BRILL'S COMPANION TO PROPERTIUS

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CHAPTER SEVEN

MAJOR THEMES AND MOTIFS IN PROPERTIUS' LOVE POETRY

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The following study of major themes and motifs in Propertius aims to set out as succinctly as possible what these motifs were and, in particular, to examine how Propertius' use of them may have differed from that of Tibullus and Ovid. An equally important aim was to provide some sense of the way in which these different motifs were distributed and developed over the four books of the corpus. While necessarily having to be selective, the intention was to cover as far as possible all the main themes. Many of these have had individual studies devoted to them, and so the prime importance of the present exercise is to give a comprehensive overview, providing, where appropriate, bibliographical references to earlier treatments and not covering in detail material that has been sufficiently analyzed elsewhere. Interestingly, all these major themes, with the exception of that relating to Propertius' own poetic composition, are foreshadowed in the programmatic first elegy of the monobiblos.

Teacher of Love

> *me legat assidue post haec neglectus amator.*[1] (1.7.13)[2]
>
> "Hereafter let the neglected lover read me avidly."

The theme of the "teacher of love" *praeceptor amoris* is well attested in all the elegists and forms the basis of Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*. In Propertius this theme makes its appearance as early as the end of

[1] The text quoted is normally that of W. A. Camps (1961–1967).

[2] For the *praeceptor amoris* theme generally in elegy, see Wheeler (1910/11) and James (2003) 161–67. For the theme in Propertius, see Wheeler (1910).

his first poem, where he warns his friends to remain faithful to one mistress, if they are happy in love, and to avoid the troubles that have beset his own affair with Cynthia:

in me nostra Venus noctes exercet amaras,
et nullo uacuus tempore defit Amor.
hoc, moneo, uitate malum: sua quemque moretur
cura, neque assueto mutet amore locum.
quod si quis monitis tardas aduerterit auris,
heu referet quanto uerba dolore mea! (1.1.33–38)

"On me our Venus levies bitter nights and Love that has no respite never fails. Shun this woe of mine, I warn you: let each cling to his own beloved, nor change when love has found its accustomed home. But if anyone should lend his ear too late to my warnings, alas with what agony will he recall my words!"

As the prominence of this theme in the programmatic first poem suggests, it is to play an important role in Book 1, but its importance gradually recedes as Propertius moves away from erotic themes to broaden the scope of his elegies; it is less frequent in Book 2, rare in Book 3 and totally absent from Book 4. One characteristic feature of the use of this theme in Propertius deserves more attention. This is the use of aphorisms involving the personified Amor (as in line 34 above) to back up the didactic points he makes. With the possible exception of 2.18.21–22, where Cupid is used to illustrate the point that no lover remains in favor for long: *saepe Cupido/huic malus esse solet, cui bonus ante fuit,* "often Cupid is unkind to the lover to whom he was kind before", Amor is the only god who appears in this role. In 1.1, as one would expect in an opening poem, this device is used with special reference to Propertius' own situation. It is Amor who has taught him to hate chaste girls and to live a life devoid of reason (1.1.5–6). The general point illustrated by the Milanion myth (1.1.9–16) on the usefulness of prayers and loyal service in the pursuit of the beloved does not hold true in Propertius' own case, where Love refuses to follow his usual well-trodden paths:

in me tardus Amor non ullas cogitat artis,
nec meminit notas, ut prius, ire uias. (1.1.17–18)

"In my case slow Love thinks up no devices, and does not remember to tread, as before, his well-known paths."

In the beginning of the second poem, addressed to Cynthia, Propertius takes up a didactic stance in an attempt to persuade his mistress that beauty unadorned is best. He decks out his arguments in good

rhetorical style with parallels from nature (9–14) and mythological *exempla* (15–22). Immediately before this the figure of Amor is used to drive home his point *nudus Amor formae non amat artificem* (8) "Love goes naked and does not love those who make an artifice of beauty". Similarly, in his warning to Gallus in 1.5 to avoid becoming involved with Cynthia, Propertius again employs the figure of Amor to make the point that Gallus' ancient ancestry will be of no avail should he fall prey to Cynthia's charms: *nescit Amor priscis cedere imaginibus* (1.5.24) "Love scorns to yield to ancestral images". In exactly the same terms in poem 1.14 Propertius makes it clear to Tullus that Love makes no concessions to wealth: *nescit Amor magnis cedere diuitiis* (8) "Love scorns to yield to great wealth". In poem 1.7, addressed to the epic poet Ponticus, Propertius stresses the usefulness of his own elegiac poetry as a source of help for neglected lovers:

me legat assidue post haec neglectus amator,
et prosint illi cognita nostra mala. (1.7.13–14)

"Hereafter let the neglected lover read me avidly, and may his knowledge of my woes profit him."

This picks up the point made earlier at 1.1.34–38 and is repeated in Apollo's advice to Propertius near the beginning of Book 3:

ut tuus in scamno iactetur saepe libellus,
quem legat exspectans sola puella uirum. (3.3.19–20)

"So that your book may often be displayed on the bedside table to be read by a lonely girl awaiting her lover."

The general reference in 1.7.13–14 to Propertius' powers as a *praeceptor amoris* leads to some specific advice for Ponticus. Should he fall in love it would be more useful to write elegy than epic (15–19), but any hopes of this being possible are dashed in another one-line reference to Amor: *nec tibi subiciet carmina serus Amor* (20) "late Love will not provide you with songs". The dangers posed by Amor coming late in life (perhaps already hinted at in Propertius' case in 1.1.17 *tardus Amor* "slow Love") are repeated more forcefully in the last line of the poem with a typical aphorism involving Amor: *saepe uenit magno faenore tardus Amor* (1.7.26) "Love that comes late often claims a heavy interest". In 1.9, when Ponticus eventually succumbs to love, Propertius once again emphasizes both his own erotodidactic powers:

non me Chaoniae uincant in amore columbae
dicere, quos iuuenes quaeque puella domet.
me dolor et lacrimae merito fecere peritum. (1.9.5–7)

"In the field of love Chaonian doves could not beat me in divining which youths each girl should subdue. Suffering and tears have made me deservedly expert."

and the superiority of elegy over epic in matters of love, this second point being backed up again by a reference to personified Amor:

plus in amore ualet Mimnermi uersus Homero:
carmina mansuetus lenia quaerit Amor. (1.9.11–12)

"In love Mimnermus' verse is worth more than Homer's: peaceful Love demands gentle poems."

Poem 9 ends, just as poem 7 had, with a general statement regarding the nature of love *dicere quo pereas saepe in amore leuat* (34) "often in love it brings relief to tell the source of one's suffering". In both cases these general statements back up advice from the author to his "pupil": *tu caue nostra tuo contemnas carmina fastu* (1.7.25) "you beware not to scorn my songs in your pride" and *quare, si pudor est, quam primum errata fatere* (1.9.33) "therefore, if you have any shame, admit your error at once". In poem 10, addressed to Gallus in the aftermath of Propertius' witnessing his lovemaking, the poet again emphasizes his erotodidactic prowess:

possum ego diuersos iterum coniungere amantis,
et dominae tardas possum aperire fores;
et possum alterius curas sanare recentis,
nec leuis in uerbis est medicina meis. (1.10.15–18)

"I can join parted lovers and I can open a mistress's reluctant door; I can cure another's fresh grief; not slight is the healing power in my words."

Again it is Love personified who, together with Cynthia, has taught him all he knows:

Cynthia me docuit semper quaecumque petenda
quaeque cauenda forent: non nihil egit Amor. (1.10.19–20)

"Cynthia has taught me what everyone should always seek, what things they should avoid: Love has done something for me."

Of course there is irony, as Holzberg has pointed out,[3] in the fact that this supposed expertise has been of no benefit to Propertius himself as the many problems in his affair with Cynthia, illustrated

[3] Holzberg (2001) 44.

even in the first book, demonstrate. By the end of Book 1 all his teaching has amounted to is that he can serve as a warning to others *similes moniturus amantes* (1.15.41) "I shall be a warning to similar lovers" to avoid the faults he himself has fallen into.

In Book 2 the poet's stance as *praeceptor amoris* is less pervasive, but the aphorisms linked to Amor continue. The first of these at 2.3.8: *differtur, numquam tollitur ullus amor* "Love may be put off, never removed" explains why Propertius' attempt to move on from love elegy to more serious compositions *aut ego si possem studiis uigilare seueris* (2.3.7) "whether I could spend my nights in serious studies" failed. At 2.4.14 *sic est incautum, quidquid habetur amor* "whatever love is it cannot be guarded against" illustrates the point that no one can guard against love. A lover can be alive at one moment and dead the next: *ambulat—et subito mirantur funus amici!* (2.4.13) "he is out walking—and suddenly his friends are surprised at his funeral". At 2.6.21–2 *tu rapere intactas docuisti impune Sabinas:/per te nunc Romae quidlibet audet Amor* "you taught us to rape with impunity the Sabine virgins. Because of you now Love dares anything in Rome". The poet, tongue in cheek, attributes current decadence in Rome to the example of Romulus who encouraged the rape of the Sabine virgins. In a mythological *exemplum* at 2.8.29–38 Propertius demonstrates how Achilles was kept from battle by his grief at the loss of Briseis and concludes in the final line of the poem with the question *mirum, si de me iure triumphat Amor?* (2.8.40) "is it surprising if Love justly triumphs over me?". If Love can triumph over a mythological figure of the stature of Achilles, what wonder if he triumphs over Propertius? In 2.22, an erotodidactic poem addressed to Demophoon on the advisability of having more than one mistress, Propertius counters an objection from Demophoon by the statement that Love never needs to ask the question "why?":

quaeris, Demophoon, cur sim tam mollis in omnis?
quod quaeris, "quare", non habet ullus amor. (2.22.13–14)

"You ask, Demophoon, why I am susceptible to all women? Love does not know the meaning of your question 'Why?'"

A little later in the same poem Propertius illustrates the point that love is no hardship to him by the statement that love does not become exhausted through frequent use: *nullus amor uires eripit ipse suas* (2.22.28) "No love exhausts its own strength". Finally at 2.33.41–42 another aphorism involving Amor explains why no woman is content to sleep alone:

nulla tamen lecto recipit se sola libenter:
est quiddam, quod uos quaerere cogat Amor.

"No women takes herself willingly to bed. There is something that Love compels you all to seek."

The *praeceptor amoris* stance in general is less obvious in the second book than in the first. The best example is perhaps in poem 2.4 where the initial six lines on the difficulty of loving girls, addressed to an unspecified hearer, are balanced at the end of the poem by six lines (17–22) on the ease of pederastic love, again spoken to an unspecified addressee. The central section of the poem, containing the aphorism about Amor quoted above (2.4.14), discusses the difficulties of Propertius' affair, which is characterized as a disease. In the central section of 2.25, lines 21–34, Propertius addresses a warning to successful lovers, advising them not to be overconfident. The central couplet of this passage:

mendaces ludunt flatus in amore secundi:
si qua uenit sero, magna ruina uenit (2.25.27–28)

"Fair winds in love are deceitful and mock us: mighty is the fall that comes late."

echoes the warning to Ponticus (1.7.20ff.) about Love coming late, discussed above. The opening of the passage, with its warning that no woman remains faithful for long, *credule, nulla diu femina pondus habet* (2.25.22) "credulous lover, no woman is faithful for long" looks forward to the second main occurrence of the *praeceptor* theme in Book 2 at 2.34.3ff. where the dangers of infidelity in love are compared to the dangers of civil strife, as suggested particularly in the phrase *tristia arma* (6) "bitter arms":

expertus dico, nemo est in amore fidelis:
formosam raro non sibi quisque petit.
polluit ille deus cognatos, soluit amicos,
et bene concordes tristia ad arma uocat. (2.34.3–6)

"I speak as an expert, no one is faithful in love: rarely does any man not seek a beautiful woman for himself. That god pollutes kinsmen, separates friends and calls to bitter arms those that are in close harmony."

A passing reference in 2.21.3 *sed tibi iam uideor Dodona uerior augur?* "but do I not seem to you now to be a truer augur than Dodona?" to Propertius' prophetic skills in his warning to Panthus about his lover recall the connection of prophecy with the *praeceptor* theme in the poem to Ponticus 1.9.5–6 discussed above.

This leads us to Book 3 and the next appearance of the theme at 3.8.17f. Propertius claims that his sufferings in love have led him to become a true *haruspex* in matters of the heart, the lesson in question being that no love can be true that is not subject to quarrels:

non est certa fides, quam non in iurgia uertas:
hostibus eueniat lenta puella meis. (3.8.19–20)

"No love is sure that cannot be provoked to quarrels: let an unfeeling girl be the fate of my enemies."

Unless one counts a passing use of an aphorism involving Amor in relation to the effect of the sight of his mistress (discussed below) at 3.21.4 *ipse alimenta sibi maxima praebet amor* "Love itself provides its own greatest nourishment" this is the last occurrence of the *praeceptor* theme in Propertius, which clearly diminishes in importance after Book 2.

Love as a Disease

solus amor morbi non amat artificem. (2.1.58)[4]

"Only love loves not the doctor of its disease."

The importance of the theme of love as a wound, or as a mental or physical disease, is commonplace in elegy and has a long history in earlier literature. Just as love can be represented as a disease, *malum/mala*, as at 1.1.35, 1.5.4, 1.7.14, 2.4.10, 3.17.10, so its cure can be discussed in terms of the Theocritean[5] image of a *medicina*, as at 1.5.28, 1.10.18, 2.1.57, 3.17.4. This theme is again announced clearly in Propertius' programmatic first elegy. The poet's love for Cynthia is a madness that has lasted for a year *et mihi iam toto furor hic non deficit anno* (1.1.7) "and this madness has not left me now for a whole year". He begs his friends for a remedy for his diseased heart *quaerite non sani pectoris auxilia* (1.1.26) "seek a remedy for a heart that is sick". To achieve this cure he is willing even to undergo the most savage form of cure known to ancient medicine, namely cautery *fortiter et ferrum saeuos patiemur et ignes* (1.1.27)[6] "bravely will I bear the knife and the fierce cautery."

