major themes of Propertian elegy. The third is politics (...)". By the second half of the first century BC, a lot was changing: the Republic was getting to its end and the monarchical regime was rising; military enterprises were expanding Roman culture; the impact of the civil war... in fact, at the rise of an eighteen-year-old to power, a period of instability began.

Quickly, the aristocracy would be affected by this new reality. At the end of a dispute against the assassins of Julius Caesar – Brutus and Cassius – Octavian was left with the ungrateful task of confiscating land. As Heyworth and Morwood (2011, p. 12) point out, a vast number of ordinary people were affected by this, and three of the most important poets of the period came from the affected areas. Between them, Propertius, whose family was on the "wrong" side of the Civil war and suffered from the confiscations and their consequences. Beyond that, Propertius had lost a relative at the siege of Perusia (Sullivan, 1976, p. 57).

Not long after that, the dispute between Octavian and his main opponent, Antony, took a break as Maecenas and Asinus Pollio "brokered a treaty". Virgil would celebrate the peace in the fourth Eclogue, but the following years would not fulfill Virgil's optimism (Heyworth; Morwood, 2011, p. 13).

While Antony was in charge of the eastern provinces, far from Rome, Octavian was making many renovations, constructions and investments in Rome's infrastructure, and, of course, promulgating

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propaganda against his rival, preparing for the conflict against him and Cleopatra, which would make Octavian the ruler of the Roman world.[4]

Even though some stability had been achieved, it came at price: the destruction of the Roman world as it was known, and, more importantly, freedom and equality gave place to a state of one ruler.

Roman elegy was developed in this troubled and unstable scenario. On the other hand, the stability achieved by the end of the civil war, might have been the main reason for a poetry of personal matters to flourish. Even Though Roman Elegy is present in the works of Catullus – who might have been the founder of the Roman genre[5] – and the Neoterics, most extant of love elegy derives from the post-civil-war period, as public matters could not be discussed as before (Harrison, 2013, p. 134). It is to be expected that, at a moment of curtailment of individual freedom, poets would focus their energies on personal matters, and, mostly, not ones of great political interest (at the surface level, of course).

It is known, though, that the political and financial influence of Maecenas and Augustus had a major role on the poetry of their *protégés*. Virgil, for instance, exchanged didactic poetry for epic poetry (if it were indeed for flattery or, on the contrary, veiled criticism, that is another discussion). Some others changed just the poetry's themes and materials, as does Propertius in his fourth book. Those who refuse to flatter Augustus and decided not to speak about the *res Romana*, did their own poetry by the *recusatio*, maintaining its autonomy, but not being able to be independent from all this, as we will discuss on the Propertius *monobiblos*. "It should also be taken into account that Propertius (...) was somewhat younger than Virgil and Horace – twenty and fifteen years old respectively – and perhaps also for this reason more reluctant to give up his creative freedom."[6] as Boldrer (2022, p. 10) points out.

We shall focus now on how the poetry uses this political material and how politics had interfered in making poetry.

II. Political Poetry

II.1. 2.1 *Monobiblos: Recusatio* as a Political Device

To make elegy is to refuse epic, and, in some sense, to refuse the political regime or, at least, its glorification. It is in this sense that Propertius starts his *monobiblos*: "*Cynthia prima*".[7,8] He has no intent to talk about the *res romana*, about Caesar, or any other political figure. His attention is devoted to Cynthia and he has eyes for no one else. Yet, she is not only the first, but the last one too. In Cynthia's absence, Propertius refuses to love someone else and announces: "*Cynthia prima fuit, Cynthia finis erit*".[9] Not only she is

the first and the last (as a lover), but also the beginning and the end (as the poetical material), at this point, he has no intention to do any other poetry.

In 1.12 the *recusatio* is addressed to Rome at the time that Cynthia (and, by extent, his poetry)[10] is getting attention throughout Rome. And this *recusatio* is a response to a "charge": "*Quid mihi desidiae non cessas fingere crimen, / quod faciat nobis, conscia Roma, moram*?".[11] At a first disagreement with Rome, Propertius promises to be faithful to Cynthia, his only love and poetic material.

Recusatiohas a huge role in Roman elegy and is more than a poetical device, it is a cultural aspect in Rome. Freudenburg clarifies it:

> They are similarly discursive (back and forth negotiations), citational/ intertextual, and repetitious. And they are similarly subject to charges of insincerity, especially in the case of poets whose refusals actually put on proud display the very talents and powers that the writer claims to lack (2014, p. 113)

It was also quite common to explain why to refuse, at least as a poet. Ovid does it by narrating the poetic birth of Roman Elegy: as Ovid started to write an epic poem, beginning with the same word as Virgil's *Aeneid*, Cupid stole one foot from every second verse, transforming the chosen meter, dactylic hexameter, into elegiac couplets, the suitable verse to love poetry. The imposition of Cupid is, in fact, a variation of a *recusatio* – which was expected for the first poem of a collection – a way of refusing the poets' patrons and the public's expectations for patriotic poetry (Turpin *et al*., 2016, p. 21).

In this sense, the poet, shot by Cupid with an arrow, has no other option but to compose elegy, or, in other words, the one who knows love, and has a worthy lover, has just one destiny: to be a *servus amoris*.

Propertius does the same. He not only tells us which would be his poetic material, but he also explains why. Cynthia has made him taste loving desire and "Love" has made him hate "chaste girls", i.e., the Muses (as Heyworth interpreted it). As both authors tell us, love is a one-way path, it is fate; and to do so, is to refuse a life of great deeds.

Indeed, Propertius states that his intentions were not to write about war, and furthermore, he praises a libertine life in a moment of troubled love with Cynthia, when he reaffirms his intentions: "*Me sine, quem semper uoluit Fortuna iacere, / hanc animam extremae reddere nequitiae. / Multi longinquo periere in Amore libenter, / in quorum numero me quoque terra tegat. / Non ego sum laudi, non natus idoneus armis: / hanc me militiam Fata subire uolunt*."[12]

The poet does not devote much attention to politics or Caesar himself in the *monobiblos*, but when he finally mentions Caesar, he does it in a sepulchral epigram in the voice of a dead soldier. The

epigram, which ends the book with a *sphragis*, change the tone of the book, as it becomes clear that the soldier is a Propertius' relative who died in the civil war. Propertius he did not forget that. Even though Propertius does not talk that much about politics, when he does it, he chooses to do it in such a way that he constructs his *persona* as an Umbrian patriot who suffered with the war and is now devoted to Cynthia, rejecting everything that could threaten his love (Heyworth; Morwood, 2011, p. 8).

The first book is a *recusatio* by itself, as all elegy, and has a political value. His denial is not only poetic, Propertius was not just indifferent about Caesar, he was actively refusing to do as it was expected for a poet and he did not have any interest in flattering him, as his family were on the other side of the Civil War (as he makes us believe in 1.22) and as he lost a relative and properties in this process. Propertius states his refusal of flattering Caesar in the first book, but also, he subtly emphasises his opposition to the regime.

II.2. Books 2 and 3: Intensifying the refusal

"*Quaeritis unde mihi totiens scribantur Amores, / unde meus ueniat mollis in ore liber. Non haec Calliope, non haec mihi cantat Apollo: / ingenium nobis ipsa puella facit*."[13] That is how Propertius begins book II, reaffirming his commitment to Cynthia, his love poetry (which is becoming more and more popular) and refusing one more time every epic poetry: his poetry does not come from a muse or a god, but from his girl.

