

MAKING LOVE, MAKING REALITY:
PROPERTIUS, *PROSOPOPOEIA*, AND POETRY'S POWER OF CREATION

By

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For Lawrence Childree
e pluribus unum

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In this study I argue that the elegies of Sextus Propertius are best understood through the model of *prosopopoeia*. According to this model, Propertius' poems are grounded in reality for authenticity and authority's sake; his poems seek to be imitable and have an effect in society; and the main feature of his poetry is an insistence on the ability of poetry to rewrite and shape that reality.

First, the dominant theory in reading elegy, the *persona*, is examined in light of ancient evidence for audience reactions to biographical or pseudo-biographical forms of writing. Then, in book 1, Propertius uses the techniques of realism to create a credible world, one which transforms his poet-friends (including his predecessor Cornelius Gallus) into mirrors of his own 'realistic' style. Propertius continues in books 2 and 3 negotiating the exemplarity granted to myth and reality by becoming a mythical character, an *exemplum*, himself. With the programmatic 4.1, Propertius predicts modern interpretations of book 4: abandoning the first person voice does not, he argues, necessarily entail a diminution of power. Only by giving Propertius' elegiac world the legitimacy of reality does book 4 come into focus as poems 4.7 and 4.8 (the Cynthia

poems) and 4.3 (Arethusa's letter to her campaigning husband Lycotas), seen through the filter of Catullus 16, negotiate, even fight, over who, in the end, controls representation.

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

In this study I argue that Sextus Propertius is best understood through the rhetorical strategy of *prosopopoeia*. According to this model, Propertius' poems are grounded in reality for authenticity and authority's sake; his poems seek to be imitable and have an effect in society; and the main feature of his poetry is an insistence on the ability of poetry to rewrite and shape that reality.

Prosopopoeia is at odds with two main trends in Propertian scholarship. As a result of the first trend—the thorough application of a simplistic *persona* model to the reading of his poems—Propertius is stuck inside his poems, doomed to interact only with other literature, fictional creations, and generic types. He is limited in his ability to interact with the world around him, a world in flux due to the rise of Augustus and the massive reevaluation of Rome's values and ideals that accompanied his rise to power. But 'no one puts Propertius in a corner'; and as chapter one shows, the theory of *persona* is inconsistent with the expectations of both ancient readers and writers. Propertius' realistic self-presentation instead prompts a biographical reading from his audience.

Propertius ensures that his audience will employ a biographical approach through the systematic application of realistic techniques in writing book 1 (this is the argument of chapter 2). These techniques include rejecting artifice (1.2) and setting up the metaphor of voyeurism as a guide for his readers (1.10). At the book's most starkly historical moment (1.21 and 1.22 on the consequences of the Perusine war), Propertius seizes the power of his realistic poetry and rewrites the painful story of his own youth.

Propertius' realistic technique is tested by the omnipresence of myth in Roman poetry and the prior claim that myth had on exemplarity (chapter 3). Propertius attacks myth on the very grounds of its exemplarity and displays the flaws inherent in using mythological exempla—these exempla simply do not correspond to real experience (2.8, 2.12). Instead, Propertius turns his own story into an exemplum and writes himself into the story of the defeat of Cleopatra as an exemplum for Augustus.

The second troublesome trend is due in large part to the influence of the first. Book 4, because of its so-called public poems, is cut off from the remainder of the Propertian corpus. The earlier Propertius (books 1-3) is 'elegy' and book 4 something else, the 'end of elegy.' The (mis)use of *persona* theory necessitates a Propertius who remains aloof from public affairs. When in book 4 Propertius gestures toward greater immersion in writing the story of Rome, this artificial perspective forces readers to break the back of the Propertian corpus. The poet of the first three books must be separated out in some definitive manner and kept distinct from the poet of book 4 (chapter 4). Yet book 4 represents the culmination of Propertius' poetic program: here he explores more fully than before the ramifications of rewriting reality, especially as it relates to the reputations of individuals (for example, Propertius' status as poet in 4.1; the relationship between Propertius and Cynthia in 4.7 and 4.8). He finds that it is the nature of reality never to be closed and settled; that there is always the possibility of renegotiating meaning. If his poetic project has succeeded, his readers too are aware that meaning is always mediated, often by writing, and always mutable.

The famous saying goes, “The winners write the history books.” If we understand Propertius’ program, though, we realize that writing can be the most important part of winning in the first place.

CHAPTER TWO
REMOVING MASKS: FROM *PERSONA* TO *PROSOPOPOEIA*

2 a.m. and I'm still awake, writing a song.
If I get it all down on paper, it's no long-
er inside of me, threatening the life it belongs to.
And I feel like I'm naked in front of the crowd,
'Cause these words are my diary, screaming out loud,
And I know that you'll use them, use them however you want to.
—Anna Nalick, "Breathe"

I is dead.
—Edward Dorn, *Slinger*

Unquestioned, unbreakable, and largely uncontroversial, the theory of the literary *persona* occupies a unique position in the world of literary criticism. Among the tools of the critic, no other stands so fundamental (one might say sacrosanct) as the rule that “the ‘I’ in a poem is *never* immediately and directly the poet; that the-poet-in-his-poem is always distinct from, and must never be confounded with, the-poet-outside-his-poem.”¹ It is perhaps surprising, then, for critics who cut their teeth on *persona* and could recite the rule as if part of their ABCs to learn that it has not always been there. In fact, it is a recent development, it arrived to a great deal of controversy, and there are serious theoretical limitations with its use, in particular, in reading Propertius.

The reason for the limitations is inherent in the nature of the *persona*, the mask itself. Every mask performs at least two roles. On the one hand, the mask projects a new ‘self,’ the outside surface of the mask, to the outside world. This self can be shaped to look like anything, an old man, a frightened woman, a young lover. This is the basic meaning of the Latin word *persona*, a mask worn on stage to indicate a character. In this use, the *persona* is performative and creative. The face presented is a creation, and

¹ Davie 1968: 62.

essentially joined to a performance. On the other hand, the mask also hides the face behind it, the ‘true’ face. This face becomes inaccessible to the audience; the outer face is all that is visible. Even if there is anything to be gained from knowing the hidden face, the *persona* eliminates the possibility.² These roles of the mask have equal importance; for both actor and audience, the *persona* is “a device of transformation and concealment.”³ But these two roles do not figure equally in modern critical theory, which tends to emphasize concealment to the exclusion of transformation.

Remembering the ‘New’ *Persona*⁴

The accusations of naïvety that now accompany any reading that does not carefully distinguish between *persona* and poet conceal the fact that *persona* theory is, among critical theories, a fairly recent innovation. The theory of the literary *persona* arrived hand-in-hand with the rise of New Criticism in the 1920s through the 1960s, a movement which gave priority to the work of art as a thing in itself. New Criticism limited the field of discussion on any poem to the words of the poem. The specific target attacked by this movement was the biographical reading of poetry: in its place, an emphasis on rhetorical skills and assumptions.

The idea of the *persona* was adopted early, and most prominently, by the poets William Butler Yeats and Ezra Pound. Pound even entitled one of his poetry books

² The standard study on self-presentation is Goffman 1959; Oliensis 1998: 1-5 uses Goffman’s concepts to discuss Horace’s “face-making.” Cf. Edmunds 2001: 63-82 and Freudenberg 1993: 1-23 on the performative nature of *persona*. The important aspect of this discussion is the anxiety all express over the artificial line drawn between art and life which is the major tenet of *persona* theory and its consequences (which are especially acute in elegy, where the elegist’s world is typically viewed as artificial; see *infra*).

³ Elliott 1982: 21.

⁴ Elliott 1982 provides a history of the introduction and controversies involved with *persona* as a critical term.

Personae.⁵ Among critics, *persona* appears earliest among interpreters of English satire. Maynard Mack's 1951 essay "The Muse of Satire" on the satires of Alexander Pope is generally considered the first strong critical advocacy of the literary *persona*.⁶ Mack stresses the rhetorical and dramatic nature of poetry. Since rhetoric "insists on the recognition of artifice," he writes, one of the effects is "the reinvigoration of our sense of the distinctions between art and life." With this reinvigorated sense of distinction, Mack seeks an approach that singles out the poem itself, and deals not with "origin nor effects, but with artifice."⁷ In his view, the *ethos* of the speaker in Pope's poems becomes part of the stock fiction of satire, and the characteristics of that speaker are those that best suit the rhetorical purposes of the poem.

The *persona* begins to enter the world of Classics through the work of another critic of satire, Alvin Kernan. Dealing chiefly with the Renaissance dramatic satires of John Marston, Kernan argues again that "satire is not a form of biography or social history but an artistic construct, the parts of which...are to be understood in terms of their function in the satiric poem."⁸ This was by now an unremarkable claim in his own field, but it struck William Anderson as "conflicting sharply" with the prevailing view of

⁵ Background to these poets' use of *persona* is provided by Elliott 1982: 8-9. *Personae* was published in 1919. Pound's own view of *persona* can be found summarized in Kenner 1951: 119-25. Pound is significant on this issue also because of his *Homage to Sextus Propertius* (1934), in which Eliot claimed Pound was working out a *persona*: "It is not a translation; it is a paraphrase, or still more truly (for the instructed) a *persona*" (Pound 1948: xxiii; cited in Zimmerman 2006: 425-6.)

⁶ Tillyard and Lewis 1939 also represents an important stage in the development of the concept of *persona*, though it is staged as a debate rather than strictly an argument for its use.

⁷ Mack 1951: 81-2.

⁸ Kernan 1959: 29.

Juvenal.⁹ Anderson relied heavily on the theoretical framework of Kernan's work, especially the idea of the *persona*, for his monograph on "Anger in Juvenal and Seneca." By making thorough use of this new concept (he refers to the speaker of the poems not as Juvenal but "the satirist"), he could reconcile the disparity in tone between the Juvenal in *Satires* 1-6 and in 10-16 without jumping through biographical hoops.

Anderson was slightly anticipated in a more general rejection of biographical criticism by others in the field of Classics. Harold Cherniss's "The Biographical Fashion in Literary Criticism" (1943) mocks critics for interest in the possible discovery of Milton's house or the number of Euripides' wives. Archibald Allen applied Cherniss's skepticism about biographical criticism more specifically to the genre of elegy, centering his argument around a set of ancient passages in which an author protests how critics are reading his work.¹⁰ Neither of these two critics laid weight on the term '*persona*,' but both argued along essentially the same lines as Anderson, Kernan, and Mack. Allen's article, though, argued not only that biographical criticism was flawed, but also that it was contrary to ancient practice, citing a set of passages that have become canonical on the question of biographical reading.¹¹ Allen sought to establish that the prohibition against biographical reading was an ancient prohibition. But even if it were

⁹ Anderson 1964: 127.

¹⁰ Allen 1950; Allen 1962 (a significantly revised version of the former).

¹¹ The passages: Catul. 16.5-8; Ov. *Tr.* 2.353-354; Mart. 1.4.8, 1.35.10-11; Plin. *Ep.* 3.14; Apul. *Apol.* 11. The 'set' can be called canonical because these same passages are cited whenever the question of biographical reading appears (e.g. Richlin 1992: 2-13, Clay 1998: 33-4, Mayer 2003: 55-80). Nevertheless, critics with the same set of information often reach different results. Clay asserts that, despite finding little evidence that the ancient view of the *persona* matched its modern application, ancient authors were aware of it and made use of it. Richlin explores implications of these passages beyond *persona*, specifically their connection with ancient views of obscenity. Mayer's views generally agree with the findings presented in this chapter.

the case that “classical literary doctrine did not assume any specific and normal connection between personal poetry and the actual experience of the poet”¹² (and we will return to this below), it had certainly not been recognized by critics before. Allen’s claim, and the theory of the *persona*, was still new in the 1940s and 1950s.

Controversial *Personae*

There was a great deal of critical protest when *persona* began to come mainstream. Again, due to the current near-universal assent to the theory, this might seem surprising, but the debate over the propriety of using *persona* theory was lively. The protests against *persona* fell under three main headings. First, stressing “the difference between appearance and reality”¹³ sets up a barrier between an author and the speaker in his poems. This separation, carried out fully and consistently, implies an essential difference between the poet and his work. This approach allows for the recuperation of uneven narrators, as Anderson sought with Juvenal, to be sure, but it also gives a perhaps undeserved center stage to irony: everything is read as the opposite of, or at least different from, the author’s actual thoughts and opinions. Second, the approach as a whole is based on timidity. What motivates the dismissal of biography from the interpretation of a work is, primarily, a fear of basing a reading on an incorrect or fallacious assumption. This results from another group of New Critical presuppositions: the intentional fallacy, the biographical fallacy, and the historical fallacy. The words on the page, as New Criticism prescribes, do not sanction the critic to speak safely about

¹² Allen 1950: 152.

¹³ Ehrenpries 1974: 52. New Criticism encouraged the emphasis on the difference between appearance and reality; cf., as cited above, “the reinvigoration of our sense of the distinctions between art and life” (Mack 1951: 81).

the author's purpose, the author's life and personality, or the author's world. Third, consider the matter of genre. While certain genres patently reject a biographical reading, others seem to encourage it. *Persona* should be applied more warily, these objectors argue, when the author speaks or pretends to speak in his own voice. This point was argued passionately by Hight (1974) mainly to defend biographical interpretation of Horace's 'autobiographical' satires, but he also included personal letters and first-person lyric and elegy among genres in which use of *persona* in interpretation can actually cause adverse results because "the authors themselves explicitly or implicitly claim that their own personalities are somehow involved and revealed."¹⁴

All three of these counter-arguments figure prominently in readings of Propertius. First, the emphasis on separating author and work, and the resulting emphasis on irony, means that, for example, one critic can read Propertius as 'pro-Augustan'; another can use the same poems as evidence and consider him 'anti-Augustan'; a third can claim that Propertius offers both and excludes neither.¹⁵ This leads to an *aporia* and, perhaps worse, a praise of ambiguity for its own sake. Second, there was a credulity and lack of critical sophistication in earlier criticism¹⁶ that tried to reconstruct the love-lives of Catullus, Horace, and the elegists by treating the poems as historical documents and ciphering the chronology of their affairs. This approach was extreme, but modern scholars fear that merely acknowledging that the abandonment of biography does not

¹⁴ Hight 1974: 325.

¹⁵ Cf. Gale 1997, esp. 1-2 on the history of interpretation of poem 2.7 and Nappa 2005 on the *Georgics*. Kennedy 1992 argues that 'pro-' and 'anti-Augustan' are poor terminology in the first place, but his view has recently been challenged by Davis 2006: 9-22.

¹⁶ In Barth 1777 and Lachmann 1816, even as recent as Butler and Barber 1933: xvii-xxv.

necessitate ignoring an author's use of biographical techniques will make them seem equally credulous. Yet there is no gullibility involved in admitting that Propertius made an attempt to seem real in his poems. Third, Propertius complicates his elegy a great deal for his audience by giving his main character his own name. Couple that with the mention of historical people as friends, a *puella* with a reasonably consistent personality, known locations in and around Rome, and a plotline that unfolds over time, and it grows harder to argue that Propertius is not encouraging a biographical reading. If it must be called a *persona*, it must also be admitted that Propertius' *persona* is very different from that of, for example, Horace or Martial across their full corpus.¹⁷ Horace and Martial depend on a flexible and mutable *persona* which can adapt to several different situations, but Propertius (like Catullus before him) builds up one consistent character.¹⁸ There are no drastic changes in Propertius' personality in the poems, and readers can safely make the same general assumptions about Propertius in 1.1 as in 4.8. If we are devotees of *persona*-based criticism, on the other hand, the situation is fraught with fear. But how might a Roman reader react, a reader not so separated from Propertius through the indoctrination of *persona* theory?

Looking Behind the Mask: The Ancient Evidence

The passages that form the backbone of Allen's argument to establish the antiquity of the general prohibition against biographical reading have remained largely unquestioned since his article. No one has seriously re-examined them to see how well

¹⁷ For the flexible *persona* in Horace, see Oliensis 1998, McNeill 2001, and Sutherland 2002. For Martial's, see Sullivan 1991: 173-5, Holzberg 2002: *passim*, Watson and Watson 2006: 5-7.

¹⁸ MacLeod 1973 argues the opposite viewpoint in relation to Catullus, but in fact all of the 'parodies' and 'personalities' mentioned in his title can be reconciled into one consistent Catullus.

they support his argument, and so, like a faulty footnote reference which is simply copied and copied again without checking, they have been repeated arbitrarily as proof for the aptness of *persona* to ancient poetry. A closer examination of these passages, though, brings into question just what reading practices this evidence substantiates on the part of ancient readers, how much ancient authors discouraged or encouraged biographical readings, and how far we should agree with Allen's findings:

Thus we find this doctrine constantly repeated: erotic poetry, though its form may be personal, cannot be taken as an indication of the conduct of the writer. This does not mean that erotic poets were never in love, but it does mean that classical literary doctrine did not assume any specific and normal connection between personal poetry and the actual experience of the poet.¹⁹

Catullus 16 is a forerunner in the tradition of Latin *apologiae*. Many other ancient passages either quote it directly or model themselves on it; modern critics likewise base their approaches to ancient biographical reading practices on it. The poem deserves a closer look as a whole:

pedicabo ego vos et irrumabo,
Aureli pathice et cinaede Furi,
qui me ex versiculis meis putastis,
quod sunt molliculi, parum pudicum. 5
nam castum esse decet pium poetam
ipsum, versiculos nihil necesse est;
qui tum denique habent salem ac leporem,
si sunt molliculi ac parum pudici,
et quod pruriat incitare possunt,
non dico pueris, sed his pilosis 10
qui duros nequeunt movere lumbos.
vos, quod milia multa basiorum
legistis, male me marem putatis?
pedicabo ego vos et irrumabo.

I will stick it in your ass, and shove it down your throat, Aurelius you pathetic, you catamite Furius, for thinking I was immodest because my poems are effeminate. A

¹⁹ Allen 1950: 152.

pious poet ought to be chaste himself, but there is no need for his poems to be. In the end, they only show wit and charm if they are effeminate and immodest, if they can stir up what itches—not in boys, but in those hairy men who cannot rouse their stuff. Just because you have read my *milia multa basiorum*, you think I am no real man. I will stick it in your ass, and shove it down your throat.

When Allen and others completely divorce the character of the poet from his poetry, they stress a notion that is incidental or secondary in this poem, and ignore a primary claim being expressed, which in fact concerns ethics.²⁰ In Catullus 16 the poet is not primarily arguing for a distinction between the poet and his words, but instead that the poet can be modest, chaste, and pious even when his poetry is not, even when his poems are *parum pudici*. Catullus puts the poem's full weight on moral terms: *molliculi*, *pudicum*, *castum*, *pium*, *male marem*. It may be extrapolated from the distinction between a poet's morals and the morals expressed in his poem that he also is setting up a distinction between his whole personality and his 'self' in his poems, but it is an extrapolation, not the main thrust of the argument. His concern is over the personal ethical implications of his poetry. It is because of this emphasis on ethics that the final line of the poem has such a strong impact: after arguing staunchly that he is pious, he offers to prove his piety—by impiously sexually assaulting Furius and Aurelius.²¹

An interest in the ethical implications of poems is well-attested in ancient rhetorical thought. Varieties of the maxim *talīs oratio qualis vita* are frequent.²² Seneca devotes an entire letter (114) to the discussion of the link between character and

²⁰ Richlin 1992: 13 in fact argues that Catullus' poem is far more subtle and nuanced than later, more naïve, imitators; cf. Hor. *S.* 1.10.16-19. Mayer 2003: 66-8 offers another interpretation of Catul. 16, again not focused on *persona*, namely that "Kissing for Catullus is symbolic of an unusual erotic emotion, which he knows he must explain to his macho readers..."; cf. also Wray 2001: 60-70.

²¹ Richlin 1992: 12-13.

²² Sen. *Ep.* 114.1; cf. Pl. *Resp.* 3.400d, Men. fr. 143 Kock, Cic. *Tusc.* 5.47, Quint. 11.1.30.

manner of speech, illustrating the link with the case of Maecenas, whom he finds as faulty in his morals as in his composition. More importantly, the one is considered the *cause* of the other. This possible causal relation between decline in morality and decline in rhetorical skill is also one of the major interests in Tacitus' *Dialogus* (26-28). This concern for ethical implications is found not just in relation to style, but also in relation to content. Two of Pliny's letters (4.14 and 5.3) reveal a latent anxiety over whether 'lower' forms of verse with their accompanying 'lower' themes are suitable for a man of nobility. In 4.14 Pliny is careful to introduce his poems as something he does during his free time (*quibus...oblectamus otium temporis*, 2); that is, he is not neglecting more important affairs for the sake of *lusus* (as he describes his efforts, 1). He emphasizes that high-ranking men and men of high morality have 'played' likewise—even gone further—and implies that if his addressee has any sophistication he will already know this (4.14.4).²³ In the second letter Pliny inserts himself into the tradition of playful writing: first of high-ranking and well-respected Roman politicians (even several emperors), then of esteemed authors (*notum est quos quantosque auctores sequar*, 5.3.5-6). This emphasis on social position is also present when Apuleius defends his poetry. He focuses on its propriety to his position as a philosopher: "Apuleius writes poetry. If it is poor, well, that is a crime, but a poet's crime, not a philosopher's. If it is good, well, why are you bringing charges?" (*fecit uersus Apuleius.' si malos, crimen est, nec id tamen philosophi, sed poetae; sin bonos, quid accusas?* Apul. *Apol.* 9.4). Apuleius cites Plato as an example of a worthy predecessor who was both philosopher and poet. He cites

²³ Plin. *Ep.* 4.14.4, *erit eruditionis tuae cogitare summos illos et gravissimos viros qui talia scripserunt non modo lascivia rerum, sed ne verbis quidem nudis abstinuisse.*

Hadrian as well, and dares his addressee to find fault with him: “Aemilianus, I dare you to say that what our emperor and censor divine Hadrian did and left to memory was poorly done” (11.4).²⁴ It is only after all this contextualization in moral or social terms that Pliny and Apuleius quote Catullus as an authority. As D. A. Russell writes, “When ancient writers speak of a coherence between utterance and the whole personality—*qualis vita talis oratio*—they do so in a moral sense.”²⁵

This argument intentionally limits and narrows the field in which we view these passages, merely to show that the topic in these passages need not necessarily be the separation of author and poem.²⁶ On the other hand, even if these passages *are* about the separation between poet and poem, the persistence of the *apologiae* must also be taken as evidence for the parallel persistence of a biographical reading habit in antiquity—not of the opposite. If nothing else, repeated passages in which the author asks not to be read biographically attest the presence of just that habit on the part of readers. In fact, a good deal of evidence points toward a widespread biographical reading practice among ancient readers. Few poets, especially those who spoke in the first person, escaped such a reading. Homer was thought blind because he was identified with Demodocus the blind bard (*Od.* 8.62-66); Hesiod’s father was assumed to be named Dios because Hesiod calls his brother Perses δῖον γένοϛ (*Op.* 229); Sappho and Pindar both have tangled receptions because of first person statements; Aeschylus was seen as “filled with rage” from the content of *Septem contra Thebas*, Euripides as obsessed with

²⁴ Apul. *Apol.* 11.4, *aude sis, Aemiliane, dicere male id fieri, quod imperator et censor divus Adrianus fecit et factum memoriae reliquit.*

²⁵ Russell 1967: 142.

²⁶ Cf. Richlin 1992: 13.

Aphrodite from his plays; Lucretius supposedly committed suicide over love (from his vehement attack on love in book 4); Ovid created a scandal with his ‘endorsement’ of promiscuity, as Augustus’ relegation of him attests.²⁷

Aristotle and Plato as well offer evidence of biographical reading (albeit *ex silentio*). Both discuss the nature of Homer as speaker, specifically, the difference between Homer speaking as himself, and Homer speaking as a character.²⁸ But while both make a distinction between Homer as narrator and Homer as character, neither asserts that Homer as narrator can be viewed as a character distinct from Homer the person—nor even seems to consider such a concept. Greek poetic theory seems to have had no idea of a *persona*; the speaker was assumed to be identifiable with the author.²⁹ Just how instinctive a biographical reading could be, in fact, is shown by the comments of Critias, another student of Socrates, on Archilochus:

αἰτιᾶται Κριτίας Ἀρχίλοχον ὅτι κάκιστα ἑαυτὸν εἶπεν. εἰ γὰρ μὴ φησὶν ἐκεῖνος τοιαύτην δόξαν ὑπὲρ ἑαυτοῦ ἐς τοὺς Ἕλληνας ἐξήνεγκεν, οὐκ ἂν ἐπυθόμεθα ἡμεῖς οὔτε ὅτι Ἐνιποῦς υἱὸς ἦν τῆς δούλης, οὔθ’ ὅτι καταλιπὼν Πάρον διὰ πενίαν καὶ ἀπορίαν ἦλθεν ἐς Θάσον, οὔθ’ ὅτι ἐλθὼν τοῖς ἐνταῦθα ἐχθρὸς ἐγένετο, οὔτε μὴν ὅτι ὁμοίως τοὺς φίλους καὶ τοὺς ἐχθροὺς κακῶς ἔλεγε. πρὸς δὲ τούτοις, ἦ δ’ ὅς, οὔτε ὅτι μοιχὸς ἦν ἤδειμεν ἂν εἰ μὴ παρ’ αὐτοῦ μαθόντες, οὔτε ὅτι λάγνος καὶ ὑβριστής, καὶ τὸ ἔτι τούτων αἴσχιον, ὅτι τὴν ἀσπίδα ἀπέβαλεν. οὐκ ἀγαθὸς ἄρα ἦν ὁ Ἀρχίλοχος μάρτυς ἑαυτῷ, τοιοῦτον κλέος ἀπολιπὼν καὶ τοιαύτην ἑαυτῷ φήμην.

(Ael. *VH* 10.13 = Archil. fr. 295 West)

Critias criticizes Archilochus for speaking badly about himself. For if he had not, he says, spread such an opinion of himself among the Greeks, we would not have learned that he was the slavewoman Enipo’s son, or that he left Paros and arrived in Thasos because of poverty and desperation, or that when he arrived he became an enemy of those who lived there, or that he spoke ill of friends and enemies

²⁷ Clay 1998: 11-14.

²⁸ Pl. *Resp.* 3.392d-3.394c; Arist. *Poet.* 1448a.19-22, 1448b.32-6, and 1460a.5-11; cf. Clay 1998: 23-8.

²⁹ Clay 1998: 27. On the problem of mimesis and representation in Plato and Aristotle, cf. Else 1957: 93-8, Rabel 2000: 169-83, Halliwell 2002.

alike. And on top of that, he says, we would not have known that he was an adulterer except from him, nor that he was lusty and licentious, nor—and this is even more shameful than the rest—that he threw away his shield. So Archilochus was not a good witness (μάρτυς) on his own behalf, since he left behind that kind of report and account of himself.

Critias not only uses the poetry of Archilochus as a witness for his life (the complaints lodged here can all be traced to evidence from various poems of Archilochus), but remarkably also criticizes Archilochus for betraying himself, as if he should have known better and protected his reputation by being more selective about what aspects of his life he revealed. But the fact that Critias read Archilochus' poems biographically hardly makes him exceptional. Archilochus was particularly susceptible to this reading practice; for example, the story of Lycambes and his daughters shows up so frequently in connection with Archilochus that it became the defining characteristic of Archilochean iambi (Hor. *Epod.* 6.11-14 with Pseudo-Acron's scholia *ad loc.*; *Epist.* 1.19.2-31; Ov. *Ib.* 53-4 with scholia C *ad loc.* and 521-4 with scholia *ad loc.*; Mart. 7.12.5-8).