[4] For the general theme of love as a disease in ancient literature, see Funke (1990); on Propertius' use of it, see Burck (1952) 167, Boucher (1965) 26.
[5] Theocr. *Id.* 11. 1–6.
[6] For *ferrum et ignes* as proverbial with reference to surgery, see Otto (1890) 170. For surgery in Hellenistic literature, see Giangrande (1974) 11.

There are some indications that Propertius had more than a passing interest in medical theory and practice. The most detailed treatment of this theme occurs in poem 2.4:

> *non hic herba ualet, non hic nocturna Cytaeis,*
> *non Perimedaea gramina cocta manu;*
> *quippe ubi nec causas nec apertos cernimus ictus;*
> *unde tamen ueniant tot mala caeca uia est.*
> *non eget hic medicis, non lectis mollibus aeger,*
> *huic nullum caeli tempus et aura nocet;*
> *ambulat – et subito mirantur funus amici!* (2.4.7–13)

"In such a case no herb avails, no Colchian sorceress of the night, no drug distilled by the hand of Perimede. For where we see neither causes nor clear blows, dark is the path whence so many ills arise. Such a sick man needs no doctors, no soft beds, it is not the climate or the air that harms him. He is out walking—and suddenly his friends are surprised at his funeral!"

The references in 9–10 to *causas, apertos ictus*, and *caeca uia* ("causes", "clear blows" and a "dark path") appear to recall the "hidden" and "overt" causes of diseases discussed in the medical theorists of the time.[7] Of the overt causes, *caeli tempus* and *aura* ("the climate" and "the air") are discussed in ancient writers from the Hippocratic "Airs and Waters" on, and commonly held responsible for the outbreak of disease. At 1.1.26 the word *auxilia* ("remedy") used for *remedium* is a medical techical term.[8] At 3.24.18 Propertius uses the technical *coeo* of wounds "healing": *uulneraque ad sanum nunc coiere mea*[9] "now my wounds knit and heal". In Book 4 the graphic description of the symptoms of tuberculosis (*tabes* in the Latin medical writers) in the *lena* Acanthis suggests again an interest in disease that goes beyond its use as an elegiac topos:

> *uidi ego rugoso tussim concrescere collo,*
> *sputaque per dentes ire cruenta cauos.* (4.5.67–68)

"I have seen the phlegm clotting in her wrinkled throat, and the bloody spit trickle through her hollow teeth."

[7] See Celsus *Proem.* 13 *qui rationalem medicinam profitentur, haec necessaria esse proponunt: abditarum et morbos continentium causarum notitiam, deinde euidentium; post haec etiam naturalium actionum.*

[8] See Fedeli (1980) on 1.1.26 for references.

[9] Cf. Celsus 2.10.15, 8.8.1a and see *OLD* **coeo** 5.

This is not to say that the usual elegiac themes of the lover's pallor, thinness, madness, and wounds are not exploited fully, particularly in Book 1. It was a commonplace idea in ancient erotic poetry that a lover's pallor indicated the depth of his passion. This is why at 1.1.22 Propertius begs the witches he calls to his aid to make Cynthia paler than he is. In addition to the mention of Propertius' own pallor at 1.5.21 there are references to the pallor of Ponticus 1.9.17 and Gallus 1.13.7 when they fall in love, and to the changes in color of Cynthia caused by Propertius at 1.6.6 and by his rival at 1.15.39. Significantly the theme is rare outside the emotionally intense Book 1, occurring in other books only at 3.8.28 where Propertius expresses his wish to be pale with longing for an angry mistress, and at 4.3.28 where Arethusa hopes that any pallor in her husband Lycotas' complexion is caused by his desire for her.

The thinness of the lover is mentioned in combination with pallor with reference to Propertius himself at 1.5.22 and to Lycotas at 4.3.27. At 2.22.21 Propertius claims, by an ironic reversal of the usual topos, that constant lovemaking does not make him thin, and at 3.16.11ff. the anaemic state of the average lover, it is argued, should prevent his being attacked by bloodthirsty brigands.

The theme of love as an irrational *furor*, introduced at 1.1.7, is restricted entirely to Book 1. At 1.4.11 Cynthia's beauty is represented as only a minor part of what inflames Propertius with furious passion: *haec sed forma mei pars est extrema furoris* "but this beauty is but the least part of my frenzy". At 1.5.3 Gallus is accused of being a madman for wishing to experience the pain of Propertius' passion *quid tibi uis, insane? meos sentire furores?* "What do you wish for, madman? To feel my frenzy?" When Gallus does fall in love with another girl the affair is characterized by *furor:*

> *non ego complexus potui diducere uestros:*
> *tantus erat demens inter utrosque furor.* (1.13.19–20)

"I could not part your embraces; so great was the wild frenzy between you both."

In Books 2 and 3 *furor* is replaced by the terms *insanus/insanio/uesanus*. At 2.14.18 Propertius complains that in the madness of love no man can see clearly how to act *scilicet insano nemo in amore uidet* "indeed in mad love no one sees his way". In the following poem he argues that no limits should be set to the frenzy of love: 2.15.29 *errat, qui finem uesani quaerit amoris* "he is wrong who wishes to set a limit on

mad love". At 2.34.25 he rejoices that Lynceus, though late, has fallen madly in love *Lynceus ipse meus seros insanit amores!* "my own Lynceus is himself mad with late love!" Apart from a single reference to Venus as *insana* at 3.17.3 and from the use of the *Mens Bona* theme at 3.24.19 (see below) the theme of love as madness is absent from Book 3. The theme of love as a wound makes its first appearance with reference to the wound caused by Cupid's arrows at 2.12.12 *nec quisquam ex illo uulnere sanus abit* "and no one escapes unharmed from that wound". At 2.22.7 *interea nostri quaerunt sibi uulnus ocelli* "meanwhile our eyes seek out their own wound" and 2.25.46 *haec atque illa mali uulneris una uia est* "both this woman and that are alike a single road to a cruel wound" the reference is to wounds caused by the attractions of a variety of girls. At 2.34.92 the poet Gallus is represented as washing away the wounds of his love for Lycoris in the waters of the underworld, just as at 3.21.32 Propertius proposes to heal the wounds of his own love through time and distant separation from his mistress. Finally, at the end of his affair with Cynthia in 3.24.18, Propertius represents his wounds as healing (3.24.18 quoted above) and, as an indication of his cure from mental anguish, he dedicates himself to Mens Bona (3.24.19).

Love as Slavery[10]

VNIVS HIC QVONDAM SERVVS AMORIS ERAT (2.13.36)
"HE WAS ONCE THE SLAVE OF A SINGLE LOVE"

The above inscription imagined by Propertius for his own tomb sums up in a single line one of the important themes of his love poetry, the theme of *seruitium amoris*. Of all the Roman elegists it is Propertius who is most inclined to see his love as a form of slavery.[11] This is a subject that has been treated in detail elsewhere and needs only a brief summary in the present section. The idea of a man's love for a woman being seen in terms of a voluntary servitude is peculiar to Latin poetry and has no real equivalent in Greek literature. The essence of the idea is encapsulated in the notion of the mistress as

[10] For *seruitium amoris*, see Copley (1947), Lyne (1979), Murgatroyd (1981), Veyne (1988) 132–50, Laigneau (1999) 328–35, James (2003) 145–50.
[11] Boucher (1965) 91 n. 1.

era or *domina* (both imply "mistress" in the literal sense). It is based on the type of reversal of normal social relations that has its roots perhaps in the Saturnalian background to native Italian comedy. In Propertius this state, incompatible as it is with the *libertas* "freedom" of a free Roman citizen, is a necessary prerequisite for success in love. It is a state that demands blind obedience in word and deed, as the warning to Ponticus at the opening of 1.9 shows:

> *Dicebam tibi uenturos, irrisor, amores,*
> *nec tibi perpetuo libera uerba fore:*
> *ecce iaces supplexque uenis ad iura puellae,*
> *et tibi nunc quaeuis imperat empta modo.* (1.9.1–4)

"Mocker, I said that love would come to you, and that you would not keep your freedom of speech forever. See you are laid low and go as a suppliant at a girl's will and now some or other girl bought just lately, gives you orders."

The more humility the lover shows the more likely he is to retain his girl, as Gallus is told:

> *at quo sis humilis magis et subiectus amori,*
> *hoc magis effectu saepe fruare bono.*
> *is poterit felix una remanere puella,*
> *qui numquam uacuo pectore liber erit.* (1.10.27–30)

"But the more humble you are, the more subservient to love, the more often will you enjoy success. He will be able to remain happily in the love of one woman, whose heart is never empty and fancy free."

No lover retains his freedom of action:

> *libertas quoniam nulli iam restat amanti,*
> *nullus liber erit, si quis amare uolet.* (2.23.23–24)

"Since there remains no freedom for a lover, no man will be free, if he wishes to love."

Hence Propertius is no longer *liber* in his mistress's eyes: *ecquandone tibi liber sum uisus?* (2.8.15) "did I ever seem to be a free man to you?" Rather, he sees his relationship with her as slavery (1.4.4 *assueto seruitio* "accustomed servitude"; 1.5 19 *graue seruitium* "harsh servitude"). Even when things are going well it is a gentle form of slavery *seruitium mite* (2.20.20) "gentle servitude", or its chains are sweet *dulcia uincla* (3.15.10) "sweet chains". Changing to a new mistress merely involves transferring one's slavery elsewhere: *sunt quoque translato gaudia seruitio* (1.12.18) "there is joy also in changing one's servitude". At the end of the

affair his only claim is to have served his mistress faithfully for five years: *quinque tibi potui seruire fideliter annos* (3.25.3) "I was able to serve you faithfully for five years". Only once is this relationship reversed and in a passage unique in Roman elegy Propertius expresses his pride in having such a beautiful girl as his slave:

nunc admirentur quod tam mihi pulchra puella
seruiat et tota dicar in urbe potens! (2.26.21–22).

"Now let men marvel that such a beautiful girl is my slave and let all the city speak of my power!"

Love as Military Service[12]

non ego sum laudi, non natus idoneus armis;
hanc me militiam fata subire uolunt. (1.6.29–30)

"I was not born fit for praise or for arms; this warfare of love is what the fates wish me to undergo."

The theme of *militia amoris* has a long history in both Greek and Roman literature and has been treated in detail by a number of modern writers. Propertius uses the theme less frequently than Tibullus[13] and Ovid,[14] who makes it the subject of a whole poem, *Amores* 1.9. The earliest recorded occurrence is in Greek lyric (Sappho fr. 1.28 *PLF*). It then occurs in elegy (Theogn. 1286f.) and tragedy (e.g., Soph. *Ant.* 781), but it does not become frequent until Alexandrian epigram. In Latin literature it is found in comedy (e.g., Plautus *Pers.* 231–33) and Catullus (e.g., 66.13–14) and reaches its peak of development in Roman elegy. Its particular relevance to this genre arises out of the common contrast between the life of military action and that of the elegiac lover. The elegist rejects "real" warfare and devotes himself to the battles of love. This is the context of 1.6.29–30 (quoted above) in which Propertius rejects an invitation from Tullus to join him on service abroad. This passage is close in tone to Tibullus 1.1.73–75 *nunc leuis est tractanda Venus . . . hic ego dux milesque bonus,*

[12] For *militia amoris* in Propertius, see Baker (1968) and in Ovid's *Amores* Thomas (1964); for the theme in elegy in general, see Spies (1930) and Murgatroyd (1975).
[13] Tib. 1.1.75–6, 3.63–4, 10.53–8, 2.1.71–80, 3.33–8, 5.106, 6.1–10: see Maltby (2002) 149.
[14] On Ovid's uses, see McKeown (1989) 257–60.

"now light love is our business . . . in this I am a leader and good soldier", which it may well have influenced. This theme of love as war occurs in Propertius in a variety of contexts. At 2.7.14–16:

nullus de nostro sanguine miles erit.
quod si uera meae comitarem castra puellae,
non mihi sat magnus Castoris iret equus.

"No soldier shall spring from my blood. But if I were to follow the true camp of my mistress, then Castor's war horse would not be big enough for me."

The context is that Propertius rejoices at the failure of Augustus' marriage legislation, which would have forced him to marry and produce legitimate children to serve in the army. In preference to this he would rather serve in his mistress's "camp". The camp image recurs twice in Book 4; once in relation to Propertius' vocation as a love elegist:

at tu finge elegos, fallax opus: haec tua castra!—
scribat ut exemplo cetera turba tuo.
militiam Veneris blandis patiere sub armis,
et Veneris pueris utilis hostis eris. (4.1.135–38)

"But you must compose elegy, a guileful task. This is your camp!—so that the rest of the throng write by your example. You will suffer service under the tender arms of Venus and will prove a fit adversary for Venus' boys."

and once in a joking reference at 4.8.28 to changing camp from Cynthia to another mistress *mutato uolui castra mouere toro* "having changed my bed I wished to change my camp". The *hostis* "enemy" metaphor seen in 4.1.138 above can be applied either to a hostile mistress *et tibi non tacitis uocibus hostis erit* "and she will be an enemy of yours with no silent voice", in a warning to Bassus of the dangers of crossing Cynthia at 1.4.18, or to a rival for one's mistress's affection as at 1.11.7. Lovemaking can be seen in terms of battles. At 2.1.45 Propertius expresses a preference for writing love elegy in the following terms: *nos contra angusto uersamus proelia lecto* "we by contrast wage battle on a narrow couch". A more detailed development of the theme occurs in Book 3:

dum uincunt Danai, dum restat barbarus Hector,
ille Helenae in gremio maxima bella gerit.
aut tecum aut pro te mihi cum riualibus arma
semper erunt: in te pax mihi nulla placet. (3.8.31–34)

"While the Danaans were victorious and while savage Hector resisted them, he waged his greatest war in Helen's embrace. Either against you or for you with my rivals I will always take up arms; with you I find no pleasure in peace."

where Paris' battles with Helen lead on to those between Propertius and his mistress.[15]

Although Propertius does not use this theme excessively in comparison with the other elegists, his development of the *hostis* and *castra* motifs is bold and effective.