If in the first book Caesar just appears at the penultimate poem, in book two he is in the first one, together with Maecenas. A *recusatio* opens the book, intensifying the political opposition that we saw in book one: "*Sed neque Phlegraeos Iouis Enceladique tumultus / intonat angusto pectore Callimachus, / "nec mea conueniunt duro praecordia uersu / Caesaris in Phrygios condere nomen auos*.".[14] More than that, as it is common on a *recusatio*, Propertius composes the poetry by mentioning the very aspect he is refusing, in this case, epic poetry: he refuses it at the same time he makes a catalog of great deeds (epic *topoi*), and he sings about Caesar affirming he would never do that. Another aspect of this *recusatio* is the selection of Caesar's deeds, Propertius chooses the most painful and controversial episodes of the war: Mutina, Philippi and Perusine War (Sullivan, 1972, p. 19-20), nonetheless, singing about it.

Similarly, we have 3.9: "*Callimachi Manes et Coi sacra Philitae, / in uestrum, quaeso, me sinite ire nemus. / Primus ego ingredior puro de fonte sacerdos / Itala per Graios orgia ferre choros*."[15] Once more, Propertius evokes Maecenas to deny his supposed wish of patronage (for the price of political obedience and flattery).

Continuing his *recusatio*, Propertius argues that what will make Maecenas famous is his loyalty, and, in opposition to that, Propertius shall be a god for boys and girls: “Maecenatis erunt uera tropaea fides. (...) / “Haec urant pueros, haec urant scripta puellas / meque Deum clament et mihi sacra ferant!”[16,17] Propertius does that in a mocking fashion, he talks to Maecenas with irony, as one who despises his interlocutor.

Another mark of political opposition is 2.7, in which the poet discusses the marriage law[18] that could have separated the poet and his mistress:

> Nos uxor nunquam, diducet amica:semper amica mihi, semper et uxor eris.Gauisa es certe sublatam, Cynthia. legem,qua quondam edicta flemus uterque diu,ni mos diuideret: quamuis diducere amantisnon queat inuitos Iuppiter ipse duos.“At magnus Caesar.” Sed magnus Caesar in armis:deuictae gentes nil in Amore ualent.

> You certainly rejoiced, Cynthia, at the abrogation of the law whose promulgation made us both weep a long while, for fear it separate us; though Jupiter himself could not divide two lovers against their will. ‘Yet Caesar is mighty.’ But it is in arms that Caesar is mighty: conquering races counts for nothing in love.[19]

Rejoicing at a supposedly political defeat, Propertius mentions Caesar once more in a subtle comparison that seems to argue that Caesar is even more powerful than Jupiter; but the end marks the mocking intention and the irony of the discourse: Caesar might be the most powerful, but that is irrelevant to love matters. As Elegy's discourse is inherently metapoetic, we may take this passage as a firm reaffirmation of his commitment to elegy (love), another *recusatio* of epic (arms) and patronage, and, by extent, a commentary on Caesar's power in face of a political defeat. Not even all his military achievements could buy every poet or change some aspects of Roman society.

II.3. 2.10: *Recusatio recusationis*

Books 2 and 3 have yet some more political aspects that could be read as a glimpse of intention to finally support the regime. In 2.10 the poet evokes a commonplace in elegy: relating the poetic labour of elegy (and by extension its love-affairs') to the “first age” and, by opposition, relating epic to a more advanced phase of writing, it is, to make love you must have the vigour of the “first age”: “*Aetas prima canat Veneres, extrema tumultus: / bella canam, quando scripta puella mea est*.”.[20] Here, the poet declares, for the first time, that he, now

older, intends to do epic, and, more than that, that his girl is already written: he is refusing once again, this time not epic poetry, but elegy, and more so, his Cynthia.

From the beginning, 2.10 points to a change of heart: the poem starts by mentioning Helicon and the Thessalian horse, direct references to Hesiod and Achilles (epic poetry), making epic in elegiac meter, and starts to aspire to immortality, as an epic poet does, through the verses: "*Haec ego castra sequar; uates tua castra canendo / magnus ero: seruent hunc mihi Fata diem!*".[21] Propertius ends the poem once more citing Hesiod (Ascraean mountains) and (re)creates an image that elevates epic: "*Nondum etiam Ascraeos norunt mea carmina fontis, / sed modo Permessi flumine lauit Amor*.".[22] Propertius is referencing Virgil's *Eclogues*, when Gallus was given the opportunity to rise to the Ascrean mountain, a place for epic, and leaves the stream of Permessus, a place for love poetry, and Hesiod's *Theogony*:

> Tum canit Hesperidum miratam mala puellam;tum Phaëthontiadas musco circumdat amaraecorticis atque solo proceras erigit alnos.tum canit, errantem Permessi ad flumina GallumAonas in montis ut duxerit una sororum,utque uiro Phoebi chorus adsurrexerit omnis;ut Linus haec illi diuino carmine pastor,floribus atque apio crinis ornatus amaro,dixerit: 'hos tibi dant calamos, en accipe, Musae,Ascraeo quos ante seni, quibus ille solebatcantando rigidas deducere montibus ornos.his tibi Grynei nemoris dicatur origo,ne quis sit lucus, quo se plus iactet Apollo.'

> Then he sings of the maid who marvelled at the apples of the Hesperides; then he encircles Phaëthon's sisters in moss of bitter bark, and raises them from the ground as lofty alders. Then he sings of Gallus, wandering by the streams of Permessus–how one of the sisterhood led him to the Aonian hills, and how all the choir of Phoebus rose to do him honour; how Linus, a shepherd of immortal song, his locks crowned with flowers and bitter parsley, cried to him thus: 'These reeds–see, take them–the Muses give you–even those they once gave the old Ascraean, wherewith, as he sang, he would draw the unyielding ash trees down the mountain sides. With these do you tell of the birth of the Grynean wood, that there may be no grove wherein Apollo glories more.' (Virgil, *Eclogues*, 6.61-73)[23]

and:

> Μουσάων Ελικωνιάδων ἀρχώμεθ᾽ ἀείδειν,αἵ θ᾽ Ελικῶνος ἔχουσιν ὄρος μέγα τε ζάθεόν τε,καί τε περὶ κρήνην ἰοειδέα πόσσ᾽ ἁπαλοῖσινὀρχεῦνται καὶ βωμὸν ἐρισθενέος Κρονίωνος.καί τε λοεσσάμεναι τέρενα χρόα Περμησσοῖοἢ Ιππου κρήνης ἢ

> Ολμειοῦ ζαθέοιοἀκροτάτῳ Ελικῶνι χοροὺς ἐνεποιήσαντοκαλούς, ἱμερόεντας: ἐπερρώσαντο δὲ ποσσίν.

