THE ENFOLDING COUPLETS: THEIR RELATION TO THE PROBLEMS OF PROPERTIUS IV 9, 71-74 1)

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The unity of Propertius IV 9 is insured by recourse to the same formal device Propertius uses in his other aetiological poems, an echoing in the conclusion of the tone struck at the outset. In IV 2, 1-2, for example, Propertius introduces the multiform god Vertumnus and promises a careful celebration of his varied manifestations:

Qui mirare meas tot in uno corpore formas,
accipe Vertumni signa paterna dei.

He unwinds his elaboration and comes to a sharp halt: sex superant versus (line 57). This is followed by a quip, notifying us of the light-hearted 2) but formal character of the poem, and a closing “thank you” to the artist Mamurius Veturius who created the image of the god Vertumnus addressing us in the poem:

qui me tot docilem 3) potuisti fundere in usus.
unum opus est, operi non datur unus honos.

The closing lines offer a clear yet subtle echo of the sense and wording of the opening couplet 4).

In similar, even more apparent, fashion IV 4 offers a formal enfolding of its theme: Tarpeium scelus et Tarpeiae turpe sepulcrum (line 1) and the first half of the final couplet: a duce Tarpeium 5)

1) I am indebted to Professor K. M. Abbott, and also to Professors C. A. Forbes and R. J. Lenardon for their advice on this paper.
2) See W. S. Anderson, Hercules Exclusus: Propertius 4.9, AJP 84 (1964), 1-12 on the elements of “amused sophistication” in the poem.
3) tot docilem. See D. R. Shackleton Bailey, Propertiana (Amsterdam 1967), 229.
4) Ovid, Met. 14, 652, in his account of Vertumnus, seems to echo Prop. IV 2, 21-22.
5) Tarpeium Palmer and Camps: Tarpeia codd.
mons est cognomen adeptus (line 93). IV 10 is an aetiological elegy 'explaining' the name of the temple of Jupiter Feretrius:

Nunc Iovis incipiam causas aperire Feretri
armaque de ducibus trina recepta tribus. (lines 1-2)

The circular pattern once again manifests itself:

nunc spolia in templo tria condita: causa Feretri.
omine quod certo dux ferit ense ducem;
seu quia victa suis umeris haec arma ferebant,
hinc Feretri dicta est ara superba Iovis. (lines 45-48)

This device, perhaps borrowed from rhetorical theory or, more generally, arising from an artist's desire to round off his work, is neither confined to Propertius' aetiological poems nor to the Propertian corpus 1).

Rather successfully ignored, however, by most, including all recent editors of Propertius, is the fact that this technique of the enfolding reference also characterizes Propertius' aetiological poem about Hercules, IV 9. Professor Camps joins Barber, Helm, Hosius, Schuster and Tovar in placing lines 71-72 after lines 73-74:

hunc, quoniam manibus purgatum sanxerat orbem,
sic Sanctum Tatiae composuere Cures. 73
Sancte pater salve, cui iam favet aspera Iuno:
Sancte, velis libro dexter inesse meo 2).

All of these editors agree that lines 71-72 are misplaced. Camps, however, seems to sense that something is still awry; for he takes the trouble in his notes to observe the apparent: 'the narrative begins without a preamble' and the "last four lines of the elegy, 71-4, are distinct from the narrative" 3). This difficulty too can be

1) See G. P. Goold, Noctes Propertianae, HSCP 71 (1966), 92. My remarks owe a heavy debt to Professor Goold's observations on pp. 92-93.
2) Transtulit Schneidewin. This passage is from E. A. Barber's Oxford text of 1960, upon which Camps bases his own. Camps' variations are discussed below.