Love and Death[16]

multi longinquo periere in amore libenter,
in quorum numero me quoque terra tegat. (1.6.27–28)

"Many have willingly perished in a long love-affair; in their number may the earth cover me too."

Death would be ever present to the consciousness of a generation that had lived through the civil wars, and poems 1.21 and 1.22 reflect the way in which Propertius' family was affected by these events. The elegiac genre had traditionally been associated with themes of lamentation,[17] and its metre was that most commonly used in funeral inscriptions. The theme of death was exploited by all the elegists, but it assumed an overriding importance in the work of Propertius. This is a topic that has received extensive treatment elsewhere and will consequently receive only a brief summary here.

The ideal of love depicted by the Roman elegists[18] was of a bond that would endure until, or, as sometimes in Propertius, beyond death. Love until death is the point illustrated in the quotation from 1.6.27–28 above. Similarly at 1.14.14 Propertius refers to the joys of his love for Cynthia lasting *dum me fata perire uolent* "until the fates shall wish me dead". Such a love is seen as deserving of praise 2.1.47

[15] For the *pax* metaphor in this context cf. 2.2.2 *at me composita pace fefellit Amor* and for *arma* in an erotic context cf. 1.3.16.

[16] For death in Propertius, see Boucher (1965) 65–81, Baker (1970), Stok (1986), Papanghelis (1987), Marchese (1995), Müller (1995), Ottón Sobrino (1995), Foulon (1996).

[17] For etymologies connecting *elegia* with lamentation, see Maltby (1991) s.vv. elegeus, elegia, elegiacus.

[18] Tib. 1.1.59–68, Ov. *Am.* 1.3.17–18, Lygd. [Tib.] 3.2.11–12, 3.3.7–8.

laus in amore mori "it is worthy of praise to die in love". The motif is often joined with the theme of the mistress officiating at the poet's funeral. In 1.17, for example, where Propertius imagines flight from his mistress's anger resulting in his shipwreck on a deserted shore he compares the lack of burial he would receive there (8, 12–13) with the funeral he would have received in Rome in the presence of Cynthia:

illic si qua meum sepelissent fata dolorem,
ultimus et posito staret amore lapis,
illa meo caros donasset funere crinis,
molliter et tenera poneret ossa rosa;
illa meum extremo clamasset puluere nomen,
ut mihi non ullo pondere terra foret. (1.17.19–24)

"If at home some fate had buried my sorrow, and a final gravestone stood above my ended love, she would have offered her precious hair at my funeral, and would have gently placed my bones on a bed of soft roses; she would have cried out my name over my last ashes, praying that the earth would lie lightly over me."

This passage is very reminiscent of Tibullus 1.1.61–62 *flebis et arsuro positum me, Delia, lecto/tristibus et lacrimis oscula mixta dabis* "You will weep and as I am placed on the pyre soon to be lit, Delia, you will give kisses mixed with sad tears", as well as of Tibullus' description of the funeral abroad in the absence of family and mistress at 1.3.5–9.[19] As an extension of this idea of faithfulness until death, Propertius imagines at 2.1.55–56 his funeral procession being led out from his mistress's house; an idea picked up by the imagined pronouncement of Maecenas over Propertius' tomb at the end of the poem: "*Huic misero fatum dura puella fuit*" (2.1.78) "a harsh girl was the fate of this sad man". Again at 2.13.17ff. Cynthia is given detailed instructions about arranging the poet's simple funeral ceremony, including the epitaph to be placed on his grave:

QVI NVNC IACET HORRIDA PVLVIS,
VNIVS HIC QVONDAM SERVVS AMORIS ERAT. (2.13.35–6)

"HE WHO LIES NOW AS UNLOVELY DUST WAS ONCE THE SLAVE OF ONE LOVE."

The first epitaph in Roman elegy occurs at Tib. 1.3.55–56 and others are found at Prop. 4.7.85–86 and Ov. *Am.* 2.6.61–62. It had its roots in Hellenistic poetry[20] and had occurred earlier in Latin in the *Eclogues*

[19] On the relative chronology of these poems, see Lyne (1998b).

[20] Theocr. *Id.* 1.120–21, [Theocr.] 23.47–48.

of Virgil (5.42–44), but the metre of elegy made it an especially appropriate form for this genre. Similarly at 2.24.33–38 Propertius asserts that he will remain faithful to Cynthia however long he lives, and imagines Cynthia officiating at his funeral and speaking words of praise over his bones. At the end of the poem his thoughts turn briefly to Cynthia's funeral, but the final couplet expresses the wish that she should die after him (51–52). At the end of the affair, when Propertius contemplates a visit to Athens to cure himself of his love for Cynthia, this theme is reversed and the poet expresses a preference for an honourable death, brought about by fate, rather than disgraceful love:

seu moriar, fato, non turpi fractus amore;
atque erit illa mihi mortis honesta dies. (3.21.33–34)

"Or if I die, let it be by fate and not broken by disgraceful love; that day of death will bring me no disgrace."

Elsewhere the funeral motif is used to underline the fame the poet will earn after his death as a teacher of love:

nec poterunt iuuenes nostro reticere sepulcro
"Ardoris nostri, magne poeta, iaces." (1.7.23–24)[21]

"And the youth will not be silent at my funeral: 'Great poet of our passion, there you lie.'"

The lover can die of his passion at any time *ambulat—et subito mirantur funus amici!* (2.4.13 translated above) and the act of love itself can be described as a form of dying *cum te complexa morientem, Galle, puella/ uidimus* (1.10.5–6) "when I saw you, Gallus, dying in your mistress's arms". At 2.26.57–58 this is seen as an honourable way to die: *quod mihi si ponenda tuo sit corpore uita/exitus hic nobis non inhonestus erit*[22] "but if I were to lay down my life on your body, that would be no ignoble death for me". Paradoxically success in love can be imagined as leading to immortality: *immortalis ero, si altera (sc. nox) talis erit* (2.14.10) "I will be immortal if I enjoy another such night" and *si dabit et multas (sc. noctes), fiam immortalis in illis* (2.15.39) "if she gives many such nights I will become immortal through them".

The theme of love beyond death is explored in 1.19. Propertius here claims he does not fear death itself so much as the idea that

[21] Cf. Tib. 1.1.65–66, 1.4.75–76.
[22] For this theme, cf. Ov. *Am.* 2.10.35–36.

after his death, though he will continue to love her, Cynthia will cease to love him. The continuity of love beyond the grave is illustrated by the myth of Protesilaus, who was allowed to visit his widow Laodamia as a ghost (7–10).[23] Propertius imagines his own faithfulness to Cynthia continuing beyond the grave (11–12):

illic quidquid ero, semper tua dicar imago:
traicit et fati litora magnus amor.

"Whatever I will be in death, I shall always be called your shade; great love crosses the shores of fate."

Lyne[24] is instructive on the way that Propertius' wish that Cynthia should continue to love him after his death: *quae tu uiua mea possis sentire fauilla!* (19) "like love to mine may you feel while still alive, when I am ashes" is undercut at the end of the poem and replaced by the more realistic wish that they should make the most of their love while they are still alive (25–26). The theme of love transcending death reappears in 2.27 where it is claimed that a mistress's voice can call her lover back from the dead:

si modo clamantis reuocauerit aura puellae,
concessum nulla lege redibit iter. (2.27.15–16)

"If only the whisper of his mistress's voice should call him back, he will return along the road allowed by no ordinance."

and the most detailed exploration of this theme comes in 4.7 where Cynthia's ghost comes back from the dead to upbraid Propertius.[25]

Sometimes the theme of the funeral and death of one lover is replaced by the motif of the simultaneous death of both lovers. This theme is introduced for the first time in 1.15.21 with the myth of Evadne killing herself on the pyre of her husband Capaneus, and is developed at length in 3.13.15–22 where this Eastern practice of suttee is used to illustrate the idea that Eastern wives are more faithful than their Roman counterparts. This comes perhaps as a half-humorous reversal of the common Augustan polemic against Eastern decadence, directed particularly at Antony and Cleopatra. At 2.8 the theme of the joint death of both lovers forms the basis of a complicated and

[23] On this, see Lyne (1998d).
[24] Lyne (1980) 100–102.
[25] Cf. the speech of the dead Cornelia in 4.11, and see Otón Sobrino (1995).

much discussed[26] elegy. The poem begins with the faithlessness of the mistress, which leads to the idea of the poet's suicide.[27] This, in turn, via the myth of Haemon dying on Antigone's tomb, leads, somewhat illogically, to the idea that the poet's mistress should not escape his fate but should die with him. In this poem, then, the theme of joint death implying faithfulness beyond the grave is replaced by the melodramatic threat of vengeful murder accompanied by suicide. At 2.28 there is a return to the more traditional use of this theme. On the occasion of his mistress's illness Propertius prays to Jupiter that both partners should either die together or live together:

si non unius, quaeso, miserere duorum!
uiuam, si uiuet; si cadet illa, cadam. (2.28.41–42)

"If you pity not one, I pray, pity both of us! May I live if she lives and die if she dies."

The theme of death is clearly one that fascinated Propertius and served to lend drama and pathos to a wide variety of elegiac situations.

Vision[28]

si nescis, oculi sunt in amore duces. (2.15.12)

"If you know not, the eyes are the leaders in love."

Of all the elegists, Propertius stands out for the strength of his visual imagination. The myths in which his poems abound appear often to be inspired by contemporary pictures, wall paintings, or sculptures. His love of the plastic arts is well documented in his poetry; witness his splendid description of the statues in the temple of Apollo Palatinus (2.31.1–16). As an illustration of the point that different artists win fame in different fields, he gives an enthusiastic account of the classic artists, sculptors, and metal workers of Greece (3.9.9–16). A projected visit to Athens is motivated in part by a desire to view the famous

[26] Lyne (1980) 91–92, Papanghelis (1987) 133–35, Sharrock (2000), 276–80, James (2003) 192–93.
[27] The suicide motif, common in the monologues of young men in Roman comedy, occurs elsewhere in Prop. at 2.7.7–8, 2.34.13–14. See Navarro Antolín (1997).
[28] On the visual aspect of Propertius' writing, see Boucher (1965) 41–62, Hubbard (1974) 164–66.

pictures and sculptures on display there (3.21.29–30). All this is well known, but the role of the visual as a theme in Propertius' treatment of love has perhaps not received the attention it deserves.

When in the first line of his first poem Propertius states that it was through her eyes that Cynthia captured him, he is announcing a theme which, in its various forms, is to play a major role in his love poetry, particularly in the first two books. An essential element in Propertius' erotodidaxis is that the eyes are the road to love. Two key texts make this point clear. The first occurs in an ecstatic poem on a successful night of love, 2.15, in which Propertius underlines the importance of the visual aspect in lovemaking:

non iuuat in caeco Venerem corrumpere motu:
si nescis, oculi sunt in amore duces. (2.15.11–12)

"There is no joy in spoiling love by sightless motion. If you know not, the eyes are the leaders in love."

The point is illustrated by two mythological exempla (Paris falling in love at the sight of the naked Helen, and Luna at the sight of the naked Endymion). If Cynthia persists in lying clothed, she will have her clothes ripped from her by her lover's hand. The lesson is concluded with a Catullan reminiscence, which, however, brings out more clearly than its original the visual theme:

dum nos fata sinunt, oculos satiemus amore:
nox tibi longa uenit, nec reditura dies. (2.15.23–24)

"While the fates allow let us sate our eyes on love. The long night comes to you and day will not return."
(Cf. Cat 5.5–6; Tib. 1.1.69, Ov. Am. 2.9.42)

Significantly the successful night of love described here and in 2.14 comes as a result of Propertius being cured of a mental blindness that had prevented him previously from understanding the secret of such a success:

ante pedes caecis lucebat semita nobis:
scilicet insano nemo in amore uidet.
hoc sensi prodesse magis: contemnite, amantes!
sic hodie ueniet, si qua negauit heri. (2.14.17–20)

"The path shone clear before my feet, but I was blind. Indeed in frenzied love no man can see. This is what I have found to be the best cure: be disdainful, lovers. Thus she will come today, who came not yesterday."

The second important text comes at the end of 2.25 and consists of a warning of the dangers involved in serving more than one love:

> *at, uos qui officia in multos reuocatis amores,*
> *quantum sic cruciat lumina uestra dolor!*
> *uidistis pleno teneram candore puellam,*
> *uidistis fusco, ducit uterque color;*
> *uidistis quandam Argiuam prodente figura,*
> *uidistis nostras, utraque forma rapit;*
> *illaque plebeio uel sit sandycis amictu:*
> *haec atque illa mali uulneris una uia est.*
> *cum satis una tuis insomnia portet ocellis,*
> *una sit et cuiuis femina multa mala.* (2.25.39–48)

"But you who direct a man's attentions to many loves, what agony torments your eyes. You see a young girl of fair complexion, or one of dark complexion; both colors attract you. You see a girl whose shape betrays an Argive, or you see Roman girls; both beauties allure. Though she is clad in plebeian robe or in scarlet, both this woman and that are alike a single road to a cruel wound. Since one girl is sufficient to keep your eyes from sleep, one girl spells trouble enough for any man."

Here the quadruple *uidistis* introduces the idea that to see is to fall in love. But the emphasis here is on the agony that such multiple encounters bring. Love is an agony that torments the eyes (40) and the eyes are the way through which the painful wound of love enters its victim (46). This theme of the *uulnus* of love had occurred earlier in Book 2 in a poem in which Propertius had advised exactly the opposite approach to that suggested in 2.25. In 2.22 Propertius had addressed Demophoon on the advisability of having more than one mistress and had described there how in his pursuit of multiple partners his eyes had sought their own wound: *interea nostri quaerunt sibi uulnus ocelli* (2.22.7) "meanwhile our eyes seek wounds for themselves". In Book 1 the visual effect of love is imagined to be great enough to extend beyond the grave:

> *non adeo leuiter nostris puer haesit ocellis,*
> *ut meus oblito puluis amore uacet.* (1.19.5–6)

"Cupid has not so lightly stuck in my eyes that my dust could forget my love for you."