> Let us begin to sing from the Heliconian Muses, who possess the great and holy mountain of Helicon, and dance on their soft feet around the violet-dark fountain and the altar of Cronus' mighty son. And after they have washed their tender skin in Permessus or Hippocrene or holy Olmeius, they perform choral dances on highest Helicon, beautiful, lovely ones, and move nimbly with their feet. [24]

Hesiod displays Helicon's peak as the place where the muses sing after they have washed themselves in Permessus' waters and other streams. Here, Propertius uses these images to both elevate epic in contraposition to elegy (the opposite of that he has done so far) and to relate elegy to streams, and epic to the stream that flows from the peak of the Helicon mountain. In 3.3 there is another reference to the Helicon and its waters. The poet had a dream, another aspect recurrent in epic poetry, where he was writing Ennian epic, but the poet is quickly "awoken" by Apollo, and later advised by Calliope. 3.5 refuses elegy and make yet another promise: to sing about natural philosophy, even though he has not even kept his first promise.[25]

2.10 is the main point of elegy's refusal so far; Propertius writes a historical epic from verse 11, which might seem quite ironic, since book 2 is refusing epic genre from the beginning. This structure is not uncommon, as we've been discussing, and, in fact, *recusatio* is expressed regularly by the means of what is being refused. The sincerity of this verses is widely discussed, thought. Indeed, this promise is not kept in the next poems.

Here, one aspect must be discussed: the form of Propertius' books. Mainly, Propertius' books are thought to be four in number (as we are citing them in this article), and, in this view, poem 2.10 is in the first half of the second book. It is followed by an epigram, a mark of ending, but in 2.13 Propertius is already back to Cynthia's arms, just after 2.12, where the poet reinforces the inevitability of love, singing one more invocation of it. Considering the second book as one single book, the irony stands only for the duration of 2.10 and 2.11, and if there was any hope of change, 3.1 reinforces the irony, starting one more book dedicated to love.

In the less common division,[26] where we have 5 books instead of 4, this aspect of 2.10 is even more powerful. This view understands that the second book ends at the epigram of 2.11. If so, this epigram would not only be the mark of the end of the second book, but also the mark of the end of Cynthia's love, finally, the closing epigrammatic poem indicates the end of a relationship, a theme or a type of love, as if it was being craved in a tombstone.

If 2.11 is the end of what is called book 2A, the effect of this *recusatio recusationis* would not last only two poems, but, in fact, it

would last until the release of the new book. Ending the book like this might have had a political and social intent, Propertius had announced new paths for his poetry, and, only by the release of book 2B could the reader be sure that it was nothing more than another refusal to praise Augustus.

Either way, 2.10 and 2.11 marks the end of Propertius' relationship with Cynthia, and, by extent, the end of his love elegy. 2.12 and 3.1 strongly indicate, though, the irony of this end. Even though 2.10 seems to be, indeed, ironic, it would foresee the material and tone of book 4.

II.4. Book 4: Cynthia's Death

The third book ends once more with a farewell to Cynthia, as Propertius is tired of her infidelity and her lies. This time, it does not seems though to have been an ironic farewell, as Cynthia would appear in the fourth book – only in two poems (4.7 and 4.9) and as a ghost –. It may yet be double-sided. As we discussed, according to 1.12.20, Cynthia would be the first and the last, and Propertius keeps his promises: even dead she is present. But her death might impose a change of heart: although the farewell turns to be sincere (as Cynthia is no longer his main subject) it is not by her conduct that this happened, but because of her death. In this sense, it is as if, by the time of book 4, Propertius would have no other option than to write about something else, as Cynthia, now dead, is no longer there to be loved.

Indeed, as we know, Cynthia is not an empirical figure – having existed or not – but a constructed *auctor*, and a metaphor for Propertius own poetry. In this sense, her death is nothing more than a poetical device to justify a change of heart. Narratively, the change of subject was already justified though: after several farewells, Propertius had finally freed himself from Cynthia. Book III ends with no doubt: Propertius said his final farewell and even gave clues about his next enterprise (sing higher matters). Why kill Cynthia then?

It seems we have two possibilities: a political one and a poetical one. Cynthia's death could be interpreted as a denial of love elegy, and, as a consequence, as she is a poetical figure and metaphor for the book itself, a movement towards a poetry more suitable to the Augustan regime; Although, another possibility seems more plausible and simple; if we justify it by the poetry itself instead of trying to find external motivations, we can read it as the path of maturity of the *auctor*, venturing himself in wider waters.

In this second approach, Cynthia's resurrection would not be the return of love matter, but a generalization of Cynthia's metapoetic function. She comes back to life as an *amplificatio* of her as a book: the love poetry

In Book 3, Propertius had already been warned by Apollo to keep making love elegy, not to venture into the deep sea: "*Alter remus aquas alter tibi radat harenas, / tutus eris: medio maxima turba mari est*.".[27] Propertius ignores Apollo's warning and Calliope's advice by making the fourth book, what could lead us to read it as a change of position to befriend Augustus. However, Augustus has related himself to Apollo, and this has been subject to Roman poetry.[28] Propertius' Apollo conserving not only his divine content and mythical amplifications, but also being a representation of Augustus, direct us to the opposite interpretation. Ignoring Apollo, Propertius is, once more, refusing Augustus. The poetical consequence seems evident: by doing so, Cynthia and his love elegy gave way to Callimachean aetilogical elegy.

As O'Neill puts it, explorations of higher subjects are dangerous, and discussed through water imagery: the sailor who sails too big seas, or too troubled waters for his boat, gets himself in a difficult situation. (O'Neill, 1995, p. 56)

The change of heart in Propertius Book 4 marks, in fact, not only Cynthia's death, but also, Propertius' own (at least in part). Elegy, as a genre of Lyric, is the insertion of the poet as an *auctors* at the poetry, singing about private matters. On the other hand, aetiological, civic and all sorts of epic poetry – or epic material – represents the poetry of public matters, the poet is pulled out of focus, for the elevated content must arise. The elegiac *ego* has not died, but, by engaging with the open sea, he is put into the shade, his troubled love with Cynthia is no longer the centre of the narrative; Rome is, Tarpeian rock is, the Battle of Actium is...

What is done in book four is already discussed and hypothesised in book 2, with the potential structure: "*Quod mihi si tantum, Maecenas, Fata dedissent, / ut possem heroas ducere in arma manus* (...)".[29] In this sense, Propertius is testing the frontiers of elegy: taking it from the shore, or from a narrow river, to the deep sea, he is making it as elevated as epic poetry.

Book 4 differs from the previous ones from the beginning. The first poem, as expected, presents the book's program: aetiological elegies modelled on Callimachus. Propertius is determined to abandon Cynthia and love elegy as a whole to pursue recognition, singing more elevated content. Starting with Rome, Propertius writes as a Roman citizen and insists on specifying his identity as an Umbrian poet. Horus in 4.1 presents a contraposition to Propertius's intention, and the poet is, once more, advised by an unpolitical entity to keep making love elegy. This might be yet another aspect of Propertius's unwillingness to change course. The fact is, he did change.