There is evidence that a more general public as well engaged in this biographical reading practice when reading Archilochus. The Sosthenes inscription (ca. 100 B.C.) once stood in a public shrine to Archilochus on Paros; it details Archilochus' life in annalistic manner (κατ' ἀρχόντων / ἔκαστον, A.col.Ia.8-9). It is the inscription's form and style, more than the content, which is revealing: Sosthenes shapes his narrative largely from Archilochus' own poems, sometimes paraphrasing, sometimes citing directly.³⁰ The passages from Archilochus' poetry are introduced as proofs or evidence, which is made clear by the verbs that head the citations. For example, fr. 93a is

³⁰ Lefkowitz 1981: 30. Citations: A col. Ia.18 (fr. 192); 42-3 (fr. 93a); 53-5 (fr. 94); col. IVa.1 (fr. 95); 8 (fr. 96); 21-2 (fr. 97); B col. 1-4 (fr. 7, 7a).

introduced with the phrase “he (or, the poet) himself plainly shows this” (διασαφεῖ δὲ τ[ο]υτο / τ . αὐτὸς, A col. Ia.42-3); fr. 94 is introduced with the same phrase in a fuller version:

καὶ ἐν τούτοις διασαφεῖ πάλιν ὡς
ἐνίκησαν καρτερῶς τοὺς Ναξίους, λέγων
οἴτω. (A col. Ia. 53-5)

And in these [verses] he again shows plainly that they defeated the Naxians, speaking thus.

Other versions of the introductory phrase include “the poet makes clear” (δῆλοι ὁ ποιητῆς, A col. IVa.1), “that this is true” (sc. the poet shows *vel sim.*) (ὅτι δ’ ἀληθῆ, A col. IVa.21, 25), and “makes mention” (μνήμην, A col. Ia.18). Since this inscription was part of a public monument and therefore would be open to viewing by the people of Paros, and since the inscription is written in this unabashedly biographical style, we must assume that the relation of poetry to life was unproblematic for this public. The people of Paros were willing to accept Archilochus’ poetry as a true account of his life. In the absence of other evidence—or, more likely, as the most authoritative form of evidence—Sosthenes can cite from Archilochus to prove a point or illustrate an event. There is also a revealing reversal of interest on the part of this public: the life receives greater emphasis than the poetry, and the latter has no real place without the former. As Lefkowitz states,

It is significant that what interested [the people of Paros] was not so much his poetry as the relation of his poetry to his life; the Archilocheion does not contain copies of his poems but excerpts of his poetry set into prose biographies.³¹

³¹ Lefkowitz 1981: 31.

On the basis of this evidence, it is much harder to claim that “classical literary doctrine did not assume any specific and normal connection between personal poetry and the actual experience of the poet.”³² Ancient readers were certainly capable of engaging in just such a biographical reading practice. Ancient authors too were every bit as aware of this practice as readers were. Several of the *apologiae* demonstrate this awareness on the part of the authors as well as the steps they took to control and manipulate this practice.

Pliny’s choice of words in 4.14 reveals his anxiety that his addressee and his readers will read him biographically. As mentioned earlier, he first aligns himself with the high-ranking and extremely serious men who wrote poems of a similar sort in the past, but then he distinguishes himself even from this group:

...summos illos et gravissimos viros qui talia scripserunt non modo lascivia rerum, sed ne verbis quidem nudis abstinuisse; quae nos refugimus, non quia severiores—unde enim?—sed quia timidiores sumus. (4.14.4)

...those high-ranking and extremely serious men who wrote such [poems] did not refrain from racy subjects or even from obscene words (*nudis verbis*). I have—not because I am more upright (how could I be?), but because I am more wary (*timidiores sumus*).

Pliny’s poems lack the outright obscenity found in his predecessors, but Pliny denies that this is due to any difference in character between them. His restraint, he says, is due solely to a greater fear (*timidiores*)—but fear of what?

It is primarily a fear of the unpredictable and possibly dangerous consequences produced by a biographical reading that has motivated Pliny’s moderation in use of

³² Allen 1950: 152.

language.³³ The publication of poetry leaves the author in a vulnerable state: the reading audience may enjoy and admire the poetry, or it may just as well criticize and find fault with the poems. Just as the author would receive any praise, he must also submit to any disapproval. In Pliny's case, were he to use obscenity (*nudis verbis*; literally "exposed words," combining the ideas of nakedness and the shame associated with it), he would himself be exposed (*nudus*) and vulnerable to the criticism that resulted. And Pliny shows that he is well-aware of the specific danger from a biographical reading, even engaging in it himself. He offers a biographical reading as a possible explanation for his verbal caution—only to reject it: "not because I am more upright." The equation he proposes is this: the more upright a person is, the less likely to employ obscenity he is. Even though Pliny rejects this notion, the fact that he included it in the first place confirms that this biographical type of interpretation occurred easily to him, and that he expected it would occur easily to his reader as well.

Ovid too, before and after his exile, chooses his words carefully in defending his poetry so that he reveals an anxiety about the danger of the biographical reading practice.

crede mihi, distant mores a carmine nostro
 (vita verecunda est, Musa iocosa mea)
 magnaue pars mendax operum est et ficta meorum:
 plus sibi permisit compositore suo.
 nec liber indicium est animi, sed honesta voluptas:
 plurima mulcendis auribus apta feret. (*Tr.* 2.356-61)

Believe me, my morals are not in my poems: my life is modest, my Muse is playful. The greater part of my work is false and fictional, and it grants itself more license than its author. And it is not the case that a book is an informer of the [author's] spirit. It is simple pleasure. It contains what is best for charming the ear.

³³ On the potential dangers of speech for someone in an elevated social position, see, e.g., Bartsch 1994.

Here *indicium* (*Tr.* 2.360) should be translated in its strongest sense. Although Ovidian usage tends toward the weaker sense of “token, marker, sign” (*OLD* 4),³⁴ Ovid also frequently uses *indicium* in such a way that it reveals its shared root with *index*, “informer, witness.” For example, Ovid tells his prospective mistress’ slave Bagoas that informing on her actions would be fruitless: “If her husband is indifferent, you are offering information (*prodis indicium*) to uncaring ears; if he is still in love, he will become worse off because of your ‘duty’.”³⁵ Ovid’s Paris likewise informs on himself when speaking in front of Helen and her circle: “So often when I was drunk I narrated a love story, relating every word to my own pain, and under a pseudonym informed on myself (*indicium mei feci*).”³⁶ Mute Procne is forced to weave an *indicium sceleris*, “information about the crime,” to communicate what has happened to her.³⁷ Ovid calls the sun an informer on Venus’ affair with Mars (*Ars am.* 2.446); Ovid checks himself during his advice to women in book 3 to question his own motives, asking “Why am I betraying myself with my own information?” (*Ars am.* 3.668). More telling, though, is that throughout the *Tristia*, *indicium* always refers to Ovid’s poetry and is always tinged with the danger of the informer and his own relegation. Ovid refuses to inform on his friends by using their real names (*meus indicio latitantes versus amicos / protrahet*, “my poetry will not inform on my friends and draw them out of hiding,” 3.4.69-72). He

³⁴ *Am.* 2.2.41, 2.7.26, 3.13.19, 3.14.12; *Her.* 11.72, 12.38, 16.52, 18.154; *Ars am.* 2.446; *Met.* 1.650, 4.190, 4.257, 5.542, 5.551, 7.555, 7.833, 9.586, 10.417, 11.188, 14.27, 15.503; *Fast.* 1.450, 1.659, 2.172, 2.528, 2.640, 6.346; *Pont.* 1.5.76, 3.2.104.

³⁵ *Am.* 2.2.53, *seu tepet, indicium securas prodis ad aures; / sive amat, officio fit miser ille tuo.*

³⁶ *Her.* 16.243-5, *ah quotiens aliquem narravi potus amorem, / ad vulnus referens singula verba meum, / indiciumque mei ficto sub nomine feci!*

³⁷ *Met.* 6.574-8, *grande doloris / ingenium est, miserisque venit sollertia rebus: / stamina barbarica suspendit callida tela / purpureasque notas filis intexuit albis, / indicium sceleris.*

refuses to further implicate himself at 4.10.99-100 (*causa meae cunctis nimium quoque nota ruinae / indicio non est testificanda meo*, “the cause of my ruin, even though it is so well known to everyone, will not be witnessed by my own informing”). In a poem sent to his wife, Ovid attempts to recuperate *indicium* by giving it a happier connotation: the informing he has done on her in his writing should give her reason to preen (*quod numquam vox est de te mea muta tuique / indicii debes esse superba viri*, 5.14.17-8).

Ovid’s use of the quasi-legal word *indicium* sets up an image of poetry which aligns perfectly with a biographical reading practice: the poetry informs on its own author. This is explicit in the method of defense that Ovid uses in the long section *Tr.* 2.361-546. His main argument in this section is that “a new penalty is being paid for an old fault” (540). He lists several authors and the content of their work which could be scandalous were it read with the same biographical eye with which his own work has been read. Homer himself is pulled into the argument: “Where would we have learned that two goddesses caught fire for a stranger if it were not for great Homer’s own informing?” (*unde nisi indicio magni sciremus Homeri / hospitis igne duas incaluisse deas?* 379-80).³⁸

Not only is it far from unique if an ancient reader assumes a correlation between the author and his writings, but the authors were also well aware of this reading practice. However, these authors’ focus on the dangerous aspects of this biographical tendency should not be allowed to force critics into seeing only the negative side of the

³⁸ Compare this line with the comments of Critias (Ael. *VH* 10.13 = Archil. fr. 295 West) above. The parallel in thought and phrasing across a timespan of more than 500 years is striking.

question. The positive version of the question is this: could a writer exploit this widespread biographical reading practice to his benefit?

Ovid's early elegies provide a good test case, because he is more open about the relation of text to audience than the other elegists. He reveals certain assumptions about the nature of elegy, even if only to parody them. He begins his *Amores* by protesting to Cupid that he is incapable of writing elegy because he is not actually in love! "I do not have the subject matter for elegy, no boy, no long-haired girl" (*Am.* 1.1.19-20). The lines parody the biographical idea they contain (a poet writing because he is actually in love), but if the assumption were not important to the workings of elegy, the parody of it would fail as well. The *puella* of the *Amores* offers other opportunities for Ovid to tease the biographical reader. At *Am.* 2.17.29-30, a girl is claiming all over town that she is Corinna. People evidently want to know Corinna's identity—or at least, Ovid wants his reader to think they do, because in the *Ars* he maintains that many people are asking him who she 'really' is (3.538).³⁹ He marks off his poetry from inspiration, landing firmly on the side of experience. The proemium of the *Ars* disdains Apollo, augury from birds, and the Muses who inspired Hesiod and Callimachus. Instead Ovid is the poet of personal experience:⁴⁰

non ego, Phoebe, datas a te mihi mentiar artes,
nec nos aerae voce monemur avis,
nec mihi sunt visae Clio Clisue sorores
servanti pecudes vallibus, Ascra, tuis:

³⁹ Cf. the reading of Kennedy 1993: 89-91 on these three passages: *nec mihi materia est numeris levioribus apta, / aut puer aut longas compta puella comas* (*Ov. Am.* 1.1.19-20), *novi aliquam, quae se circumferat esse Corinnam. / ut fiat, quid non illa dedisse velit?* (*Am.* 2.17.29-30), *et multi quae sit nostra Corinna rogant* (*Tr.* 3.538).

⁴⁰ Rudd 1976: 174-5.

usus opus movet hoc: vati parete perito;
vera canam... (1.25-30)

Apollo, I will not lie and say that you gave me this *ars*, or that I was advised by the song of birds, nor that I have seen Clio and her sisters while I was watching over the herds in Ascra's valleys. Experience produces this work. Make way for the prophet of personal experience; I will sing the truth!

In retrospect we know well what encouraging this reading practice cost Ovid.⁴¹ He

captures it neatly himself at the opening of *Tristia* 2:

carmina fecerunt ut me cognoscere vellet
omine non fausto femina virque meo:
carmina fecerunt, ut me moresque notaret
iam demi iussa Caesar ab Arte mea. (2.5-8)

My poems caused men and women to want to know me—a bad omen for me. My poems caused Caesar to mark me and my morals down because of my *Ars*, ordered to be removed immediately.⁴²

Catullus never suffered as Ovid did because of what he wrote; nevertheless, he too constructs the argument of his poem 16 around a full awareness of his audiences' biographical reading practice. If such a practice did not exist, the logic of the poem would break down immediately.⁴³ It is by creating a tension between the poet inside the poem and outside of it, and between the addressees Furius and Aurelius inside the poem and outside of it, that the poem has an impact. Catullus hinges the poem on the question of whether action can pass from inside the poem to outside of it, to the real world. Furius and Aurelius have nothing to fear if there is a complete disjunction between the poem and the real world. If so, then Catullus' threats have no efficacy

⁴¹ On the relation between Ovid's exile and his poetry, see Thibault 1964, Nagle 1980, Evans 1983, and Williams 1994.

⁴² Cf. *Tr.* 4.10.1-2, *ille ego qui fuerim, tenerorum lusor amorum, / quem legis, ut noris, accipe posteritas.*

⁴³ Selden 1992: 477-9.

outside the poem, and the pair have nothing to fear. The threat that begins the poem is violent and angry, but apparently innocuous. Some editors even soften it into little more than a stout curse.⁴⁴ Yet when the same threat ends the poem, after Catullus has employed the biographical approach of Furius and Aurelius to complicate the lines that divide reality from poetry and has effectively pulled Furius and Aurelius inside his poetic world, the threat proves much more dangerous. Catullus has pulled reality into his poem, and threatens to push his poetic world back out on reality.⁴⁵

Catullus, however, does more than offer an example of a poet depending upon and making good use of biographical reading. In poem 16, he also exhibits the three parts required for full execution of a poem: the author behind the poem (*pium poetam*), the poem itself with its charm (*versiculos...qui...habent salem ac leporem*), and the effect on the reader (*incitare possunt*).⁴⁶ This is the same three-part division of the poem found in New Criticism, which attempts to deal with neither “origin [poet] nor effects [audience], but with artifice [the poem itself].”⁴⁷ Lacking any part, though, our understanding of the poem is incomplete. *Persona* theory, as commonly employed, fails when it comes to the poems of Catullus and Propertius because, by definition, it isolates the middle term, the poem itself, from any meaningful connection with the author and the reader. This isolation may provide protection from possible biographical fallacies, but it also limits critical interpretation. These poets urge us to play along and join in the world of the

⁴⁴ E.g., Quinn 1970: *ad loc.*

⁴⁵ Cf. Selden 1992.

⁴⁶ Or origin, artifice, and effects, to use the terms of Mack 1951: 82.

⁴⁷ Mack 1951: 82; my amplifications.

poems, but *persona* theory forbids it. By doing so it contravenes a truly basic principle of reading—as well as a tenet of New Criticism, since these realistic or biographical techniques are certainly a part of the text itself. On a foundational level, the author of a poem has certain expectations of his audience. In order to fully participate, a reader must join the *narrative audience*, an audience which believes, for example, in *War and Peace*, not only that Napoleon lived and led battles, but also that Natasha, Pierre, and Andrei ‘really’ exist. Otherwise, our readings become perverse. A reader of *Cinderella* who refuses to believe in fairy godmothers considers Cinderella neurotic or even psychotic and hallucinatory.⁴⁸

A New Framework: *Prosopopoeia*

Elegy’s psychotic Cinderella is the view of elegy as a mere textual game, played by the elite as a form of aesthetic pastime.⁴⁹ Here, Propertius is referred to as ‘Ego’; the *puella* is merely a placeholder; elegy itself “appeals to things as they are for an effect; it does not seek to change them.”⁵⁰ A more complete theory will consider all three aspects of the poem. The poem will be seen as a “consequential act”;⁵¹ that is, it stems from a reality and has consequences back out onto reality. A more complete theory will also properly acknowledge the place of realism in these texts. Such a theoretical framework is in fact available, and even ancient (and therefore known to all these authors). I suggest

⁴⁸ This is the terminology and these are the examples of Rabinowitz 1977: 127-9.

⁴⁹ For example, in Veyne 1988; cf. the two readings, one sympathetic and one critical, of Veyne in Kennedy 1993: 83-100.

⁵⁰ Veyne 1988: 30.

⁵¹ The term comes from Oliensis 1998: 2; cf. Searle 1979 and Barker 2004. The implications of the term here, however, are my own.

instead the rhetorical figure *prosopopoeia* as a framework for reading Propertius. It embraces realism—even depends upon it to be effective. It focuses on the audience and the reception of the poem because of its exemplarity. And it highlights the transformative control of reality in the poet’s words.

Prosopopoeia is a speech in character.⁵² In strictly rhetorical terms, it means an orator speaks as if through the voice of another, whether dead or alive, fictional or historical, animate or inanimate.⁵³ It serves as a broad term covering a whole range of more specific types of impersonation including *eidolopoeia*, summoning forth a shade from the underworld, and *ethopoeia*, impersonation which focuses on the emotions appropriate to a character.⁵⁴ Quintilian describes the figure metaphorically in several different ways (3.8.50), either as “donning a character” (*personam induere*), “granting a voice” (*vocem dare*, the passive version being *vocem accipere*, 9.2.31), or “shaping an image” (*imaginem exprimere*). It was a show-piece, belonging to the grand style of oratory (12.10.61). According to Quintilian it spices up and enlivens a speech (*mire namque cum variant orationem tum excitant*, 9.2.29). But the figure has practical uses beyond merely “enlivening” a speech. Quintilian lists three possible uses:

his [sc. prosopopoeiae] et adversariorum cogitationes velut secum loquentium protrahimus (qui tamen ita demum a fide non abhorrent si ea locutos finxerimus quae cogitasse eos non sit absurdum), et nostros cum aliis sermones et aliorum inter se credibiliter introducimus, et suadendo, obiurgando, querendo, laudando, miserando personas idoneas damus. (9.2.30)

⁵² Lausberg 1998: 366-372 (§ 820-829). A definition is given by Quintilian at 11.1.39, *utimur enim fictione personarum et velut ore alieno loquimur*.

⁵³ Dead or alive: Cicero has the dead Appius Clodius as well as the live and present Clodius address Clodia in *Pro Caelio* 33-34 and 36 respectively; cf. Quint. 3.8.54. Fictional: *Virtus* speaks in Cic. *Tusc.* 2.46. Historical: Quint. 3.8.52. Inanimate: Rome addresses Cicero in *Cat.* 1.18.

⁵⁴ Lausberg 1998: 367 (§ 822).

Using *prosopopoeia*, we bring forth the thoughts of our opponents as if they were talking to themselves. (This only maintains fidelity if we portray them saying things which they might actually say.) We also believably introduce our conversations with others and the conversations of others speaking among themselves, and we offer characters suited to persuasion, rebuke, plaint, praise, and pity.

The orator could, using *prosopopoeia*, bring forward a respected figure from the past to speak with authority in a case. Leaning on the authority of this character as a sort of witness, he attempts to persuade his audience. From the resources of the underworld, the heavens above, all recorded history, and the creations of the poets, the orator is able to call upon “a wealth of witnesses” (*locupletissimos testes*, Cic. *Brut.* 322). The number and variety of such “witnesses” is one obvious benefit of *prosopopoeia*. Another is that the figure affirms the strong Roman traditions of the *mos maiorum* and the use of *exempla* in education. The orator could depend on historical *exempla* to carry great weight with his audience (*exempla plurimum in consiliis possint, quia facillime ad consentiendum homines ducuntur experimentis*, Quint. 3.8.36). *Exempla* were a necessary part of any orator’s repertoire (*abundare debet orator exemplorum copia*, Quint. 12.4), and these could include even the fictional creations of poets. *Prosopopoeia* was an extension of the use of *exempla*—but rather than simply narrating the deeds of a famous Roman and making a comparison, the exemplum is brought to life, as that Roman is summoned to give his own opinion. Instead of narrating, for example, how Cincinnatus laid down his dictatorship for the greater public good, the speaker shows Cincinnatus speaking himself, saying “I laid down my dictatorship. Will you not also think of the common good?” There is no need for the audience to make a comparison between former action and their own; the source of the *exemplum* speaks, and the

comparison is explicit. *Prosopopoeia* invigorates the force of these *exempla* by collapsing this usual comparison.

On the other hand, the ability of *prosopopoeia* to range across the wide gulf caused by time and distance, between fact and fiction, opens up the possibility of going too far to help one's case.⁵⁵ Implausibility would be fatal to the effectiveness of the impersonation, and *prosopopoeia* treads the line: either the performance would, because of its virtuosity, convince the audience, or else the audience would sit in disbelief and the technique would fail.⁵⁶ Quintilian therefore stresses faithfulness to reality. In the passage quoted above (9.2.30), each item in the list is reinforced with the need for plausibility. Opponents' thoughts are only credible if they are not too far removed from possibility (*qui tamen ita demum a fide non abhorreat si ea locutos finxerimus quae cogitasse eos non sit absurdum*, 9.2.30); conversations should be introduced believably (*credibiliter*); characters should speak words to which they are suited (*idoneas*). The necessity of believability means, as Quintilian notes, that impersonation is added to the orator's already tough task of persuasion.⁵⁷ The orator had to 'get in character,' and that meant both remaining consistent to what was known of the character he introduced and also adopting further traits, perhaps even of speech or gesture (*dandique sunt iis, quibus vocem accommodamus, sui mores*, 11.1.39). Speeches composed for others to deliver offered an easily understood parallel: Cicero and Lysias are commended for

⁵⁵ As Cicero warns (*Top.* 45): *in hoc genere oratoribus et philosophis concessum est...ut aliquid quod fieri nullo modo possit augendae rei gratia dicatur aut minuendae, quae ὑπερβολή dicitur, multa alia mirabilia.*

⁵⁶ Quint. 9.2.33, *falsa enim et incredibilia natura necesse est aut magis moveant, quia supra vera sunt, aut pro vanis accipiantur, quia vera non sunt.*

⁵⁷ Quint. 3.8.49, *ad reliquum suasoriae laborem accedit etiam personae difficultas: namque idem illud aliter Caesar, aliter Cicero, aliter Cato suadere debet;* cf. 11.1.42.

matching the speeches they wrote to the circumstances and character of their clients “so that they themselves seem to speak, just better” (*ut melius quidem sed tamen ipsi dicere viderentur*, 3.8.50). The most important consideration was fitting the speech to the one supposed to be speaking (3.8.51). The task was nearly equal to acting.⁵⁸

Still Quintilian only hints at the most remarkable effects of *prosopopoeia*. In perhaps the most famous *prosopopoeia* in antiquity, Cicero calls up Appius Claudius:

sed tamen ex ipsa quaeram prius utrum me secum severe et graviter et prisce agere malit an remisse et leniter et urbane. si illo austero more ac modo, aliquis mihi ab inferis excitandus est ex barbatis illis non hac barbula, qua ista delectatur, sed illa horrida, quam in statu is antiquis atque imaginibus videmus, qui obiurget mulierem et pro me loquatur, ne mihi ista forte suscenseat. (*Cael.* 33)

But I will ask her first whether she prefers that I deal with her harshly, seriously, and in the old-fashioned way, or gently, calmly, and dignified. If she wants the plain-spoken method, I will need to raise someone from the underworld, one of those bearded fellows—not with the kind of beard she likes, but that shaggy kind that we see on ancient statues and *imagines*. He can scold the woman and speak in my stead, so that maybe she will not get mad with me.

Cicero leads in with several phrases loaded with intimations of the *mos maiorum*: the phrases *severe et graviter et prisce agere* and *austero more ac modo* present an old-fashioned and rougher way of doing things. Before Appius Claudius is even announced, his beard makes an appearance, evoking out-of-date fashions.⁵⁹ Cicero portrays this beard as something no longer seen in the streets of Rome; the only place to find an example is on the statues and *imagines* evocative of past greatness. In this subtle but hardly understated way, Cicero places authority on (his) Appius Claudius.

⁵⁸ Quint. 3.8.51, *vix comoediarum actoribus plures habitus...sint*.

⁵⁹ See Austin 1952: *ad loc.*

It is the phrase *pro me loquatur*, however, which gives away Cicero's strategy. Cicero affects to abandon the stage to allow Appius Claudius to speak for him, when the reverse is the case: Cicero is speaking for Appius Claudius. What Appius Claudius says, out of the mouth of Cicero, is what best accomplishes Cicero's own goals for his case. Cicero has presented this *prosopopoeia* as allowing the *mos maiorum* to state its own case; instead, Cicero is actively redefining what the *mos maiorum* stands for according to his present needs and circumstances. The purpose of bringing on a character through *prosopopoeia* is revisionist. To speak in another voice is to redefine that voice, and *prosopopoeia* is the performance of reality.⁶⁰

Through the lens of *prosopopoeia*, we can see a Propertius who is not sequestered away, masked from his surroundings, locked between the covers of a book. His words touch the world and have consequence. The reality of his elegiac world serves as the strongest factor in its persuasiveness and exemplarity. Changing voices and speaking for other characters becomes a calculated method of broadening Propertius' impact, not a problem. Most of all, we are able to see how writing about Rome offers Propertius the opportunity to interact with his readers to re-imagine Rome.

⁶⁰ This control of reality is nowhere mentioned in ancient discussions of *prosopopoeia*. Quintilian suggests some knowledge of these capabilities (3.8.54): *frequentissime vero in his utimur ficta personarum quas ipsi substituimus oratione: ut apud Ciceronem pro Caelio Clodiam et Caecus Appius et Clodius frater, ille in castigationem, hic in exhortationem vitiorum compositus, alloquitur*. "In our speech we often use *prosopopoeiae* which we ourselves select. For example, in Cicero's *pro Caelio*, Caecus Appius and Clodius her brother address Clodia, the first in criticism, the second in encouragement of her vices." Quintilian recognizes that the choice of whom to introduce belongs to the orator in the phrase *quas ipsi substituimus*. And depending on how we read *compositus in*, we perhaps ought to translate "written/composed/redefined to do the business of X."

CHAPTER THREE
FROM REALISTIC ELEGY TO ELEGIAC REALITY

τὴν δ' ἀλήθειαν διὰ τί προσέθηκεν ὅμως ἀπορῶ.
I have no idea why he added truth in.

—Philodemus, *De Poematis* 5 (Mangoni col. ix)¹

James Frey is here and I have to say it is difficult for me to talk to you because I feel really duped. But more importantly, I feel that you betrayed millions of readers.

—Oprah Winfrey, on “The Oprah Winfrey Show”

Defining Realism

In January 2006, Oprah Winfrey invited James Frey to appear on her show for a second time. The first time, in October 2005, he had been there to talk about his book *A Million Little Pieces*, described on the back cover as “this generation’s most comprehensive book about addiction: a heartbreaking memoir defined by its youthful tone and poetic honesty.” Oprah was selecting it as the latest member of “Oprah’s Book Club.” Because of the large audience and popularity of “The Oprah Winfrey Show” and the trust that Oprah’s viewers have in her choices, books that she selects for inclusion in her “Book Club” gain not just incredible publicity, but also incredible leaps in sales figures. Frey’s *A Million Little Pieces* was no exception. But Frey had not been asked back to talk about the success of the book; he was there that day to apologize.

In the time between Frey’s appearances, he had been ‘exposed’: a website called “The Smoking Gun” claimed that their investigation “put the lie to many key sections” of the book and showed that the author had “wholly fabricated or wildly embellished

¹ Quoted by Newman 2006: 319 as a rhetorical question, i.e., self-evident and not needing a response. I think the question deserves an attempt at an answer.

details.”² Oprah initially, hesitantly, defended Frey and his book (for example, on the “Larry King Show”), but finally the controversy was beginning to affect her and, more importantly, her reputation, enough that she asked him to come back on the show to address the website’s investigation and findings. During her interview this time, she was much warier of Frey’s story and often accusatory of him. At one point, Frey said that he struggled to remember important details about a trip to the dentist: “Since that time I’ve struggled with the idea of it...” “No,” Oprah breaks in, “the *lie* of it. That’s a lie. It’s not an idea, James. That’s a lie.”³ This recent controversy over truth and the audience shows how current the problems addressed in the previous chapter still are. Audiences are still very ready and willing to read first-person narratives as true statements, and authors are, as I suggested, ready and willing to take advantage of that reading strategy, no less now than in antiquity. The controversy also provides a good context for defining the term ‘realism,’ which has so far been left undefined.

