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Concordia Discors: The Unity of Propertius 2.29

My paper combines textual and literary criticism, with some implications for the question of the reality of Cynthia. I argue that Propertius 2.29 is a single elegy, that it should not be divided after line 22, contains no lacunae, and requires no transpositions. At the same time, the individual words are more corrupt than many conservative scholars admit.

The elegy falls into two well-defined halves: the poet's capture by a gang of cupids and transportation to Cynthia's house (1-22 or 'A'), and what he finds there (23-42 or 'B'). The huge differences in tone and situation between the two halves have persuaded most editors to divide it in two. My thesis is that Propertius 2.29 constitutes a *concordia discors*: the two halves are antithetical and complementary, and neither can be understood properly without the other. Details of the plot, situation, and tone of A are balanced by the opposing plot, situation, and tone of B. Most of these antitheses are obvious enough: night-day, drunkenness-sobriety, outdoors-indoors, turbulence-clarity. In addition, A is 'poetic', B 'prosaic': that is, A is fantastic and artificial, with a multiplication of metaphors: *seruitium amoris*, the lover as slave, leads to *fugitiuus amoris*, the unfaithful or unwilling lover as runaway slave, which in turn demands *fugitiuarii amoris*, the cupids as the runaway slave catchers of love. B is narrative and thoroughly realistic. To put it another way, A is a pleasant dream, B a cruel awakening. Though dealing with kidnapping and slavery, A is quite a pleasant piece. B, at least after Cynthia starts speaking, is thoroughly unpleasant.

Further, A is written in the second person, with a vocative in the first line (*mea lux* 1), while B is written in the third person throughout. This is paradoxical. The part of the elegy in which the poet is not with Cynthia is addressed to her, and vice versa. This is the opposite of what we might expect, though at the same time it fits better with the pleasantness and anticipation of A and the cruelty and disappointment of B. Similarly, in the Cupid's description in A, Cynthia is *haec* (13) and Propertius *hic* (9), while in B she is *illa* from the start (23, 25).

Details could be multiplied. However, all of the differences in mood between the two parts are explained by the difference in situation. In A the poet is apart from Cynthia: in B he is with her. As shown by the change of persons and demonstrative pronouns, he is, paradoxically, closer to her, his love is most openly and freely expressed, when he is not (bodily) with her. The subject of Propertius 2.29 is the disproportion between Propertius' slavish devotion to Cynthia and her aversion to him: in Catullan terms, *amo et abhorreor*. The mood of B destroys that of A: the poet's dreams are shown to be empty and false. We might say that Propertius makes one half of his poem (B) more 'real' than the other.