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Heyworth relates the publication of Book 4 and the publication of the *Aeneid*, and sums up the material used by Propertius in his last book:

> Propertius responds to the publication of the *Aeneid* by producing a book that shows epic inclusiveness of material from other genres: mimes (4.1B, 5), epigrams (4.2, 11), a letter (4.3), hymns (4.6, 9), epicedia (4.7, 11), narratives reworked from epic (4.7, 8), a speech for the defence (4.11). (...) To the reworking of Evander and Aeneas's tour in 4.1, he added two other parodies of episodes from Book 8: the battle of Actium from the shield (4.6), and Hercules's destruction of Cacus, condensed in 4.9 to allow room for more elegiac scene as Hercules stands outside the door of the shrine of the Bona Dea and pleads with the priestess admission. (Heyworth, 2007, p. 123-124)

It is quite clear that Propertius's poetry has changed by the last book, as we can see in 4.6 and 4.10. If in the other books, when the poet cited Augustus, he did it with irony, and when he seemed to be celebrating any battle, he would cite the most controversial aspect of each battle. In 4.6, though, he seems to be sincerely (in a poetical matter) celebrating Actium. 4.10, on the other hand, does not have any intention to elegize the epic material, in opposition to the rest of the book.

Book 4 seems to be the result of a poet that is forced to find new subjects, either because he is politically influenced to do so, or because the old subject cannot provide the poet with anymore poetry – and we must remember that the right age is an imperative to make elegies –. We can discuss how significant some decisions might be: to choose to do elegy even though the content has changed; to kill Cynthia, to resurrect her, to reintroduce moments of indecision about the future of his poetry and so on... The image is clear, though: the love elegist, the lover of calm waters, has being dragged by a river and is finally being tossed into the deep sea.

III. Metapoetic Waters

III.1. Homer's Ocean

Homer is probably the most significant name in all literature. The founder of epic poetry could not be left out, even when he is not the main model. By Hellenistic times, his literary supremacy was already a consensus, and, as Craig writes: "In some quarters Homer was regarded as the origin not only of all literature, but of all knowledge and his epic poems came to be seen as the fountainhead of all-natural philosophy" (2009, p. 54). Plato, for example, asserts that "the poet taught Greece" (Plato, *Republic*, book 10). For Aristotle (*Poetics*), he is a paradigm of poetry whose actions are lofty and can be paralleled with tragedy, and other genres.

Craig points out how a very important aspect about the influence of Homer, his depiction of *Oceanus*, influenced the subsequent

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literature and how this became an analogue of Homer himself. From *Il.* 21.192-7 we have the description of Zeus as the ocean from where every water derives, the rivers, seas, springs and wells. As it is, Homer became the same image he created for Zeus, deified, he became the foundation, the ocean that would make it possible for all the other water formations to be born, and not just that, the ever-flowing fountain of literature. Homer, drawing the battle of the son of Peleus against Asteropaeus, says:

> (...) Αχιλεὺς δ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ἐνὶ στήθεσσιν ὀρούσαστεύχεά τ᾽ ἐξενάριξε καὶ εὐχόμενος ἔπος ηὔδα:‘κεῖσ᾽ οὕτως: χαλεπόν τοι ἐρισθενέος Κρονίωνοςπαισὶν ἐριζέμεναι ποταμοῖό περ ἐκγεγαῶτι.φῆσθα σὺ μὲν ποταμοῦ γένος ἔμμεναι εὐρὺ ῥέοντος,αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ γενεὴν μεγάλου Διὸς εὔχομαι εἶναι.τίκτέ μ᾽ ἀνὴρ πολλοῖσιν ἀνάσσων ΜυρμιδόνεσσιΠηλεὺς Αἰακίδης: ὃ δ᾽ ἄρ᾽ Αἰακὸς ἐκ Διὸς ἦεν.τὼ κρείσσων μὲν Ζεὺς ποταμῶν ἁλιμυρηέντων,κρείσσων αὖτε Διὸς γενεὴ ποταμοῖο τέτυκται.καὶ γὰρ σοὶ ποταμός γε πάρα μέγας, εἰ δύναταί τιχραισμεῖν: ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ ἔστι Διὶ Κρονίωνι μάχεσθαι,τῷ οὐδὲ κρείων Αχελώϊος ἰσοφαρίζει,οὐδὲ βαθυρρείταο μέγα σθένος Ωκεανοῖο,ἐξ οὗ περ πάντες ποταμοὶ καὶ πᾶσα θάλασσακαὶ πᾶσαι κρῆναι καὶ φρείατα μακρὰ νάουσιν:ἀλλὰ καὶ ὃς δείδοικε Διὸς μεγάλοιο κεραυνὸνδεινήν τε βροντήν, ὅτ᾽ ἀπ᾽ οὐρανόθεν σμαραγήσῃ.[30]

> And Achilles Drew nigh and robbed him of life with his sword. In the belly he smote him beside the navel, and forth upon the ground gushed all his bowels, and darkness enfolded his eyes as he lay gasping. And Achilles leapt upon his breast and despoiled him of his arms, exulted saying: “Lie as thou art! Hard it is to strive with the children of the mighty son of Cronos, albeit for one begotten of a River. Thou verily declarest that thy birth is from the wide-flowing River, whereas I avow me to be of lineage of great Zeus. The father that begat me is one that is lord among the many Myrmidons, even Peleus, son of Aeacus; and Aeacus was begotten of Zeus. Wherefore as Zeus is mightier than rivers that murmur seaward, so mightier too is the seed of Zeus than the seed of a river. For lo, hard beside thee is a great River, if so, be he can avail thee aught; but it may not be that one should fight with Zeus the son of Cronos. With him doth not even king Achelous vie, nor the great might of deep-flowing Ocean, from whose all-rivers flow and every sea, and all springs and deep wells; howbeit even he hath fear of the lightning of great Zeus, and his dread thunder, whenso it crasheth from heaven.” (Homer, *Iliad*, 6.182-199)[31]

Homer depiction of the ocean, as the place where all waters meet and from all waters flow,[32] had become the metaphor for the poet himself, it is, Homer came to be seen, from a certain moment on, as the source of all literature, the Ocean of literature. Homer being related to the ocean – or the sea – and his poetry, the fundamental

one, the one where it all began, being related to the ocean, made it a metaphor for epic poetry. Craig summarizes it:

> Homer's equation with the Ocean referred to his being the source of all poetry, to his greatness, and to the universal nature and limitless scope of all of his own poetry. By extension, Ocean also came to refer to the epic genre. The Ocean and the sea became confounded and thus in Roman poetry the Ocean/sea can represent the following: Homer; all poetry, as Homer was the source of all poetry; and epic poetry, which was seen to Homer; all poetry, as Homer was the source of all poetry; and epic poetry, which was seen to encompass all subjects. (...) Any ventre in the sea of epic or grand themes was fraught with danger and could bring about ruination (Craig, 2009, p. 56-57).

This has many consequences that we shall further explore.

One minor imagery that we can find is the usage of drinking water as poetic influence. Sometimes it can be opposed to drinking wine.[33] Some others water formations, as we are going to explore, have been used as well. For example, the shore (that means, the beaches, coastlines, land close to the sea and all similar formations) as a place for troubled love, or even unstable circumstances in general. For example, Odysseus' times with Calypso, and the fourth Book of the *Aeneid*.

An opposition that appears more often is between salt and fresh waters. Fenno points out that this opposition in the Iliad might even be a representation of the two sides, that is, the sea divinities would support the Greeks, and their mortal descendants would fight sided with them; on the other side, gods associated with freshwater would be affiliated with the Trojans (Fenno, 2005, p. 480).