Texts in large part define their readers. They demand certain attitudes and certain approaches by their readers. The guides or clues for how a text is to be read are a constituent part of the text itself. Genre itself works in this way. All of the signals that a text ‘belongs’ to this or that genre are inherent in the text; for example, the use of hexameter, elegiac couplets, or iambs may mark a text as epic, elegiac, or iambic. A text with an authoritative speaker and a focused addressee may mark a text as didactic. Vergil can nod to the tradition of Homeric epic and make himself a part simply by

² “A Million Little Lies – January 8, 2006.” *The Smoking Gun*. 1 February 2007
<<http://www.thesmokinggun.com/archive/0104061jamesfrey1.html>>.

³ “Oprah’s Questions for James: The Dentist’s Chair.” *oprah.com*. 1 February 2007
<http://www2.oprah.com/tows/slide/200601/20060126/slide_20060126_350_108.jhtml>.

beginning *cano*. Even word choice can make distinctions; some *Wörter* are just *unpoetische*.⁴ A text shares and adopts these symbols from a tradition, and the simple marks on the page instruct the reader how to read—or even better, construct the ideal reader of the text.⁵

This process was somewhat more complicated for an ancient reader than it is now. Bookstores today divvy books into nice and neat categories: fiction here, poetry there, sci-fi, new age, history there. In fact, at James Frey’s second visit to Oprah’s show, she insisted that the book should have been categorized differently, as a novel ‘based on a true story,’ not a memoir. Oprah even chastised the publishers of the book for misleading readers: “as the consumer, the reader, I am trusting you. I’m trusting you, the publisher, to categorize this book whether as fiction or autobiographical or memoir.”⁶ But an ancient reader did not have a handy label on the inside front flap to lead (or mislead); the textual clues alone had to signal the reader’s approach.

The key to defining realism, then, is in how the reader approaches the text first, and, second, in what guides the author has used to create that approach.⁷ A work may be called realistic if the author has worked to engender in his reader a response that treats the events that are described not as if they are narrating something unreal, but as

⁴ Axelson 1945.

⁵ The formulation of Conte 1994 is worth quoting at length: “This reader-addressee is a form of the text; it is the figure of the recipient anticipated by the text. To this prefiguration of the reader, all future, virtual readers must adapt themselves. The author conceives of the form of the reader as a communicative function, foreseeing it and articulating his discourse so as to entwine the reader’s reactions with the literary act. In short, the text’s form and intentionality determine the reader’s form” (xx). Contrast the schematic view of genre in Cairns 1972.

⁶ “Oprah’s Questions for James: Check the Facts.” *oprah.com*. 1 February 2007
<http://www2.oprah.com/tows/slide/200601/20060126/slide_20060126_350_113.jhtml>.

⁷ For further work on defining realism and the creation of realism, see Auerbach 1953 and Mazzotta 2001.

if they are feasible and possible. A work may be called realistic if a reader responds like Oprah originally did: “When I was reading the book and I got to the last page and Lilly has hung herself and you arrived the day that she was hung, I couldn’t believe it. I’m like gasping, I’m calling people, like ‘Oh my God. This happened!’”⁸ Propertius in book 1⁹ employs several techniques to ensure that his reader approaches his text as if he were peeking in on a life that happened. He prompts the reader to view his poetry as realistic. The reader becomes, in Propertius’ own words, a *testis* (1.10.1) to his life—his elegy.

Propertius and the ‘Nude’ Style

quid iuvat ornato procedere, vita, capillo
et tenuis Coa veste movere sinus,

⁸ “Oprah’s Questions for James: The Truth about Lilly.” *oprah.com*. 1 February 2007 <http://www2.oprah.com/tows/slide/200601/20060126/slide_20060126_350_103.jhtml>. I hope my use of Oprah in these pages is not misconstrued as an endorsement of her critical acumen (such as it is). Frey’s book was a very well publicized scandal, and Oprah’s interactions with the book and its author demonstrate the problems involved with first-person narrative. For a similar flap, on a more elevated literary level, see the series of articles on David Sedaris’ autobiographical/pseudo-autobiographical books on “Slate” (www.slate.com).

⁹ Butrica 1996b has shown that the frequently-used term *monobiblos* has no legitimacy as a title for book 1, and I will not use it. The term originates among the lemmata for Martial’s gifts (14.189). It became a part of the MS tradition in A. Butrica has ascribed the title “Monobiblos,” along with the corrupt and confused version of the author’s name “Propertius Aurelius Nauta” to Richard de Fournival, for whom the manuscript was copied. On the other hand, the other oldest manuscript (N) contains nothing by way of title except “Incipit Propertius” and “Explicit Propertius,” and that in a second hand. Richard de Fournival misunderstood the lemma in Martial as an ancient title. But *monobiblos* means nothing more than “a work contained in a single roll.” It was never a title for a work. In fact, it is only because Martial’s poem begins with the word *Cynthia*, just as book 1 does, that it is possible to identify Martial’s gift as our book 1. *Cynthia* was more likely the title the book circulated under in antiquity (cf. 2.24.2), just as the *Aeneid* was known as *arma virumque*. For this reason I also think it is circular when Butrica further deduces that books 2-4 were published as one unit, since “if the *Cynthia* could be identified without further qualification as ‘Propertius’ Monobiblos,’ then Propertius could have written only one monobiblos” (94). That further qualification comes when the the first word of Martial’s poem alludes to the first word of Propertius’ first book. There is no reason to require the term *monobiblos* to precisely identify which book of Propertius Martial meant; the poem itself does that. Rather, it is descriptive of the gift in a more general way; the lemma should therefore be read as “A one-book work of Propertius” not “*The* one-book work of Propertius.” We must still assume *seriatim* publishing of the books. *Monobiblos*, then, has no ancient authority, and if we assume that Propertius’ four books were each published separately, as we must lacking further evidence, it adds no value as a descriptive term, *pace* Butrica. *Monobiblos* would in fact be better used where it does make such a distinction, as for example with Hor. *Od.* 4.

aut quid Orontea crines perfundere murra,
teque peregrinis vendere muneribus,
naturaequae decus mercato perdere cultu, 5
nec sinere in propriis membra nitere bonis?
crede mihi, non ulla tua est medicina figurae:
nudus Amor formae non amat artificem.
aspice quos summittat humus non fossa colores,
ut veniant hederæ sponte sua melius, 10
surgat et in solis formosior arbutus antris,
et sciat indocilis currere lymphæ vias.
litora nativis præfulgent picta lapillis,
et volucres nulla dulcius arte canunt.
non sic Leucippis succendit Castora Phoebe, 15
Pollucem cultu non Helaira soror;
non, Idae et cupido quondam discordia Phoebo,
Eueni patriis filia litoribus;
nec Phrygium falso traxit candore maritum
avecta externis Hippodamia rotis: 20
sed facies aderat nullis obnoxia gemmis,
qualis Apelleis est color in tabulis.
non illis studium fucō conquirere amantes:
illis ampla satis forma pudicitia.
non ego nunc vereor ne sis tibi vilior istis: 25
uni si qua placet, culta puella sat est;
cum tibi praesertim Phoebus sua carmina donet
Aoniamque libens Calliopea lyram,
unica nec desit iucundis gratia verbis,
omnia quaeque Venus, quaeque Minerva probat. 30
his tu semper eris nostrae gratissima vitae,
taedia dum miserae sint tibi luxuriae.¹⁰ (1.2)

What good does it do you, my dear, to promenade with a fancy hair-do and shake the thin folds of your Coan dress? Or to perfume your hair with Syrian myrrh and display yourself in foreign gifts? You are destroying your natural beauty with bought finery; you are not allowing your body to shine on its own merits. Believe

¹⁰ The text throughout is quoted from the revised edition of Goold 1999. Differences from this text will be noted or discussed. This choice may be controversial, first because it is a Loeb edition and so has a limited *apparatus*. But Goold's engagement with the text of Propertius stretches over decades. Second, Goold's text is eager to emend (some would say overeager; he makes clear the influence of Housman), but this skeptical approach to the received text is gaining support as the proper approach to Propertius' text, and the key textual critics working on Propertius commend this edition as the best currently available; cf. Butrica 1992: 273-6. For a review of the editions of Propertius, see Tarrant 2006: 45-65. A new OCT and a companion volume of commentary on the complete text are promised in Fall 2007 by Stephen Heyworth.

me, there is no way to improve your appearance. Since Love is naked himself, he has no love for a manufacturer of beauty.

Look at what colors spring up from the earth without it ever being tilled; how ivy comes in better on its own; how the strawberry grows prettier in unvisited hollows; how the stream just knows how to flow down paths it was never taught. Shores rejoice because they are painted with their own rocks; birds sing sweeter because they have no art.

This was not how Leucippis' daughter Phoebe stirred up Castor; her sister Helaira did not inflame Pollux with finery either. Not Evenus' daughter, who was once the cause of a quarrel between Idas and Phoebus, on her father's shores. Hippodamia, carried away on foreign wheels, did not win her Phrygian husband with deceitful makeup; no, her appearance, like the color on Apelles' canvasses, was not owed to any jewels. None of them had any desire to gather in admirers with makeup. For them, purity was beauty enough.

Now, I have no concerns that you are lesser than them in your own eyes. If a girl has one man, she has enough decoration. Especially when Phoebus has given you his song and Calliope has happily given you her Aonian lyre, and when there is a certain charm, and everything Venus and Minerva approve of, in your pleasant words. Because of *these* gifts you will always be the best thing in my life—so long as you get over these luxuries.

On the surface, poem 1.2 presents the typical Hellenistic theme that beauty is best unadorned. Propertius begins by censuring Cynthia for her interest in luxuries such as Coan silk and Syrian perfume (1-8).¹¹ He demonstrates that there is no need for such refinements through examples of raw beauty from nature (9-14), and then examples of artless beauty from the women of myth (15-24). The poem closes with Propertius urging Cynthia to reject such luxury (25-32). This *topos* can be found throughout literature from Plaut. *Most.* 289 (*pulchra mulier nuda erit quam purpurata pulchrior*, “a beautiful woman will be more beautiful naked than all decked out in purple”)¹² to the letters of Alciphron (2.8) and Philostratus (22 and 27, which like Propertius' poem include mythological *exempla*). Propertius' fellow elegists Tibullus and Ovid each attempt the

¹¹ Assuming *vita* (1) means Cynthia. The woman is never named in the poem, but cf. 1.8a.22, where *vita* picks up Cynthia in 1.8a.8.

¹² The entire passage runs from 272-292. Note especially 292: *nam si pulchra est, nimis ornata est.*

theme (Tib. 1.8.9-14, Ov. *Am.* 1.14), and Propertius himself touches on it again in 2.18. The theme often has overtones of invective, especially when the female addressed is using cosmetics or other adornment to make herself seem younger or more attractive than she actually is (for example, Eubulus fr. 98, Hor. *Ep.* 12.7-12, Martial 2.41, 9.37). In these poems especially, women's use of cosmetics, perfumes, and other beauty-aids symbolize "the problem of the relationship between reality and image, truth and falsehood."¹³ As Ovid writes at the end of a passage on women's actual as opposed to apparent qualities, "A girl is the smallest piece of herself" (*pars minima est ipsa puella sui*, *Rem.* 344).

Propertius' poem lingers on this separation between reality and image. The line that closes the opening section of the poem opens up this issue for the reader: *nudus Amor formae non amat artificem*, "Since Love is naked himself, he has no love for a manufacturer of beauty" (8). Due to the strong parallel with 2.1.58, *solus amor morbi non amat artificem*, it is extremely difficult to accept Heinsius' emendation *formam* here. Even though logic suggests the line should be more concerned with *artificial* beauty than an *artificer of* beauty, the stress on the performer is the very point of the line. A distinction is drawn between 'natural' and 'created,' and the examples Propertius chooses all emphasize the lack of interference by a outside hand: *spon te sua* (10), *solis antris* (11), *indocilis vias* (12), *nativis* (13), and *nulla arte* (14).¹⁴

¹³ Wyke 1994: 146.

¹⁴ The mss. read *formosus*, which results in an insipid echo because the word is repeated so soon (*formosior* in 11); *non fossa* (9) is Skutsch's conjecture. Reading *formosus* the verse also did not fit well into the series with the following lines. This conjecture emphasizes outside influence, which makes it fit with the other *exempla*, and therefore recommends itself.

The poem has further implications, though, than just women's appearance or the problem of representation and reality. David Ross and James Zetzel have each argued that 1.2 may actually be a programmatic poetic statement.¹⁵ Ross associated the two sets of *exempla* in lines 9-14 and 15-24 with neoteric poetry, even claiming they might be seen as representations of such poetry. He also emphasized the presence of two poetic figures, Apollo and Calliope, at poem's end. He only suggested this reading, thinking it was still somewhat inconsistent. Zetzel followed through on Ross's suggestions and argued that the poem was a parody, an example of how not to write poetry. For him, Propertius was asserting his independence from his predecessors by overexaggerating their techniques (even if he still in practice followed their precepts).¹⁶ P. Allen Miller, on the other hand, has claimed that 1.2 could not in any serious way be advocating a 'simple' style, since Propertius is well-known as a "difficult poet."¹⁷

There is, however, a clear link between the terminology of ornament and that of style. The Latin critical vocabulary regularly employs *nudus*, *vestitus*, *ornatus*, and related terms to distinguish between straightforward, plain, fact-based writing—the simple style—and more elaborate and showy writing.¹⁸ This is clear from several passages in Cicero, especially his discussion of *commentarii*, both Caesar's and his own.

¹⁵ Ross 1975: 58-9, Zetzel 1996: 89-90 (picking up where Ross left off); cf., although in a different vein, Curran 1975: 1-16.

¹⁶ Zetzel 1996: 89-90.

¹⁷ Miller 2004: 66, 248n. 12.

¹⁸ On cosmetics and critical vocabulary, see Wyke 1994: 144-6 and especially Wiseman 1979: 3-8.

Cicero famously described the style of Caesar's *commentarii* as "naked":

valde quidem, inquam, probandos [commentarios]; nudi enim sunt, recti et venusti, omni ornatu orationis tamquam veste detracta. sed dum voluit alios habere parata, unde sumerent qui vellent scribere historiam, ineptis gratum fortasse fecit, qui volent illa calamistris inurere: sanos quidem homines a scribendo deterruit; nihil est enim in historia pura et illustri brevitae dulcius. (Cic. *Brut.* 262)

His *commentarii* are certainly quite praiseworthy. They are *nudi*, straight, and beautiful. They have all the ornament of oration removed like clothes taken off. But although he wanted others to have base material [*parata*] to take up if they wanted to write a history, he has probably delighted those fools who want to burn them up with their curling irons. Wise men, at least, have been deterred from writing: nothing is sweeter in histories than a plain and clear brevity.

The imagery and vocabulary of ornament runs throughout Cicero's discussion. In particular, *nudus* is prominent in both Cicero and Propertius 1.2. Cicero clearly associated nudity with a straightforward style since he creates the parallel between the phrases *omni ornatu orationis [detracta]* and *tamquam veste detracta*.¹⁹ Perhaps more important here are the qualities associated with nudity and ornament: *nudus* is coupled with *rectus* and *venustus*, and later results in the sweetness of *pura et illustris brevitae*. The addition of ornament is compared to the damaging effects of a curling iron (*calamistris inurere*). Two conclusions can be drawn from this passage. First, that ornament is something additional, added on, not necessarily inherent in writing itself.²⁰

¹⁹ Some have associated *nudus* in this passage with nude sculpture; cf. Powell 1998: 113, 133n.7.

²⁰ Cicero's position on this is somewhat unclear: compare *Or.* 1.142, *cumque esset omnis oratoris vis ac facultas in quinque partis distributa, ut deberet reperire primum quid diceret, deinde inventa non solum ordine, sed etiam momento quodam atque iudicio dispensare atque componere; tum ea denique vestire atque ornare oratione; post memoria saepire; ad extremum agere cum dignitate ac venustate* with 3.199, *his tribus figuris insidere quidam venustatis non fuco illitus, sed sanguine diffusus debet color*. It seems Cicero would prefer to think of ornament as organic, or to think of it as organic when done best, but the prevailing opinion (even if just for simplicity's sake)—the opinion he is reacting to—thinks of ornament as an addition, an extra layer. These extra layers account for the metaphors from cosmetics; cf. also Quint. 8.3.6, *sed hic ornatus (repetam enim) virilis et fortis et sanctus sit nec effeminatam levitatem et fuco ementitum colorem amet: sanguine et viribus niteat*.

Second, that the addition of ornament while usually positive, can be potentially damaging or at least unwelcome.

At the other end of the literary spectrum, in a letter to Atticus, Cicero discusses having his own *commentarii* written up into a fuller, more elaborate form:

As I was on my way to Antium on the Kalends of June, eager to leave M. Metellus' gladiator show behind me, your boy met me with a letter from you and a sketch (*commentarium*) of my Consulship in Greek....Actually though, your piece, which I have read with pleasure, struck me as a trifle rough and unkempt, but it was embellished by its very neglect of ornament and seemed fragrant because odourless, as with the ladies (*erant ornata hoc ipso quod ornamenta neglexerant et, ut mulieres, ideo bene olere quia nihil olebant videbantur*). Now my book has used up Isocrates' entire perfume-cabinet (*myrothecium*) along with all the little scent-boxes (*arculas*) of his pupils, and some of Aristotle's rouge (*pigmenta*) as well....Posidonius has already written to me from Rhodes that when he read this *ebauche* (*hupomnema*) of mine, which I had sent him with the idea that he might compose something more elaborate (*ut ornatius de isdem rebus scriberet*) on the same theme, so far from being stimulated to composition he was effectively frightened away. The fact is, I have dumbfounded the whole Greek community, so that the folk who were pressing me on all sides to give them something to dress up (*quod ornarent*) are pestering me no longer. (Cic. *Att.* 2.1-2)²¹

Once again, the language of ornament and cosmetics permeates the passage. Cicero's description of Atticus' *commentarius* sounds remarkably like what Propertius would like from Cynthia: the *commentarius* "was embellished by its very neglect of ornament."

Cicero has on the other hand written his with such ornament (note the words for perfume and make-up, *myrothecium*, *arculas*, *pigmenta*) that no one wants to add to it.

Both of these descriptions view *commentarii* as the basic facts, plain *materia*, and discuss the results when ornament or, figuratively, make-up, is added to them.

Propertius' rejection of ornament in 1.2 sets up the same paradigm for his poems. He is encouraging a view of his own poetry as a *commentarius* of sorts: just a set of facts, a

²¹ Trans. Shackleton Bailey 1965. It would be useless to try to improve on his translation.

display of actual events with minimal outside interference (even from him). And like Cynthia, he asserts, they have greater beauty because they are kept away from artifice. This poem is Propertius' first attempt at directing the reader toward a 'realistic' reading of his poetry.

The disjunction between appearance and reality creates consequences for Propertius himself. If a reader pauses after taking in Propertius' argument and attempts to apply the terms of that argument to Propertius himself, should not Propertius also be found guilty of artificially manufacturing beauty? As a poet writing about Cynthia and her charms, what is he other than an *artifex formae*? The word 'poet' itself implies as much: ποιέω = *facio*, from which *-fex* is derived. Is the poet himself, then, betraying *Amor* by the act of writing every bit as much as Cynthia is by indulging in finery? Is he destroying Cynthia's beauty at the same moment he lifts his *stilus* to describe it? Poem 1.2 creates a dilemma concerning representation and reality which forces the question upon the reader: must writing be considered a destructive stylization of reality? Must poetry interpose a layer of artificiality between reality and reader, or can a reader gain access to reality by reading poems?²²

Though he seems implicated in the same argument he has used against Cynthia, Propertius works carefully to exclude his poetry. Propertius allies his poetry with the 'natural' components of his argument. Lawrence Richardson points to "two curious little lapses in the poet's argument."²³ First, Richardson argues that "no one could say an

²² The textual obstacles that lie between reality and reader in Propertius are the subject of several articles by Wyke focused on the reality of the elegiac *puella*; viz., Wyke 1987a, 1987b, 1989; cf. Kennedy 1993: 1-23 on the "rhetoric of reality" in criticism of elegy.

²³ Richardson 1977: 150.

uneducated voice sings best” (*et volucres nulla dulcius arte canunt*, 14). In this line, however, *ars* is not a marker of learning but, as in the rest of the poem, of artificiality. The use of the verb *cano*, so commonly used of the activity of poets (see *TLL* s.v. *cano* II), connects poetry with the unaffected song of birds, and so links Propertius with the ‘natural.’ The second supposed “lapse” comes at the end of the section of mythological women (15-24). Here Hippodamia’s complexion is compared to the color in Apelles’ paintings. The logic in Propertius’ comparison is troublesome, since he is arguing that Hippodamia’s complexion had the same naturalism as a painting—a manufactured object whose sole purpose is to represent and imitate. Once again, though, rather than harm Propertius’ argument, this example strengthens the possibility that painting (or, by extension, poetry²⁴) can project realism. In fact, the entire section of mythological *exempla* creates a bit of slippage between what is real and what is literature, since myth surely belongs more closely to the world of literature than the real world. Yet when paired with the natural *exempla* from 9-14, these myths have all the persuasive power of non-fictional examples.²⁵

What appears disjointed in Propertius’ argument, when it is read as a preference for the natural and the realistic in the art of poetry, actually explains the final section of the poem. When Propertius has finished off his list of examples of unadorned beauty, he appeals to Cynthia to rely on her poetic gifts instead of fashion. He associates her with Phoebus and *carmina* (27), the Aonian lyre and Calliope (28), *iucunda verba* (29), and

²⁴ For the connection between painting and poetry, cf. Simon. *apud* Plut. *Mor.* 346f, πλὴν ὁ Σιμωνίδης τὴν μὲν ζωγραφίαν ποίησιν σιωπῶσαν προσαγορεύει, τὴν δὲ ποίησιν ζωγραφίαν λαλοῦσαν and Hor. *Ars* 361, *ut pictura poesis*. On Horace and the visual arts, see Hardie 1993.

²⁵ See chapter 3 for discussion of the relation of myth and reality in Propertius.

Minerva (30). Venus, too, is included, though nothing related to Venus' power is attributed to Cynthia. The stress is all on Cynthia's poetic gifts. Richardson comments that the praise of her talent here is "extravagant" and must be understood as "overstatement"; however, it is hardly overstatement if, through his praise for Cynthia, Propertius neatly excludes his elegy from the unnatural or the artificial. In fact, the emphasis on Cynthia's poetic gifts here is entirely appropriate—even if more appropriate for Propertius' own poetry than for Cynthia's.

Having asserted that realistic and non-artificial poetry is best, Propertius uses several techniques to maintain just such a realism in his poems in book 1. He diminishes the literary aspects of his poems, those narrative features which have been formalized to the point that they smack of fiction. Instead he hides his work as author. He encloses himself inside the world of the poems and brings the reader along with him into that world. He disrupts historical narrative with an unclear chronology and an insistent presentness in his poems. He refuses to give himself omniscient authorial knowledge of other people's thoughts, actions, and motivations, and tosses his readers into his poems without enough background information to understand a poem's situation fully. Because of these methods by which Propertius constructs his elegy, the reader feels less and less like he is reading a story, more and more like he is looking in on Propertius' life. Propertius writes his elegy naked.

Making the Audience Read 'Real'

The first and most basic step towards destroying the idea of a merely fictional character, named Propertius, living only inside the world of the poems, Propertius takes when he brings his biographical information with him inside the poems and assigns it to

his narrator. The Propertius who speaks and acts in the poems, like the author, lives in Rome; like the author, was born in Assisi; like the author, is friends with Bassus, Ponticus, Gallus, and Tullus; like the author, writes love poetry. This last piece of shared biographical data is a special case, because this is precisely where the two Propertii might decisively differ. If the Propertius in the poems did not write, the identification would be fatally flawed. At the same time, if he is presented too much as a writer, the emphasis falls on writing rather than life and no attempt at realism will overcome this basic conflict. Instead, Propertius' writing is accommodated to the situation of the poems: he writes in order to win (or win back, or keep, etc.) Cynthia. This is his tangible, in poem, motivation: his poems function as rhetorical persuasion.²⁶ The poems to Ponticus (1.7 and 1.9) show Propertius enacting this distinction, the practical real-world use for poetry, between Ponticus' epic and Propertius' own *amores*.²⁷ Ponticus is working in the Homeric tradition, while Propertius is looking for the right words to make headway with his mistress:

[dum] primo contendis Homero...
 nos, ut consuemus, nostros agitamus amores,
 atque aliquid duram quaerimus in dominam;
 nec tantum ingenio quantum servire dolori
 cogor et aetatis tempora dura queri. (1.7.3, 5-8)

While you duke it out with Homer, the Original, I, as usual, am working on my loves and looking for something that will work on my tough mistress. It is not so much my talent as my pain that I am forced to serve, and to complain about the tough times in my life.

²⁶ Stroh 1971 first discussed elegy “als werbende Dichtung.”

²⁷ Cf. Stroh 1971: 9-35.

Propertius emphasizes the practical goals of his writing, even to the point of dismissing the idea of poetry for poetry's sake, that is, writing simply because he has poetic talent (*ingenio servire*). The implication is that this is, on the other hand, exactly what Ponticus is doing. Even when Propertius envisions others reading his poetry, he sees them doing so only to learn from his experiences and apply them to their own lives:

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

After all this, my hope is that some ignored lover will read me repeatedly and that learning about my misfortunes may do him some good.²⁸

Propertius hopes the same for Ponticus himself:

tum me non humilem mirabere saepe poetam,
tunc ego Romanis praeferar ingeniis. (1.7.21-22)

Then you will often consider me no lowly poet, then I will be preferred to the other Roman talents.

Even what seems like a bold claim to poetic fame in this second line (*Romanis praeferar ingeniis*, 22; compare, for example, *me lyricis uatibus inseres*, Hor. *Od.* 1.35) is not; Richardson correctly comments “sc. *a te*.” The statement remains tied to the context of Propertius’ predictions for Ponticus, and the difference between Propertius and the “other Roman talents” is his utility in love.

²⁸ It is worth noting that Propertius uses the phrase *me legat* rather than something like *versus meos legat*. The lover is not reading a book, but Propertius himself. The metonymy of the form “reading Catullus” instead of “reading Catullus’ poems” is as frequent in antiquity as it is now: (a partial list) Catul. 14b.2-3; Cic. *De Orat.* 1.158, 3.39; *Scaur.* 5; *Brut.* 65; *ad Att.* 12.45.2; 2.2.2; 13.44.3; Ov. *Am.* 1.15.8, 13, 38; 2.1.5-6; *Rem.* 363, 765; *Met.* 15.877; *Trist.* 2.370, 463; 3.7.52; 4.10.1-2, 128; 5.14.5; *Pont.* 3.2.30; Mart. 1.2, 117.15-7; 3.95.7-8; 5.13.3; 8.61.3; 7.88.3-4; 14.186, 190, 194; Quint. 8.6.26 (discussing the trope itself). Yet in many of these passages (especially in the poetry), as in this passage of Propertius, there is a strong possibility that by using the metonymy the author is also encouraging the reader to assume a close link between the poem and the author’s life.

In the second poem to Ponticus (1.9) the key point remains the utility of poetry, and now Propertius' predictions of elegy's usefulness have begun to materialize:

dicebam tibi venturos, irrisor, amores,
nec tibi perpetuo libera verba fore:
ecce iaces supplexque venis ad iura puellae,
et tibi nunc quaevis imperat empta modo....
quid tibi nunc misero prodest grave dicere carmen
aut Amphioniae moenia flere lyrae?
plus in amore valet Mimnermi versus Homero:
carmina mansuetus lenia quaerit Amor.
i quaeso et tristis istos sepone libellos,
et cane quod quaevis nosse puella velit!
quid si non esset facilis tibi copia? nunc tu
insanus medio flumine quaeris aquam. (1.9.1-4, 9-16)

I told you when you were laughing at me that love was coming and that your words would not stay free forever. Now look. You are submissive and come begging at the command of a girl, and some recently purchased girl is giving you orders.... What good does singing a weighty poem do you now, or crying over the walls built by Amphion's lyre? When it comes to love, a line of Mimnermus is worth more than Homer. Love is peaceful; it wants soft songs. I am telling you, go, put away those gloomy books and sing what a girl would like to hear. What if you did not have plenty of material at hand? But now you are acting insane, trying to find water in the middle of a river.