In Book 3, however, although the sight of the mistress is still seen as one of the main roots of his passion;

> *crescit enim assidue spectando cura puellae:*
> *ipse alimenta sibi maxima praebet amor.* (3.21.3–4)

"Love for my girl grows incessantly with seeing her; love itself provides its own greatest nourishment."

the distance involved in a proposed trip to Athens is seen as being enough to banish Cynthia from his eyes and consequently his love from his heart:

> *unum erit auxilium: mutatis Cynthia terris*
> *quantum oculis, animo tam procul ibit amor.* (3.21.9–10)

"There will be one remedy; if I move to another land, love will be as far from my mind as Cynthia from my eyes."

The corollary of the fact that vision leads to love is that in order to preserve her lover's fidelity, a mistress should not allow his eyes to wander. So in his warning to Gallus to keep away from Cynthia, Propertius points out that she would not allow him freedom to sleep or to let his eyes range at will *non tibi iam somnos, non illa relinquet ocellos* (1.5.11) "she will not now leave you your sleep or your eyes". Ponticus is given a similar warning of the dangers of falling in love and not being allowed to give his eyes free rein:

> *quippe ubi non liceat uacuos seducere ocellos,*
> *nec uigilare alio nomine cedat Amor.* (1.9.27–28)

"Especially as Love will not allow you to turn your eyes freely where you like or to stay awake for anyone else but her."

Conversely any man who sees Cynthia will commit the sin of falling in love with her:

> *qui uidet is peccat: qui te non uiderit ergo,*
> *non cupiet: facti lumina crimen habent.* (2.32.1–2)

"He who sees you sins; he who does not see you will not desire you: the eyes bear the blame for the deed."

Closely related to this theme is that of the beauty of the mistress's eyes and their power over her lovers. As far as Propertius was concerned it was the beauty of Cynthia's eyes that first captured him (1.1.1). They could persuade him to believe her falsehoods (1.15.33–34) and cause him to die of love (1.15.41). Her eyes closing in sleep inspire his songs (2.1.11) and their power over him is second only to that of her abilities as a singer and poetess (2.3.14–22). When Propertius dreams of his mistress drowning at sea, his main fear is that the sight of her eyes will cause the sea god Glaucus to make her his mistress (2.26.13–14).

The theme of vision also enters into Propertius' voyeurism in regard to the affair of his friend Gallus. Propertius was there to watch their embraces:

cum te complexa morientem, Galle, puella
uidimus et longa ducere uerba mora! (1.10.5–6)

"When we saw you dying, Gallus, in your girl's embrace and speaking words with long-drawn silences!"

and also:

uidi ego te toto uinctum languescere collo
et flere iniectis, Galle, diu manibus,
et cupere optatis animam deponere uerbis,
et quae deinde meus celat, amice, pudor. (1.13.15–18)

"I saw you languish, Gallus, with your neck in close embrace, and weep for a long while with your arms about her, and long to lay down your life for her sweet words; finally, my friend, I saw things that my modesty conceals."

As Nicholson first pointed out,[29] there is perhaps an intentional echo of these poems in 1.21, in which a relative of Propertius (possibly an uncle) turns his eyes from another Gallus (perhaps the father of the addressee in 1.10 and 1.13) who is dying in battle:

quid nostro gemitu turgentia lumina torques? (1.21.3)

"Why at my groan do you turn away those swollen eyes?"

In the next generation Propertius turns his eyes toward the younger Gallus dying metaphorically of love.

Enough has been said in this section to highlight the importance in Propertius of a theme that, as far as I am aware, has no echoes in Tibullus and plays only a minor role in Ovid's *Amores* (1.10.10, 2.17.12, 3.11.48).

Poetry[30]

Unlike his contemporary Tibullus who rarely mentions poetry or poets, Propertius frequently discusses his literary aspirations and the

[29] Nicholson (1988/1989) 143ff.
[30] On the poetics of Propertius, see Boucher (1965) 161–225, Fedeli (1981), Mitchell (1985), Álvarez Hernández (1997).

nature of his poetic inspiration. This is a theme that runs through all four of his books, though a marked development is to be discerned from one book to the next as his self-confidence as a poet increases or as he responds to pressure from patrons.

In the first book the theme is developed in poems 7 and 9, addressed to the epic poet Ponticus, in which elegiac love poetry is compared with epic. Propertius begins 1.7 by expressing admiration for Ponticus' epic on the subject of the Seven Against Thebes, an admiration undercut to some extent by his parenthetic remark that Ponticus would rival Homer—provided the Fates would be kind to his verse: *sint modo fata tuis mollia carminibus* (1.7.4). He contrasts Ponticus' position with his own situation as a love poet:

nos, ut consuemus, nostros agitamus amores,
atque aliquid duram quaerimus in dominam;
nec tantum ingenio quantum seruire dolori
cogor et aetatis tempora dura queri. (5–8)

"I, as is my wont, am occupied with my love and seek something to soften a mistress's hard heart. I am compelled to serve not so much my talent as my sorrow and to complain of the harsh times of my youth."

where he does not have the freedom to serve his inspiration, but is compelled to complain of the difficulties of his age. Nevertheless, the type of poetry Propertius writes does have its uses. First, it can serve to soften a hard mistress's heart. The use of *dura* "hard" twice in this passage, with reference to his own poetry, contrasts with the *mollia fata* "soft fate" he wishes for Ponticus in 4 and is the first of a number of occasions in which the technical term connected with epic and war *durus* is applied paradoxically to elegy, and the technical term for elegiac verse *mollis* is applied to epic. The second use of elegy is that, just like epic, it can be a source of fame . . . *haec mea fama est,/hinc cupio nomen carminis ire mei* (9–10) "this is my fame, from here I wish the glory of my verse to spring" and men will praise him for finding favor with a cultured mistress *me laudent doctae solum placuisse puellae* (11) "may they praise me alone for finding favor with a learned girl". Furthermore, his poetry will be of use to other lovers (13–14). And now comes the counter-attack. If Ponticus were to fall in love, he would cast aside his epic and long to write elegy. Propertius would be preferred to all the famous Roman writers of epic *tunc ego Romanis praeferar ingeniis* (22) "then shall I be preferred to Rome's men of genius" and would die a hero's death, idolized

by the youth of Rome (23–24). The point about the usefulness of love poetry is then illustrated in the following poem, in which Propertius' verse entreaties are shown to have been successful in preventing Cynthia from traveling to Illyria with a rich suitor:

> *hanc ego non auro, non Indis flectere conchis,*
> *sed potui blandi carminis obsequio.*
> *sunt igitur Musae, neque amanti tardus Apollo,*
> *quis ego fretus amo: Cynthia rara mea est!* (1.8.39–42)

> "Not with gold, not with Indian pearls could I sway her, but with the homage of beguiling verse. So, then, the Muses exist and Apollo is not slow to help a lover; in these, as I love, I put my trust: peerless Cynthia is mine!"

In the following poem, 1.9, Ponticus, it appears, has fallen in love and this allows Propertius to expand more forcibly on the relative merits of elegy and epic in such a situation:

> *quid tibi nunc misero prodest graue dicere carmen*
> *aut Amphioniae moenia flere lyrae?*
> *plus in amore ualet Mimnermi uersus Homero:*
> *carmina mansuetus lenia quaerit Amor.* (1.9.9–12)

> "What use is it to you now, poor wretch, to declaim your grand song and to weep for the wall built by Amphion's lyre? In love Mimnermus' verse is worth more than Homer's. Peaceful love demands gentle poems."

where love elegy, as exemplified by one of its first exponents, the seventh-century Mimnermus of Colophon, is of more value than the poetry of the first epic writer, Homer.

The emphasis in Book I, then, is on the "usefulness" of elegy for those who have fallen in love.[31] Epic is not rejected as being essentially worse, but only as being inappropriate for the lover.

Book 2 opens with the statement that it is not the Muses or Apollo (in contrast with 1.8.41 quoted above) but Cynthia herself who inspires Propertius' verse:

> *non haec Calliope, non haec mihi cantat Apollo.*
> *ingenium nobis ipsa puella facit.* (2.1.3–4)

> "It is not Calliope nor Apollo who sings these songs to me. My mistress herself provides my inspiration."

[31] On this aspect of Propertius' poetry, see Stroh (1971).

In a reference back to the elegy/epic comparison of Book 1, he now claims that Cynthia's naked beauty can inspire him to compose whole Iliads:

> *seu nuda erepto mecum luctatur amictu,*
> *tum uero longas condimus Iliadas.* (2.1.13–14)

> "Or if she wrestles with me naked, her dress snatched away, then indeed I compose long Iliads."

This leads into a subtle *recusatio* addressed to Maecenas, in which in the form of a *praeteritio* he mentions all the epic subjects he would not write on, if the fates had given him the power to compose in that genre, and excuses himself for not having the ability to write even on his chosen epic topic of the deeds of Augustus and Maecenas himself. In the first of a number of increasingly direct comparisons between himself and Callimachus, he states that he could no more sing of Augustus' ancestry than Callimachus could write a Gigantomachy:

> *sed neque Phlegraeos Iouis Enceladique tumultus*
> *intonet angusto pectore Callimachus,*
> *nec mea conueniunt duro praecordia uersu*
> *Caesaris in Phrygios condere nomen auos.* (2.1.39–42)

> "But neither would the narrow breast of Callimachus suffice to thunder forth the conflicts between Jove and Enceladus waged on Phlegra's plain, nor does it suit my heart to trace back in epic verse the name of Caesar to his Phrygian ancestors."

Poem 2.3 continues the poetic themes of 2.1. Propertius had tried in vain to devote himself to more serious studies (7), but had produced instead a second, *alter*, book of elegies:

> *uix unum potes, infelix, requiescere mensem,*
> *et turpis de te iam liber alter erit.* (2.3.3–4)

> "You can scarcely keep quiet for one month, poor wretch, and already there is to be a second scandalous book about you."

Cynthia is still his inspiration, but the new point here is that in contrast to 2.1.5–16 it is not so much her physical charms *nec me tam facies, quamuis sit candida, cepit* (2.3.9) "it was not so much her face, beautiful though it be, that snared me" as her intellectual gifts, bestowed on her by the gods *caelestia munera* (2.3.25) "celestial gifts", namely her skills in dancing, singing, and verse composition (17–22) that Propertius now finds most captivating.

The poetic themes of poems 2.1 and 2.3 are picked up and reversed in poems 2.10 and 2.11, poems which Lyne[32] has argued could well have concluded an original Book 2, before an original Book 3 opened with our poem 2.12. Poem 10 opens with an apparent desire to turn from elegy to epic:

> *Sed tempus lustrare aliis Helicona choreis,*
> *et campum Haemonio iam dare tempus equo.*
> *iam libet et fortis memorare ad proelia turmas*
> *et Romana mei dicere castra ducis.* (2.10.1–4)
>
> "But now it is time to circle Helicon with other dances, now it is time to give the Haemonian horse the field. Now I am eager to recall the squadrons valiant in battle and to tell of my leader's Roman camp."

Here Haemonian = Thessalian and suggests the epic horses of Achilles (cf. 2.3.38).[33] For the use of the horse as an image for composition we may compare Virg. *Georg.* 2.542 *et iam tempus equum fumantia soluere colla* "and now is the time to unyoke our horses' sweating necks". Immediately in the lines that follow, however, this bold proposal is undercut. His strength may fail him, but simply to have wished to undertake such poetry is worthy of praise (5–6). Nevertheless, the time has come for him to move on from love poetry to war, since he has finished writing about his mistress, *quando scripta puella mea est* (8) "since my girl has been written about". The phrase suggests that poetry inspired by his mistress, the inspiration of his first and (original) second books, will now cease to be his subject. After an address to the Pierid Muses to prepare themselves for a great work *magni nunc erit oris opus* (12) "now a might voice will be needed", Propertius launches into an example of the sort of epic he could write (13–18) on the victories of Augustus in Parthia, India, Arabia, and the furthest reaches of the Empire. But work on this scale is to be a project for the future (19–20) . . . *uates tua castra canendo/magnus ero: seruent hunc mihi fata diem* "a mighty bard shall I become by singing of your camp; may fate keep this day for me."

An image of ascent dominates the last three couplets of the poem. Like a man who wishes to place a garland on the head of a statue, but has to be content with putting it on the base, Propertius has not yet reached the summit of Mount Helicon, nor even the springs

[32] Lyne (1998a).
[33] Lyne (1998c) 23.

of Ascra, but Love has simply washed his verses in the stream of Permessus.[34] The imagery, as set out in detail by Lyne,[35] derives ultimately from the scene of poetic initiation of Gallus, as described in Virgil *Eclogue* 6.64–72. From this it appears that in his poem on the Grynean grove Gallus pictured himself being led up from the river Permessus (at the base of Helicon) to the summit of Helicon by the Muses. Whereas in Gallus' case this ascent was successful, Propertius remains at the springs of Permessus (love poetry); he has not yet reached the Ascraean springs (a reference to Hesiod's initiation at the spring of Hippocrene and standing here for Callimachean aetiological poetry).

This theme of progressing from elegy to more elevated verse is continued, as Lyne shows,[36] in poem 11. Whereas in the traditional *recusatio* the poet claims he is fit only for love poetry and leaves to others the composition of epic, poem 11 constitutes a reverse *recusatio* in that it leaves to others the task of writing of Cynthia *scribant de te alii* (2.11.1) "let others write about you". Furthermore, this is now described as a thankless task *laudet, qui sterili semina ponit humo* (11.2) "let him praise you who sows his seed in barren ground", since all her endowments that in 2.3 were described as immortal gifts from the gods *haec tibi contulerunt caelestia munera diui* (25) "the gods have bestowed upon you these heavenly gifts" are now described as mortal and perishable:

> *omnia, crede mihi, tecum uno munera lecto*
> *auferet extremi funeris atra dies.* (2.11.3–4)
>
> "Believe me, in the end the dark day of your funeral will carry away all your gifts with you on one bier."