As we'll see, this opposition is presented beyond Homer. The sea, as we discussed, is a metaphor for epic poetry, and the river seems to be the best place to make elegy. Even though the river seems to be a place for poetry in general (as it involves an encounter with waters), the sea, given its hostility, would not be able to sustain love. On the other hand, too calm waters would not be the place for love poetry, as for a lover to do elegy, he must suffer.

III.2. Water Imagery in Propertius' Poetry

III.2.1. Propertius' Waters: *Monobiblos* (*Flumen et Pontus*)

Propertius' first poem with a significant usage of water imagery is 1.6. The *propemptikon* addressed to Tulus opposes the *servitium amoris* (Propertius) and the *servitium armorum*, as G. Gontijo (Trad., 2019, p. 328) points out; instead of engaging in an epic journey, the poet chooses to stay on land with Cynthia. Propertius begins the poem declaring he has no fear of joining Tullus in his journey (i.e. he does not fear making epic poetry), but Cynthia holds him back, and his destiny is to perish in love and not in war. He refuses to know the

"*doctas* (...) *Athenas*" ("learned Athenas")[34] and wealths of ancient Asia as the price for it is Cynthia's hatred

1.9 presents a series of *topoi*: (1) the inversion of the servitude: Ponticus is receiving orders from the girl he has just bought; (2) the adequacy of the poet's age to make love poetry: "*Quare, si pudor est, quam primum errata fatere: / dicere quo pereas saepe in Amore leuat*.";[35] (3) the experience of the poet in the specific matter: "*Me dolor et lacrimae merito fecere peritum: / atque utinam posito dicar Amore rudis!*"[36] and "*Plus in Amore ualet Mimnermi uersus Homero*:";[37] and, apart from that, (4) it introduces one of the most present use of water imagery, the river as a high place for elegy: "*Quid si non esset facilis tibi copia? Nunc tu / insanus medio flumine quaeris aquam*.".[38] Heyworth translates *medio flumine* as "in midstream", but it is important to point out here the opposition of *flumen* and *pontus*. It is quite clear that Propertius is addressing an epic poet, and, for that, he chooses the name *Ponticus*.[39] Propertius chooses the water imagery to argue against the possibility of a lack of material, placing *Ponticus* in the middle of a river asking for water. Its is quite interesting to note where this epic poet is, now that he found love, and what should he drink when wanting to feed this love.

In 1.15, Propertius uses the image of Calypso, from Homer's *Odyssey*, to exemplify the end of love. As Odysseus departed, she cried by the desertis aequoribus, "*desertis olim fleuerat aequoribus: / multos illa dies incomptis maesta capillis / sederat, iniusto multa locuta salo, / et quamuis numquam post haec uisura dolebat, / illa tamen longae conscia laetitiae*.".[40] Propertius uses yet other myths to exemplify the sad lover by the departure/betrayal of the loved one. This is a commonplace in elegy, as known, where the poet takes the place of the betrayed lover, that is, takes the place of the women in the cited myths. Verses 23-24 mark this inversion, as Propertius says that this mythological *exemplum* should have taught Cynthia to act differently.

What Heyworth translates by "ocean" and "sea", is constructed by Propertius in two images: *desertis aequoribus* and *iniusto salo*. The first one, points to an abandoned formation, the ocean itself, not a place to live, but to undertake adventures; the second one, by approximation to the word *sal*, meaning "salt", focuses one aspect of the sea that is opposed to the drinkable water from the stream, where Ponticus could drink for an inspiration to make love poetry. In both cases, the sea, or the ocean, represents the end of love, in opposition to the stream, or the river, that represents the best place to make love, as in 1.9.

Further in the poem we have another inversion: now it is the water's flows that are inverted as a way to express the strength of his love to Cynthia: "*Multa prius uasto labentur flumina ponto, / annus et*

inuersas duxerit ante uices, / quam tua sub nostro mutetur pectore cura:".[41] Two aspects of this inversion are significant: first, it intends to show that his love of and servitude for Cynthia is more stable and persistent than the nature itself; secondly, and more importantly, by inverting the order of water flow, Propertius opposes his love to Cynthia to love itself, destined to end as the river ends up in the sea. Once more we have here the river as the place for love, and love existing as long as the river keeps flowing. In opposition to that, we have the sea, the place where the river stops flowing, love ends, and epic arises.

In 1.17 we have the shore as a place related to water, and the lover waiting for a propitious weather to sail back to Rome. Propertius curses the one who invented the sail and made it possible for him to sail away from Rome and Cynthia and he fears he will not be able to get back, as the weather does not seem inclined to change. At the end, he prays for a climate change and the possibility to correct his error (to have fled from Cynthia) and hopes love has already touched the waters he must endure, so he can get back safely. All the images at the poem are quite common, but the main point here is to understand the function of the shore: it is a place of change, instability. If the mouths of rivers are places where salt and freshwater meet, the shore is the place where the sea meets land. Used both in elegy and in epic poetry, the shores marks the end in the journey (the end of the epic), as in *Aeneid*, at the end of book 6, the end of the first half of the poem: "*ancora de prora iacitur; stant litore puppes*" (The anchor is cast from the prow; the sterns stand ranged on the shore);[42] an unstable moment, mostly related to a troubled and brief love. In the poem we find different descriptions of shores: *ingrato litore*[43] and *masuetis litoribus*,[44] and that is because of the unstable nature of shores, they are places of passage. For Propertius, who longs to see Rome and Cynthia again, the shores of Rome are civilized, as Heyworth chooses to translate, and the one where he finds himself, an ungrateful one.

III.2.2. Book 2: The shore and in-lands formations

2.5 presents us with an actor quite unhappy with the actions of his lover, just as we see at the end of book 3. Propertius makes use of invectives to talk to Cynthia and proposes a break-up. The "wind" would be the metaphorical actor of the break up, a voyage as the end of love. A little bit further into the poem, the poet compares the instability of the Carpathian Sea and the Northern winds to the instability of the lover, that can be maddened by only one word. This comparison distances the love poet from epic poetry, a recurring artifice that aims to surpass the poetry it compares itself to.

2.9 uses, once more, the image of the ship ready to depart as the imminent end of love in a poem where there is an amorous conflict

between Propertius, Cynthia and a love rival. 2.10, already discussed here, ends with an important image: after flirting with epic poetry, the poet assumes his verses does not know the Ascraean Mountains, but affirms that his verses were now washed by Love at the waters of the Permessus stream. The last verses mark a possible irony (which is confirmed by the keeping of love poetry) but marks, as well, that the spring of inspiration – the same spring that feeds the sea of epic – has now washed Propertius's verses.

2.12 marks the returning to love and the description of it gives us some interesting characteristics. With wings, but also without them when he shoots a lover with his bow; a child, that is, young and not rational, as a lover should be; but verses 8-9 points to the aspect of the waters of love, troubled and stronger than the lover, tossing them from one side to the other: *iactamur in unda*.

In 2.15 Propertius, once more, inverts the natural flow of the waters and challenges the inevitability of the end. In a rare mood for an elegiac actor, he affirms that as he is hers (Cynthia's) in life, he will be hers in death, and more, he says that "*nec mea conueniunt duro praecordia uersu / Caesaris in Phrygios condere nomen auos. / Nauita de uentis, de tauris narrat arator, / enumerat miles uulnera, pastor ouis*;".[45]

In 2.17, once more, Propertius indicates the river as a place for love, and, drinking the river's fresh water, as experiencing love. For it, he evokes Tantalus, who was made to stand in water without being able to quench the thirst. 2.26a paints the image of a shipwreck, but now it is the beloved who is in this situation. If she dies, the sea would be named after her, as happened to Helle.