Ponticus, having fallen in love, is helpless because his epic poetry is ineffectual. He has fallen into the position of a suppliant (3), which reflects not only the effects of love but also his loss of control because of the uselessness of his poetry. Under Propertius' definition of poetry, poets can be weighed according to their value in winning over a lover (11 is not a simple "Callimachean" claim for primacy of smaller Mimnerman elegy over large Homeric epic, but rather a claim that, in love and in poetry, utility determines value, similar to 1.7.22). The section closes with an image of Ponticus flailing in a river of words which are doing him no good in obtaining the object of his desire. He has plenty of words, but which ones he can use is now not up to him; his words are no

longer free (*nec libera verba*, 2). This is poetry-writing as exemplified by Propertius in his poems. He does not write as a pastime or to express his artistic urges; he is forced to write poems to obtain his mistress' love. His words are not free, not his to choose, and his poems are worthless if they do not bring him help. They are worthless as *ars gratia artis*. "He's a lover, not an author."

Propertius' interactions with others *via* poetry can be considered a device for realism because the people and places he interacts with are real people and historical places. Of the people addressed in his poems, Tullus (1, 6, 14, 22) is by common consent identified as the nephew of Lucius Volcacius Tullus (cos. 33).²⁹ Bassus and Ponticus are verifiable as an iambist and an epicist, not only from the context of Propertius' poems, but also from a catalogue of poets in Ovid.³⁰ The remaining addressees, Gallus and Cynthia, present greater challenges. Recent scholarship considers Gallus (excepting usually the Gallus of poem 21) to be the same as Cornelius Gallus, first prefect of Egypt and founder of Latin elegy.³¹ Any argument about Cynthia, however, would be begging the (incredibly convoluted and well-discussed) question of her identity. Yet it is possible for Ovid and much later Apuleius to assert that the names of the elegists' *puellae* are pseudonyms used to protect the modesty of real women or to shield them from the

²⁹ *RE* Suppl. IX.17. See more recently Cairns 2006: 35-69, esp. 42-9.

³⁰ *Ov. Tr.* 4.10.47-8: *Ponticus heroo, Bassus quoque clarus iambis / dulcia convictus membra fuere mei*. There is also a possibility that Bassus is mentioned by Horace (*Od.* 1.36); cf. *PIR*² 81, 82. See Cairns 2006: 66 for further information on these two poets.

³¹ See Manzoni 1995; Janan 2001; Miller 2004; Cairns 2006: 70-80. The argument of Syme 1978 that identifies Propertius' Gallus with Aelius Gallus or Caninius Gallus still deserves close consideration. See *infra*.

law.³² It is enough to say that by naming known individuals, Propertius increases the authenticity of his poems. These people have an existence separate from his poems; they are not solely his creations, not solely fictions, and the importance of this fact must be accepted. When Cairns shifts from discussing the literary features of Ponticus and Bassus to discussing their historical data, his disappointment is almost palpable:

“Despite the multiple literary dimensions of Ponticus and Bassus, which make them such convenient foils for Propertian elegy, they are not fictional characters.”³³

Comparison with Cicero’s dialogues reveals what effects on the reader Propertius can create by employing named participants.³⁴ Cicero (*Q.fr.* 3.5, *ad Att.* 13.19, *Amic.* 3-4) gives two reasons for using dialogue and known participants in the dialogues. First, he repeatedly emphasizes that putting words in the mouths of men of dignity or authority lends those same qualities to the words.³⁵ Aged Cato, for example, lent authority to a discussion of old age; Laelius, renowned as Scipio’s great friend, gave credence to a discussion on friendship. Yet, as was evident in the discussion of *prosopopoeia* in chapter 1, placing words in the mouths of these famous men only bestows authority on them if, in some sense, readers can believe the words were actually spoken by them. If a treatise on seamanship written by a man who had never once set

³² See *supra*, chapter 1.

³³ Cairns 2006: 66.

³⁴ The differences of genre should not pose big problems to the parallel, considering the recognized “dialogische Charakter” (the title of a section in Tränkle 1960: 143-9) of Propertius’ poems.

³⁵ *Amic.* 4, *genus autem hoc sermonum positum in hominum veterum auctoritate et eorum illustrium plus nescioquo pacto videtur habere gravitatis; Q.fr.* 3.5.1, *hominumque dignitas aliquantum orationi ponderis adferebat*. On the other hand, Sallustius pointed out to Cicero that his own authority might be sufficient, or better: 3.5.1, *admonitus sum ab illo multo maiore auctoritate illis de rebus dici posse si ipse loquerer de re publica, praesertim cum essem non Heraclides Ponticus sed consularis...*

sail were put in the mouth of John Paul Jones, it could only gain authority if the reader could accept John Paul Jones as the speaker and disregard the actual author. This is the second concern present in Cicero's discussions: avoiding tell-tale signs of fiction. Cicero takes precautions to ensure credibility for his dialogues. He mentions taking the role of *χωρὸν πρόσωπον* for dialogues in which he would have been too young to participate (*ad Att.* 13.19.3-4), while claiming to have been silently present to hear and record the discussions all the same (*Amic.* 1). Cicero removes other marks of the author as well. In the preface to the *Amic.* (3) he says he has "brought the speakers themselves onstage in order to avoid interjecting 'he said' and 'I said' too much and so that the conversation would seem to be carried on by them present and in person."³⁶ There is also danger in employing speakers from the too-distant past. Cicero comments, "Speeches given to persons so ancient would appear fictitious" (*visum iri ficta*, *Q.fr.* 3.5.1). This statement is intriguing, since it implies its opposite: speeches given to contemporary persons might not seem fictitious.³⁷ And Cicero gives further reason to believe this is at the root of his use of dialogue, when he attests that "sometimes reading my own work I am so struck that I think Cato is speaking, not me" (*Amic.* 4). Taken together, then, the evidence from Cicero seems to indicate that he considered the use of known persons in his dialogues beneficial precisely because of the realistic effects it provided. It is therefore reasonable to assume that Propertius takes advantage in the same way of the known participants of his poems.

³⁶ Plato likewise illustrates how repeated 'I said' and 'He said' can jar the reader at *Theat.* 143c.

³⁷ Cf. Shackleton Bailey 1965: *ad loc.*

Not only are the people from the poems familiar, the poems also take place in locations that would be familiar to readers. Although Rome is hardly the center of attention that, for example, Tomis is in Ovid's exile poetry, and although monuments and locations in Rome are not evoked in book 1 as they are in book 4, several poems heighten the feeling of 'here' versus 'there'—Tullus' proposed trip to Asia (1.6), Cynthia's proposed trip to Illyria (1.8a-b), Cynthia's vacations in Baiae (1.11-12), and, most strikingly, Propertius' evocation of the violent history of Perugia (1.21-22). All of these proper nouns locate the Propertius inside the poems in the same place that Propertius the poet inhabited.

But there are a few instances when Propertius sets his scene in more dreamlike locations, during his shipwreck (1.17-18), for example, or in the extended mythological narrative of Hylas (1.20). Even in these poems, though, Propertius ties the scenes, himself, and the reader along with him, to reality. Propertius consistently uses deictics to connect himself to the 'here' or 'this' of his poems, and these deictics in turn direct the reader to assume a reality because of the pressure to identify the referent of the 'here' or 'this.' These referents, like the pointers given in a stage play, exist only as part of the assumed life of the poet and only from his perspective, and so both poet and reader are pulled into the reality of the location or situation of the poem. The opening of 1.18 offers a good example of how Propertius grounds his poems in a reality with deictics and how he pulls his reader into that reality with him:

haec certe deserta loca et taciturna querenti,
et vacuum Zephyri possidet aura nemus.
hic licet occultos proferre impune dolores,
si modo sola queant saxa tenere fidem. (1.18.1-4)

This is certainly a deserted place, quiet enough for complaining, and the West Wind's breeze occupies an empty grove. Here I can let out my hidden pain without reprisal, as long as the lonely rocks can keep quiet.

When Propertius begins *haec certe deserta loca*, the reader, frankly, has no idea where he or Propertius is. Therefore *certe* is almost humorous for the reader: “Yes, it *sure* is deserted.” If the reader is to picture the location at all, it will only be because Propertius says, ‘these,’ ‘here,’—because Propertius points to the places. Propertius constantly assures the reader that there is something ‘there.’ He makes such assertions repeatedly throughout book 1, vividly and emphatically pointing to something that exists—until his poems take on a physical presence for the reader. From the very start in 1.1, as he addresses his friends, he talks of *hic furor* (7) and *hoc malum* (35); in poem 6 he expresses his struggles by pointing to *his querelis* (11), *puer iste* (23), *huic nequitiae* (26), and *hanc militiam* (30). In 1.7 he lays claim to his lifestyle with a tricolon of deictics:

hic mihi conteritur vitae modus, **haec** mea fama est,
hinc cupio nomen carminis ire mei. (1.7.9-10)

My way of life is spent *here*, *this* is my fame, I want the reputation of my poetry to come from *this*.

At another point he asks (to no one in particular), “Will *this* little bit of sand cover my grave?” (*haecine parva meum funus harena teget?*, 1.17.8). It is hard not to see the sand running from between Propertius' hands. The image is no less vibrant when a soldier dying on the battlefield says, “Let her know *these* are my bones” (*haec sciat esse mea*, 1.21.10). Showing just how much weight a deictic can bear, in 1.20 Propertius manipulates the reader into straining through the syntax of the poem itself to see the referent of *huic* (1.20.7), Gallus' young lover:

huic tu, sive leges Umbrae rate flumina silvae,
sive Aniena tuos tinxerit unda pedes,
sive Gigantei spatiabere litoris ora,
sive ubicumque vago fluminis hospitio,
Nympharum semper cupidus defende rapinas... (1.20.7-11)³⁸

Him, whether you skim the rivers of Umbria's forests, or dip your feet in Anio's waters, or walk the shores of the Giant's beach, or anywhere there is a river's wandering welcome, always keep away from the eager attempts of the Nymphs...

Propertius is gesturing toward a boy who only exists in the reader's imagination until the reader commits and believes there is a 'him,' an actual person, there. The hyperbaton requires the reader to hold "him," *huic* (7), in suspense until *defende* (11) suddenly connects the whole and throws great emphasis back on the boy—and on the deictic. To use a more modern metaphor, one might say *defende* "looks all the way back to *huic*." It is also through deictics that the long mythical narrative of the poem is tied to the poem's outer framework. The beginning and ending couplets feature prominent deictics:

haec pro continuo te, Galle, monemus amore,
quod tibi ne vacuo defluat ex animo...

his, o Galle, tuos monitus servabis amores,
formosum ni vis perdere rursus Hylan. (1.20.1-2, 51-2)

Gallus, I give you this advice on behalf of your longtime love. Do not let it slip out of your mind unawares....

With this warning, Gallus, you will protect your lover, unless you want to lose a beautiful Hylas again.

The preponderance of Propertius' deictics are similar to the practice of the dramatists who use the device like stage-directions to situate their play in a real time and place.

³⁸ The choice between MS. *hunc* and Auratus' *huic* at the beginning of this passage makes no difference to this discussion; it does illustrate the difficulty caused by the separation of verb and object.

Like the dramatists, Propertius is prompting the reader to imagine a real world in which the elegy takes place.³⁹

All the while Propertius invokes historical figures and places and confronts the reader with assertions of presence, he is also obscuring the literary artificiality of his poems. He manages this concealment in two ways. First, he refuses to give the narrator any of the omniscience that an author typically has: command over the complete chronology of his story and knowledge of the thoughts and motivations of others. Second, he leaves his reader with the same limited perspective, often lacking the tools or information needed to read and understand the poems properly.

Propertius opens book 1 straightforwardly, as if it were going to present a simple plotline. The first six lines of 1.1 offer nice, neat narrative in the perfect tense. Cynthia is introduced immediately. Propertius' situation is spelled out. The progression in time is marked at every step:

Cynthia prima suis miserum me cepit ocellis,
contactum nullis ante cupidinibus.
tum mihi constantis deiecit lumina fastus
et caput impositis pressit Amor pedibus,
donec me docuit castas odisse puellas
improbis, et nullo vivere consilio. (1.1.1-6)

First,⁴⁰ Cynthia caught poor me with her eyes. (I had never been touched by desire before.) Then Cupid forced down my looks of constant pride and stepped on my head with his feet, until he taught me to hate chaste women—the bastard—and to live recklessly.

³⁹ Cf. Barchiesi 2007: 156 on Horace's use of second person deixis in the *Odes*.

⁴⁰ The translation renders *prima* as an attributive alternative for *primum* (i.e., not translating "Cynthia was the first to..."), following Stahl 1985: 26-27. As he points out, there are two arguments for doing so. First, Propertius surely would not want to imply that Cynthia was just the first in a line of lovers, and in the very opening of his book lead the reader to expect a second, and third, etc.; nor does Lycinna figure here at all. Second, there is a clear progression in time in these lines, marked by temporal adverbs: *prima* fits much better sequentially if understood as *primum*.

The narrative is retrospective. Propertius is looking back on the events. The chronology is clear to him: *prima* (1), *ante* (2), *tum* (3), *donec* (5). But this is all a trick. Up to this point, the reader is set up by this style of presentation to expect an orderly, backward-looking narrative of a relationship between Propertius and Cynthia. Which is precisely what the reader does not receive in the remaining poems of book 1. The poems that follow will rarely offer the advantageous perspective of looking back on events; instead, they insistently reveal themselves in the present moment (and using present tense verbs). The poems that follow will rarely offer a clear movement through time; instead, they start with a jolt, and end unsure about the future. The bait-and-switch begins in the very next verse of the poem (1.7), as Propertius moves into the present moment that will occupy nearly all of the rest of book 1. Propertius signals his change in tactics with one more temporal adverb: *ei mihi, iam toto furor hic non deficit anno, / cum tamen adversos cogor habere deos* (“Oh, this madness has not left for a whole year now, and meantime I must assume the gods are against me,” 1.1.7-8).

After this switch from past to present, the reader sees the kind of narrative found at the beginning of 1.1 only in mythical *exempla* and gnomic statements⁴¹ all the way until 1.8b. At this point (1.9-13) the poet begins a series of paired-poems which often look back to earlier ones. Once this series is complete (with 1.13), the retrospection ends and the present dominates, culminating with the starkly historical 1.22. Overall, Propertius writes predominantly in the present—one might almost say trapped in the present.

⁴¹ The peculiarly narrative poem 1.3 is an exception. A possible reason for this exception will be given in the next chapter.

Propertius is obsessed with the present, as 1.6 illustrates:

non ego nunc Hadriae **vereor** mare noscere tecum,
Tulle, neque Aegaeo ducere vela salo,
cum quo Rhipaeos **possim** conscendere montes
ulteriusque domos vadere Memnonias; 5
sed me complexae **remorantur** verba puellae,
mutatoque graves saepe colore preces.
illa mihi totis **argutat** noctibus ignes,
et **queritur** nullos esse relicta deos;
illa meam mihi iam se **denegat**, illa **minatur**
quae solet ingrato tristis amica viro. 10
his ego non horam **possum** durare querelis:
ah pereat, si quis lentus amare **potest!**
an mihi **sit** tanti doctas cognoscere Athenas
atque Asiae veteres cernere divitias, 15
ut mihi deducta **faciat** convicia puppi
Cynthia et insanis ora **notet** manibus,
osculaque opposito **dicat** sibi debita vento,
et nihil infido durius esse viro?
tu patruī meritas **conare** anteire secures,
et vetera oblitis iura **refer** sociis. 20
nam tua non aetas umquam **cessavit** amori,
semper at armatae cura **fuit** patriae;
et tibi non umquam nostros puer iste labores
afferat et lacrimis omnia nota meis!
me **sine**, quem semper **voluit** fortuna iacere, 25
huic animam extremam reddere nequitiae.
multi longinquo **periere** in amore libenter,
in quorum numero me quoque terra **tegat**.
non ego **sum** laudi, non **natus** idoneus armis:
hanc me militiam fata subire **volunt**. 30
at tu, seu mollis qua **tendit** Ionia, seu qua
Lydia Pactoli **tingit** arata liquor,
seu pedibus terras seu pontum remige **carpes**,
ibis et accepti pars **eris** imperii:
tum tibi si qua mei **veniet** non immemor hora, 35
vivere me duro sidere certus **eris**.

I am not afraid of facing the Adriatic with you, Tullus, or spreading sail on the Aegean Sea. I could climb the Rhipaeian mountains with you and travel beyond Memnon's houses. But I am held back by my embracing girlfriend's words and serious pleading (she keeps changing color!).

She complains to me about her love all night long and claims that, if she is left behind, then there are no gods. She says she is not really mine, she makes all the threats that an upset woman makes to an ungrateful boyfriend. I cannot last another hour with these complaints. Curses on the casual lover!

Is it so important to me to visit learned Athens and see the ancient wealth of Asia that I would have Cynthia reproach me once the ship has pushed back and tear at her face with wild hands? That she say she owes her kisses to the contrary winds and that nothing is crueller than a faithless man?

You go on and try to surpass your uncle's earned axes and bring the old laws back to forgetting allies. Your age has never slowed down for love; you were always concerned with your armed country. I hope that boy never brings you my workload and everything known to my crying.

But allow me to offer up my last breath to this vice. Fortune has always wanted to lay me low. Many have died willing for love; I hope the ground covers me as one of that group. I was not born to be praised or carry weapons. The fates want me to undergo this kind of service.

But regardless of whether you venture where mild Ionia stretches or where the waters of the Pactolus touch Lydia's fields, whether you go on land or by sea, you will go and you will be part of the popular government. If a time ever comes then when you remember me, you will know for sure that I am living under a harsh star.

Through his sequencing of the main verbs in this passage Propertius clearly indicates that that the dominant mode for his poetry is the present. He even marks this strongly at the beginning with *non ego nunc* (1). From there, the reader is thrown into Propertius' current situation, his discussion with Tullus about travelling to Asia. The past tenses in this poem are all non-narrative: *cessavit* (21) and *fuit* (22) are, just like *voluit* (25) and *sum natus* (29), present perfects describing a current state rather than past action. The only exception, *multi longinquo periere in amore libenter* (27), is gnomic. The past is made in fact present when Propertius inserts himself into the legendary list of ruined lovers (28). This poem lacks any extended mythical narrative, but 1.1.9-16 and 1.2.15-24 demonstrate that Propertius' retellings of myth, as would be expected, feature such past narrative. Although these mythological passages are

narrated in the past, they contrast with the rest of the poem's present focus and thus serve as a foil for the present action of the poem.

On the other hand, future tenses (including imperatives and future-looking subjunctives) are common throughout Propertius' poems in book 1. In 1.6, as is typical in book 1, they are clustered near the end of the poem (*carpes, ibis, eris, veniet, eris*, 33-36). Propertius leaves the particular moment of the poem unresolved because he ends the poem by looking ahead and making predictions (or guesses) as to how the future will unfold. This repeated looking to the future goes hand-in-hand with Propertius' other major attribute as a limited narrator: his lack of knowledge of others' thoughts or motivations. So that he will not seem as narrator to have any knowledge beyond the present moment, Propertius continually expresses doubt or unsurety about, for example, what Cynthia is doing, or why, or what she will do in the future. By doing this, by trapping the narrator, as it were, inside the poems and not allowing the reader to detect the author who has in fact arranged the action in the poems, Propertius maintains the façade of realism. Every character in book 1, including the narrator, must operate from a limited and therefore very real and human perspective. So, for example, when Cynthia is in Baiae (1.11), he can only guess at her activities there and hope. The first two-thirds of the poem (twenty of thirty lines) are consumed by his suffering from lack of knowledge. The first ten lines are simply a series of questions, set up by the poem's first word, *ecquid*. He wonders, but cannot know, if she thinks of him, or if another lover is sneaking in to her affections. He can only imagine her on an empty beach with a lover whispering sweet nothings into her ear (9-20). Propertius attributes all his thoughts not

to her character (*non quia perspecta non es mihi cognita fama*, 17), but to his own fear, his own lack of knowledge (*timetur*, 18; *culpa timoris*, 20).

The so-called ‘two-part’ poems (1.7 and 1.9, 1.8a-b, 1.11 and 1.12, 1.10 and 1.13)⁴² further keep Propertian elegy in the real present. They dramatize clearly that Propertius does not know what others are doing or thinking, and that he cannot know what they *will* do. For example, When Cynthia proposes to follow a rival of Propertius to Illyria, the first poem of the 8a-b pair shows Propertius again wondering about her motives (somewhat melodramatically):

tune igitur demens, nec te mea cura moratur?
an tibi sum gelida vilior Illyria?
et tibi iam tanti, quicumque est, iste videtur,
ut sine me vento quolibet ire velis? (1.8a.1-4)

What are you, crazy? Does my love for you not give you any pause? Am I worth less than freezing Illyria? Is he—whoever he is—worth so much to you that you want to travel anywhere the wind blows, without me?

As the poem ends, Propertius is no surer of Cynthia’s decision. All he can do is promise that he will still be faithful on his end, and that they will be together eventually (21-26).

The reader is not kept in suspense (nor is Propertius) for very long. The next poem (8b) begins triumphantly: *hic erit! hic iurata manet!* (“She will be here! She has promised to stay!”, 1). The height of his excitement displays what was the depth of his fear. In this second poem of the pair, Propertius lists Cynthia’s reasons for staying. The reader must assume that Cynthia has instructed Propertius on what her thoughts and

⁴² The term “two-part poems” is perhaps misleading, considering that neither 1.8a-b nor 1.11-12 are actually divided in the MSS., and it is amusing that discussion still goes on about the unity of 1.8, while the separation of 1.11-12 is almost universally, and without discussion, accepted. See Butrica 1996, who proposes that both pairs are single poems. The parallel with 1.7 and 1.9, or 1.10 and 1.13, however, illustrates that Propertius did in fact split up two phases of a story over two poems. I believe both 1.8a-b and 1.11-12 to have been intended as two separate poems, two separate stages of the event, coming in succession.

her reasons were for making her decision, since *dicitur* and *negat* (32) hint at her words. The impression, however, is that Propertius is engaging in wishful thinking, as the lack of knowledge in the previous poem so suddenly turns to certainty:

illi carus ego et per me carissima Roma
dicitur, et sine me dulcia regna negat.
illa vel angusto mecum requiescere lecto
et quocumque modo maluit esse mea, 35
quam sibi dotatae regnum vetus Hippodamiae,
et quas Elis opes apta pararat equis.
quamvis magna daret, quamvis maiora daturus,
non tamen illa meos fugit avara sinus.
hanc ego non auro, non Indis flectere conchis,
sed potui blandi carminis obsequio. 40
sunt igitur Musae, neque amanti tardus Apollo... (1.8b.31-41)

She calls me dear to her, and Rome, because of me, especially dear. She says whole kingdoms would not be sweet without me. She preferred to lie with me in my narrow bed and to be mine in whatever circumstances rather than possess the ancient kingdom of Hippodamia's dowry and the riches acquired by horse-suited Elis. Even though he was giving plenty, and going to give even more, she was not greedy enough to leave my embrace. It was not gold, not Indian pearls that changed her mind: I was able to do it with dutiful pleasant poetry. Therefore the Muses do exist, and Apollo is not slow to help a lover...

The phrase *sunt igitur Musae* reveals that Propertius based his hope of keeping Cynthia on the power of his poems; therefore, if she has decided to stay, his poems must be the cause. To the reader, this seems like lovesick fantasy, and Propertius' *igitur* more hopeful than true. This enactment over time (from one poem to the next) of Propertius' transition from ignorance to (perhaps faulty) knowledge of Cynthia's motivations emphasizes just how limited the narrator's perceptions are. Even when he thinks he knows, he could be—and probably is—mistaken. Such finite and very human limits on what is and what is not known are highlighted again later in the book by the pair 1.11-12. This time Cynthia is in Baiae, and Propertius writes to her about how miserable he

is, asking her to leave Baiae as soon as possible and return to Rome (1.11.25-27). The resolution is again open-ended. Only this time, the response is not what 1.8a-b might lead the reader and Propertius to expect. This time, Cynthia remains in Baiae. Again, but sadder this time, Propertius offers an explanation of her reasons:

non sum ego qui fueram: mutat via longa puellas.
quantus in exiguo tempore fugit amor! (1.12.11-12)

I am not who I used to be [in her eyes].⁴³ A long trip changes women. So much love gone in such a short time!

Not only do these lines offer another example of the narrator's lack of knowledge, the phrase "I am not who I used to be" gains deeper resonance if we consider that in this pair of poems, even though the setup is similar to 1.8a, the result is "not what it used to be."⁴⁴

As lacking in knowledge as the narrator Propertius might be, he keeps the reader every bit as ignorant, especially at the beginnings of poems. Here Propertius has the upper hand, and often makes no concession to his readers: the reader sees just bits and parts of Propertius' life, and sometimes that means a poem starts suddenly without any real explanation for its action. The reader is left in the lurch, and has to orient quickly to the situation of the poem. Propertius, maintaining the pose of reality, does not need to explain. Whatever happened antecedent to the poem, he was present for, even if the reader was not. This practice of leaving a gap at the beginning of a poem allows

Propertius to stress two aspects of realism for his poems: first, it reinforces the finite

⁴³ Cynthia's opinion must be implied in this phrase, considering the focus on her in the rest of the couplet.

⁴⁴ Statements like *non sum ego qui fueram* (1.12.1) are often programmatic; cf. Horace's complaint to Venus at the opening of *Odes* 4 (*non sum qualis eram bonae / sub regno Cinarae*) and Ovid's stubbornness (*idem sacra cano signataque tempora fastis*, *Fast.* 2.7).

reality of the ongoing life he is leading by implying that a great deal of action is not contained within the poems; second, it denies the reader a position of any omniscience, even importance. The actors in the poem know the circumstances of the poem's occasion, and Propertius does not acknowledge that his life is merely a book by stopping to make sure the reader is all caught up.

Poem 1.17 demonstrates how Propertius brings the reader headlong into his poems by reacting to some event antecedent to the poem, but unknown to the reader.

et merito, quoniam potui fugisse puellam!
nunc ego desertas alloquor alcyonas,
nec mihi Cassiope salvo visura carinam,
omniaque ingrato litore vota cadunt. (1.17.1-4)⁴⁵

And rightfully so, since I was able to leave behind my girl! Now I speak to the lonely halcyons, port Cassiope will not see my ship safe and sound, and all my promises fall away on the ungrateful beach.

The very first word greatly bothered earlier editors such as Lachmann and Hertzberg. Can a Latin poem begin with *et*? A poem in Greek may feature a δέ in the opening line, but there is no good equivalent in Latin. Lachmann compared the beginning of 2.27 (*at vos incertam*, where *at* is now the generally accepted reading against the *et* of the *deteriores*) and wanted *et* at both places to mean *frustra aliquid fieri*.⁴⁶ Hertzberg dismissed this idea with a bit of a joke at Lachmann's expense: "*frustra aliquid fieri*" *significari Lachmannus...frustra contendat*.⁴⁷ Instead he drew attention to Propertius' use of the particle to bring the reader *in medias res*:

⁴⁵ The first two lines of the text given here are punctuated differently than Goold 1999. The reason for the change will be discussed below.

⁴⁶ Lachmann 1816: *ad* 2.27. In 2.27, not only is there an issue whether the first word should be *at* or *et*, there is also a question whether it should be joined to the previous poem; cf. the *apparatus* of Fedeli 1984.