The poem or fragment ends with a reference to a passing traveler, who, seeing Cynthia's tomb, would not say "this dust was once a learned maid"

> *et tua transibit contemnens ossa uiator,*
> *nec dicet "Cinis hic docta puella fuit."* (2.11.5–6)
>
> "And the traveler will pass by your bones unheeding and will never say: 'These ashes were once a learned girl.'"

[34] For the humor inherent in this reference, see Lyne (1998c) 27.
[35] Lyne (1998a) 26.
[36] Lyne (1998a) 28ff.

There is a clear contrast here with the immortal fame Propertius had promised her in his verse and with the epitaph of Propertius himself at the end of 2.1, where the great Maecenas passes Propertius' grave and comments: *"Huic misero fatum dura puella fuit"* (2.1.78) "A harsh girl was the death of this poor man". Of course, by writing the words *"Cinis hic docta puella fuit"* "These ashes were once a learned girl" into his poem Propertius has in fact preserved her memory.[37]

In fact the program proposed in 2.10 and 2.11 does not materialize. In 2.13 Love bids Propertius to stay in the grove of Ascra so that Cynthia should marvel at his verse (3–6). Here, unlike 2.10.25 where Ascra seemed to refer to aetiological poetry, the reference is simply to elegy. Perhaps elegy is now seen to have a status that it had not achieved in 2.10.25.[38] Love poetry and Cynthia continue as the subject of numerous poems, and in 2.25 Propertius is still claiming that his mistress will find immortality in his poems: *ista meis fiet notissima forma libellis* (3) "that beauty of yours will be made world-famous by my books". The same point is made at the end in the last lines of our second book:

> *Cynthia quin uiuet uersu laudata Properti,*
> *hos inter si me ponere Fama uolet.* (2.34.93–94)
>
> "Cynthia, praised in the verses of Propertius, shall live, if Fame consents to place me among such poets as these."

where *hos* in 94 refers to the famous Latin love poets Varro of Atax, Catullus, Calvus, and Gallus in whose number Propertius wishes to be included. He will leave to Virgil the singing of an epic that will prove greater than the Iliad (61–66).

Support for the idea, first proposed by Lachmann in his edition of 1816, that our present Book 2 was originally two books comes in a much-discussed reference at 2.13 where Propertius speaks of there being three books in his funeral procession:

> *sat mea sit magni, si tres sint pompa libelli,*
> *quos ego Persephonae maxima dona feram.* (25–26)
>
> "My funeral procession will be costly enough if it consists of three books for me to present to Persephone as my finest gift."

[37] Lyne (1998a) 35.
[38] See Camps (1967) *ad loc.*

The simplest interpretation would be to take these words at face value to mean that when Propertius wrote this couplet he was engaged on the composition of his third book. Such a reference would fit well near the beginning of an original Book 3, just as the reference to *liber alter* "a second book" in 2.3.4 (quoted above) is well suited to its position near the beginning of an original Book 2.

The implication of these expressions is that our second book consists of part of an original second book (our poems 2.1–2.11, with other material perhaps now missing) together with a third book (2.12–2.34). The original Book 2 started with emphasis in poems 2.1 and 2.3 on Cynthia as the poet's inspiration and ended with a proposed change to epic themes (2.10) and a refusal to continue with elegy (2.11). This project does not, however, immediately take shape and the aim of his poetry in the original Book 3 remains the immortalization of his mistress.

With the beginning of our Book 3 there is a change in emphasis in Propertian poetics from a stress on Cynthia as the source of his inspiration to an expression of the poet's desire to follow in the footsteps of two illustrious Hellenistic Greek elegiac poets Callimachus and Philetas:

> *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.* (3.1.1–4)
>
> "Shade of Callimachus and sacred rites of Coan Philetas, allow me, I pray, to enter your grove. I enter as the first priest from a pure spring to bring Italian mysteries in Greek dances."

These two poets had first been mentioned in advice to Lynceus at 2.34.31–32:

> *tu satius memorem Musis imitere Philitan*
> *et non inflati somnia Callimachi.*
>
> "It would be better for you to imitate learned Philetas in your poems and the dream of refined Callimachus."

The context was that Lynceus, like Ponticus in 1.9, had recently fallen in love and was being advised to give up philosophical studies in favor of writing elegy. The two poets in question represent the best Greek exponents of narrative elegy (so Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.58). The "dream" of Callimachus refers to the prologue to his aetiological

work the *Aitia*, in which the poem describes being transported to Mount Helicon where he receives instruction from the Muses. Both poets were exponents of the "refined" (*non inflati*) style of writing, and though neither, as far as we know, wrote subjective elegies like those of Propertius to Cynthia, their works did concern themselves to some extent with love, and Callimachus' prologues and epilogues contained personal biographical material. In the opening of 3.1 Propertius is taking up a serious pose as a priest of the Muses. The grove which he symbolically enters represents the poetic inspiration of Callimachus and Philetas, and the sacral imagery represents Propertius' claim to be introducing for the first time to a Roman context a literary form established by these prestigious Greek predecessors. The context of this claim is that of a *recusatio*. Under pressure, perhaps, from Maecenas to produce an Augustan epic, Propertius no longer claims, as in Book 1, that as a love poet he has no choice but to write elegy, nor does he claim, as in 2.10 and 2.11, that he is about to give up elegy for greater things; but rather he now fully associates himself with Callimachus and Philetas and, using Callimachean imagery, suggests that well-written elegy is just as worthwhile as epic and just as likely to make its poet famous after death.

> *a ualeat, Phoebum quicumque moratur in armis!*
> *exactus tenui pumice uersus eat,—*
> *quo me Fama leuat terra sublimis* . . . (3.1.7–9)
>
> "Ah, farewell the man who detains Phoebus in arms. Let my verse run smoothly, polished with fine pumice and through it may soaring Fame raise me above the earth . . ."

The images of slender verse, pure water, the narrow road, the envious rival, are, as all the commentators have shown, purely Callimachean, derived mainly from the *Aitia* prologue (fr. 1.17–21) and the conclusion to the *Hymn to Apollo* (105–12). This proud validation of elegy leads in poem 3.2 to a return to Propertius' role as a writer of verse to please (3.2.2) and immortalize (3.2.17–18) his mistress. The traditional *recusatio* theme continues in 3.3, where Propertius reports a dream consisting of two parts. In the first he is on Mount Helicon, contemplating an epic on Roman history, when he is interrupted by Apollo, who warns him to keep to his own sphere of poetry and directs him to the grotto of the Muses. In the second part the grotto is described, and Calliope delivers a speech in which she repeats Apollo's advice that Propertius should keep to love poetry (37–52). Again the themes of the dream and the advice of the Muses

(Call. fr. 7.19f.), as well as the intervention of Apollo (Call. fr. 1.22ff., cf. Virg. *Ecl.* 6.2ff.), are derived from Callimachus' *Aitia*. At the end of the poem the epic fountain of Bellerophon, with which the poem began (lines 2, 5), is replaced by the water of Philetas, with which Calliope sprinkles Propertius' lips. It comes as some surprise, then, that poem 3.4 begins with an epic flourish, describing Augustus' plans for a campaign against the East; but this elevated tone is soon undercut at 15ff. by the statement that Propertius' role will be restricted to watching any subsequent triumph in the arms of his mistress. In 3.5 the values of the life of action are rejected as being based on greed (1–18); Propertius himself will continue as a love poet, until, with the onset of old age, he will devote himself to the study of natural philosophy (19–46).

The mention of Propertius' patron Maecenas, which is delayed in Book 3 until poem 9, now becomes the occasion for a full-blown *recusatio* poem. Propertius excuses himself from writing epic (1–4) on the grounds first of all of his own poetic limitations (5–20), but secondly by reference to the self-restraint so admirably exemplified by Maecenas himself. Once again it is to Callimachus and Philetas that Propertius appeals as his models in elegiac poetry:

> *inter Callimachi sat erit placuisse libellos*
> *et cecinisse modis, Coe poeta, tuis.* (3.9.43–4)
>
> "It will be enough to have given pleasure along with the books of Callimachus and to have sung, Coan poet, strains like yours."

This position is undercut to some extent in 47–56, where Propertius adds the rider that he would be prepared to write on epic topics if Maecenas were to give him the lead; but from 21–34 it is clear that this will not be the case.

In fact, when the revered Italian Muses, the *Camenae*, make an appearance at the beginning of the next poem, 3.10.1–4, their role is to inspire not a national epic, but an elegy on his mistress's birthday. Finally in 3.17, a poem that anticipates his freedom from slavery to Cynthia celebrated in the final poem of the book, 3.25, Propertius imagines himself honoring Bacchus with a poetic tribute, if the god is able to free him from the torment of love. The type of poetry imagined is partly (21–28) legends associated with Bacchus and partly (29–38) a depiction in elevated Pindaric style:

> *haec ego non humili referam memoranda coturno,*
> *qualis Pindarico spiritus ore tonat.* (3.17.39–40)

> "Of these things shall I tell, to be recalled in no humble style, but with such a voice as thundered from Pindar's lips."

of the god being honored with music and sacrifice.

In Book 3, then, Propertius is more confident about his status as an elegiac poet in the tradition of Callimachus and Philetas. When love has come to an end he would be willing to turn to philosophical subjects (3.5) or to celebratory poetry in the style of Pindar (3.17), but his position on epic is now consistent. This is not the genre for him.

Confidence in his own poetic abilities and pride in his elegiac achievement reaches its climax in Propertius' fourth book. If Book 3 had begun with a wish to follow the poetic inspiration of Callimachus and Philetas (3.1.1–6), by the opening of Book 4 this has become a desire to be the Roman Callimachus:

> *ut nostris tumefacta superbiat Vmbria libris,*
> *Vmbria Romani patria Callimachi.* (4.1.63–64)

> "That Umbria may swell with pride at my books, Umbria, the home of the Roman Callimachus."

Later on in the book, Callimachean inspiration is to allow Propertius not only to follow in the footsteps of Philetas, but actually to become his rival:

> *serta Philiteis certet Romana corymbis,*
> *et Cyrenaeas urna ministret aquas.* (4.6.3–4)

> "Let the Roman garland rival the ivy crown of Philetas, and may the urn serve me with the water of Cyrene."

An analysis of the contexts in which these statements are made will clarify Propertius' concept of his own poetry as it emerges in Book 4. The first elegy of Book 4, from which the first quotation above is taken, consists of two parts: lines 1–70 spoken by the poet and lines 71–150 spoken by the astrologer Horus. The greater part of 1–70, inspired by Tibullus 2.5.22–64, is taken up with a description of early Rome (1–38) and the arrival of the Trojans, the forerunners of the great heroes of Rome (39–56). It is at this point that the poet makes his statement about his own poetic intentions (57–64). The imagery again is Callimachean. His voice is weak: *paruus in ore sonus* (58) "weak is the sound in my mouth", but he will put the pure stream of his inspiration *exiguo quodcumque e pectore riui/fluxerit*

(59–60) "whatever stream flows from my slender heart" at the service of his country. He rejects Ennian epic and states his wish to be the Roman Callimachus (61–64). The section ends, if we accept the transposition of lines 87–88 as printed by most editors, with a statement of the form this Callimachean poetry is to take:

> *dicam: "Troia, cades, et Troica Roma resurges;"* 87
> *et maris et terrae longa sepulcra canam;* 88
> *sacra diesque canam et cognomina prisca locorum:* 69
> *has meus ad metas sudet oportet equus* 70

> "I will sing 'Troy you shall fall, and as Roman Troy you shall rise again', and I will tell of distant burials by land and sea. Of holy rites and their days shall I sing and of the ancient names of places, this is the goal to which my steeds must sweat."

The poetic prophecies on the fall of Troy and the rise of Rome, as advertised in 87–88, do not materialize, except in the earlier part of the present poem, but the Roman aetiological poetry proposed in 69–70 does provide material for half the poems in the book. The second half of the poem begins with a warning from Horus that Apollo and the Fates are against this proposed poetic programme (71–74). This pattern is reminiscent of Book 3 poem 3, in which Propertius' dream of epic composition is shattered by the warning from Apollo and the Muses to keep to elegy. The rest of Horus' speech is taken up with his qualifications as a seer (75–118), and a detailed horoscope of Propertius (119–50) giving biographical details of the poet, which end with a reference to his slavery to one mistress and a warning to keep to elegy *at tu finge elegos, fallax opus—haec tua castra* (135) "but you compose elegy, a tricky work—this is your camp". In fact, the content of Book 4 reflects a compromise between Propertius' proposed program of the first half of 4.1 and Horus' advice in the second. Of the ten remaining poems of the book, five (2, 4, 6, 9, and 10) are aetiological in content, reflecting Propertius' proposal at 69–70, and five are on subjects concerned with love: 3 Arethusa's letter to Lycotas, 7 the return of Cynthia's ghost, 8 Cynthia bursting in on Propertius' party, and 11 the speech of the dead Cornelia to her husband L. Aemilius Paullus.

The second reference to Callimachus comes in 4.6.3–4 (quoted above) where Propertius expresses his wish to rival Philetas and to follow the model of Callimachus. Poem 4.6 is an aetiological elegy on the origins of the temple of Palatine Apollo, seen here as a thank-offering

for Apollo's help to Augustus in the battle of Actium. The central section of the poem (lines 15–66) is taken up with a narrative of the battle of Actium, but emphasis on Callimachean inspiration is particularly appropriate at the start of this poem (1–10), where the poet speaks in the person of a priest officiating at an act of worship. The inspiration for this goes back ultimately to Callimachus *Hymns* 2 (to Apollo) and 5 (the Bath of Pallas), although it had been used earlier in Latin poetry by Horace in *Odes* 3.1 and by Tibullus in poems 2.1 and 2.5. All of these earlier poems have left their mark on Propertius' treatment, but the influence of Callimachus *Hymn* 2 is particularly marked, and a detailed list of reminiscences is discussed in Boucher.[39] Views on the success of this poem differ, but as an exercise in adapting potentially epic material to the elegiac meter it is something of a *tour de force* and it can be seen as a good example of the type of aetiological poetry proposed by Propertius in 4.1.69–70.