2.26b (or 2.26c according to other editors, such as Goold) is the poem where we can find the most significant usages of water imagery in book 2. After dreaming about Cynthia's shipwreck in 2.26a, Propertius begins the poem with a different perspective about the sea: Cynthia wants to go sailing, but not in order to end their relationship and the lover is willing to go with her. Propertius seems to keep defying the nature and the nature of love as he thinks: "*Sed non Neptunus tanto crudelis Amori, / Neptunus fratri par in Amore Ioui*:",[46] even though experience shows otherwise, as he puts it between vv. 35-39. The voyage, though, aims at the shore, not the sea: "*Illa meis tantum non umquam desit ocellis, / incendat nauem Iuppiter ipse licet*.".[47] In some sense, a shipwreck might even be desirable, as long as they stay together (and maybe without the possibility being separated, since there would be no ship to leave). The desire here is for a shore of love, where both could drink from "a single water" ("*Unum litus* (...) *bibemus aqua*;"),[48] i.e., only one fountain of love, and for that, he would endure anything.

2.26b presents us a different perspective on the sea and on the shore, but in a hopeful way, the lover Propertius would like to

resignify those places. The "single water" seems to mark a water source – since they would be drinking from one – as it is a fountain of love, it is, presumably, a river. Another feature is cited in the poem, *palus*, translated as "marsh" by Heyworth. It is a reference to the myth in which Neptune fell in love for the girl who was seeking water at her father's behest and revealed (or created) a spring (or a lake/marsh) with his trident.[49] The "marsh" here, or the lake, well or even the fountain, represents what we are addressing here as the same category: a water feature surrounded by land. Even though it is related to a love theme, it is also related to a more bucolic theme.

III.2.3. Book 3: Preparing for the journey

Already a well-known elegiac poet (as Cynthia is spread through Rome), Propertius varies the themes for Book 3, yet still making elegies and loving Cynthia (in disagreement with what he has declared at the end of book 2). This variety might already point to the farewell at the end of the book, even though we know it would be the definite farewell only because book 4 has another direction, marking Cynthia's death and resurrection.

3.1 begins the book as expected, as a programmatic poem; but, in opposition to 1.1, 3.1 begins with Callimachus instead of Cynthia, changing the focus of his poetry. Book 3 is not only a *variatio* of Cynthia's love, it is in fact a *variatio*[50]of Propertius poetry as a whole. In the first verses of 3.1, we can point out some common places for poetry in general, Propertius talks once more about water spring of poetic inspirations, and more, indicates that each water is an inspiration for different poetry: "*Dicite, quo pariter carmen tenuastis in antro? / Quoue pede ingressi? Quamue bibistis aquam*?".[51]

Propertius cites the "grove", a sacred place for poetry (Horace, *Odes*, 1.1.29-32; Ovid, *Amores* 3.1.1-2) as Gontijo (2019, p. 383) points out. 3.1 references epic poetry and places historically related to poetry to constitute the poet's new program, and he does that once more with a long *recusatio* of epic.

3.3, as discussed before, cites Helicon's waters, where Ennius supposedly drank for inspiration (vv. 1-6). A little bit further on, vv. 15-20, we get some perspectives about the relation of bodies of water and poetry in an advice by Apollo:

> 'quid tibi cum tali, demens, est flumine? quis tecarminis heroi tangere iussit opus?(...)mollia sunt paruis prata terenda rotis,ut tuus in scamno iactetur saepe libellusquem legat exspectans sola puella uirum.

> What is your business with so great a river, madman? Who told you to touch what is the work of heroic poetry? (...) small wheels have to travel on soft

> meadows, so that your book may often be tossed on a stool for a lonely girl to read while she is waiting for her man.

It is quite significant that the river here is a place for epic and not for elegy, which makes us believe that, the relation between poetry and the river is about its specific aspects, and not its ideal nature. Even though the passing nature of the river seems to point to the nature of love, too big a river might not be suitable to make love, as the waters would be too aggressive, i.e., too epic, too much like the sea. On the other hand, such rivers have been referenced as good places for battle. In this sense, a river, as a place of encountering waters, is a place for both elegy and epic, it would depend on the characteristics of each river. Apollo does not disapprove Propertius's presence in the river, but he questions the possibility of love poetry in "so great a river" (*tali flumine*).

It is important to notice that this passage is also a reference to Callimachus' hymn to Apollo that talks not about the length of rivers, but about the purity of their waters, which reinforces the interpretation that not only the sea is not a place for elegy, but neither are filthy or strong-flowing rivers:

> ὁ Φθόνος Απόλλωνος ἐπ᾽ οὔατα λάθριος εἶπεν‘οὐκ ἄγαμαι τὸν ἀοιδὸν ὅς οὐδ᾽ ὅσα πόντος ἀείδει.’τὸν Φθόνον ὡπόλλων ποδί τ᾽ ἤλασεν ὧδέ τ᾽ ἔειπεν:‘Ασσυρίου ποταμοῖο μέγας ῥόος, ἀλλὰ τὰ πολλὰλύματα γῆς καὶ πολλὸν ἐφ᾽ ὕδατι συρφετὸν ἕλκει.Δηοῖ δ᾽ οὐκ ἀπὸ παντὸς ὕδωρ φορέουσι Μέλισσαι,ἀλλ’ ἥτις καθαρή τε καὶ ἀχράαντος ἀνέρπειπίδακος ἐξ ἱερῆς ὀλίγη λιβὰς ἄκρον ἄωτον.’

> Envy secretly spoke into the ear of Apollo, "I do not admire the singer who does not sing as much as the sea." Apollo struck Envy with his foot and said, "Great is the flood of the Assyrian River, but it hauls much refuse from the land and garbage in its water. Bees carry water to Deo not from every source, but pure and immaculate it flows from a holy spring, a tiny trickle, the topmost flower.". (Callimachus, 1955, vv. 105-112)[52]

3.9 marks, once more, the Callimachean *topoi* of calm and angry waters, relating Propertius' poetry with the calm, "little river" (*exiguo flumine*), once more opposed to the "swollen sea" (*tumidum mare*): "*Non ego uelifera tumidum mare findo carina: / tuta sub exiguo flumine nostra mora est*.").[53]

3.21 brings the image of voyage as the end of love, or as a way to forget the loved one. In fact, this elegy is the first of a series of four elegies that would mark the love break-up between Propertius and Cynthia. For it, Propertius wants to go to Athenas, running away from love (in opposition to 1.6, when he refuses it), and studying philosophy, a subject less suited to the young and libertine mind:

"*Illic uel stadiis animum emendare Platonis / incipiam aut hortis, docte Epicure, tuis*;"),[54] or some other higher matters, such as rhetoric. Propertius, knowing that there is no medicine to the disease of love, tries to be absent from his loved one, and, more than that, he does so by choosing higher matters instead of another lover. By doing that, Propertius does not only moves away from Cynthia, but from elegy as a whole.