⁴⁷ Hertzberg 1843-5: 130

...Propertianae elocutionis impetui accommodatissimum cum particula cuius propria in continua oratione sedes ab initio carminis collocatur ut ea quae ante scriptionem poeta tacite apud mentem volverat, interrumpere subito et in medias quodammodo res legentem ducere videatur.⁴⁸

Other than the technique of *in medias res* (a peculiar device anyway for an elegist rather than an epicist), Hertzberg does not pinpoint exactly why the opening “breaks in all of a sudden” beyond the fact that *et* functions as a conjunction and needs something to come before it. But, as Rothstein was to point out later, *et merito* (1.17.1) is an independent phrase and must be taken as a whole.⁴⁹

Other examples of the use of the phrase *et merito* show just how strongly Propertius is in this passage looking back to something outside the poem, *ante scriptionem*. The earliest literary use of *et merito* comes in two passages of Lucretius, and these demonstrate the fairly fixed position of the phrase in continuous speech:

quippe cadunt toti montes magnoque repente
concussu late disserpunt inde tremores.
et merito, quoniam plaustris concussa tremescunt
tectam viam propter non magno pondere tota... (Lucr. 6.546-9)

So whole mountains fall down and from the great blast tremors suddenly spread out wide. And rightfully so, since whole buildings next to the road tremble, shaken by wagons, no great weight...⁵⁰

From the Lucretian passage it is evident, first, that *et merito* is an independent phrase, and second, that it has a precise logical relation to phrases before and after it. This logical relation is expressed in three parts: (1) a basic statement or claim by the author,

⁴⁸ Hertzberg 1843-5: 130.

⁴⁹ Rothstein 1898: *ad loc.*; cf. Richardson 1977: *ad loc.* Despite the correction, Rothstein echoed Hertzberg’s sentiments on the effect of the phrase: “Mit *et merito* wird der Leser unmittelbar in das erreichte Selbstgespräch des seine Lage überblickenden Dichters versetzt” (*ad loc.*).

⁵⁰ Cf. also Lucr. 1.104-9. The passages share enough similarities that it would be redundant to quote them both.

generally followed by strong punctuation (546-7 above); (2) *et merito*; (3) a phrase, introduced by *nam*, *quid enim*, *enim*, or in this case and in Propertius 1.17, *quoniam*, which explains why the opening statement is particularly true, apt, logical, or proper (548-9). This same pattern is found repeated throughout the occurrences of *et merito*. Compare the following examples:⁵¹

fallimur, an nostris innotuit illa libellis?
sic erit—ingenio prostitit illa meo.
et merito! quid enim formae praeconia feci?
vendibilis culpa facta puella mea est. (Ov. *Am.* 3.12.7-10)

Am I wrong, or did she become famous because of my books? (1) That is how it will be; she is put up for sale by my talents. (2) And rightfully so, (3) because, why did I publicize her beauty? My girlfriend is up for sale because of my own misdeed.

si tutor pupillam suam contra senatus consultum uxorem duxit, illa quidem ex testamento eius capere potest, ipse autem non potest, et merito: delinquunt enim hi, qui prohibitas nuptias contrahunt et merito puniendi sunt...
(Maecian. *dig.* 30.1.128)⁵²

(1) If a tutor marries his ward in violation of the senatus consultum, she may inherit, yet he may not. (2) And rightfully so, (3) since those who contract illegal marriages are delinquents and should rightfully be punished....

DVRI laboriosi: et merito, qui caelum sustinet: unde ait FVLCIT, hoc est sustinet, propter altitudinem. (Serv. ad *A.* 4.247)

(1) *durus* means *laboriosus*. (2) And rightfully so, (3) since he supports the heavens. Which is why he says *fulcio*, i.e. *sustineo*, because of his height.

Many of the instances of this phrase are found in late legal texts or in ancient commentaries, but the fixity of the phrase makes it reasonable to assume that it is not

⁵¹ See further Hor. *S.* 1.6.19-22 (with *vel merito* instead); several from the *Digest*, including Ulp. *dig.* 4.4.9.5, 9.2.29.1, 28.6.2.4; Paul. *dig.* 3.2.7; and Porphyrio *ad* Hor. *Carm.* 3.3.49-50.

⁵² Notice the difference between *et merito* as an independent phrase and *et / merito*, the conjunction plus an adverb taken closely with the verb (in this passage, *puniendi sunt*).

an innovation by these writers and in fact probably reflects traditional, formal phrasing. The passages usually cited in the commentaries (Ov. *Met.* 6.682-9 and 9.581-6) are no exceptions to this strict three-part pattern, even though they seem very similar to the Propertian passage, since a character begins a monologue in direct speech with *et merito*. Ovid is perhaps partly imitating Propertius' dramatic opening, but in these passages the characters' use of *et merito* depends logically upon and responds to the words of the narrator himself. The variation is typically Ovidian.⁵³

The three-part pattern always connected with the use of *et merito* shows that in 1.17, Propertius has not just begun suddenly. He has not just taken the reader *in medias res*; instead he has omitted a piece of information that is vital for the reader to logically understand the poem's opening. Propertius' *et merito* is responding to some statement, but he does not reveal that statement to the reader. Propertius opens other poems similarly. At the beginning of 1.15, Propertius is chiding Cynthia for her harshness and says, "I often feared difficulties because of your fickleness, but not this treachery" (*saepe ego multa tuae levitatis dura timebam, / hac tamen excepta, Cynthia, perfidia*, 1.15.1-2). At this point, there is no way to discern what treachery Propertius means. All the reader knows is that Propertius has been deeply affected by something Cynthia has done before the poem started, and with these words the reader breaks in on

⁵³ A study of these passages also has implications for the text of 1.17.1-3. Based on these passages, it is clear that part (1) is simply left out in Propertius 1.17. Several editors, however, have ignored the usage of *et merito* as an independent phrase and instead taken *merito* as if it modified *alloquor* in line 2 (as in the passage from Maecianus quoted above n. 44). Their text would then mean something like, "Now I deservedly am addressing halcyons." This leads to the punctuation found in Barber 1953, Camps 1961, and Goold 1999, who all place a comma after *puellam* (1.17.1) and a full-stop after *alcyonas* (1.17.2). In quoting the text above, I have adopted the punctuation of Rothstein 1898, which makes it clear that *et merito* is a phrase to itself and not to be read with *alloquor* (1.17.2). Line 2 begins a series with 3-4, and there should not be a full-stop before the connective *nec* (1.17.3). Fedeli 1984 splits the difference, offering commas after *puellam* (1.17.1) and *alcyonas* (1.17.2).

Propertius' response. It is in fact only through allusion to the departures of Odysseus and Jason (1.15.9-22) that he reveals that Cynthia is leaving him. The abrupt opening line of 1.18 (*haec certe deserta loca*, "This is certainly a deserted place") assumes that the reader already knows that Propertius is stranded. Likewise when Propertius makes *tunc igitur demens* the opening words of 1.8a, *igitur* marks that he is responding to something Cynthia has done just prior to the poem's words, something that in his eyes marks her as insane. Though it is quickly disclosed that she is leaving for Illyria, her side of the initial conversation is unavailable; the reader can only pick up some hints from Propertius' response. This is an especially favorite pattern for Propertius: poems 4, 5, 11, and 22 all start with the second half of a dialogue, and the reader has to piece together what the voiceless participant said.

By using abrupt and incomplete openings in his poems in this way, Propertius is failing to perform his duty as author for his reader. If Fraenkel's famous dictum holds true, that an author is "both determined and able to express everything that is relevant and necessary to the understanding and appreciation of a poem, either by saying it in so many words or by implying it through unambiguous hints,"⁵⁴ Propertius is neglecting that concern for his reader and thereby increasing the impression that he is merely living the experiences in his poems, not writing them for a reader. Thus he obscures the literariness of his own book by refusing to set up a relationship of author-to-reader. An author would do things differently; Propertius' audience is just watching his life unfold.

What part does the reader play then? How to respond to a work of art seemingly lacking artifice? By employing reality so carefully and thoroughly in his poems,

⁵⁴ Fraenkel 1957: 26.

Propertius manipulates the position of the reader. First he puts the reader in the position of a witness, a spectator. The poems are not directed to the reader, and the reader merely receives glimpses and snapshots of Propertius' life. Propertius hides his work as author. Then, by withholding information, Propertius forces the reader to invent the surrounding circumstances himself. The urge to make the story into a whole is strong, the urge to fill in the gaps the author leaves.⁵⁵ The reader ends up complicit in Propertius' evocation of reality, because he must contribute motivations and actions to splice together the poems into some sort of consistent chronology.⁵⁶

Looking at Propertius, Looking at Gallus

Propertius models this very relationship between reader and 'text' in the opening lines of 1.10. He is peeking in as Gallus and his lover first consummate their relationship.

o iucunda quies, primo cum testis amori	
affueram vestris conscius in lacrimis!	
o noctem meminisse mihi iucunda voluptas,	
o quotiens votis illa vocanda meis,	
cum te complexa morientem, Galle, puella	5
vidimus et longa ducere verba mora!	
quamvis labentis premeret mihi somnus ocellos	
et mediis caelo Luna ruberet equis,	
non tamen a vestro potui secedere lusu:	
tantus in alternis vocibus ardor erat. (1.10.1-10)	10

What a pleasant night, when I was there as a witness to your first lovemaking, sharing in your tears! What a delight to remember that night, a night to be

⁵⁵ See Miller 1994 who argues that such active reconstruction of a storyline by the reader is one of the defining characteristics of Catullan lyric. Propertius' poems in general, like Catullus', offer the reader no clear signposts about their chronological connection to each other (although Propertius' pair-poems, as discussed above, depend on these temporal relations).

⁵⁶ Among Propertian editors, Barth was complicit in this way, compiling a detailed chronology of Propertius' life and relationship with Cynthia (1777); Butler and Barber 1964 likewise indulged their urge to fill in Propertian gaps (xx-xxv).

recalled so often in my prayers, Gallus, when I saw you swoon with your girl's arms around you and draw out your words with long delay. Even though sleep was pushing my eyes closed and the moon growing red as her horses reached mid-sky, still I could not leave your games because of the great passion in your words to each other.

Early commentators found these lines confusing or embarrassing, or both. On the surface, they present an indecent scene. Propertius is acting the voyeur. Worse, he is unabashedly describing his enjoyment of the event. Even Propertius' interest in love ought rightly to stop at someone else's bedroom door. The poem's opening was scandalous enough that Hermann Fränkel wrote, "The story Propertius tells in I, 10, 1-12 is more shameless than anything to be found in Ovid's works."⁵⁷ Exactly how Propertius was watching confused Franz Skutsch enough that he could only guess how Propertius did his peeping: "Durchs Schlüsselloch?"⁵⁸ It was Skutsch, in fact, who first offered an alternative reading of these lines that avoided the embarrassment of explaining away such reproachable behavior. Skutsch identified the Gallus of 1.10 with Cornelius Gallus, Propertius' elegiac forerunner, and explained that "Properz erzählt als gesehen, was er in einer Dichtung des Gallus gelesen hat."⁵⁹ This identification of Gallus as Cornelius Gallus was generally rejected until David Ross revived the thesis in his attempt to discover the "Backgrounds to Augustan Elegy."⁶⁰ With the passing of time, more and more critics have endorsed Skutsch's hypothesis.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Fränkel 1945: 190 n. 71.

⁵⁸ Skutsch 1901: 144.

⁵⁹ Skutsch 1901: 144.

⁶⁰ Ross 1975: 81-4.

⁶¹ Benjamin 1965 anticipated Ross in endorsing Skutsch's hypothesis, stressing that the poem could be seen as a parallel with the poetic *lusus* in Catul. 50 and therefore, in a sense, amoebian. Thomas 1979

There are problems with identifying Propertius' Gallus with Cornelius Gallus; these are met by strong arguments for the identification.⁶² Those in favor of the identification argue that the other addressees named in the book are all verifiable (again, excepting perhaps Cynthia); Gallus then should also be. Linked as he is with Bassus and Ponticus, the possibility that this Gallus is a *litterateur* too is high. Moreover, several poems seem to echo Gallan passages.⁶³ The myth of Milanion narrated in 1.1.9-16 features abrupt difficulties of diction and syntax associated with Gallan style.⁶⁴ It also mentions Mt. Parthenius, a mountain referenced elsewhere in Augustan poetry only in a Gallan passage of the *Eclogues* (10.56-7). Parthenius was the name of Gallus' friend as well and the author of the *Erotica Pathemata*.⁶⁵ The *puella* walking over frosty ground appears in Propertius at 1.8a.7-8 and at *Ecl.* 10.46-9 (compare Serv. ad 46: *hi autem omnes versus Galli sunt de ipsius translati carminibus*, "These lines are adopted straight from the poems of Gallus").⁶⁶ Propertius' ekphrasis of Pege's fountain, in a poem addressed to a 'Gallus' (1.20.33-42), likewise recalls Gallus' depiction of the

highlights the theme of *agrupnia* shared in Catullus 50 and in 1.10.7-8, in which the sleepless lover is also a writer in turmoil; cf. O'Hara 1989 and Sharrock 1990 on 1.10 as amoebian song. All accept the basic premise that Gallus here is the elegist. See also King 1980, Gall 1999: 181-91, Janan 2001: 36-9, Miller 2004: 78-83.

⁶² To prevent this complicated issue from sidetracking the argument, only the most salient points for either side are given; for further discussion on Gallus in Propertius' poetry, see Cairns 2006: *passim*. Because Cairns' major thesis is to establish the pervasiveness and importance of the influence of Gallus on Propertius, he finds Gallan verbal and thematic echoes throughout Propertius. It can be difficult to sort out the plausible from the implausible among his suggestions.

⁶³ Gallan passages, that is, from Vergil's treatment of him in *Ecl.* 6 and 10. The scraps of Gallus from Qasr Ibrīm have been less helpful in discovering influence (see Anderson, Parsons, and Nisbet 1979).

⁶⁴ These difficulties include *modo* (11) missing a corresponding *modo vel sim.* (although Goold creates one, *saepe*, through emendation), and the infinitive of purpose *ibat videre* (12).

⁶⁵ Ross 1975: 61-8, following Tränkle 1960: 12-17.

⁶⁶ Skutsch 1901: 13.

Grynean grove (*Ecl.* 6.72).⁶⁷ There are also verbal complexes, such as the use of the *-no-* root, which, again, occur in poems addressed to ‘Gallus’ (1.5), and seem to be associated with Gallus’ poetry.⁶⁸ On the other hand, the major problem with identifying Propertius’ Gallus with the elegist is Propertius’ apparent designation of his Gallus as noble:

nec tibi nobilitas poterit succurrere amanti:
nescit Amor priscis cedere imaginibus. (1.5.23-4)

Your nobility will not help you as a lover; Love does not know how to yield to august *imagines*.

Cornelius Gallus was an *eques*, and therefore should not be characterized by *nobilitas* nor have *imagines* with which to adorn his home. Still, Cairns has proposed that these lines present no problem, arguing first that *nobilitas* was a much looser term, used here in a decidedly non-technical sense, and second that the pentameter line is not strictly attributing *imagines* to Gallus. In fact, he argues, the second line of the couplet may itself be a reminiscence of Gallus (comparing *Ecl.* 10.69, *omnia vincit Amor, et nos cedamus Amori*).⁶⁹ Since the nobility of this Gallus is the only major stumbling-block to the identification of Propertius’ Gallus with Cornelius Gallus, in light of Cairns’s arguments it seems extreme to argue against it when all the echoes of Cornelius Gallus in book 1 would at least trigger some thought of Gallus the elegist in the reader’s mind. The resonance of the name of Latin love elegy’s founder—in a series of such elegies—would be too much to dismiss. If, then, ‘Gallus’ in poems 1.5, 1.10, 1.13, and 1.20 is to

⁶⁷ Ross 1975: 79-80.

⁶⁸ Tränkle 1960: 24, Ross 1975: 73, Cairns 1983: 85-6.

⁶⁹ Cairns 1983: 83-8.

be understood as Cornelius Gallus the elegist, Skutsch's interpretation makes of 1.10.1-10 a simple allegory. Propertius is not watching Gallus' affair, he is merely reading his poems. But while this reading must be substantially correct, it also perverts the effects that Propertius achieves. Skutsch's allegory undoes what Propertius has devised, and reverses what is at stake in the opening of 1.10. Propertius radically redefines Gallus' poetry by modelling his behavior as a reader—only, for Propertius, 'reading' Gallus is not reading at all, but watching! Propertius' position in relation to Gallus in 1.10.1-10 is the same position he has been encouraging the reader to take throughout book 1. For Propertius, the reader is a *testis*, a spectator. With the opening lines of 1.10, Propertius makes Gallus into a mirror of himself. Propertius' poems exist not because he is a writer, but because he is a lover. They are presented as his experiences, not sheets of paper, and this is exactly how he portrays Gallus. Gallus is a man in love as well. When someone reads Propertius, he is acting as a voyeur and peeking in on him making love, just like Propertius himself looks in on the *amores* of his predecessor.

Perhaps it is safer to avoid the eroticism of the scene and allegorize it all back into text. However, doing so overlooks the dynamic shift Propertius has created. He has recreated his predecessor, the inventor of the genre, in his own image. Who, then, really stands at the front of the line of elegists? With these few lines Propertius recenters the elegiac tradition around himself and his realistic style of poetry. If any readers did not believe that Gallus really had a Lycoris, Propertius has attested how real that relationship is: "I was there, a witness, a participant, I saw, there was passion!" Propertius' strategy with these lines demonstrates the *prosopopoetic* character of his poetry. Reality is invoked, but only to control and manipulate that reality. Cicero

invokes Appius Claudius, a real man, but when he speaks, he speaks Cicero's words. Propertius shows us Gallus—the reader peeks right over his shoulder, and the scene is full of realistic details such as tears, embraces, sleepy eyes, the moon in the sky—but when Gallus makes love, his poetry becomes Propertian reality, his life Propertian poetry.

The connection of the opening to the remainder of the poem also becomes clear when the poem's realism is taken into account. After Propertius describes Gallus' night of love (1.10.1-10), he suddenly begins to talk about his own abilities as a *praeceptor amoris* (1.10.11-30). If the opening is allegorized, the two parts are disjointed.⁷⁰ But if the *prosopopoeia* of the opening lines is understood, the link with the rest is clear.

Propertius is in control and has the power to shape reality:

sed quoniam non es veritus concredere nobis,
 accipe commissae munera laetitiae:
 non solum vestros didici reticere dolores,
 est quiddam in nobis maius, amice, fide.
 possum ego diversos iterum coniungere amantes, 15
 et dominae tardas possum aperire fores;
 et possum alterius curas sanare recentis,
 nec levis in verbis est medicina meis.
 Cynthia me docuit, semper quae cuique petenda
 quaeque cavenda forent: non nihil egit Amor. (1.10.11-20)

But since you were not afraid of entrusting [this] to me, accept the reward of your entrusted pleasure. Not only have I learned how to keep quiet about your pain; I have something more, my friend, than trustworthiness. I can rejoin lovers who are broken up, and I can open the slow doors of a mistress. I can mend someone else's new cares. It is no mean medicine in my words. Cynthia has taught me what each man should aim for or avoid. Love's achievement is not trivial.

⁷⁰ Cf. Hodge and Buttimore 1977: 137.

The repeated use of *possum* (15, 16, 17)⁷¹ stresses the power Propertius has to shape the lives of those around him, and this is exactly what he has done in the rest of the book. The confidence he expresses here is unusual. Usually Propertius is unsure what his friends or Cynthia will do. Stuck in the present, he is left only to guess or predict. But when Propertius is able, as in this passage, to use definitive past tenses, or make sure assertions, or predict, that is when he is shaping the world around him.⁷²

Bassus and Ponticus receive treatment similar to Gallus. Each begins as a foe of love, either (in Bassus' case, 1.4) trying to convince Propertius that other women are more beautiful than Cynthia or (in Ponticus' case, 1.7 and 1.9) writing cold epic. Each ends up a Propertian lover, as Propertius recasts them suffering in love. Propertius is quite sure of Bassus' future: he will offend Cynthia and so become *persona non grata* to all eligible bachelorettes (1.4.17-24). Ponticus, on the other hand, after showing epic indifference to matters of love in 1.7, is displayed suppliant, begging and helpless (*ecce iaces supplexque venis ad iura puellae*, 1.9.3).⁷³ On the other side of love, when patron Tullus offers to take his client Propertius with him to Asia (1.6), Propertius' words present Tullus instead as a lover leaving his beloved behind. Propertius speaks to Tullus not as a client complaining to his patron, but as if he is reproaching his beloved. Propertius himself takes the place of Cynthia left behind on the shore (cf. 1.6.5-18),

⁷¹ The verb *didici* also belongs in this list since it is, as Rothstein notes, "ganz im Sinne von *possum*" (Rothstein 1898: *ad loc.*).

⁷² Cf., e.g., 1.8b: *vicimus* (28), *destitit* (30), *maluit* (34), *fugit* (38), *potui* (40); *sunt igitur Musae* (41), *Cynthia...mea est!* (42); *sive dies seu nox venerit, illa mea est! / nec mihi rivalis certos subducet amores / ista meam norit gloria canitiem* (44-6).

⁷³ Cairns 1983: 79-83.

Tullus the place of the hard-hearted man who leaves.⁷⁴ Even Cynthia is manipulated by Propertius. In the final section of 1.2 (25-32), when Propertius has turned from Cynthia's obsession with dress and finery to listing her positive qualities, the attributes he gives her there are shaped to his own best benefit. She is given the qualities of the *docta puella*, one especially suited to appreciate a lover like Propertius.⁷⁵ Her gifts are Phoebus' song, Calliope's talent for music, and graceful speech (1.2.27-9). Similarly, when Cynthia decides to stay in Rome rather than leave for Illyria (1.8a-b), Propertius says *sunt igitur Musae*, creating a Cynthia who is moved by Propertius' poetry rather than gold or pearls (1.8b.39-40). Gallus, then, is hardly the only one who is manipulated and controlled by Propertius; Propertius has shaped Bassus, Ponticus, Tullus, and Cynthia. He makes them all move and behave according to his reality. For his finale in book 1, Propertius takes control of Roman history in the meaning of the Perusine War.

The 'Real' Perusine War

tu, qui consortem properas evadere casum,
 miles ab Etruscis saucius aggeribus,
 quid nostro gemitu turgentia lumina torques?
 pars ego sum vestrae proxima militiae.
 sic te servato possint gaudere parentes, 5
 haec soror acta tuis sentiat e lacrimis:
 Gallum per medios ereptum Caesaris enses
 effugere ignotas non potuisse manus;
 et quaecumque super dispersa invenerit ossa
 montibus Etruscis, haec sciat esse mea. (1.21) 10

You who are hurrying to avoid a fate like mine, you soldier coming injured from the Etruscan siege walls, why are you turning your swollen eyes at my groan? I am

⁷⁴ Oliensis 1997: 158. The emphasis on Propertius' ability to reshape his characters, realistic though they are, is not new. Oliensis uses "transforms" in this sense three times in as many pages in her discussion of Propertius.

⁷⁵ See James 2003 for a reading of elegy which foregrounds the viewpoint of the *docta puella*.

the closest member of your platoon. On this condition⁷⁶ may your parents rejoice that you are safe, that you let your sister know this information by your tears. After Gallus broke past the swords of Caesar, he was not able to escape ignoble hands, and whatever bones she finds scattered across the Etruscan mountains, let her know that these are mine.

qualis et unde genus, qui sint mihi, Tulle, Penates,
 quaeris pro nostra semper amicitia.
 si Perusina tibi patriae sunt nota sepulcra,
 Italiae duris funera temporibus,
 cum Romana suos egit discordia cives— 5
 sic mihi praecipue, pulvis Etrusca, dolor,
 tu proiecta mei perpessa es membra propinqui,
 tu nullo miseri contegis ossa solo—
 proxima suppositos contingens Umbria campos
 me genuit terris fertilis uberibus. (1.22) 10

My rank, my lineage, my *Penates*, Tullus, you ask me on account of our constant friendship. If you know the Perusine graves of your country, the tombs of Italy during the tough times when Roman discord drove on its citizens—this is why you are grief especially for me, Etruscan soil, you bear my relative’s scattered limbs, you cover his poor bones with no earth—nearby Umbria, which touches the fields below, gave me birth, the land fertile from its rich fields.

All of the poems of book 1 treat the subject of love, until the final two poems (1.21-2). Up to 1.20, each of them concerns, in some way, Propertius’ love for Cynthia, whether directly or mediated through his friends. Propertius’ advice to Gallus in 1.20 does still concern love, but it is in this case Gallus’ love for a young boy, not for Cynthia or another woman. Therefore, the final poems of the book, 1.21-22, stand apart. Cynthia is absent. Although names from previous poems are present (a Gallus appears in 1.21 and Tullus is addressed in 1.22), the topics of the poems are dramatically different, and because of this “sudden heterogeneity” they “remove both characters from

⁷⁶ See Camps 1961: *ad loc.* on the syntax of this wish: “The speaker asks a favour of the person addressed and wishes him some good; the latter is to be a consequence of the former, or the former a condition of the latter.” Camps compares Hor. *Od.* 1.3.1-9, *CIL* 1013, and Virg. *Ecl.* 9.30-2, 10.4-6; cf. also Catul. 45.13-6.

the world of love and connect them harshly with historical events not merely familiar to the reader but politically sensitive and disturbing.⁷⁷ The historical event evoked in these poems is the Perusine War (41-40 B.C.), in which Octavian besieged Perugia in response to the rebellion of Lucius Antonius and his wife Fulvia. Ancient historians disagree about the precise circumstances of the aftermath of Perugia's surrender, but the most important citizens of Perugia seem to have suffered greatly and the city burned.⁷⁸ These last two poems are further marked off by their form: each poem is only 10 lines long, far shorter than any other in book 1,⁷⁹ and each poem also suggests specific literary forms not found earlier in the book. 1.21 contains many of the features of an epigram, 1.22 of a sphragis poem.⁸⁰ As a result of this sudden introduction of historical material and formal novelty, critics have felt compelled to consider the last poems as merely a 'coda' not necessarily intrinsic to the structure of book 1, and to argue that these poems fail to bring the book to a proper close.⁸¹ For while these poems are markedly shorter and more formal than previous poems (features strongly indicative of closure), instead of bringing the book to a close, by introducing the problematic issue of the Perusine War, Propertius complicates the end of the book and disturbs any sense of closure.

⁷⁷ Hutchinson 1984: 103.

⁷⁸ For the sources on the Perusine War, see App. *B. Civ.* 5.12-49, Dio 48.3-14, Liv. *Per.* 125-6, Vell. Pat. 2.74.2-4, Plut. *Ant.* 28-30; cf. Syme 1939: 207-13, Gabba 1971, *CAH* 10.14-19.

⁷⁹ 1.12 is the shortest previous poem, at twenty lines; 1.20, immediately preceding these two poems, is the longest in the book at fifty-two lines, which only heightens the contrast.

⁸⁰ On the traditional and formal characteristics of 1.21-2, see Williams 1968: 172-85, Davis 1971: 209-10, Putnam 1976: 107-8, DuQuesnay 1992: 55-74.

⁸¹ On the position of 1.21 and 1.22 in numerical and symmetrical schemas of book 1, see Skutsch 1963, Otis 1965, Courtney 1968.