By Book 4, then, Propertius has achieved full confidence in his Callimachean and Philetan poetic credentials. There is no need for him to change genres from elegy to epic; elegy itself can be used as a vehicle for historical and aetiological themes as well as for more traditional erotic topics. Propertius claims no longer simply to be following in the footsteps of his Greek elegiac predecessors but to be the Roman Callimachus and a rival to Philetas.

Conclusion

Certain developments in the handling of these major themes stand out clearly. As the nature of Propertian elegy changes over the four books from a concentration in the monobiblos on personal erotic experience, through a broadening of the elegiac themes in Books 2 and 3, to a more objective stance in Book 4, so the relative importance of the various themes changes. In the first book the writing of subjective elegy has to be defended on the grounds of its usefulness to other lovers, and so the *praeceptor amoris* theme dominates. This decreases in importance as the range and variety of subject matter broadens in the second and third books, and by the fourth

[39] Boucher (1965) 199.

book the theme is entirely absent. Conversely, as Propertius' confidence in his role as an elegiac poet increases, the discussion of poetics takes on a more important function, reaching its climax in Book 4 where Propertius takes on the role of the Roman Callimachus.

In comparison with the other elegists Propertius has been shown to be much more aware of the visual dimensions of his subject. Death, though an important theme in all the elegists, assumes an overriding significance in Propertius and is present throughout the collection. The same can be said for the *seruitium amoris* theme which, at least in the early books, takes on an importance far greater than that found in the other elegists. At a more detailed level certain features have been identified as characteristically Propertian. The most striking of these are the use of aphorisms connected with Amor as a feature of the *praeceptor* theme and the interest in the technical aspects of medical language and teaching in relation to the theme of love as a disease.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE IMAGE OF WOMAN IN PROPERTIUS' POETRY

Elaine Fantham

Perceptions of the sexual and social roles of women have changed radically in Western cultures over the last forty years, and with them the nature of our interest in women in ancient literature and life. In 1965 Lilja's monograph on the elegists' attitudes toward women was a useful first step, but it disappointed by attempting too much, and by dissipating its energies on attitudes not toward women or a woman, but toward the alternative relationships of free love and marriage. In Propertius' case Cynthia was still treated as reality; or at least fictionalized reality; hence the useful formulation of Lieberg (1963): inspiration, subject and intended addressee, "zugleich Quelle, Gegenstand und Ziel" of Propertius' elegiac poetry, and the vivid recreation of the poet's mistress in the climactic twelfth chapter of Boucher (1965).

Then came a critical move to separate literature from life, with concentration on the poet's processes: Veyne (1983) reinterpreted the loved woman as a mere reflection of the poet lover's self-image, followed by Wyke (1987a, b; 1989) for whom Cynthia passed from being the poet's subject to a "form of literary language," or "of poetic production," (1987a, 53) on which the elegist could exercise his Callimachean stylistic ambitions. Dispute over the fictionality or instrumentality of "Cynthia" distracted from the primary study of how she was represented and how she was treated as representative of her sex. The elegist's attitude is important because Propertius himself shows so much interest in his contradictory reactions. As the shrewd slave told young Phaedria in Terence *Eunuchus*, "you can't control [Love] by reasoning, since it knows no reason or restraint."[1] But where comedy could correct the prejudiced views of the distressed lover on his woman, or on women, through the wiser judgments of

[1] *Eun.* 57–8 *Quae res in se neque consilium neque modum / habet ullum, eam consilio regere non potes.*

unaffected characters, elegy speaks only through the elegist and can only fully represent the woman by also representing the poet's own emotions: Lilja saw that "Propertius emphasizes the irrational nature of love" (1965, 115), he "underlines his own . . . feelings of inferiority, . . . is suspicious . . . over-sensitive, . . . jealous" (159). He expects his public to assess his statements for themselves.

The purpose of this essay is to go beyond the poet's complex portrait of Cynthia to isolate his views of her sex: that is, of sexually active women, whose behavior he generalizes either by extending Cynthia's faults to reproach her contemporaries, or by invoking the idealized women of other, mythical or bucolic[2] worlds as parallels to her beauty or foils to her offenses. But one must start, as Propertius did, with Cynthia herself.

The first book of elegies opens with the name of Cynthia, and with his own relationship of longing and submission to her: she is the woman desired, cruel and unyielding, like Atalanta (1.1.10 *saevitiam durae . . . Iasidos*),[3] because she imposes demands on the man who seeks to be her lover. The lover-poet defines women in terms of their desirability and response to his desire, and for most of the *Monobiblos* we learn little about Cynthia and her circumstances, except in terms of her physical charms (defined in 1.2 as needing no unnatural enhancement) and the poet's frustration from gratifying his passion. This book confines itself within a tight male circle (Tullus, Gallus, Bassus, Ponticus)—themselves introduced in terms of their misguided indifference to love (Ponticus, 1.7, reversed in 1.9), their criticism of Cynthia (Bassus 1.4), or jealous attempts to seduce her (Gallus 1.5). Praise of Cynthia is combined with the exaltation of sexual delight, as Venus is treated with awe for her power to humble mighty heroes and cause pain to unyielding hearts (1.14.17–18: *illa potest magnas heroum infringere vires, / illa etiam duris mentibus esse dolor*). Apart from varying Cynthia's circumstances, such as her plan to travel away from Propertius to Illyricum or her escape to Baiae (1.8; 1.11), Propertius depicts her only in terms of the pangs of desire she causes. Indeed the last poem to focus upon her (1.19) does so through the poet's protests of love beyond death: he claims for himself the

[2] Propertius' use of myth explored by Boucher (1965) will be discussed below. For the bucolic alternative, compare 2.34.67–76 (Virgil's *Eclogues*) and 3.13.25–40.

[3] The text will normally be cited from Fedeli (1984), with reference where there is significant divergence to Barber (1960) and Goold (1990).

role of dead Protesilaos, although Laodamia's grief over her unconsummated marriage and attempts to mould a substitute for her husband was an equally well-known aspect of the myth; it is the man's emotions that matter.

There are other women in this collection. Gallus' unidentified beloved is mentioned incidentally in 1.10 and 1.13 as Propertius gives him advice based on his personal experience: Gallus should not provoke her when she is angry, or speak arrogantly, or sulk in silence, or refuse any gift she asks for, or let her kind words fall in vain. If she is treated with contempt she will be annoyed and take offense, reluctant to abandon her threats: any man who wants to stay happy with a single girl can never again be free in heart (1.10.21–30). The same assumptions, that women are emotional creatures who must be humored, recur when Propertius moves in 1.13 from generalizations about the pains of love to a voyeuristic report of the passionate mutual embrace of Gallus and his girl, comparable to the mythical lovemaking of Poseidon/Enipeus and Hercules with Tyro, daughter of Salmoneus, and the divine Hebe. The women are indeed named, but it is the gods' fulfilled desires (*facili amore*, 22; *gaudia prima*, 24) that are the point of comparison between his ordinary young friends and heroic mythology. In contrast, infidelity to Propertius disqualifies Cynthia from consideration alongside the heroines of *Odyssey*, *Argonautica*, and Euripidean tragedy, although her failure seems to consist only in being slow to come to him when he is sick (1.15.13). Her fickleness and broken oaths (*levitas, periuria*) have betrayed him: she has failed to match the heroines and become a glorious legend, and she will suffer for it.

Only one elegy in this book is focused on a woman from outside Propertius' circle. In the tradition of Catullus' poem 67 the speaker is the door of a patrician mansion, which contrasts the present disgrace brought on by a promiscuous mistress to the noble tradition of masculine victories and feminine Chastity,[4] and the tears of foreign captives led in triumph are replaced by obscene epigrams and the suppliant laments of the excluded lover. The context and positive family ideology that sets the scene for this elegy will return in

[4] *Pudicitia* is the fidelity expected of the married woman, her equivalent of her husband's military *virtus*. It was an early object of cult (Treggiari 1991, 105–7, 232–37) but since Propertius sanctifies his relationship with Cynthia as a kind of marriage, he repeatedly calls for her to be *pudica* and holds her to *pudicitia*.

its opposite (4.11); the imagined self-defense before the infernal judges of the dead Cornelia, descendant of the triumph-loaded Cornelii Scipiones, and daughter of Augustus' ex-wife Scribonia. But like the mistress of the house in Catullus 67, this wife is indifferent to her reputation (*famae* 11).[5] She is clearly an adulteress (is her husband indifferent, or absent?), and the thirty lines of reproach (1.16.17–46) sung by the excluded lover make it clear that he, like Propertius, is indignant because she is lying in the lucky arms of another man (33). Exclusion is painful and he is ashamed to lie on her threshold; but he would not be ashamed if he had been invited into her bed. The door has one standard of honor and shame (cf. *turpior*), the lover a different standard based purely on pride in male conquest, not of Rome's enemies, but of the desired woman. Surely here in impersonating the door, which has the last word, condemning its lustful mistress and the lover's endless laments, Propertius is passing judgment on his own world? If there is any difference, it is in the woman's status: Propertius never represents Cynthia as another man's wife, but in Catullan fashion sets up a distinction between the fidelity she owes to his own loyal love and her preference for any other lover, which is seen as faithless if not also mercenary.

Now Propertius has set up the paradigms for his one-on-one devotion to Cynthia (1.12.19–20 "It is not right for me to love any other, or cease to love her: Cynthia was the first love and will be the last" *mi nec amare aliam neque ab hac desistere fas est; Cynthia prima fuit, Cynthia finis erit*) it is time to look beyond Cynthia to the poet's statements and assumptions about other women. In the three later books of elegies there are in moral terms two kinds of "other women": virtuous and faithful wives or partners, almost always set back in the context of Greek legend, and the mass of easily won "modern" women, who will receive the most violent abuse in the third book, which also depicts the fading of Propertius' own love.

What we have as the second book is both the most discontinuous and the most complex of his books; it is almost certainly a fusion of two previous collections, with a second beginning at 2.10 *sed tempus lustrare aliis Helicona choreis*.[6] But there are two other recurring

[5] For 1.16.9, *infamis . . . noctes*, "her nights of shame," Goold prefers Housman's *voces*, "Shaming rumors."
[6] This was first seen by Lachmann; cf. Hubbard (1974), and Goold (1990) 11–12.

problems: a lack of boundaries between elegies where the argument seems to continue beyond the inherited manuscript divisions, and an excess of disruptions where topics or addressees change abruptly within poems, being connected neither with what precedes nor what follows.[7] While the volume begins by reaffirming the poet's enslavement to Cynthia and evoking her beauty and talents, it soon adds a broader context to the intimate world of Book 1 by applying directly and indirectly to Cynthia the circumstances of the professional but high-class Greek *hetaera* known to Romans from Plautus' and Terence's adaptations of Menandrian and other New Comedies.[8] As the third elegy of Book 1 compared the sleeping Cynthia to three different mythological figures (Ariadne, Andromeda and an exhausted maenad) so the sixth elegy of Book 2 compares Cynthia to the notorious Lais of Corinth, Athenian Phryne (creatures of real life) and the literary Thais of Menander, for the crowds of admirers thronging her home. She will be assimilated to a hetaera in this and several other extended elegies of Book 2. This is a household of women: courtesans were mostly daughters of other courtesans by unknown or casual fathers, so Cynthia has a mother and sister and girlfriend (2.3.26, 2.6.11–12) but no brother or even son (2.18.33–34) to act as her moral guardian. It is also a house adorned with provocative pictures (*iuvenum pictae facies, obscenae tabellae, turpia . . . visa* 2.6.9 and 27–28) like the wall painting of Jupiter and Danae in the courtesan's house of Ter. *Eun.* 583–90: indeed Propertius will represent himself in the situation of the poor young lover Phaedria in that highly successful play, excluded when the rich soldier who is his rival returns. Terence's Thais has an unselfish motive for entertaining the

[7] On "emotional incoherence" and shifts of mood within the elegies of Book 2, see Hubbard (1974) 63, La Penna (1977) 53–54, 65–66: on the book's discontinuous nature, see Goold (1990) 11–12 and 22. To illustrate from poems discussed below, Barber and Fedeli print 2.9 as one elegy (with a lacuna after 48); 2.18 is printed as three units (1–4, 5– 22, 23–38) by Barber, two (1–22, 23–38) by Fedeli, and four by (1–4, 5–20, 21–22, 23–38) Goold; 2.24 divided by Barber into two (1–16, 17–52) but has three parts in Fedeli (1–10, 11–16, 17–52), while Goold assigns 1–10 to the end of 2.23. La Penna (1977) 60 sees 2.28 as a cycle of three elegies. Where Barber and Fedeli print 2.32.1–62 as a single elegy, Goold has fused 31 and 32, transposing 32.7–10 before 32.1.
[8] For the courtesan's world, compare Plautus *Cistellaria* (= Menander *Synaristosae*), and *Truculentus*, as well as Terence *Eunuchus*, based largely on Menander's play of the same name. The Thais of 2.6.3 and 4.5.53 is not Terence's heroine (called Chrysis in Menander's play) but the title character of the lost *Thais*.

soldier, but for Propertius Cynthia's welcoming of the Praetor from Illyricum (2.16)[9] is purely mercenary. She is not impressed by his rank, only his purse and his luxury gifts: *Cynthia non sequitur fasces nec curat honores; semper amatorum ponderat una sinus.* The world of the courtesan was one of drinking parties or tête-à-têtes with lovers (2.9.23–24); they were *venales amicae* (2.16) asking for gifts of jewels and purple cloth (2.16.17–18), accepting robes and emeralds (16.43–44; cf. the fragment 2.24a 1–6 "now she asks for peacock-tail fans and marble balls to cool her hands, for ivory dice and the gifts that glitter on the Sacred Way.")[10]

This was also a world of promenades in Pompey's portico and gardens (2.32.3–14) and pleasure excursions with young admirers outside Rome to Lavinium (as in the retrospective 4.8), to Aricia and Tibur and Praeneste. This representation of Cynthia as a courtesan never names her livelihood, and while the many elegies in Book 2 concerned with rival lovers can be read in terms of hired sex, protests like 2.9.17: "you could not even spend a single night alone" (*at tu non una potuisti nocte vacare*) can as easily be read as indictments of her fickleness or greed[11] as of outright lust. A group of later elegies (21–25) sets out the standard choices of sexual partner available to young unmarried men in a kind of debate between options: in 2.22 the poet will henceforward divide his attention between two or more girls, rather than suffer frustration (cf. 2.22.43–50 for the pain of a cancelled rendezvous and the humiliation of importuning slaves to get access to the beloved courtesan); 2.23 returns to this image of futile pursuit and expensive nights (23.8–12) contrasting it with the easy accosting of girls walking dusty-footed and with cloak thrown back along the Sacred Way (13–17). Gratification is instant and inexpensive, without the terrors of courting a married woman who will panic at the sounds of her husband returning from the family farmstead. Foreign girls from Syria are good enough to please him (19–22), and he proudly rejects the oxymoron and transferred epithet *furta pudica tori*, "stealthy couplings with the mate of a chaste bed." What Propertius sets out here was conventional enough;

[9] She has slept with him for seven nights (2.16.23–24). But Propertius' reference is uncomfortably specific; there would only have been one praetorian governor of Illyricum in any given year; were his readers intended to identify the fellow?