3.24-25 seems to end the poetry that started in book 1 in a ring composition, Cynthia being the first and the last. Resolved to finally leave Cynthia, once and for all, Propertius suggests the possibility of a voyage as a metaphor for being free from Cynthia:

> haec ego nunc ferro, nunc igne coactus, et ipsanaufragus Aegaea, uera fateborx aqua.correptus saevo Veneris torrebar aeno;uinctus eram uersas in mea terga manus.Ecce coronatae portum tetigere carinae,traiectae Syrtes, ancora iacta mihi est.Nunc demum uasto fessi respiscimus aestu,uulneraque ad sanum nunc coiere mea.Mens Bona, si qua Dea es, tua me in sacraria dono!Exciderunt surdo tot mea vota Ioui.

> I was seized and roasted in Venus's savage cauldron; I had been bound with hands twisted behind my back. Family friends could not save me from this, or a Thessalian which wash it away in the vast ocean. But look, the vessels are garland and have reached harbour; the sandbanks have been crossed, my anchor is dropped. Now at last tired of the vast deep I have regained my sense, and my wounds have now come together and healed.[55]

Finally free, Propertius seems eager to try different waters, and he does so. Book 4 is nothing more than his venture to the sea. Propertius might not have left his small boat, as he chooses to keep experimenting with elegiac meter, but now he chooses to make aetiological and not love poetry (at least not as the main subject). As we discussed, Propertius ventures to the sea (and not any sea, but Augustus's one) not without trouble and it is at least debatable if it was willingly.

IV. A Systematization Proposal[56]

Harrison traces back to Catullus 64 the image of voyage and sea representing epic poetry in Roman literature. He seems to be the poet to introduce this image to Roman poetry, and it is a reelaboration of Homeric, Pre-Homeric, Callimachean and Hellenistic's images of the sea and voyage in a more general way. Harrison justifies his interpretation of Catullus 64 by the semantic choices made by the poet:

> The detailed language of lines 10-11 supports such an interpretation, since several of the terms can be used symbolically of poetic activity as well as of sailing. *Cursu* in line 11, together with *decurrere* in line 6 and *currum* in line 9, recalls *currere* of the progress of poetry. (...) *Aequor* can allude to any flat surface, and here it might represent not only the metaphorical 'sea' of epic but even perhaps a flat surface for writing. (Harrison, 2007, p. 3)

Harrison emphasizes the metapoetic aspect of the sea, or ocean, as it can represent the surface on which to write.

Commenting on Harrison's article on the poetic voyage, Craig evidences the metapoetic function of land (or water formations closer to land) in the water imagery's big picture. Citing Book 2 of the *Georgics*, Craigs (2009, p. 86) points out two types of voyage: (1) "the voyage over the sea of epic, with all its Homeric connotations" and (2) "the preferred one closer to the land which is a more appropriate analogue for the less grandiose poem that is the *Georgics*".

Water imagery is intrinsically metapoetic, as the sea (or the ocean) is related to Homer and epic poetry in general, but, more than that, the river and other formations have meanings related to Homer's sea. In opposition to it we have land. For that, it seems that we have two alternatives: (1) the end of the voyage and epic poetry, as the hero approaches the much-desired destination; (2) A place for bucolic poetry and other stable themes.

Beyond land and sea, we have the river, and, as we discussed, it seems to be the fitting place for elegy but also a place for epic, as it is not only a place for encountering waters, but it also flows into the sea. The river seems to encompass all the characteristics necessary for elegiac love, though. It is destined to end into the sea (which we can relate to the age fitting for poetry); it flows continuously; it has a predestined path and it is not always a safe journey. Yet, as we saw, big rivers and dirty ones would not be the place to experience love. Another water formation that seems to be related to love is the lake, but, its waters are too calm and would not be a place for an elegiac lover to suffer.

The shore, or beaches, seems to be another place of encounter and for passing. It can be either the place where you depart for the deep sea (the end of love) or the place where you arrive (or suffer shipwreck) after a journey (end of epic). Either way, it is a place for brief and troubled love.

We propose that the semantic opposition that rules water imagery is Continuity vs Discontinuity. Even though salt and fresh water is an important opposition here, the fundamental one is about the movement of the waters. Continuity here meaning a continuous and determined movement, and discontinuity, a chaotic movement. The river would be the icon for the continuity side, and opposed to it, the sea. We also have, structurally, the negation of each one. Semiotically,

we would have the Non-Continuity vs Non-Discontinuity function as a result of the first one.

The formation that seems to deny the sea and its chaos is the inland water formations (i.e. lakes, marshes, wells...), a non-discontinuous place; in the other side, the one which seems to oppose the river is the shore, as it has a more continuous movement, but not so predictable. At the sub-contrary side of the semiotic square, we would have the function of surrounded and surrounding, the countryside encloses lakes and other inland water formations; in opposition to that, the shore encloses the land. The semiotic square would look like this:

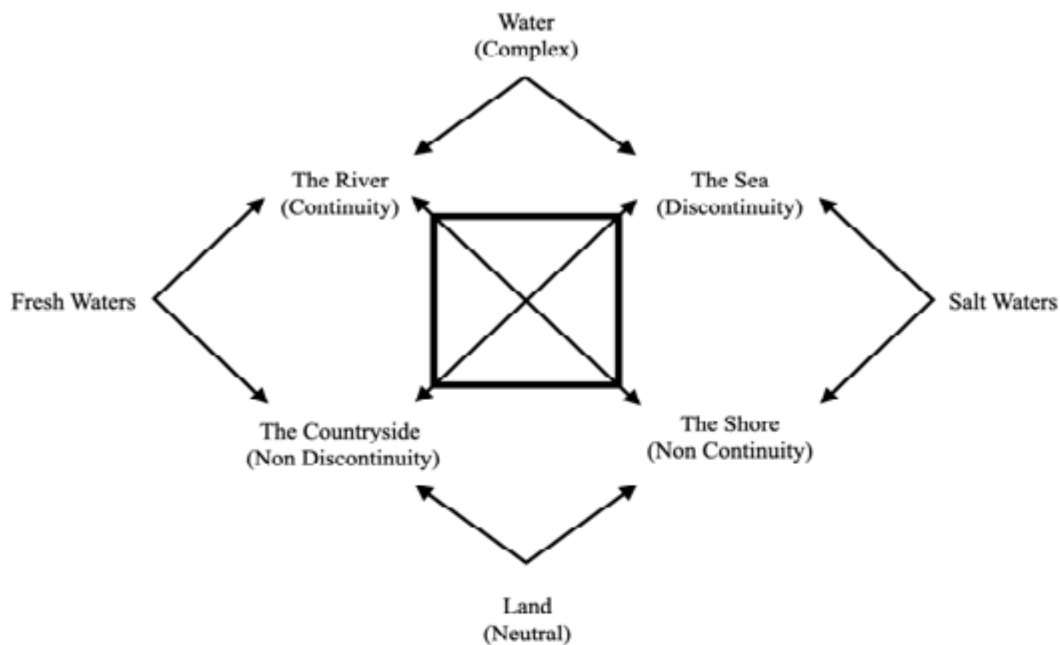

FIGURE 1: Greimas Square applied to the system of waters in classical poetry

Many passages about water imagery have not been analyzed in this article, as this subject would require more than one study about it. This brief analysis however evidences some important aspects of the narrative and the structure of water imagery in Propertius poetry.