Not only do these final poems introduce new historical material for the reader to confront, they open up issues about naming and identity which they do not resolve. The Gallus of 1.21 is pictured dying during the Perusine War, ten years or so before the dramatic date of book 1, and therefore logically should not be the same person as the Gallus named in previous poems, even though they share the name and even though a Gallus is referred to in the penultimate line of the previous poem. A connection between the two Galli is tantalizing, but there is no way to be sure what the relation would be. In 1.22, Propertius' *propinquus* (7) is unnamed, not to mention unburied. Since Gallus in the previous poem asks for his bones to be found so they can be buried, there may even be a connection between Gallus and the *propinquus*, but again, certainty is impossible. Finally, the form of 1.22 as a whole is a sphragis poem, in which an author closes his work with a 'seal' which offers his name, family lineage, birthplace, and similar information; in this case, however, Propertius seems to dodge answering any of these usual questions. In fact, the entire poem is a side-step, as Propertius discusses both his *propinquus* and the Perusine War, and only gives his birthplace in the last two lines through oblique reference to them.⁸²

On the other hand, it is not necessary to be shocked by the reality of these poems. Such arguments that the historicity in the final poems surprises the reader depend greatly on the critic's view of the previous poems: if he has read the poems merely as a text about an entirely artificial world, then the mention of Perusia is quite an intrusion. If, on the other hand, Propertius' attempts to maintain realism throughout the book,

⁸² See Nicholson 1999: 146-151 on the problems of identity in 1.21-2. The rift created by these last two poems forms the grounds of the discussion for Janan 2001: 36-52 and Miller 2004: 68-94, each of whom sees the issue of broken or troubled identity as central to book 1.

paired with his argument for a realistic reading practice in 1.2 and 1.10, have convinced the reader to treat the book as thoroughly realistic already, the presence of Perugia is far less disturbing. In fact, Propertius prepares the reader well for these final poems. The links in characters have already been mentioned, links which force the reader to assume some kind of continuity between 1.1-20 and 1.21-2. Tullus' appearance in the last poem brings into play his appearance in the first poem and creates a unity for the book. Verbal echoes between the Gallus poems reinforce the idea of a continuity throughout the book, troublesome as those echoes may be. The dying Gallus of 1.21 is reminiscent of Gallus' metaphorical 'dying' in poems 1.10 and 1.13; the *ignotas manus* (1.21.8) recall the repeated use of the *-no-* root in 1.5; the soldier averting his eyes (1.21.3) summons up the emphatic *vidis* of 1.10 and 1.13 and Propertius' focus on watching in those poems.⁸³

Hutchinson argues that 1.21-2 make the reader suddenly realize the difference between the pseudo-reality in the previous poems and the truly real in these poems; that is, even if he was reading 'realistically,' when Perugia is mentioned, the reader sees that the previous poems are by contrast quite fictional.⁸⁴ But this is perhaps (over-) reacting to the presence of a verifiable historical event in the poems. If the reader has been seeing a real world all along, 1.21 and 1.22 meet his expectations perfectly, and the book gains closure by being grounded in an event clearly based in historical reality. The links to the previous poems reinforce that realistic reading was appropriate—even called for—all along.

⁸³ Nicholson 1999: 151-2.

⁸⁴ Hutchinson 1984: 103-5.

It should be noted, however, that the reality of the final poems has been somewhat overstated, and Propertius comes dangerously close to undermining his own diligently worked-for realism in them. Both of the final poems are strongly marked as truth-statements by their form. An epigram ought rightly to be a fair assessment of a person's life, or at least of his own or his loved one's opinion of him. Roman epigrams are often quite matter-of-fact, listing little more than family relations, dates, offices held, and similar details. The very purpose of a sphragis is to publicize the author in his biographical details and allow him to lay claim to his book of poetry; as such it too is inextricably tied to the real world. But in 1.21 and 1.22, Propertius destabilizes the truth value of each of these traditional forms. Although 1.21 begins in a manner reminiscent of epigram by addressing a passerby, even mentioning the "common fate" of death (*consortem casum*, 1), with the next line what seemed like a common address is made specific as the speaker talks of a *miles ab Etruscis saucius aggeribus* (2). Later on, it becomes clear that this epigrammatic voice, which seemed at the beginning to be coming from inside a tomb, is in fact still alive, albeit sprawled out and dying. Instead of the ghostly voice of an epigram on a grave, the poem depicts one half of a dramatic dialogue between two living human beings, just like so many of the poems that have come before in book 1.⁸⁵ If the reader has doubted the truth of any of the poems prior, he has no more reason to trust the events of this poem.⁸⁶ Not until this dying Gallus is

⁸⁵ Davis 1971: 210. See also *supra* on the dramatic or dialogic form of Propertius' poems in book 1.

⁸⁶ Additionally, Propertius draws attention to the fact that the dying Gallus' words are meant for specific people: first the fellow soldier, then the sister (6). How Propertius might have come across such a personal message—if it is meant to be striking realistic—has caused some critics (Rothstein 1898: *ad loc.*, followed, if only, experimentally, by Stahl 1985: 119-20) to identify the unnamed soldier in the poem as Propertius' father, who then presumably passed on this piece of family history.

linked to Propertius' dead relative in the following poem (note the position of *Gallum* and *propinquus* each in line 7) does the scene regain its realism. Likewise 1.22 fails to perform its function as sphragis, as Propertius almost nervously avoids Tullus' questions, jutting off-topic until closing with a roundabout reference to his hometown (and never actually mentioning its name, Assisi).⁸⁷ Indeed, these final two poems repeatedly dodge and treat speaking and answering as a burden. Tullus questions Propertius about his birthplace, and Propertius replies by naming—not where he was born, but the place *near* where he was born. His childhood is explained by Perusine tombs and his dead unburied relative (1.22.7), which shifts the reader to the words of the unburied Gallus of the previous poem. Gallus, in turn, is unable to relay his own message (that he slipped through the siege only to meet his death randomly, and where his bones lay) to the *soror* and must entrust his message to the passing *miles*.

The issues of confused identity and naming which scholars have noted in 1.21 and 1.22 are more importantly issues of shifted voices, and these poems are audaciously *prosopopoetic*. Propertius invokes voices not his own, steeped in the reality of the Perusine War, in order to change what that war represents. In 1.22, a sphragis poem in which he is meant to define himself, the war dominates. Propertius implies that the war itself could answer Tullus' questions (*si Perusina tibi patriae sunt nota sepulcra*, 3; note the aposiopesis). The description of the war takes over the poem at this point. By allowing the war to dominate in this way, to answer Tullus' questions and so fulfill the function of the sphragis—to speak on Propertius' behalf—Propertius redefines the

⁸⁷ Cf. Stahl 1985: 100-103.

Perusine War as an experience intimate and personal and his. His description of the war breaks off from the universal and generalizing phrases

si Perusina tibi patriae sunt nota sepulcra,
Italiae duris funera temporibus,
cum Romana suos egit discordia cives— (1.22.3-5)

If you know the Perusine graves of your country, the tombs of Italy during the tough times when Roman discord drove on its citizens—

and moves to his own personal experience and what he suffered, emphatically beginning *sic mihi praecipue*:

sic mihi praecipue, pulvis Etrusca, dolor,
tu proiecta mei perpessa es membra propinqui,
tu nullo miseri contegis ossa solo. (1.22.6-8)

this is why you are grief especially for me, Etruscan soil, you bear my relative's scattered limbs, you cover his poor bones with no earth.

The apostrophe of the Etruscan soil adds to the pathos. The Perusine War, Propertius argues, is less important as an event in the general history of Rome, more important as a personal event in his life. This claim makes the preceding poem that much more poignant, especially if, as seems proper, the *propinquus* of 1.22 is the same man as Gallus in 1.21.

Through his *prosopopoeia* of Gallus in 1.21, Propertius restores to his now dead relative a voice. The horrific personification, *membra perpessa es* (1.22.7), is much more effective because 1.21 has preceded it; it instantly makes the connection with the previous poem and vivifies this corpse. Gallus' dying words now reach a much broader audience than merely the passing soldier or his sister, and the words he speaks have been carefully chosen by Propertius for more far-reaching purposes. Gallus' speech does not merely express the horrors of the Perusine War—and it is notable that he in fact

survived the fighting at Perugia only to die anyway. Propertius makes of his death a tragic love story. Any hint of love-poetry seems to be missing from the poem, but the identity of the *soror* (6) and her relationship to Gallus makes this a subtle echo of Propertius' own affair. The *soror* is unidentified by the words of the poem. Since there are only two characters in the poem, however, she must be the sister of one of them. Unaccompanied by any epithet, *soror* is taken most naturally as *soror mea*, and this reading would mean that she is the sister of dying Gallus.⁸⁸ However, the previous line (1.22.6) and two previous passages in book 1 (1.17.19-24 and 1.19.3-4, 21-3) tell against this interpretation. In the previous line, Gallus speaks of *parentes*, again unattributed, but there is no way to understand this as *parentes mei*, and no editor, it seems, has attempted to read the phrase thus. The parents must be those of the passing soldier. There is precedent then for understanding some form of *tuus* and for referring to the passing soldier's own family before *soror* follows. Also, the *soror* is meant to perform the funereal duties for Gallus (*haec sciat esse mea*, 10). Propertius consistently envisions not a family member but Cynthia performing such rites:

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

If some fate had buried my sorrow there [in Rome] and a tombstone stood on my buried love, she would have given her hair as an offering at my funeral and softly set my bones on tender roses. She would have cried out my name at my ash, crying that the earth should lie weightless on me.

⁸⁸ Adherents of this reading include Postgate 1881: *ad loc.*, Camps 1961: *ad loc.*, and Nicholson 1999: 150 n. 24.

sed ne forte tuo careat mihi funus amore,
hic timor est ipsis durior exsequiis...
quam vereor, ne te contempto, Cynthia, busto
abstrahat a nostro pulvere iniquus Amor,
cogat et invitam lacrimas siccare cadentis! (1.19.3-4, 21-3)

But that maybe my funeral will lack your love, that fear is harder to bear than death itself...I am so afraid, Cynthia, that you will abandon my tomb and cruel Love will pull you away from my dust and force you to dry your teary eyes, even though you do not want to!

The *soror*, then, must belong to the passing soldier, and most likely is Gallus' beloved. Gallus' death enacts the fears of Propertius in 1.17 and 1.19.⁸⁹ The Perusine War, both speaking for itself and in Gallus' words, has become a personal event tied closely to love and loss, and the political meaning of these two final poems are overwhelmed by personal lament.

It may strike some as disingenuous of Propertius to insist on the reality of the poems of book 1 and manipulate his reader into trusting it, only to subvert that trust by manipulating in turn what that reality looks like and means. Without a tight connection to reality, however, Propertius' poetic mission fails, since, after he has argued that artificiality has no place in his poetry (1.2) and modeled for the reader the position of *testis* looking in on real life (1.10), he nevertheless shapes the reality his reader accesses in his poems through his artistic presentation of it. In so doing, he opens up the question of poetry's ability to affect—even create—reality. This ability is especially important for Propertius if, as Stahl, Janan, and Miller have argued, poems 1.21 and 1.22 reveal that Propertius has in some sense lost his identity due to the

⁸⁹ Davis 1971: 213.

Perusine War.⁹⁰ If so, Propertius in book 1 endeavors to rewrite an identity for himself, and convincing his readers that this created identity is real is paramount. Propertius' desire to convince would explain the pseudo-autobiography that is book 1, its emphasis on reality, and Propertius' manipulation of that reality:

Autobiography offers the individual an opportunity to reify, to constitute, to create an identity precisely because referentiality is the *sine qua non* of such texts. However, if . . . the premise of autobiographical referentiality that we can move from knowledge of the text to knowledge of the self proves to be a fiction—the text becomes paradoxically not less precious but more: in making the text the autobiographer constructs a self that would not otherwise exist.⁹¹

Book 1 represents Propertius' attempt to lean on the referentiality inherent in the realism of his poems in order to reify himself, to create a new identity for himself—even if he must perform this creation, paradoxically, through the inherently artificial medium of text. Ignoring realism in book 1, reading about his affair with Cynthia and his relationships with his friends and not saying, “This happened!” like Oprah, not “adding truth in” like the target of Philodemus' criticism, leaves Propertius as nameless and lacking identity as the corpse of 1.22.

⁹⁰ Stahl 1985: 120-9, Janan 2001: 36-52, Miller 2004: 60-94.

⁹¹ Eakin 1985: 26. The relation of the text of Propertius to autobiography is deserving of further study, and modern criticism of autobiography is opening up fruitful approaches for readers of ancient works as well; cf. Bruss 1976, Lejeune 1988, Eakin 1992, Olney 1998.

CHAPTER FOUR
A REAL MYTHOLOGICAL PROPERTIUS

“We are a real mythological group,” the chief physician sleepily observed, “because you are Diana. Cold, athletic, and spiteful.”

“And you are a satyr. Grown old, lecherous, and garrulous,” said the woman doctor. “And Havel is Don Juan. He’s not old, but he’s getting old.”

—Milan Kundera, “Symposium” in *Laughable Loves*

*quarum nulla tuos potuit convertere mores,
tu quoque uti fieres nobilis historia.*

None of them [a list of women from mythology including Calypso, Hypsipyle, and Evadne, who mourned the absence of their lover] could change your ways and make you into a noble legend.

—Prop. 1.15.23-4

The Problem with Propertian Myth

Books 2 and 3 differ from book 1 by in general having longer poems which are more complex and on more varied subject-matter. The dramatic character of the poems in book 1 is replaced by interior dialogue. Poems have unnamed or no addressee in any real sense, and so seem to lack specific occasions. When they do have addressees, poems shift between them in startling ways (for example, 2.8, which over the course of forty lines moves: friend, Cynthia, self-address, Cynthia, friend). Cynthia remains the center of book 2, but gently moves offstage in book 3 until Propertius renounces her at the end of the book (3.24 and 25), and Propertius more and more emphasizes his role as a poet rather than, instead of in conjunction with, his role as lover.¹

The part that mythology begins to play in the poems of books 2 and 3 also marks a change from book 1. Comparatively speaking, of course, Propertius’ poems feature few mythological narratives of any length: the Hylas episode (1.20.15-50) and the tale of

¹ Wyke 1987a: 47-8.

Dirce and Antiope (3.15.11-42) are the only examples to be found in the first three books. Given the fondness of his Hellenistic predecessors for mythical narratives, and the presence of works such as Parthenius' *Erotica Pathemata*, which was specifically intended as a sourcebook for authors looking to add a dose of myth into their poems,² Propertius' failure to indulge in mythological narratives of any length throughout his *corpus* might be remarkable.³ Nevertheless, mythology pervades books 2 and 3 in a way unexampled by book 1. Suddenly, Propertius again and again describes himself and Cynthia in comparison with figures from myth, and describes their behavior in comparison with mythical events. Mythological exempla abound. Propertius seems determined to portray his life with Cynthia in the terms of the bigger stage of myth—almost unable to imagine any other framework. In books 2 and 3, the evocation of the mythological world is persistent.

To come to terms with these mythological exempla, critics have resorted to various strategies, but have usually limited themselves to thinking about myth in Propertius in terms of its immediate contexts. Each exemplum, for instance, is investigated on its own for its appropriateness to the theme of its poem or to the character being compared. This piecemeal approach has no doubt been shaped by ancient theory on the exemplum. One of the chief concerns of antiquity was the *aptum* in exempla, that is, finding an exemplum that best paralleled the topic at hand.⁴ In Propertius, this concern entails

² Parthenius in fact dedicates the book to an elegist, Cornelius Gallus (discussed in the previous chapter), with these words (2): “You will be able to put the best of these stories into hexameter or elegiacs. Do not think less of them because they lack the polish that you yourself strive after. I have gathered them as a set of notes, and it seems to me that they will serve you this same purpose.”

³ Sullivan 1976: 134.

⁴ Cf. Lausberg 1998: 117-8 (§258).

discovering the points of similarity between Propertius' situation or current emotional state and that of the mythical character to whom he is compared. Trouble arises, though, when the parallels are inexact. Then critics are forced to search for variant versions of the myth. For example, in 2.8, where the Antigone-Haemon exemplum is problematic, critics have sought refuge in an apparently non-Sophoclean version of the myth related by Hyginus, in which Haemon killed Antigone as well as himself (*Haemon se et Antigonam coniugem interfecit*, 72). Propertius' use of this version of the story is defended by Theodore Paphangelis. He even proposes that the original source common to both Hyginus and Propertius may have been a mythological sourcebook much like Parthenius'.⁵ *Quellenforschung* has its own benefits and virtues, but in Propertius' case it often does little to illuminate his use of myth. The other interpretive strategy critics resort to is exhibited by Richard Whitaker's term "shaped exempla," by which he means exempla in which "the poet by careful wording or selection of detail so shapes his mythological references that they immediately suggest to the attentive reader how he is to interpret them."⁶ This is, in essence, an argument for personal and idiosyncratic myth on the part of Propertius, nonce mythology, a practice that has been argued for (and against) in Homer as well.⁷

The shortcomings of these approaches are inherent in Propertius' use of exemplum. Exempla work on a basic inferential principle: "if a predicate A holds of a subject B, this

⁵ Paphangelis 1987: 121-3.

⁶ Whitaker 1983: 88.

⁷ See Nagy 1992.

predicate will hold also of subjects *similar* to B.”⁸ Or, as Aristotle puts it, “it is by looking at past events that we predict and make decisions about future ones” (ἐκ γὰρ τῶν προγεγονότων τὰ μέλλοντα καταμαντευόμενοι κρίνομεν, *Rh.* 1368a).⁹ Exempla are used by the rhetoricians to buttress or illustrate arguments, or, lacking better arguments, as proofs themselves.¹⁰ Close examination of Propertian exempla on these terms may reveal how apt the exemplum is, how well it suits his argument, but this is an inadequate way to discuss the use of exempla in Propertius as a whole. Nor is it necessary to argue against the view that myth is justified as a sort of elaborating illustration: as Paul Veyne writes, “When Propertius compares Cynthia to Atalanta, the comparison is not always an indirect way of repeating that she is beautiful.”¹¹ Propertius does not often depend on exempla to prove his claims, nor does he use myth merely as a way to “fill out” his poems.

These approaches fail to account for the pervasiveness of myth in books 2 and 3, the cumulative effect, nor do they account for Propertius’ comprehensive engagement with myth. A list of every mention of myth in books 2 and 3 would be very long, but the partial catalogue presented below (which omits minor passages and anything shorter than two lines) demonstrates how thoroughly Propertius employs myth in these books:

- 2.1.37-8 Theseus and Achilles vouch for their friends
- 2.1.49-50 Helen a fickle girl
- 2.1.51-54 Phaedra, Circe, and Medea as witches

⁸ This is the formulation of Reinhardt 2003: 285.

⁹ Cf. also *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* 1429a 21-2: “Exempla are actions that have occurred in the past and are similar to, or the opposite of, those we are currently discussing.” 3.

¹⁰ Arist. *Rh.* 1394a, Quint. 5.11.1-2.

¹¹ Veyne 1988: 124.

2.1.59-64	Healers Machaon, Chiron, Aesculapius, Achilles
2.2.5-12	Cynthia like Juno, Athena, Ischomache, Brimo
2.2.13-14	The judgement of Paris
2.3.17-18	Cynthia dances like Ariadne
2.3.32-40	Cynthia a second Helen, first Roman lover of Jupiter
2.3.51-54	Melampus steals cattle for love of Pero
2.4.7-8	The ineffectiveness of the drugs of Medea and Perimede
2.6.1-6	Lais, Thais, and Phryne thronged by visitors
2.6.15-22	Love the cause of outrages: the Trojan War, the rape of the Sabine women
2.6.23-4	Faithful Alcestis and Penelope a joy to their husbands
2.8.21-24	Haemon's suicide at Antigone's death
2.8.29-38	Achilles' grief at the loss of Briseis
2.9a.3-18	Penelope and Briseis chaste and faithful
2.13.46-50	Nestor grieves his overlong life
2.13.53-56	Venus mourns Adonis' death
2.14.1-9	Great joy: the fall of Troy, Ulysses' return, Orestes safe, Theseus unharmed
2.15.13-16	Desire stoked by nudity: Paris for Helen, Luna for Endymion
2.16.29-30	Unhappiness from gifts: Eriphyla, Creusa
2.17.5-10	Tantalus and Sisyphus are no comparison for the suffering lover
2.18a.7-18	Aurora loves Tithonus though old
2.20.1-8	Briseis, Andromache, Niobe weeping
2.20.10-12	Danae in her bronze tower
2.21.11-14	Jason and Ulysses deceive their lovers
2.22.25-34	Love not incompatible with strength: Jupiter, Achilles, Hector
2.24.43-6	The brevity of love: Theseus and Ariadne, Demophoon and Phyllis, Jason and Medea
2.26c.37-40	Ulysses enduring the aimless winds
2.26c.47-52	Neptune well-disposed to love: Amymone
2.28.9-14	Venus, Juno, Athena jealous of Cynthia
2.28.51-56	Dead beauties: Antiope, Tyro, Europa, Pasiphae
2.30.3-6	Flight useless, whether Pegasus, Perseus, or Mercury
2.30b.29-31	Jupiter himself overcome by love
2.30b.34-36	A Muse overcome by love for Oeagrus
2.32.31-40	Mistakes in love forgiven: Helen, Venus
2.33b.29-32	Wine's harm: Icarus, Eurytion, Polyphemus
2.34.7-8	Unfaithful friends: Paris, Jason
3.2.3-10	Power of song: Orpheus, Apollo, Polyphemus
3.8.29-32	Lovemaking sweeter than battle for Paris
3.10.8-10	Niobe and Philomela to abandon mourning
3.11.9-28	Powerful women: Medea, Penthesilea, Omphale, Semiramis, Juno
3.12.23-38	Postumus a second Ulysses because of his wife's loyalty
3.13.51-8	Gold's dangers: Brennus, Polymestor, Eriphyla
3.13.61-64	Cassandra unheeded
3.15.11-30	Dirce and Antiope

- 3.17.7-8 Bacchus experienced in love
 3.18.27-30 Death unavoidable: Nireus, Achilles, Croesus
 3.19.11-24 Women's lust: Pasiphae, Tyro, Myrrha, Medea, Clytemnestra, Scylla

No one has yet asked what seems to be the more interesting and valuable question: what effect does Propertius' insistent use of myth create? What would the author have to gain by repeatedly painting his life on the canvas of myth? The answer to these questions, and the way to understanding the role of myth in Propertius' program in books 2 and 3, can be found in another of Propertius' obsessions that appears in the early parts of book 2. Propertius, now known from the publication of book 1, has gained a reputation. Cynthia has one as well. And these reputations are due to, and based on, the poems he has written. In several passages in book 2, Propertius makes clear that he knows that he is being read by his audience at large, the public, and at the same time reveals a bit of anxiety about what the perception of him is.

Book 2 opens, in fact, with Propertius acknowledging his readers, and responding to their interest in him:

quaeritis, unde mihi totiens scribantur amores,
 unde meus veniat mollis in ora liber.
 non haec Calliope, non haec mihi cantat Apollo:
 ingenium nobis ipsa puella facit. (2.1.1-4)

You want to know the source for my writing my *amores* so often, for the book coming so soft on people's mouths.¹² Neither Calliope nor Apollo sang the songs to me; my *puella* herself causes my talent.

Propertius' supposed addressee is his audience at-large. If *amores*, as frequently among the elegists, elides the difference between his "love-affair" on one hand and "poems about his love-affair" on the other, then book 1 has clearly made Propertius a public figure. As

¹² As Richardson 1977: *ad loc.*: "*sc. populi.*" Cf. Catul. 40.5 (*an ut pervenies in ora vulgi?*) and Enn. *var.* 18 (*volito vivos per ora virum*) as well as Camps 1985: *ad loc.*

pleased as Propertius seems about that fact in this passage, being a known man is not always a good thing, as he illustrates later:

‘tu loqueris, cum sis iam noto fabula libro
et tua sit toto Cynthia lecta foro?’
cui non his verbis aspergat tempora sudor?
aut pudor ingenuis aut reticendus amor.
quod si iam facilis spiraret Cynthia nobis,
non ego nequitiae dicerer esse caput,
nec sic per totam infamis traducerer urbem... (2.24.1-10)

“Is that what you say, even though you are now a legend because of your book being known and your Cynthia being read throughout the forum?” Whose forehead would not get sweaty when he heard that? A gentleman has to be chaste or keep his love quiet. If Cynthia were breathing softly on me, I would not be getting called the summit of naughtiness, and I would not be the dishonorable subject of gossip all over the city.¹³

Being known means being open to gossip and scandal, and Propertius’ publication of his affairs with Cynthia has ensured that his reputation partakes of both.¹⁴ In fact, he has become a byword, a *fabula* (1); *Cynthia* (2), as usual, implies both the *puella* herself and the book of poems that began with her name. This is perhaps an unexpected turn, because despite Propertius’ best efforts to present himself realistically, as discussed in chapter 1, he has become a character to his public, and his affair with Cynthia a story. In book 1, he even went so far as to predict that Cynthia could never reach the rank of *fabula* or *historia*: *quarum nulla tuos potuit convertere mores, / tu quoque uti fieres nobilis historia* (“None of those women could change your ways and make you into a

¹³ Cf. also 2.3.3-4, *vix unum potes, infelix, requiescere mensem, / et turpis de te iam liber alter erit*, “You could hardly wait a month, poor guy, and now there will be a second scandalous book about you” and 2.1.49-50 (deleted by Carutti) *si memini, solet illa levis culpae puellas, / et totam ex Helena non probat Iliada*, “If I remember right, she finds fault with impulsive girls, and disapproves of the whole *Iliad* just because of Helen.”

¹⁴ It may be appropriate to note also Propertius’ infatuation with writing epigrams for himself and for others; cf. 2.1.77-8; 2.5.1-8, 27-30; 2.11; 2.12.21-4; 2.13.35-6; 2.14.27-8; 2.24.35-8; 2.25.1-4. No doubt this too reveals an awareness of the public reception of his reputation.

noble legend,” 1.15.23-4). Once book 1 is out, though, Propertius realizes that he is in fact becoming a *fabula*, as is Cynthia, as is their relationship:

seu compescentis somnum declinat ocellos,
 invenio causas mille poeta novas;
seu nuda erepto mecum luctatur amictu,
 tum vero longas condimus Iliadas:
seu quidquid fecit sive est quodcumque locuta,
 maxima de nihilo nascitur historia. (2.1.11-16)

...if she lowers her eyes, struggling against sleep, the poet in me discovers a thousand new topics; if she wrestles naked with me after I have pulled off her dress, then, by god, we are composing lengthy *Iliads*. Whatever she has done or said, a grand legend is born out of nothing.

To this point, I have avoided translating *fabula* or *historia* as “myth.”¹⁵ But the fact that it seems clearly to be a possibility—perhaps even the best choice for both—marks out the core issue in Propertius’ engagement with myth. Propertius encourages a certain response and method of reading by his audience by employing realism and the first person in his poems (as discussed in chapter two). All such autobiographical (or pseudo-autobiographical) writing may be exemplary and offers the possibility of a text marked by didacticism, an authoritative voice, and “hortatory guidance to the perplexed.”¹⁶ The possible exemplarity of the text is one of the most compelling reasons to encourage an autobiographical reading, and this is a key feature of Propertian poetry. But Propertius would have to fight for a space for his realistic exemplum. In Roman culture there already existed a “shared vocabulary” for exemplarity: myth.¹⁷

¹⁵ There are fine distinctions to be made between the use of terms like “legend” and “myth”; cf. especially Wiseman 1995: 129-50.

¹⁶ Bruss 1976: 15. Bruss’s study of “autobiographical acts” is important for understanding the nature of the reader-author relationship that is created when an author chooses the autobiographical mode.

¹⁷ “Shared vocabulary” translates Boucher’s term “langage commun”; it will be discussed below.

The Knowledge of Myth among the Romans

Jean-Paul Boucher has argued that the audience of Propertius' era grew up on mythological poetry, with the influence and predilections of the Hellenistic Greeks toward mythological tales showing itself in the choice of topics of their Roman adherents.¹⁸ As he argues, early Roman poetry was rife with mythological tales, many in imitation (or flat out translation) of Greek models as literature written in Latin strove to establish itself in comparison to the tradition of Greek literature. Later, the *neoteroi* reinvigorated the passion for myth with epyllia which gained great fame, such as Catullus' poem 64, Cinna's *Zmyrna*, Calvus' *Io*, and others. Cicero himself translated from Greek tragedy. Julius Caesar composed an *Oedipus*. The readers of Propertius' poems were accustomed to an environment in which myth proliferated. Myth was an expected component of literature, and provided a sort of shortcut for expressing complex ideas:

C'est parce qu'il y a eu tant de récits mythologiques rapportant tous les détails et toutes les variantes de toutes les grandes légendes, approfondissant les connaissances diffusées par les tragédies, que la technique de Propertius—il serait plus juste de dire l'usage augustéen—devient possible et nécessaire: quand toute la mythologie a été l'objet de narrations, la génération suivante peut évoquer, rappeler, user d'allusions et se composer un nouveau langage à partir de ce fonds commun.¹⁹

¹⁸ Boucher 1965: 228-36.