[10] On these lovers' gifts (*munera*), see Boucher (1965) 448–49.

[11] *Vacare* almost suggests an empty slot in an appointment book.

Horace had made the same point a decade earlier in *Satires* 1.2, recommending the casual prostitute over either adultery or expensive and demanding mistresses (cf. Williams 1968, 529). Propertius' summary in what may be the next elegy, *parcius infamant*: (2.24.10), shifts ground to defend his reputation (whether for virtue or sexual success) against a friend's reproaches: it is because Cynthia has deceived him and turned him away that he is now seeking cheap women.

This pattern of assimilating Cynthia to professional courtesans is quite consistent with elegies in that she sends out slave *Erotes* by night to bring him to her house, or he decides to spy out her activities in the early morning (2.29a and b) or with his interrogation of their go-between Lygdamus in 3.6. If we are to imagine a woman ineligible for marriage it is not surprising that the poet sees any pressure to marry as necessarily a betrayal of Cynthia, but there are other elegies that seem by implication to associate her with marital infidelity and his descriptions of her education and high birth (Boucher 1965, 456–57) are incompatible with the foreign or freedwomen status of courtesans.[12]

The elegist's many allusions to mythical heroines in this book can be divided into evocation of their beauty and desirability, with no moral to be drawn, and the moralizing concern with the heroines as exempla, in their relationships to men, and almost exclusively to their roles as good and bad wives. In what is still the most illuminating discussion Boucher (1965, 227–68) has noted that for all his Hellenistic expertise, Propertius draws largely on the classic heroines of Homer tragedy and Apollonius; these would be what his public had read or heard or seen, so that a phrase or even a mere epithet could evoke remembered texts or images without need for narrative. Propertius actually acknowledges the category of heroines, or women from the age of heroes, citing *Inachiis . . . heroinis* 1.13.31, *formosae . . . chorus heroinae* 1.19.13, *Maeonias omnis heroidas inter*, 2.28.29). Naturally Helen is the most celebrated object of desire; in 1.13.29–30 Cynthia's

[12] As Williams (1968) shows in his careful discussion (530–38), Propertius avoids identifying Cynthia as either a high-class *meretrix* or an adulterous wife; there are several clues that favor assuming she is, or is conceived as, a married woman like Catullus' Lesbia, but if he is writing about an actual relationship it would be indiscreet (even before the Augustan legislation of 18 BC) to reveal that it was adulterous. Griffin (1985) 1–30 esp. 26f. rightly stresses the availability of luxury courtesans in Triumviral and Augustan Rome, but a basis in contemporary reality does not exclude the adoption of motifs from literary sources like comedy.

beauty was worthy of Jove himself, equal (or near it) to Leda, or Leda's three daughters—grouping Helen and Clytemnestra with divine Artemis/Diana; 2.3.32 calls Cynthia the second beauty on earth after Helen, a worthy cause for Troy to perish, for whom Menelaus and Paris were justified in fighting; (*nunc Pari, tu sapiens, et tu, Menelae, fuisti*). Other women are exalted as objects of love, from Antiope and Hermione (1.4.5–6) to Peirithous' bride Ischomache (2.2.9) and Brimo (2.2.12).[13] Even Antigone (2.8.21) who should surely have been honored for her own heroic deeds, is cited along with Achilles' prize captive Briseis (2.8.21) as the object of love: Briseis at least will receive her due for her devotion to Achilles in the next elegy, which describes in affecting detail (2.9.9–16) her mourning over her master's corpse. This scene outside Homer's narrative may have been described in the epic cycle, or featured in Hellenistic poetry or wall painting; Propertius may be the first Roman poet to envisage Briseis' grief, but Ovid's tender *Heroides* 3 takes the hint from Prop. 2.20.1 and recreates from her captivity by Agamemnon her expression of love for the living Achilles. It is natural that the poet should single out Penelope for her fidelity (2.6.23, obliquely named along with Alcestis as *Admeti coniunx et lectus Ulixis*, but more fully characterized in 2.9.3–6, cf. 3.12). Fidelity, the fidelity he misses in Cynthia, is the reason for his lavish praise of Aurora (2.18.7–18) for continuing to love her aging Tithonus. Other heroines are evoked either for their mourning (Procne and Niobe, both traditional, 2.20.5–8) or their roles as victims, suffering either rape or other hardship: the captives Briseis and Andromache, the imprisoned Danae (2.20.9–12) the drowned Helle and ravished Amymone and Orithyia (2.26.5 and 47–51), or the long list in 2.28 that combines victims beloved of Jove and transformed or consumed for their pains (Io, Callisto, Semele, 17–18, 23–24 and 27–28). Here Ino and Andromeda serve a different purpose; they are poignant and appealing because they have suffered, but Io and Ino became goddesses, and Andromeda was rewarded with marriage to Perseus. Their return to good fortune serves the rhetoric of this list by reassuring Cynthia that she

[13] Ischomache is not the usual name for Peirithous' bride, and Brimo is a Hellenistic rarity, but as Boucher points out (1965), 239 and 259, Roman women of this generation were well read; we should also bear in mind their familiarity with the mythological paintings of private homes and sculpture programs of public parks like that of Pompey.

will recover from her illness, but there are two less obvious purposes: to confer on Cynthia the glamor of the heroines of old (this is the poem that names the Homeric heroines and beauties now among the dead)[14] and to give his readers the pleasure of contemplating women in distress. In fact, elegy 2.28 offers the richest panorama of heroines, adding to the virtuous and victimized Antiope, Tyro and Europa (more loves of Jupiter) and the wicked Pasiphae.

For bad women have as much to contribute to the dimensions of Propertius' praise and blame as the conventional model heroines. In Book 1 only the spells of Medea represent the threats of evil women, but Books 2 and 3 will introduce all the female descendants of the Sun; not just Medea (2.4.7, cf. 3.11.9–12; 3.19.18; 4.5.41–42) who will also receive some sympathy among the list of deserted women (2.21, 11–12 and 24.43–44), but with Medea her cousin Circe, and a strange allusion to the poison (or perhaps love potions) of Phaedra (2.1.51–54). Oddly, Phaedra is not quoted for the Euripidean version of her attempt to seduce and then traduce Hippolytus, but she is found only once, in contrast to her mother Pasiphae, whose desire for the bull from the sea was both before and after Propertius the prime symbol of unnatural female lust (compare with 2.32.57, and 4.7.57–8, Virgil *Ecl.* 6.46–60, and Ovid *Ars Amatoria* 1.295–96). In several poems of Book 3 these bad examples of legendary womanhood are used cumulatively to denounce the whole sex.

But while the many positive allusions to mythical heroines together create a glamorous distant world of maidens and virtuous wives, each individually is used to make a point about, or more often against, contemporary women. Overt judgments of women come only slowly in Book 2, but appear in both 2.6 and 2.9. Elegy 6, which began with mercenary hetaerae, explodes in indignation at 25–26 against the violation of *Pudicitia* by married women: *templa Pudicitiae quid opust statuisse puellis, si cuivis nuptae quidlibet esse licet*, and 2.9 turns from the true brides, *veris . . . nuptis* of legendary Greece (ostensibly the women who loved Achilles, Briseis, and Deidamia, one a captive, the other raped and deserted), to Cynthia, who cannot stay a night without sex (2.9.17) and pursues a man who previously left her, to an apostrophe indicting all women for a series of vices first deceit: *sed vobis facilest verba et componere fraudes* (31–32), then fickleness: "the Syrtes do

[14] 2.28.29 *Maeonidas omnis heroidas inter/primus erit . . . locus*, and 49–50 *sunt apud infernos tot milia formosarum,/pulchra sit in superis . . . una locis.*

not change so constantly with the shifting wind, nor are leaves so dislodged by the wintery South wind—" This turns, however, in the last couplet to a recognition that what moves women is anger:—"As a bond collapses with a woman's anger, whether the cause be serious or trivial" *non sic incerto mutantur flamine Syrtes,/nec folia hiberno tam tremefacta Noto/quam cito feminea non constat foedus in ira/sive ea causa gravis, sive ea causa levis* (33–36). Here is the Catullan ideal of the binding pledge (*foedus*) and an echo, surely, of Mercury's dismissive "woman was ever inconstant and changeable" *varium semper et mutabile femina* (*Aen.* 4.569–70).[15]

Other generalizations about women are less striking, but we may compare 2.18.1–4 warning the lover against constant complaining, because it often produce disgust, whereas "a woman is often broken by a man's silence" *frangitur in tacito femina saepe viro.* In Ovidian fashion the man is advised to conceal anything distressing he has seen and deny that he is pained by any cause of jealousy. Not all comments on women stress their untrustworthiness: in the cycle provoked by Cynthia's supposed infidelity, which toys with the appeal of promiscuity (2.21–25), the first elegy assumes Cynthia's latest lover is married, and pretends pity for girls too easily trusting; *ah nimium faciles aurem praebere puellae,/discite desertae non temere esse bonae!* (2.21.15–16): this is reiterated in 2.24.41–42 and 49–50; many men have fallen for your beauty, Cynthia, but have not kept faith . . . do not associate[16] with noble and wealthy men: scarcely one will come to gather your bones at your death. But the very next elegy 2.25 addresses her current lover, and adjusts to the new addressee and situation: "as for you, who put on airs with satisfied love, trusting fool, no woman remains stable for long," *nulla diu femina pondus habet.* The lover has not yet reached harbor, and he should be sparing in coming when called (32–33). In more moral times Propertius would even now be enjoying the lover's privilege that this intruder has taken. Then the poem veers to answer friends who have tried to console

[15] Propertius' evocation of the African Syrtes (cf. also 3.19.7 discussed below) may point to *Aeneid* 4 (2.34 shows that he was already familiar with book 8); but 2.28.8 (quoted below) shows he also had in mind Catullus 70 and the proverbial saying that women's promises were written in wind and water. With women's anger, compare 3.15.44 (addressed to Cynthia): "your headlong anger does not know how to step back" *nescit vestra ruens ira referre pedem,* and 3.8.1–12 and 28 on anger as proof of a woman's love.

[16] I read Damsté's *consuesse* with Goold against the Mss. *conferre* (Barber, Fedeli).

him for her desertion by recommending other women of all social categories, Greek or Italian, a working girl or one clad in luxurious scarlet. The poet answers with a different claim that vindicates return to monogamy: one woman causes the eyes enough lack of sleep; one woman is quite enough misfortune for any man.

With 2.28 Propertius returns to the attack on both Cynthia and the tribe of women, blaming Cynthia's present sickness on her perjury, then generalizing to condemn all girls for breaking their oaths and failing to treat the gods as sacred: as in 2.9.33–36 above "this is what ruins . . . wretched girls: whatever they swear the wind and water sweeps away," *hoc perdit miseras, hoc perdidit ante puellas, / quicquid iurarunt, ventus et unda rapit.*[17]

The argument of 2.28 echoes that of 2.9, adding only that women cannot control their tongues. In Cynthia's case pride in her beauty has combined with her hurtful tongue to bring on this illness. But given the imagined circumstances, the poet has the grace to change his tune and promise Cynthia the recovery that has come to other persecuted heroines, without further reproaches.

We have seen that Propertius regularly idealizes the noble ladies of myth and legend as models of beauty combined with innocence and virtue, and that his adverse judgments are reserved for contemporary women. Yet in 2.9 and 2.28 women's perjury is not just recent; it has always been their ruin. In 2.6 and 2.25 the poet had preserved a contrast between past virtue and present corruption: 2.6 acknowledges that male desire had fomented rape since the centaurs violated Peirithous' wedding feast, before even Paris carried off Helen, or Romulus the Sabine women. But he seems to imply a time-lag before the corruption of women: the rape of the Sabines taught male Love to dare all. Later, it would seem (2.6.25) a shrine of chastity was set up for girls, but to what end? It was fruitless since now any bride may do as she chooses, corrupted by the art of erotic painting; once (*olim*) walls were innocent of provocative art: a spider's web has covered the shrine and rank weeds choked the abandoned gods. In 2.25 again he argues that if these were the days welcome to old-fashioned girls, (*saecla . . . antiquis grata puellis*) he would still be Cynthia's reigning lover instead of this upstart intruder. But the self-contradictory elegy 32 overthrows this wishful idealization.