Book 4 marks the arrival at the sea, which, metaphorically, seems to reinforce the interpretation that Propertius had finally said yes to Augustus's regime (or succumbed to the pressure to accept it). In this sense, understanding the possible structure behind the usage of water imagery do not just help us to understand literary aspects of his poetry, but might also give us a hint of his political intentions.

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Notes

1

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Professor Stephen Harrison for his invaluable assistance and feedback throughout the development of this article and for hosting Guilherme Pezzente Pinto as his supervisor on Corpus Christi College – Oxford, for the development of this research.

2

See Fear (2005, p. 13-40).

3

For further discussions, see Veyne (2015).

4

See Martins (2012).

5

See Oliva Neto, J. A. (2013).

6

Our translation.

7

We used Heyworth's translation for this article for every Propertian passage.

8

Prop. 1.1.1 – "Cynthia was the first;".

9

Prop. 1.12.20 – "Cynthia was the start; Cynthia will be the end."

10

For further discussion on the methapoetic origin of Cynthia, see: Martins (2015) and Wyke (2002).

11

Prop. 1.12.1-2 – "Why don't you cease inventing a charge of sloth against me, on the grounds that Cynthia is causing us a distraction, Rome?"

12

Prop. 1.6.25-30 – "allow me to give up this soul to life-long misbehaviour: many have willingly perished in a long-lasting love: may I too be among their number when the earth covers me. I was not born suited to glory, nor arms: this is the soldiering that the fates wish me to undergo."

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13

Prop. 2.1.1-4 – "You ask how it happens that so often I write of love affairs, how my book comes in elegiac form on to people's lips. it is not Calliope who sings this for me, nor Apollo: it is my girl herself who creates my poetic talent."

14

Prop. 2.1.39-42 – But neither does narrow-chested Callimachus thunder the Phlegraean uproar of Jupiter and Enceladus, nor does my heart suit the composition of Caesar's name back to his Phrygian ancestors in epic verse.

15

Prop. 3.9.1-4 – "Maecenas, knight from the blood of Etruscan kings, you who desire to stay within the limits of your good fortune, why do you send me on to so vast an ocean of writing? Large sails are not suited to my vessel."

16

Prop. 3.9.34-46 – "(...) loyalty will be the true trophy of Maecenas. (...) May these writings fire boys and fire girls, and let them celebrate me as a god and bear me sacred offerings".

17

About the last lines of this poem and its meaning, see Heyworth (2007, p. 103 et seq.).

18

See Martins (2019).

19

Prop. 2.7.1-6.

20

Prop. 2.10.7-8 – "Let the first age sing Venuses, the last disorder: I shall sing wars, since my girl is written".

21

Prop. 2.10.19-20 – "I shall follow these campaigns; in singing your campaigns I shall become an inspired poet and a great one: may the fates preserve this day for me".

22

Prop. 2.10.25-26 – "Not yet do my poems know the Ascraean mountains, but love has just washed them in the stream of Permessus."

23

Vergil (1916).

24

Hesiod (*The Theogony*, 1914, 1-8).

25

For some more examples, see Heyworth (2007 p. 114 et ss.).

26

For a complete discussion on the matter, see Heyworth (1995, p. 165-85), and Martins (2017, p. 175-92).

27

Prop. 3.3.23-24 – "Let one of your oars skim the water, the other the sand: you will be safe; the greatest storm [and crowd] is in mid sea".

28

See Martins (2021, chapter 6).

29

Prop. 2.1.17-18. – "But, Maecenas, if the fates had given me so much that I could lead heroic hands to arms (...)".

30

Homer (1920).

31

Homer (1934).

32

Hom, Il. 21.192-7.

33

For further discussions about the ocean as a metaphor for epic poetry, and the opposition between water and wine, see Craig (2009).

34

Prop. 1.6.14-15.

35

Prop. 1.9.33-34 – "So, for goodness' sake, confess your error as soon as you can".

36

Prop. 1.9.7-8 – "pain and tears have deservedly made me an expert".

37

Prop. 1.9.11 – "In love the verse of Mimnermus counts for more than Homer".

38

Prop. 1.9.15-16 – "What if you did not have ready access? As it is, you are a madman, searching for water while you are in midstream."

39

See Heslin (2011).

40

Prop. 1.15.10-14 – "(...) saying much to the unfair sea [iniusto multa locuta salo] and though she grieved that she was never to see him again, yet she was aware of her long period of joy".

41

Prop. 1.15.29-31 – "For rivers will flow out of the desolate sea, and the year will pass its seasons in inverted order before love of you is removed from the depths of our heart".

42

Virgil's *Aeneid*, 6.901; Loeb's translation. (DOI: 10.4159/DLCL.virgil-aeneid.1916).

43

Prop. 1.17.4.

44

Prop. 1.17.28.

45

Prop. 2.15.41-44 – "If such were the life everyone desired to run through and lie with their limbs weighed down by much wine, there would be no cruel iron nor ship for war, nor would the sea at Actium turn over our bones (...).

46

Prop. 2.26b.45-46 – "Neptune will not be cruel to such great love: Neptune is a match for his brother Jupiter in love".

47

Prop. 2.26b.43-44 – "Provided she is never absent from my eyes, Jupiter himself may burn the ship."

48

Prop. 2.26b.33-34.

49

See Higino, Fab. 169.

50

For discussions and definitions on the term *variatio*, see: Fitzgerald (2016).

51

Prop. 3.1.5-6. – "Tell me, in what glen did you together refine your song? or with what foot did you begin? or what water did you drink?"

52

Callimachus (1955).

53

Prop. 3.9.35-36 – "I do not cut through the swollen sea on a sail-bearing keel: our time is spent safe beneath the banks of a tiny river."

54

Prop. 3.21.25-26 – "There I shall begin to improve my mind in the porticos of Plato, or in your gardens, learned Epicurus;".

55

Prop. 3.24-25.11-16.

56

Based on Aristotle's logic square of opposition, Greimas developed what would be the structuralist programme of semantics, on Structural Semantics of 1966. Based upon a fundamental and general axis of opposition of two terms that constitutes the substance of content, the semiotic square develops logically this into a square by opposing this axis to its contrary (the absense of meaning) at the level of the form of

the content. By extending the principle of binary opposition, the Semiotic Square introduces a representation that includes four key elements divided into two axis: (1) the initial term (S1); (2) its direct opposite (S2), forming with S1 the first axis; (3) the negation of the initial term (non-S1), and (4) the negation of the direct opposite (non-S2), forming with non-S1 the sencond axis. For further explanations on the Semiotic Square, or Greimas Square, see: Greimas, A. J.; Rastier, F. (1968). The Interaction of Semiotic Constraints. For a deep methodological discussion, see Greimas, A. J. *Structural Semantics* (1966).

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Propertius' waters and his journey to the sea[1]
As águas de Propércio e sua viagem ao mar

Classica - Revista Brasileira de Estudos Clássicos
vol. 38, p. 1 - 26, 2025
Sociedade Brasileira de Estudos Clássicos, Brasil
editor@classica.org.br

ISSN: 0103-4316
ISSN-E: 2176-6436

DOI: https://doi.org/10.24277/classica.v38.2025.1104