¹⁹ Boucher 1965: 239. Boucher adds that the invasion of myth extended into Roman philosophical thought as well as poetry: "Il faut admettre que la mythologie grecque, précisée par les créations de la tragédie et fournissant des caractères, a été assimilée par la auditoire romain, qu'elle a désormais un sens exact pour un auditoire romain et qu'elle peut fournir à la réflexion philosophique des exemples riches et consistants aussi bien que des sujets aux poètes."

To what degree this knowledge and familiarity with myth was really “commun,” though, has been disputed by Paul Veyne.²⁰ He argues that knowledge of mythology was shared among the ancient Greeks, but that during the Hellenistic period mythology lost its place among the people at large and was reserved for the erudite few. By the time Latin literature was reaching its golden age, myth would have seemed “cold and pedantic” to the average Roman.²¹ For Veyne, by the time of Propertius, the ability to understand mythology requires a certain “initiation”; and mythology as used by the poets was “*learned entertainment*, a pedantic game among the initiates.”²² Examples of the scorn heaped on *poseurs* who pretended to a greater knowledge of myth than they actually possessed might seem to buttress this view. Petronius’ Trimalchio is an obvious instance, when, for example, he boasts about his silver collection and the mythological scenes depicted on it:

in argento plane studiosus sum. habeo scyphos urnales...quemadmodum Cassandra occidit filios suos, et pueri mortui iacent sic uti vivere putes. habeo capidem quam <mi> reliquit patronorum <meorum> unus, ubi Daedalus Niobam in equum Troianum includit.

I am a connoisseur of silver. I have large vessels...[depicting] how Cassandra murdered her children, and the children lay dead in such a way you would think they were still alive! I have a bowl that I inherited from one of my patrons, on which Daedalus is closing up Niobe in the Trojan horse.

The freed slave Trimalchio’s howlers are legendary, but his mistakes also show a serious problem with assuming that only the learned would be interested in mythology.

Mythology was pervasive, showing up in statuary, in epigrams, wall paintings, pots,

²⁰ Veyne 1988: 116-126.

²¹ Veyne 1988: 116.

²² Veyne 1988: 123, 117.

bowls, dishes, silver, all around in everyday life. Propertius mentions wall-paintings specifically in 2.6.27-36. Myth formed a major part of the public entertainment at the Flavian amphitheater as well. Martial's *Liber de spectaculis* features poems on reenactments of Hercules and a bull (19), Daedalus forced to defend himself on the ground rather than in air (10), Leander's famed swim (28-9), Orpheus torn apart by a bear (24), even Pasiphae mating with her bull (6):

iunctam Pasiphaen Dictaeo credite tauro:
vidimus, accepit fabula prisca fidem.
nec se miretur, Caesar, longaeua vetustas:
quidquid fama canit, praestat harena tibi.

Believe it, Pasiphae mated with a Dictaeon bull. We saw it: the old myth has proof. But Caesar, do not let ancient history vaunt itself. The arena offers you whatever legend sings.²³

In this poem, Martial boasts that all of myth is a potential subject for the spectacles. Even more importantly, though, in this set of poems from the *de spectaculis*, is the role of irony. For example, Leander is spared in making his swim, contrary to the mythical version; Orpheus, rather than charming nature, is mauled by a bear. The point of the performances is lost if the audience does not know the original version so as to be surprised when the performance occurs contrary to expectation (as Martial closes the poem on Orpheus: "Just this one thing [the mauling] happened contrary to the story," *haec tantum res est facta παρ' ἱστορίαν*, 24.8) Of course, these examples all come from a later period than Propertius, but it is difficult to believe that there was a sea-change in the public knowledge of myth between the time of Augustus and that of Nero.

²³ See Coleman's recent edition with commentary (Coleman 2006) on these poems.

In fact, the ease with which Romans could exchange ideas and concepts expressed in the shared vocabulary of myth can be demonstrated by a passage from Cicero's speech *pro Caelio*. Cicero is defending Caelius' lifestyle against charges of profligacy from the other side, and, speaking about his move to an apartment on the Palatine hill, quotes from Ennius' (fairly faithful) translation of Euripides' *Medea*:

quo loco possum dicere id quod vir clarissimus, M. Crassus, cum de adventu regis Ptolemaei quereretur, paulo ante dixit:

“utinam ne in nemore Pelio”

ac longius quidem mihi contexere hoc carmen liceret:

“nam numquam era errans”

hanc molestiam nobis exhiberet

“Medea animo aegra, amore saevo saucia.”

sic enim, iudices, reperietis quod cum ad id loci venero, ostendam hanc Palatinam Medeam migrationemque hanc adulescenti causam sive malorum omnium sive potius sermonum fuisse. (*Cael.* 18)

At this point I can repeat what the well-known Marcus Crassus said a little while ago when complaining about the arrival of king Ptolemy: “I wish that in the Pelian grove...” and I might unfold the poem even further, “for the wandering mistress never...” would have caused this bother for us, “Medea, sick at heart, wounded by wild love.” Just so, judges, you will discover that when I come to that point in my speech, I will reveal that this Palatine Medea, and this move of his, was the cause of all this young man's troubles, or at least the gossip about him.

Cicero moves effortlessly from quoting a Roman version of a Greek myth to applying the less-than-desirable characteristics of Medea to Clodia (on whose poor character and negative influence on Caelius he transfers the weight of his speech). This passage demonstrates precisely the claim Boucher makes. The literary source for the myth is clearly displayed (as well as its previous place in tradition with Crassus). The myth is simply mentioned without any real elaboration or explanation—even cutting sentences short and leaving them incomplete—apparently because Cicero was addressing an audience which would require no explanation. The terms of the myth are then used as

shorthand—again without any elaboration of how calling Clodia Medea is apt—to discuss (and paint) a real person. In fact, though, this is only part of the picture: earlier in the case the prosecutor Atratinus had called Caelius *pulcherrimus Iason*, “fancy-pants Jason.” Caelius in turn had called Atratinus *Pelias cincinnatus*, “curly-haired Pelias.”²⁴ Throughout the trial, a battle was fought on the backdrop of the myth of the Golden Fleece. Cicero’s was merely the last, and perhaps most successful, shot.

Propertius as a ‘Real’ Myth

Propertius’ use of myth is not for the sake of decoration, not for strengthening his arguments, not for parading pedantic knowledge. Propertius takes on myth at the fundamental level of exemplarity itself, and he does so by attempting to become a myth of his own, a *fabula*, a *historia*, a story and not just a person. If myth is a shared vocabulary for Romans, Propertius includes his story as part of that vocabulary as well. Propertius covets for himself the power that mythical exemplarity holds. This results in a relationship of *aemulatio* between Propertius and myth: he will take on myth, engage it on its own terms and even imitate it—but only so as to better it with his own version of realistic myth.²⁵

To become a myth, though, for Propertius means first becoming a story. Quintilian’s definition of exemplum stresses the literary dimension of exemplarity (5.11.6): *rei gestae aut ut gestae utilis ad persuadendum id quod intenderis commemoratio* (“The recollection of something done, or something which could have been done, applied to persuading what you intend”). Heinrich Lausberg breaks down

²⁴ Both are clearly terms of derision, implying, at best, effeminacy; cf. Austin 1952: *ad loc.*

²⁵ On the relationship between *imitatio* and *aemulatio*, see the seminal article of Russell 1979: 1-16.

this formulation: “Thus exemplum has a source for its content (*res gesta, res ut gesta...*), a function of *utilitas* (*utilis ad persuadendum...*), and a literary form (*commemoratio...*).”²⁶ In Propertius’ case, he is his own source for content—or at least, his relationship with Cynthia provides the content for him; *utilitas ad persuadendum* is the exemplarity he seeks; but mythology has a hold on the literary form, and this is where his fight lies. He realizes, seeing the reception of book 1, that his life must become literary too, in order for his story to become an operative myth. This all is despite his previous striving to maintain realism and to dissociate himself from ‘the literary.’ It is a paradox that even though mythological exempla seem naturally at home in literature, historical exempla depend every bit as much on a literary retelling for part of their power. Historical exempla have greater credibility because they correspond to actual events, but if they remain unknown they are worthless.²⁷ So, when Propertius enters the discussion between historical or realistic exempla and mythological exempla, he is plugging in to a long-standing argument over the value of historical exempla as opposed to the value of mythological ones. Propertius is joining a whole group of writers who argue that the use of mythological exempla should be limited or eliminated.

The truth value of μῦθοι was always up for debate; this is especially clear in the schema of exempla found in the rhetorical handbooks, where myth is either lacking from the discussion altogether or ranked as less useful than strictly historical exempla.

Aristotle (1393a) divides exempla into two groups: things that actually happened (πράγματα προγεγενημένα) and inventions (τό αὐτὸν ποιεῖν). Myth would seem to belong

²⁶ Lausberg 1998: 196 (§410).

²⁷ Cf. Lausberg 1998: 197 n.1.

to this second group, but Aristotle then explicitly further subdivides this second group into generalizing comparisons (παραβολαί) and fables such as are found in Aesop (λόγοι). Myth, such as we are discussing, does not fit well into either of these subdivisions. In the *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*, the anonymous author discusses only the historical exemplum: the examples he gives discuss the historical battle strategies of Athens, Thebes, and Syracuse (14239b 6-25). The Roman rhetorical writers, on the other hand, take the role of mythological exempla more into account. Cicero discusses exempla in *de partitione oratoria*:

verisimilia autem partim singula movent suo pondere, partim etiamsi videntur esse exigua per se, multum tamen cum sunt coacervata proficiunt....maximam autem facit fidem ad similitudinem veri primum exemplum, deinde introducta rei similitudo; fabula etiam nonnumquam, etsi est incredibilis, tamen homines commovet. (*Part.* 40)

Probabilities (*verisimilia*) partly have effect because of their own authority, and partly, even though they seem slight on their own, do a great deal of good when they are piled up.... The greatest proof toward truthfulness is offered first by the exemplum, then by the introduction of likely material; myth too, even if hard to believe, still has an effect.

Cicero here ranks the effectiveness of various types of exempla: the historical exemplum first, then events that could happen (this group is probably the same as Aristotle's παραβολαί), and then, last, but still granted efficacy, myth.²⁸ Quintilian's discussion of exemplum reproduces the grouping found in Cicero. He refuses to distinguish between Aristotle's παραβολαί and exempla in general (5.11.1-2), but when he comes to define

²⁸ Cf. also Cic. *Inv.* 1.30.49, where Cicero offers some definitions of these terms: *comparabile autem est, quod in rebus diversis similem aliquam rationem continet. eius partes sunt tres: imago, collatio, exemplum. imago est oratio demonstrans corporum aut naturarum similitudinem. collatio est oratio rem cum re ex similitudine conferens. exemplum est quod rem auctoritate aut casu alicuius hominis aut negotii confirmat aut infirmat*, "Comparison is the certain strand of similarity contained in diverse subjects. There are three parts: image, parallel, and exemplum. An image is speech offering a likeness of body or nature. A parallel is speech comparing one thing to another based on similarity. An exemplum strengthens or weakens a case through the authority or experience of some person or event."

exemplum, he does make the same distinction as Cicero between events that actually happened (*res gestae*) and the merely possible (*ut gestae*) (5.11.6). Later he too lists myth itself (in a separate discussion) as a source of exempla, but ones which carry less weight: “The same principle governs the use of exempla taken from poetry, except that these offer less force of proof,” *eadem ratio est eorum quae ex poeticis fabulis ducuntur, nisi quod iis minus affirmationis adhibetur* (5.11.17). That Quintilian is speaking of myth with the phrase *quae ex poeticis fabulis ducuntur* is clear because he immediately offers as an example Cicero’s use of the Orestes myth in a speech. At some point, the distinction between mythological and historical exempla became far more strict; the handbook of Apsines (b. 190 A.D.) precribes against the use of mythological exempla altogether:

χρή δὲ τὰ παραδείγματα γνώριμα εἶναι καὶ σαφῆ, καὶ μὴ πάνυ ἀρχαῖα μηδὲ μυθώδη, συνάδοντα δὲ τοῖς ὑποκειμένοις καὶ μὴ ἀπομηχύνεσθαι ἄγαν...
(*Rhet. Gr.* 1.373.23-25)

Exempla should be well-known and clear, not too old or mythological, suited to the topic, and not too drawn out...

Apsines’ handbook is a digest version, not original to him, and it is likely that despite his late date, this sort of prohibition of mythological exempla was going on long before.

The distaste these writers show for mythological exempla has a great deal to do with the credibility of myth in the first place. There was an anti-myth sentiment from as far back as Xenophanes,²⁹ and two of the most influential authors from the period

²⁹ Xenophanes fr. 10 and 13.

right before Propertius expressed their dislike. Cicero often expresses his incredulity when it comes to myth, and the passage at *Div.* 2.113 is particularly cynical:³⁰

num igitur me cogis etiam fabulis credere? quae delectationis habeant quantum voles, verbis sentiis numeris cantibus adiuventur; auctoritatem quidem nullam debemus nec fidem commenticiis rebus adiungere.

Then are you going to force me to believe in myths? They can have as much charm as you want, they can be reinforced by word, thought, meter, or melody; still we should not grant any authority or trust to fabrications.

Even though, as we have seen, Cicero argued that myths can have some authority in oratory, if in a limited way, here he goes further and refuses to personally grant myth any. He explicitly opposes myth to reality: *commenticius* is used as the opposite to what is already existing or what is actual.³¹ In fact, Cicero, as part of his philosophical project, even argues away myths such as those associated with the underworld. Early on in the *Tusculanae Disputationes* he hopes that his philosophical sparring partner believes in underworld myths; he boasts, “I could be quite eloquent if I were to speak against those” (1.10). In a later passage he allegorizes the story of Tantalus, saying

The poets express the greatness of this evil by depicting a stone hanging over the head of Tantalus “for his crimes, his pride, and his boasting.” And this is the common punishment of foolishness; for some such fear hangs over the head of every one whose mind turns away from reason. (*Tusc.* 4.35)

Such allegorizing, of course, recalls Lucretius’ treatment of these same myths (3.978-1023), which begins with a section on Tantalus which Cicero might have had in mind:

And doubtless all the things that tradition says exist in deep Acheron exist for us in our lives. There is no poor Tantalus, as the story goes, afraid of the giant rock hanging in the air above him, frozen with useless fear; instead in this life the

³⁰ Cf. also *Tusc.* 1.11, 1.65, *Div.* 2.44.

³¹ See L-S *s.v.* (cf., e.g., Cic. *N.D.* 2.70, *commenticios et fictos deos*).

empty fear of the gods oppresses men and they fear whatever accident chance may bring. (3.978-983)

It should not be surprising, then, when the same doubt appears in Propertius and he repeatedly questions or shows disapproval of myth. Lucretius' Epicureanism may even have entered into Propertius' thoughts on the underworld, since in 3.5 he depicts himself investigating,

...sub terris sint iura deum et tormenta reorum,	39
num rota, num scopuli, num sitis inter aquas,	42
aut Alcmaeoniae furiae aut ieiunia Phinei,	41
Tisiphones atro si furit angue caput,	40
num tribus infernum custodit faucibus antrum	43
Cerberus, et Tityo iugera pauca novem,	
an ficta in miseris descendit fabula gentes,	45
et timor haud ultra quam rogos esse potest. (3.5.39-46)	

...whether there exist in the underworld the laws of the gods and the punishments of sinners, the wheel, the rock, the thirst in the middle of water, Alcmaeon's furies or Phineus' starvation, if Tisiphone's head slithers with black snakes, whether Cerberus' three throats guard hell and if nine acres are too few for Tityus—or whether these made-up myths have descended on miserable mankind and there can hardly be any fear beyond the grave.

In the case of Cynthia, Propertius finds her acting under the influence of mythical precedents such as the legendary courtesans Lais, Thais, and Phryne (2.6.1-6). Thais is explicitly referred to as Menander's Thais (*Menandreae Thaidos*, 2.6.3), and Propertius seems to think Cynthia has made, in choosing this literary character, a very poor choice of exemplum for her behavior. Later in the same poem, as Propertius fairly flails about looking for a reason for Cynthia's behavior, he curses the inventor of wall-painting for corrupting innocent young women by introducing scandalous mythological scenes:³²

³² On the nature of the paintings Propertius is discussing, see Goold 1999: 121 n.17, who compares Ter. *Eun.* 584 and August. *Conf.* 1.16.

quae manus obscenas depinxit prima tabellas
et posuit casta turpia visa domo,
illa puellarum ingenuos corruptit ocellos
nequitiaeque suae noluit esse rudis.
ah gemat in tenebris, ista qui protulit arte
orgia sub tacita condita laetitia!
non istis olim variabant tecta figuris:
tum paries nullo crimine pictus erat. (2.6.27-34)

That first hand that painted obscene paintings and put up disgusting sights in a decent household, that hand corrupted well-born girls' eyes and did not want them to be ignorant of iniquity. I hope he is groaning in hell, whoever it was that displayed with his art the mysteries hidden behind silent delight! Once upon a time, people did not decorate their walls with these drawings; back then, walls were not painted with any misdeeds.

In 2.31-2,³³ Cynthia is again following the example of mythological characters, to Propertius' displeasure. His jealousy is once more the motivation for the poem; he complains that he is well aware that Cynthia's trips out of town are just excuses for rendezvous. Towards the end of this complex poem, though, Propertius changes tactics and attempts to defend her behavior to himself by arguing that mythical characters from Lesbia (an important point—Catullus' Lesbia, apparently a myth of sorts and an exemplum in her own right through the fame of Catullus' poetry) to Pasiphae and Danae were not entirely faithful; therefore, Cynthia may be excused for her minor infidelities (2.32.45-60). His closing lines, however, are unconvincing, and between his weak acceptance of her behavior and his emphasis on her imitation, the lines betray that he truly does not approve of the models she has chosen:³⁴

quod si tu Graias, si tu es imitata Latinas,
semper vive meo libera iudicio! (2.32.61-2)

³³ These are separated into two poems in the mss., but are almost universally united in modern editions of Propertius.

³⁴ Cf. Richardson 1977: 301 (the introductory note to 2.31-2).

But if you have modeled yourself on these Greek and Latin examples, live, in my judgement, freed³⁵ for always.

But Propertius' doubts about myth do not all center around their malevolent influence on his girlfriend's amatory behavior. At a much more basic level, these myths just do not work for Propertius. They are not reliable predictors of his experience and do not match up with his life and his relationship with Cynthia. A poem from Martial well illustrates the disjunction between myth and life that bothers Propertius and keeps him at odds with myth, and makes him feel the need to offer an alternative exemplum:³⁶

qui legis Oedipoden caligantemque Thyesten,
Colchidas et Scyllas, quid nisi monstra legis?
quid tibi raptus Hylas, quid Parthenopaeus et Attis,
quid tibi dormitor proderit Endymion?
exutusve puer pinnis labentibus? aut qui 5
odit amatrices Hermaphroditus aquas?
quid te vana iuvant miserae ludibria chartae?
hoc lege, quod possit dicere vita 'meum est.'
non hic Centauros, non Gorgonas Harpyiasque
invenies: hominem pagina nostra sapit. 10
sed non vis, Mamurra, tuos cognoscere mores
nec te scire: legas Aetia Callimachi. (10.4)

You who are reading about Oedipus and dark Thyestes, about Medeas and Scyllas, what are you reading but monstrosities? What good does the story of stolen Hylas, of Parthenopaeus and Attis, of sleepy Endymion do for *you*? What about the boy stripped of his slipping wings, or Hermaphroditus who despised the loving waters? What use to you are the empty mockeries of the poor page? Read this instead, which life can say "That is mine." You will find no centaurs, no gorgons or harpies here. My pages smack of mankind. But Mamurra, you do not want to recognize your ways or learn about yourself. You can read Callimachus' *Aetia*.

³⁵ This translation follows the interpretation of Richardson 1977: *ad loc.*: "better *libera* = *liberata* and goes with *meo...iudicio*, with return to the courtroom idiom of 32 and 42: 'acquitted by my court.'"

³⁶ Martial's poem has even greater point if, as some critics have felt, it is aimed specifically at Statius and his fancy for mythologizing; see Watson and Watson 2003: 95-9 (especially on lines 1, 3, and 5) with bibliography there.

Propertius' engagement with myth in books 2-3 calls into question at a very fundamental level the value of mythological exempla. To offer an alternative however, as he wishes to do—to become a *fabula*, a myth himself—means becoming literary. It is the price he must pay for competing with the authority of mythological exempla. For this reason, Propertius first depicts himself and Cynthia inhabiting the world of myth, right alongside Jupiter, Penelope, Helen, Achilles. Then he deconstructs the usual application of mythological exempla, by demonstrating their failure to account for or explain or predict his experiences. Finally, Propertius offers up his own story as a historical exemplum, a more persuasive exemplum.

Face-to-face with Myth

When Propertius sets out to praise his Cynthia in 2.3, he depicts her as a second Helen, back on earth and among the women of Rome. He in fact denies her humanity in his hyperbolic praise. In doing so, he also puts her on equal footing with the legendary women of myth, and, more importantly, raises the question of whether there is a distinction between Cynthia and these beauties:

quantum quod posito formose saltat Iaccho,	
egit ut euhantis dux Ariadna choros,	
et quantum, Aeolio cum temptat carmina plectro,	
par Aganippaeae ludere docta lyrae,	20
et sua cum antiquae committit scripta Corinnae	
carminaque Erinnae non putat aequa suis.	
non tibi nascenti primis, mea vita, diebus	
candidus argutum sternuit omen Amor?	
haec tibi contulerunt caelestia munera divi,	25
haec tibi ne matrem forte dedisse putes.	
non, non humani partus sunt talia dona:	
ista decem menses non peperere bona.	
gloria Romanis una es tu nata puellis:	
post Helenam haec terris forma secunda redit.	30

nec semper nobiscum humana cubilia vises;
 Romana accumbes prima puella Ioui.
 hac ego nunc mirer si flagrat nostra iuventus?
 pulchrius hac fuerat, Troia, perire tibi.
 olim mirabar, quod tanti ad Pergama belli
 Europae atque Asiae causa puella fuit: 35
 nunc, Pari, tu sapiens et tu, Menelae, fuisti,
 tu quia poscebas, tu quia lentus eras.
 digna quidem facies, pro qua vel obiret Achilles;
 vel Priamo belli causa probanda fuit. (2.3.17-40) 40

...as much as that, when the wine is brought out, she dances as beautifully as Ariadne led her cheering chorus girls, and how she seems, when she tests out songs on the Aeolian lyre, learned at playing something fit for Aganippe's lyre, and when she puts up her own compositions against those of ancient Corinna and thinks Erinna's are not up to hers.

In your first days, did not bright Amor sneeze you a clear omen at your birth? The gods brought these heavenly gifts for you: do not think your mother gave you them. Gifts such as these do not come from human birth; ten months did not produce these talents. You alone are born the glory of Roman women; this beauty returns to earth second after Helen. And you will not visit human beds with us: you will be the first Roman girl to lie down with Jupiter.

Should I be surprised if all our young men are on fire for her? Troy, you would have fallen more beautifully for her. I used to be amazed that a girl was the cause of such a battle at the walls of Pergamum between Europe and Asia. Now I think you were smart, Paris and Menelaus: you because you demanded her back, you because you were slow to give her back. Her face is enough that even Achilles could have died for it; even Priam would have to approve this cause for war.

Propertius has inserted Cynthia right into mythology. She is not as beautiful as Helen, she is the reincarnation of Helen's beauty. She is not as pretty as one of Jupiter's lovers, she is the first Roman girl who will be his lover. Taking his Cynthia-as-Helen further, Propertius substitutes Cynthia for Helen in the Trojan War and narrates the fall of Troy all over again, even replicating the conversation of the old men when they see Helen on the wall (2.3.35-40; compare *Od.* 3.146-60). This is the nature of Propertius' poetry in books 2 and 3. Because of the depth of his use of exempla, every character is a potential analogue for a mythological character: Propertius is an Achilles, a Paris, a

Jupiter, a Tithonus; Cynthia is a Helen, a Medea, an Ariadne, an Antiope; a rival for Cynthia's affection is a Jason or Ulysses. In 2.1, when Propertius writes that his wrestling naked with Cynthia turns into full *Iliads*, (*seu nuda erepto mecum luctatur amictu, tum vero longas condimus Iliadas*, 2.1.13-14), he is talking not only about length, but also about content. His love affair is equal to the story of the *Iliad*.

The constant juxtaposition of the people in Propertius' poems to mythological figures inevitably results in the need for comparison: it is the nature of the exemplum. Propertius explores just that comparison in a series of poems (2.8, 2.9, 3.12, 2.12) in which he shows that myth fails to supply him with dependable exempla that can explain his life. Why not, then, offer up his own story as an alternative, a new myth?

The Failure of Myth

With the linked poems 2.8 and 2.9 Propertius predicts how myth will fail him. Propertius' experiences do not match what the myths tell him he should expect. The disconnect he feels is mirrored by critics attempting to understand the Haemon exemplum (2.8.21-4) in particular: critics have shown a great deal of ingenuity in explaining the purpose of this exemplum which seems to fit Propertius' circumstances so poorly.

eripitur nobis iam pridem cara puella:	
et tu me lacrimas fundere, amice, vetas?	
nullae sunt inimicitiae nisi amoris acerbae:	
ipsum me iugula, lenior hostis ero.	
possum ego in alterius positam spectare lacerto?	5
nec mea dicitur, quae modo dicta mea est?	
omnia vertuntur: certe vertuntur amores:	
vinceris a victis, haec in amore rota est.	
magni saepe duces, magni cecidere tyranni,	
et Thebae steterunt altaque Troia fuit.	10

munera quanta dedi vel qualia carmina feci!
 illa tamen numquam ferrea dixit ‘amo.’
 ergo ego tam multos nimium temerarius annos,
 improba, qui tulerim teque tuamque domum?
 ecquandone tibi liber sum visus? an usque 15
 in nostrum iacies verba superba caput?
 sic igitur prima moriere aetate, Properti?
 sed morere; interitu gaudeat illa tuo!
 exagitet nostros Manes, sectetur et umbras,
 insultetque rogis, calcet et ossa mea! 20
 quid? non Antigonaē tumulo Boeotius Haemon
 corrui ipse suo saucius ense latus,
 et sua cum miserae permiscuit ossa puellae,
 qua sine Thebanam noluit ire domum?
 sed non effugies: mecum moriaris oportet; 25
 hoc eodem ferro stillet uterque cruor.
 quamvis ista mihi mors est inhonesta futura:
 mors inhonesta quidem, tu moriere tamen. (2.8.1-28)

The girl so dear to me for so long is being snatched away, and you tell me not to cry, my friend? No hatred is bitter except hatred in love. Cut my throat, and I will be a kindlier enemy. Can I look at her wrapped up in another man’s arms? Should I not call her ‘mine’ when just now she *was* mine? Everything changes, and especially love. You conquer them, then they conquer you: that is the wheel of love. Great leaders and tyrants have fallen; Thebes once stood, lofty Troy once existed. I gave her so many presents and wrote her such great poems! But she never said—her heart is like iron—“I love you.”

So have I been too bold all these years, then? Shameless woman, I supported you and your household. Was I ever free, in your opinion? Are you always going to throw proud words in my face?

Is this how you are going to die, then, Propertius, and while you are still a young man? Go on then, die. Let her celebrate my death. Let her pester my spirit and chase my ghost, let her dance on my pyre and kick around my bones! What? did not Boeotian Haemon collapse with a wound from his own sword on Antigone’s tomb? And mix his bones with those of his poor girlfriend, because he could not return to his Theban home without her?