[17] Hubbard (1974) 62 sees imitation of Tib.1.4.21–24.

The sequence of thought is complex and circular, so we must follow it in close paraphrase. Cynthia's endless trips out of town show she is unfaithful to him, leaving the city to avoid his supervision; but it is in vain: he is familiar with her tricks. What is worse is the damage to her *fama*: he has just heard unpleasant gossip about her infidelity all over the city (32.16–24). With a sudden *volte face* he encourages her to resist the malicious tongue that has always attacked beautiful women: her hands are clean, and if she has spent a long night or two in sport with another man, such petty charges do not disturb him (25–30).[18]

It seems the poet has decided that if he cannot deny her infidelity he must belittle it, but his method is that of the young man in comedy who, when accused of seduction, said "everyone does it" *volgo faciunt.* The obvious mythical precedent is Helen who left her country for a foreign passion but was allowed back unpunished *sine decreto.* In Euripides' *Troiades* the susceptible Menelaus renounced his right to kill Helen, but the Latin suggests something more legalistic: that she was never put on trial. But then, before 18 BC no Roman wife would have been put on trial for adultery: is this some imagined bronze age procedure? But Helen was not the first. Venus herself was seduced by lust for Mars but kept her respectability in heaven; worse, she slept with the shepherd (Anchises)[19] on Ida, witnessed by Silenus and the nymphs (33–40). (And the poet's public knows it was Venus who promised Helen to another Trojan shepherd, prince Paris).

Returning to the present (41–44) Propertius sets Cynthia's situation against a swarm of fornications—the word *stupra,* least poetic and most legal and damning of words for intercourse, occurs here for the first time in the poet's work.[20] Amid such promiscuity, who will ask how she got rich, from what lover, and by what means? If only one girl is violating custom, Rome is exceptionally fortunate in our time. Once again he carries the record of immorality backwards,

[18] Lilja (1965) 161 rightly compares Catullus' indulgence of Lesbia's occasional lapses (*rara furta* 68.136): we might see the euphemistic *furtum* as the antithesis of *stuprum.*

[19] The manuscripts have been corrupted by a scribe expecting a reference to the judgment of Paris on Ida, but *Parim* cannot stand as the beloved of Venus: we need an allusion to Anchises, whose intercourse with the disguised Aphrodite is the theme of the Homeric hymn. Goold adopts Barber's conjecture *illam pastorem* (not in Barber 1960).

[20] On *stuprum,* see Fantham (1992) 267–91. It will recur at 3.19.20 and 4.7 57, both times of Clytemnestra's adultery.

first to Lesbia, who excuses Cynthia by her precedent. Only a stranger would expect to find old Tatius and hard-living Sabines at Rome—or perhaps it would be more cogent to understand *qui quaerit Tatium veterem durosque Sabinos* as "the man who looks back to Tatius (to find a time of chaste behavior) . . . must have just come to our city."

This is not a matter of particular ages, but something universal, like a law of nature. It would be more impossible than the cosmic *adunata* of drying up the sea and gathering stars to make our girls averse to sinning. Even before Venus and Mars this was the way when Saturn was king:[21] who could keep his bed chaste, what goddess lives as the sole mate of one god, during Deucalion's flood or thereafter? (49–56)

Up to this point the poet's argument has moved from strength to strength: why then does he weaken it by returning to mere mortals, to Pasiphae "seduced by the whiteness of a savage bull" and Danae enclosed in her bronze tower, unable to refuse Jupiter's embrace? His purpose is to exonerate Cynthia, and his best argument is the irresistible power of love over either sex. Here the case of Danae enables him to transfer responsibility back from the wanton female to the lustful (and omnipotent) male—the conclusion to which Propertius is leading is that so many models both Greek and Latin have forced him to acquit Cynthia of reproach; *semper vive meo libera iudicio.*

The final poem of Book 2, like the opening poems of Book 3, moves attention away from love itself to the poetry of love. As in Book 1 the male friend, here called Lynceus, has attempted to seduce Cynthia, but he does not write the appropriate kind of poetry: women are indifferent to didactic poetry about the cosmos or life after death (34.51–54). Girls read love poetry, like Virgil's bucolic poems and Propertius' elegies; Lynceus should look at how Propertius is king as party guest among the girls. His boast of women readers will return in Book 3 (2.1–2) as will his new boast of immortalizing the woman he honors: *fortunata, meo si qua es celebrata libello: carmina erunt formae tot monumenta tuae* (2.17–18). But this third book marks a broadening of theme away from Cynthia herself, who is the central theme of only four poems (3.6 and 8, 10, and 16). Three elegies in Book 3 have something new to say about women: 3.12 in its sympathetic and

[21] Like the reference to vice in the time of Tatius and the Sabines, questioned by Ovid *Amores* 1.8.39–40, and parodied in Juvenal's introduction to *Satire* 6, Propertius' assumption of greed and venality back in the prehistoric age of Saturn is echoed by Janus in Ovid *Fasti* 1.195–96.

serious depiction of a loyal Roman woman (Aelia Galla bears the name of an elite matron—and is called *coniunx*) whose man has departed on military service, and the longer 3.11 and 3.19, ostensibly about the vices of all womankind. Let us take Galla first because she contributes to a model of loyalty that Propertius will develop fully in the elegiac letter of Arethusa (4.3) and Cornelia's posthumous apologia (4.11). The poet reproaches Postumus for leaving Galla to go on campaign, as if it were not his military duty; instead he reads Postumus' motives as love of glory and sheer greed (cf. *avari* 5) and lingers over Galla's fears for his death. But she is a chaste Penelope, who cannot be overcome by gifts; like Ulysses he can live through every hazards confident that his wife's loyalty (*fi des*) will surpass even Penelope. Just as we feel surprise that the soldier is reproached with a patriotic expedition, we are surprised that it needs to be said that this lady will refuse corrupting gifts. And in fact, the opening situation of 3.20 seems a variant of 3.12, addressed to an unknown woman and denouncing the faithlessness of her lover who has preferred profit to his girl: Africa (like Parthia in 3.12.3) is not worth the lady's distress. In 3.20 the poet sets about striking his own *foedus* of love with the girl, suggesting the difference of tone that might be expected in the same circumstances between a situation of marriage and of romance.

Although 3.11 and 3.19 seem designed and placed, like 3.12 and 20, to serve as a pair, they are vastly different in scale. Cynthia is not named but is a starting point for each elegy. The addressee of 3.11 should not wonder that a woman dominates the poet's life; Cynthia as unnamed addressee of 3.19 is scolded for constantly reproaching our (that is male) lust. But while 3.19 lasts for only twenty-eight lines, of which the first ten are argument, and the larger second part cites the bad women of mythology as witnesses, 3.11 begins with the evil dominant women and carries the list to twenty-eight before reaching the poet's real theme, the ultimate bad woman, Cleopatra. The libidinous women of 19 are not promiscuous free agents, but overcome by a single passion, and unable to impose limits on their crazy hearts (*captae mentis*): they are forces of nature like fire and water and can no more be quenched than rivers can be turned back to their sources (echoes of Medea!) or the treacherous Syrtes and Cape Malea offer safe harbor. All are violators of the family: Pasiphae who put on her wooden disguise to win the fastidious bull; Tyro,

who fell in love with the river Enipeus,[22] Medea, who as mother vented her anger on her sons; Clytemnestra, whose fornication disgraced the house of Pelops; and Scylla, who killed her father from lust for Minos. Minos' good judgment in condemning Scylla has earned him the position of chief justice in the underworld. Inevitably, despite the neat ending, the poem is anticlimactic, doing less than justice to the Roman myth of female *impotentia*.

3.11 reiterates the poets' subjection, enslaved (*addictum*), cowardly, and unable to break the yoke, exposed since youth to wounds and perils like a sailor or soldier.[23] Yet Medea could force fire-breathing bulls beneath her yoke, sow battling warriors, and close the dragon's jaws; queen Penthesilea dared attack the Greek fleet, and by her beauty conquered her conqueror. From now on the poet's examples are all barbarian queens, whose power is symbolized by the men or powers they subdue: Omphale, who enslaved Hercules,[24] and Semiramis who built the walls of Babylon, tamed Euphrates, and ordered Bactra to bow its head beneath her command. The distich 27–28 turning from dominant women to dominated males seems inadequately motivated, and to understand Propertius' argument the reader must know that Semiramis constructed a temple of Belus/Jupiter to which the god came to sleep as her consort; hence "Jupiter disgraces himself and his temple."[25] Without this knowledge the transition to Cleopatra is unclear. But with it we see that Propertius is more interested in the shameful male lover than the issue of women's lust. This barbarian queen contrived shame for our warfare, demanding the walls of Rome as price of her vile marriage and the bondage of our senate to her powers (*addictos in sua iura patres*). The scandal of Cleopatra was held against Antony by every Augustan poet, though the Roman

[22] Propertius evokes Tyro three times: 1.13.21, 2.28.51 simply recall from *Odyssey* 11.235–59 the union of Salmoneus' lovely daughter with Poseidon, disguised as the river Enipeus: she gave birth to the twins Neleus and Pelias, and then three sons by her mortal marriage. Apart from her passion for the river Tyro seems a very harmless example of evil desire.

[23] Like 1.6, this is a refinement of the so-called *Servitium amoris*, enslavement to love; see Lyne (1979), with a subsidiary allusion to the poet's other paradigm of suffering, the soldier's sufferings (*militia amoris*).

[24] On Antony represented as Hercules enslaved to Omphale, see Griffin (1985) 46 and n. 79, and Zanker (1987) 58–62 and fig. 45.a, b.

[25] On 3.11.27–28, see Hubbard (1968) 317, citing Herodotus 1.181–82 and Diodorus 2.9.4.

general usually went unnamed. Much of the abuse heaped upon her in 33–58 is familiar from *Aeneid* 8. 685–88, 696–713, *Epode* 9, and Odes 1.37. Propertius had compared his own shame at rejection in love to Antony's humiliation in 2.16.37–42: "you should be ashamed!" yes, ashamed, except that as they say, "love shamed is wont to have deaf ears." It was *infamis amor* that compelled the leader who filled the sea with futile din, to turn tail with his fleet. In 3.11 it is Cleopatra's turn. Williams (1968) 558 is uncomfortable with Propertius' attempt to fuse private and political material, whereas Griffin (1977/1985) sees the poet as deliberately assimilating himself to Antony, the glorious romantic failure.

From the point of view of Propertius' evolving composition, I find it more significant that he not only links Cleopatra's would-be tyranny to his own fate (11.32 = 11.2) but evokes the same language in 3.13, a denunciation of domestic luxury and the corrupt greed of married women at Rome: compare Cleopatra's schemes of disgrace (*opprobria*) in 3.11.29 with "the spoils of [the matron's] disgrace thrust in our faces" in 3.13, and the queen's demand of Roman walls as the price of her vile marriage (*coniugis obsceni pretium Roman poposcit/moenia*) with the matron's lack of respect in demanding and giving, and her removal of any hesitation for a price (3.13 11–14). It is the East that has sent Rome the luxuries that corrupt chaste and enclosed wives (3.13.5–10), and the Alexandrian *meretrix* (3.11.39) who has dared to attack Rome. It seems to me that private and public are converging in these poems. 3.11 exploits the theme of tyranny and national liberty to suggest that escape from Tarquinius Superbus would have been futile, if we Romans had had to endure a woman's rule: *si mulier patienda fuit* (3.11.49).

The poet has created his own portrait as subjected by passion to the fickleness, greed, lust, and perjury of an untrustworthy and tyrannical woman. There are many elegies that offer a happier and more favorable image of his beloved, but it seems that the genre needed this extreme image to obtain its pathos. If so, whose is the *capta mens* (3.19.4), and whose is the *impotentia* so often stigmatized by Roman moralists as *muliebris*?[26]

[26] On womanly lack of self-control, *muliebris impotentia*, see Cato's defense of the Lex Oppia, Livy 34.2.2, Tac. *Ann* 4.57.4, *matris impotentia* (on Livia and Tiberius): the noun cannot occur in dactylic hexameter or elegy. Cf. also *impotens* of Cleopatra's unrestrained ambition, Hor. *Odes* 1.37.10, but also of passionate lovers, Cat. 35.12, Tac. *Hist* 4.44. In the senate debate on the impact of governors' wives in the provinces at Tac. *Ann.* 3.33–34 both sides agreeing on women's lust for power (*impotentibus mulierum iussis*) and lack of restraint.

CHAPTER NINE

PROPERTIUS AND RHETORIC*

Tobias Reinhardt

Cynthia facundi carmen iuvenale Properti
accepit famam, non minus ipsa dedit.
Martial 14.189

When we talk about rhetorical features of any classical author, we may want to be guided (yet not constrained) by the ancient conception of the term 'rhetoric'.[1] Thus conceived, rhetoric would comprise the methodical analysis and generation of persuasive discourse as it was performed in certain contexts, and the analysis, description and evaluation of any type of formal writing, primarily though not exclusively from the viewpoint of style.[2] The latter raises the obvious problem that one can put a label derived from an ancient rhetorical manual to almost every type of argument and figure of style, without much illumination. So a rhetorical feature in this weak sense should be marked, e.g., through use, function or distribution, to class as a rhetorical feature in the stronger sense. But ancient stylistics, while it may be too wide a frame of reference if left unqualified, may also be too narrow: a construction like *non quo* + subj. . . . *sed quia* + indic., which we might term 'rhetorical' both because of its distribution (it is frequent in Cicero's speeches, but absent from poetry except for Lucretius and Ovid) and its function (it considers one reason, which may or may not have been mentioned before, and rejects it in favor of another one),[3] would lie outside the scope of ancient stylistics to describe. However, our criteria should allow us to

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[1] Cf. Fränkel (1945) 167–69 for an attempt to arrive at a meaningful concept of 'rhetorical feature' for Ovid.

[2] Heath (1993) shows that the ancient scholia on Homer use rhetorical theory concerned with forensic argument as a conceptual framework.

[3] See Kenney (1999) 407 and nn. 37–38.