But you will not get away. You are supposed to die with me. Let our blood drip from the same sword. That death will be shameful for me, certainly shameful, but still you will die.

The commentary of Butler and Barber split this poem into three parts in order to limit the incoherence of the whole. However, that was not enough in their estimation to

completely cure the poem of its faults: their introductory note makes it appear that if they could have legitimated excising lines 21-4, they would have:

The illustration with which he justifies his proposed suicide is peculiarly inept. Antigone was no faithless mistress; in all forms of the legend it is in grief for her death that Haemon slew himself. The inappropriateness is intensified by the lines which follow, in which the poet threatens to murder Cynthia.³⁷

The problem in this poem is understanding the train of thought which leads Propertius from thoughts of suicide, to thoughts of Haemon and Antigone, to thoughts of murdering Cynthia. The progression is far from clear.

The first expedient has been textual surgery. In Propertius, and especially in book 2, critics and editors have always been ready to solve problems of logic with emendation or, as in this case, transposition. A. E. Housman proposed moving 2.8.21-4 after 2.28.40. This change is possible, surely, but the lines would not really add anything in this new spot, nor is there a noticeable lack in that passage which would suggest missing lines.³⁸ Emil Baehrens proposed placing them after line 28, but this simply inverts the two problematic passages (from Haemon and Antigone > murder to murder > Haemon and Antigone) without doing much to clarify the relation between them. Any shuffling of verses, however, would disturb the symmetrical pattern in the poem's alternation of addressees. Propertius begins speaking to a friend (1-12); then turns to Cynthia (13-16);

³⁷ Butler and Barber 1933: 204.

³⁸ The transposition would involve crossing several hundred lines. The principle behind transposing verses is that manuscript copyists, especially when copying elegy (which comes in regular couplets), might easily pass over one such couplet, only to realize their mistake later and, presumably, insert the lines in the margin at whatever point they had reached in the manuscript. These lines would then, through the course of recopying, insinuate themselves into the text at the spot they were added. I have never seen, however, a reasonable explanation of a transposition across hundreds of verses. Transposition is perhaps too easy a fix for problems such as the one in this passage. Cf. the statement of Butler and Barber 1933: lxix: "That elegiac couplets may easily be displaced is an admissible view...But that a couplet or a series of couplets should stray far afield...is incredible in default of some definite theory." Cf. also Günther 1997: 1-52.

then addresses himself (17-24); then again, Cynthia (25-8); and finally, the friend again (29-40). The shifts in addressee divide the poem in the pattern of 12 : 4 : 8 : 4 : 12.³⁹

Taking the text as it stands offers the more reasonable approach, but retaining the manuscript order of the text leaves the difficulty of following and describing the seeming incongruities of Propertius' leaps in thought. It becomes necessary to pin down Propertius' motivation for the exemplum at 21-4, as Lawrence Richardson tries to do: "The shift of thought is abrupt and elliptical: he contemplates suicide and, finding himself somewhat reluctant, tries to bolster his determination with the thought of other lovers who have killed themselves for love."⁴⁰ Nevertheless, where Richardson locates Propertius' reluctance is not apparent. On the other hand, it is enough for W. A. Camps to simply affirm Propertius' emotional crisis:

The point of comparison here is that Haemon killed himself for loss of his loved one; the poet has said in 17-18 that he will kill himself for loss of his. The fact that the circumstances attending the loss are quite different in the two cases is not a fault; the speaker's thoughts are rendered incoherent by emotion.⁴¹

There is always some danger in entrusting the solution of a problem to a claim on the "incoherence of emotion."⁴² A compromise is struck by P. J. Enk, who argues that the exemplum is only partly applicable to the situation: "Poeta Cynthiam non comparat cum Antigona sed se ipsum comparat cum Haemone qui sine Antigona vivere non potuit."⁴³

³⁹ Suits 1965: 437.

⁴⁰ Richardson 1977: *ad* 21.

⁴¹ Camps 1966: *ad* 21.

⁴² As Paphangelis 1987: 120 points out in criticism of Camps' claims.

⁴³ Enk 1962: *ad* 21.

Rothstein's commentary proves helpful by showing that a hidden assumption undermines all these proposals:

Von den wirren Ergüssen einer erregten Phantasie kehrt die Betrachtung wieder zu dem Hauptgedanken *sic igitur moriere?* zurück, um die Antwort zu geben "warum nicht? ist es doch auch dem Hämon ebenso ergangen."⁴⁴

Rothstein and the others pass over the vivid image of Cynthia desecrating Propertius' grave as a 'confused outburst' and focus on the *Hauptgedanke*, namely that Propertius is pondering suicide. This is implicit in Camps' citation of lines 17-18. Richard Whitaker too states matter-of-factly that Propertius, just like Haemon, intends to kill himself because he lost the girl he loved; yet on the previous page he paraphrases, "Let her then persecute his shade and insult his dead body! It is at this point that the mythological exemplum is introduced..."⁴⁵ Despite keying in on very the moment that the exemplum occurs, Whitaker writes as if the exemplum has no connection to the immediately previous lines. This is the critical mistake in reading the myth.

The scene at the grave is the motivation for the Haemon and Antigone exemplum. Propertius has resolved to kill himself already. In lines 18-20, he is imagining himself dead. And here comes Cynthia to his graveside—to mourn? No, to celebrate and stomp on his ashes! Hardly the appropriate behavior for a beloved. No, in fact, Haemon showed how it was meant to be done. Haemon came, discovered Antigone dead, and heaped his own body onto her tomb, mixed his bones with hers. Propertius is the one dead (Antigone); Cynthia is—well, is supposed to be—the one mourning to the point of her own suicide at his grave (Haemon). In the exemplum, the bones of Antigone are

⁴⁴ Rothstein 1898: *ad* 21.

⁴⁵ Whitaker 1983: 120, 119.

called *miseræ ossa puellæ*; *miser* is, of course, the epithet *par excellence* of the elegist.

Haemon did not want to return to his Theban home, but Propertius, by contrast, has to stop Cynthia from leaving: “But you will not get away.”⁴⁶

Consequently, Cynthia has not embraced her role as latter-day Haemon, and the myth fails Propertius. The second half of line 25 reveals Propertius’ expectations: *mecum moriaris oportet*, “You are supposed to die with me.” The word *oportet* draws attention to itself because it is prosaic.⁴⁷ Here is the crux of the exemplum: if the myth has any relevance as an exemplum, Cynthia is *supposed* to kill herself out of longing for Propertius, not dance on his grave. Propertius, of course, has an option: make the myth fit by killing Cynthia. If she will not willingly fulfill her mythological obligations, Propertius can see to it that she does so unwillingly.⁴⁸ This is why her death would be *inhonesta* (27, 28) for him.

The failure of Cynthia to follow mythological precedent further breaks down the value of myth’s exemplarity because of a second theme that runs through 2.8 and 2.9 (a

⁴⁶ Commentators cite a passage from Naevius as a parallel: *numquam hodie effugies quin mea moriaris manu* (“You will never escape dying at my hand today,” *Trag.* 16), but I am not convinced that *effugies* as used by Propertius here must mean only escaping death. There are plenty of examples of *effugio* used for escaping something other than death (cf. *OLD* s.v.); in fact, since the all-important words present in the Naevian parallel (*mea manu*) are absent in Propertius’ line, it is possible to argue that murder is not the foremost idea for Propertius. The close proximity of the phrase to *noluit ire domum* (24) makes it possible that Propertius is telling Cynthia that she will not be able merely to leave and go home, just as Haemon found himself unable. On the other hand, the other Propertian uses of *effugio* (1.21.8, 4.7.2) clearly do refer to escaping death. The matter is further complicated because *effugies* appears only in lesser manuscripts; N reads *efficies*, which can mean achieving any sort of task.

⁴⁷ Axelson 1945: 14-15.

⁴⁸ Cf. Suits 1965: 431, who, however, holds the traditional view of the roles played by Propertius and Cynthia in the exemplum: “Propertius realizes that in the story Haemon’s death followed from that of Antigone. Elsewhere, he must carefully select or adapt his myths to fit the details of his situation. Here, on the other hand, he is in the unusual position of being able to control the circumstances and ensure that the myth will be appropriate; he has only to kill Cynthia and take her with him.” This is not far from my reading, but Suits reverses the roles so that he misses Cynthia’s failure to act with Haemonian loyalty at Propertius’ grave.

companion poem which treats a topic very similar to that of 2.8). The line between the poems is so blurry that the beginning lines of 2.9 could belong equally well on the end of 2.8, as James Butrica has argued. This location of the opening lines (2.9.1-2), he claims, seems not to follow Propertian practice: “No other elegy that announces its situation through a series of exempla prefaces them with any introduction...”⁴⁹ Second, these lines highlight a theme that runs strongly through 2.8: the theme that history is cyclical:

iste quod est, ego saepe fui: sed fors et in hora
hoc ipso eiecto carior alter erit. (2.9.1-2)

What he is, I have been. Maybe in time he will be rejected and another will become dear.

This first couplet of 2.9 also hearkens back to the opening section of 2.8, in which Propertius mentions the wheel of love:

nec mea dicetur, quae modo dicta mea est?
omnia vertuntur: certe vertuntur amores:
vinceris a victis, haec in amore rota est.
magni saepe duces, magni cecidere tyranni,
et Thebae steterunt altaque Troia fuit. (2.8.6-10)

Should I not call her ‘mine’ when just now she *was* mine? Everything changes, and especially love. You conquer them, then they conquer you: that is the wheel of love. Great leaders and tyrants have fallen; Thebes once stood, lofty Troy once existed.

The life of love is cyclical and repetitive. Propertius makes this concrete by being extremely repetitive in these very lines: *mea/mea, dicetur/dicta, vertuntur/vertuntur, vinceris/victis, magni/magni*.⁵⁰ Lovers come and lovers go. Propertius might even think “Haemons and Antigones come and go.” When it is his turn to be Antigone, however, he

⁴⁹ Butrica 1984: 189. He compares 1.3, 2.6, 2.14, and 2.20.

⁵⁰ Warden 1980: 93.

discovers that Cynthia is no Haemon. The myth holds no power of exemplarity for Cynthia.

This interpretation of 2.8 reverses the roles played by Propertius and Cynthia. Previous critics switched their roles partially because of a desire to connect the exemplum with some part of the poem other than the disgraceful scene of Cynthia desecrating Propertius' grave, and partially, I suspect, because it involves a gender-reversal that plays against latent sexual stereotypes. Is it really that surprising, though, if Propertius dons a dress and acts the part of a loyal and nurturing woman? As Nancy Wiggers has shown, in 2.9 Propertius begins by contrasting Briseis and Penelope, both models of fidelity, to Cynthia, who fares miserably in the comparison.⁵¹ But neither does Propertius play clever Odysseus or fierce Achilles. Actually, Propertius models himself in this poem after just those women that Cynthia failed to live up to. He tends for Cynthia when she is ill (25-28), recreating the scene of Briseis tending wounded Achilles (9-16). He swears to keep his bed empty and remain loyal (41-8), just as Penelope stayed true (3-8).

In these two poems, Propertius' expectations of myths are repeatedly defeated. Haemon and Antigone, Penelope and Odysseus, and Briseis and Achilles all prove to be deeply flawed analogies for Cynthia's relationship to Propertius. Propertius is forced to take on the role Cynthia is meant to play, or worse, to make Cynthia fit her role by force. And yet Propertius' threat against Cynthia in 2.8 is hardly the "first recorded threat in Western literature of what would be called male apocalyptic violence."⁵² The

⁵¹ Wiggers 1976.

⁵² James 2003: 313 n. 117.

threat is toothless, and Propertius is just railing against a mythology that so often misleads him.

Another pair of lovers are misled by their mythological counterparts in 3.12. Propertius joins with a woman named Galla to lament her husband's departure to "follow the standards of Augustus" (3.12.2). In the latter part of the poem (3.12.12-38) Propertius retells Odysseus' journey at extended length (or, as Camps puts it, "disproportionate").⁵³ While Postumus is gone, Galla displays remarkable fidelity, the fidelity of a Penelope (3.12.38). This comparison, and his lengthy trip away from home, makes Postumus, the husband, into an *alter Ulixes*, "a second coming of Odysseus" (3.12.23). Propertius, however, fights against the propriety of this identification: not every Penelope must endure an Odysseus.⁵⁴ In fact, Galla's fidelity deserved better treatment (*ter quater in casta felix, o Postume, Galla! / moribus his alia coniuge dignus eras*, "Postumus, you are blessed three and four times over in your chaste Galla; with your ways, you deserved a different wife"). By the very act of leaving and turning himself into an Odysseus, Postumus shows himself unworthy of being married to a Penelope.

With this poem Propertius demonstrates that even the most apt and suitable exempla—and Postumus and Galla clearly are aptly described as a latter-day Odysseus and Penelope—can fall short of what Propertius considers the proper behavior. As an elegist, and as a man subject to suffering Cynthia's trips abroad in the company of the

⁵³ Camps 1966: 112 (introductory note to 3.12).

⁵⁴ Perhaps the length of the digression on Odysseus is meant to embody Galla's feeling of the length of Postumus' trip, and editors such as Camps are made to empathize with her when they find the digression too long.

Illyrian praetor (1.8, 2.16), Propertius could have told Postumus exactly what he ought to do: stay at home. Propertius made that very choice himself when Tullus offered to take him to Athens and Asia in 1.6 (with a much less faithful *puella* involved). Where myth fails, the elegist Propertius offers a real exemplum, his life, that works.

Propertius unites all of these strands—comparison of myth with reality, failure of myth, and the greater value of his own myth—in a poem balanced precisely to emphasize these differences:

quicumque ille fuit, puerum qui pinxit Amorem,
 nonne putas miras hunc habuisse manus?
 is primum vidit sine sensu vivere amantes,
 et levibus curis magna perire bona. 5
 idem non frustra ventosas addidit alas,
 fecit et humano corde volare deum:
 scilicet alterna quoniam iactamur in unda,
 nostraque non ullis permanet aura locis.
 et merito hamatis manus est armata sagittis,
 et pharetra ex umero Cnosia utroque iacet: 10
 ante ferit quoniam tuti quam cernimus hostem,
 nec quisquam ex illo vulnere sanus abit.
 in me tela manent, manet et puerilis imago:
 sed certe pennas perdidit ille suas;
 evolat heu nostro quoniam de pectore nusquam, 15
 assiduusque meo sanguine bella gerit.
 quid tibi iucundum est siccis habitare medullis?
 si pudor est, alio traice tela, puer!
 intactos isto satius temptare veneno:
 non ego, sed tenuis vapulat umbra mea. 20
 quam si perdideris, quis erit qui talia cantet
 (haec mea Musa levis gloria magna tua est),
 qui caput et digitos et lumina nigra puellae
 et canat ut soleant molliter ire pedes? (2.12)

The first man that painted Love as a boy, whoever he was, do you not think his talent was amazing? He was the first to see that people in love act senselessly and lose great blessings for the sake of unimportant concerns. He also attached airy wings not without reason, and made the god fly in men's hearts, since clearly we are tossed around on the waves and our breeze never remains in one spot. And rightly he carries barbed arrows and a Cretan quiver hangs from each shoulder,

since he strikes before we perceive our enemy, while we think we are safe, and no one walks away from that blow still sound.

In my case, the arrows remain, the image of the boy remains. But he has surely lost his wings, since—goodness!—he does not fly off anywhere from my chest and constantly conducts campaigns at the cost of my blood. What is so pleasant about living inside dry marrow? If you have any shame, boy, toss your arrows somewhere else! Better to try out this poison on the never-been-in-love. It is not me, but my slight shadow that is taking the punishment; if you destroy it, who will there be to sing this sort of song (this girl, my slight Muse, is your great glory)? Who will sing about her head, fingers, dark eyes, about how she steps so lightly?

The form of the poem, a piece-by-piece explication of Love's attributes based on their relation to the qualities of lovers, has a rhetorical ring to it, and Quintilian indeed attests that (later on, at least) just such exercises were practiced in the rhetorical schools:

solebant praeceptores mei neque inutili et nobis etiam iucundo genere exercitationis praeparare nos coniecturalibus causis cum quaerere atque exequi iuberent 'cur armata apud Lacedaemonios Venus' et 'quid ita crederetur Cupido puer atque volucer et sagittis ac face armatus' et similia... (Quint. 2.4.26)

My teachers used to prepare us for conjectural cases with a useful and fun type of exercise. They would have us ask (and then develop), "Why is Venus armed in Sparta?" and "Why is it believed that Cupid is a child and winged and armed with arrows and carrying a torch?" and other similar questions.

This rhetorical influence is one of the contexts for this poem,⁵⁵ but the *topos* of descriptions of Love has a very long tradition and extends in both time and location far beyond the schools of rhetoric. The Greek Anthology features poems on the same subject (5.176, 177) by Meleager of Gadara in the 1st c. B.C.⁵⁶ Moschus, the 2nd c. B.C. bucolic poet from Syracuse, includes a lengthy description in his poem on Runaway

⁵⁵ On the role of such exercises in Roman education, see Bonner 1949, Bonner 1977, and Clark 1957.

⁵⁶ Meleager's version in 5.177 may already feature something of the formality of the rhetorical schools; it opens by announcing, κηρύσσω τὸν Ἔρωτα, "A disquisition on Love."

Love (fr. 1). Three centuries later, Isidore of Seville (560-636 A.D.) preserves a version of the *topos* as well:

Cupidinem vocatum ferunt propter amorem. est enim daemon fornicationis. qui ideo alatus pingitur, quia nihil amantibus levius, nihil mutabilius invenitur. puer pingitur, quia stultus est et irrationabilis amor. sagittam et facem tenere fingitur. sagittam, quia amor cor vulnerat; facem, quia inflammat. (*Etym.* 8.11.80)

They say he is called Cupid due to love; he is the daemon of sex. He is portrayed with wings because nothing is more flighty or changeable than lovers. He is portrayed as a child because love is stupid and irrational. He is imagined carrying an arrow and a torch; an arrow, because love wounds the heart, and a torch, because he sets people on fire.

Isidore's version illustrates the primary purpose of the *topos*: explaining how the characteristics of Love are apt for the god of love. The four categories (boy, winged, arrows, torch) are shared by Isidore and Quintilian (Propertius neglects to discuss his torch, but covers the other three), and each is accompanied by a justification for that characteristic in the behavior of lovers. But just as discussed in the passages previously, a close comparison like this invites its opposite, an equally close look at where the characteristics of Love come up short. This is precisely how the fragment of Eubulus (4th c. B.C.) attacks the *topos*:

τίς ἦν ὁ γράψας πρῶτος ἀνθρώπων ἄρα
ἢ κηροπλαστήσας Ἐρωθ' ὑπόπτερον;
ὡς οὐδὲν ἦδει πλὴν χελιδόνας γράφειν,
ἀλλ' ἦν ἄπειρος τῶν τρόπων τῶν τοῦ θεοῦ.
ἔστιν γὰρ οὔτε κοῦφος, οὔτε ῥάδιος
ἀπαλλαγῆναι τῷ φέροντι τὴν νόσον,
βαρὺς δὲ κομιδῆ. πῶς ἂν οὖν ἔχοι πτερὰ
τοιούτο πρᾶγμα; λῆρος, εἰ κᾶφησέ τις. (Eubul. fr. 41)

Who was the first man who painted or sculpted Eros with wings? He did not know how to paint anything other than swallows; he was unacquainted with the god's ways. He is not light, nor easy for someone who is suffering from his plague to toss off. He is instead altogether heavy. How could something like that have wings? It is foolishness, if anyone says he is.

Propertius' poem begins in similar fashion, but Eubulus, at least in the fragment as it stands, reverses the *topos*. He does not endorse the conventions of describing Love as winged, and he instead describes several ways that the image of a winged Love is inappropriate.

Propertius does both, ascribing to the appropriate and challenging the inappropriate. The first section of the poem (2.12.1-12) endorses typical images of Love, even praises the skill of the artist who first depicted him thus. In the second half, in an equal number of lines (2.12.13-24), Propertius breaks down the myth's failings in his own experience. The symmetry between the two halves of the poem is crucial, and allows Propertius to move from one approach to its opposite without even a contrasting conjunction: no *sed*, *tamen*, or *at*. The balance allows for an asyndeton, as it were, of form. Instead Propertius changes course with a simple *in me*, "In my case" (13).⁵⁷ Because of the lack of formal or explicit contrast, however, this *in me* receives much greater weight; and duly so, since it is the key to Propertius' poem.

This *in me* recalls an earlier use of the same phrase at the same position in the line—as it turns out, to serve the same function. In the opening poem of book 1, Propertius cites the exemplum of Milanion to justify his belief that with endurance and suffering a lover can win over his beloved, just as Milanion eventually won over Atalanta. Yet even as Propertius cites the myth, he knows its flaws, because despite his persistence, Cynthia still eludes *him*.

⁵⁷ In this line (2.12.13) *in me* could be local with *tela manent* ("The darts remain in me"), but the previous use of the phrase in 1.1.17 tells against it. It is better understood in both places as "In meinem Fall" (Rothstein 1898: *ad loc.*).

Milanion nullos fugiendo, Tulle, labores
 saevitiam durae contudit Iasidos.
 nam modo Partheniis amens errabat in antris,
 rursus in hirsutas ibat et ille feras;
 ille etiam Hylaei percussus vulnere rami
 saucius Arcadiis rupibus ingemuit.
 ergo velocem potuit domuisse puellam:
 tantum in amore fides et benefacta valent.
 in me tardus Amor non ullas cogitat artes,
 nec meminit notas, ut prius, ire vias. (1.1.9-18)

Tullus, Milanion conquered the savageness of the tough daughter of Iasus by shirking no task. Now he wandered mindless in the Parthenian caves, then again he went up against hairy wild animals; he even groaned on Arcadian mountains after he was wounded by a strike from the Hylaeian club. Therefore he was able to tame the swift girl. In love, faith and good deeds accomplish that much.

In my case, Love is slow and does not conceive any stratagems. It does not know how to travel the paths it once did.

The transition is the same as in 2.12: from a mythological exemplum that promises one version of events, to the actuality of Propertius' life, which is far different. Notice in this poem, Propertius even strengthens the formal nature of the exemplum with *ergo*, "therefore" (15). Despite the appearance of logical necessity, though, the exemplum does not hold true for Propertius.

In each of these poems, 1.1 and 2.12, after the *in me*, Propertius turns to offering his own experiences as a substitute for the flawed myths. Propertius' strategy in 1.1 is obvious. After the failure of Milanion and the turn in the poem signalled by *in me*, Propertius himself becomes the teacher of behavior, not the myth-studying student. The remainder of the poem (1.1.19-38) is filled with his own commands and instruction, littered with imperatives (*en agedum convertite*, 21; *facite*, 22; *quaerite*, 26; *ferte, ferte*, 29; *remanete*, 31; *sitis*, 32; *vitae*, 35). He concludes with the authority of his own story, not an old myth:

hoc, moneo, vitate malum: sua quemque moretur
cura, neque assueto mutet amore torum.
quod si quis monitis tardas adverterit aures,
heu referet quanto verba dolore mea! (1.1.35-8)

I warn you, avoid this mistake. Let each man spend his time with his woman; do not change beds once he has become accustomed to his love. But if anyone turns slow ears to my warnings, oh, he will recall my words with a great deal of pain!

In 2.12, Propertius more subtly replaces the *pictor* of the opening lines with himself as artist in the closing lines. He even chooses the same words for the painter's description of Love and his own description of Cynthia: *et levibus curis magna perire bona* (2.12.4) and *haec mea Musa levis gloria magna tua est* (2.12.22).⁵⁸ The poem moves from the painted Love to the sung Cynthia, and the picture of Cynthia is, Propertius argues, the truer one. Propertius has replaced one artist with another, and one topic (myth) with another (Cynthia).

The Propertian Myth

It is clear that Propertius, in books 2 and 3, explores closely the value of mythological exempla and contends that his own story—his own myth—is more useful than those of traditional mythology.⁵⁹ In poems 1.1 and 2.12 Propertius even begins to put forth his own myth as a replacement for their failings. Still neither of these poems is quite on the level of Propertius' exemplary audacity in 3.11, in which he claims that his exemplum provided Augustus with the knowledge to stave off Cleopatra and save Rome at the battle of Actium.

⁵⁸ Wyke 1987a: 56.

⁵⁹ The period in which Propertius was writing was particularly open for rewriting and contesting reality and meaning; Augustus' ascent to power after Actium and his own program of self-redefinition, along with his rewriting of Rome's institutions and morality, is a strong example of the environment Propertius found himself in. Cf. Nappa 2005, esp. 1-22.

Elegy 3.11 begins with a fairly typical example of the *topos* of *servitium amoris*.

Propertius is responding to an unnamed addressee who has charged him with cowardice because of his *femina*.

quid mirare, meam si versat femina vitam
et trahit addictum sub sua iura virum,
criminaque ignavi capitis mihi turpia fingis,
quod nequeam fracto rumpere vincla iugo?
ventorum melius praesagit navita morem,
vulneribus didicit miles habere metum.
ista ego praeterita iactavi verba iuventa:
tu nunc exemplo disce timere meo. (3.11.1-8)

5

Why are you surprised that a woman is busying my whole life and dragging me off in her custody and under her laws? Why are you charging me with shameful crimes of cowardice, saying that I cannot break the yoke and break the chains? A sailor best knows the way the winds blow, a soldier learns from his wounds to be afraid. I boasted in those same words of yours back when I was young: now you take my example and learn to be afraid.

The words *trahere*, *sub iura*, *rumpere*, *vincla*, and *iugum* are all frequently found in passages where the elegist complains of his unrequited servitude to his mistress.⁶⁰ In the last line of this opening section, though, Propertius asserts a certain amount of authority, even as he is charged with cowardice, and says “Take my example and learn to be afraid.” The phrase receives even more emphasis from the position of *meo* at the end of the line.⁶¹ And an exemplum does follow—in fact a series of exempla—but not of Propertius. The rest of the poem tells the story of Medea, Penthesilea, Omphale, and Semiramis, each renowned for her power over men (3.11.9-28). Only then does the poem turn to Cleopatra and Augustus’ victory over her at Actium (3.11.29-72). Propertius does not mention himself again, and what might seem like the set up for a frame-poem

⁶⁰ On the use of *servitium amoris* by the elegists, see Lyne 1979 and Copley 1947.

⁶¹ Gurval 1995: 190.

(as, for example, 1.20 or 3.15) never circles back around to its opening lines. For this reason, Camps thought the opening lines dispensable:

There is no return at the end of the piece to the sentiments which begin it. Despite the poet's refusal in Elegy ix to attempt 'patriotic' poetry, this elegy (like xiii below) is a 'patriotic' poem, for which the love-theme does no more than furnish what is frankly a peg.⁶²

This 'peg,' however, has a great deal to do with the 'patriotic' sentiments of the rest of the poem. Surely Propertius could have written this poem without the opening lines had he wanted to; he was not constrained to insert some love-poetry into every poem.

Instead, these opening lines set the erotic context as governing all of what follows.⁶³

They begin a process of mythological recasting of the events of Cleopatra and Augustus at Actium in terms of the Propertian myth.

The exemplum referred to in line 8 is not to be found: it is Propertius' life itself. The reader will know Propertius' story from the rest of his poems, and from the reputation his poems have given him. It is all-too appropriate that critics have searched for the presence of this exemplum in a poem that begins *quid mirare?* Propertius' addressee should already know Propertius' story; he should not be surprised. Propertius' readers too should already know what *exemplo meo* refers to: Propertius' life and relationship with Cynthia as a whole. The exemplum is not 'missing,' as commonly supposed. Through his poems Propertius has established himself as a *fabula* on par with the world of mythology. His passing reference to his own myth in this case is a form of *antonomasia*, whereby simply mentioning a name or a place is enough to conjure up the

⁶² Camps 1966: 104 (introductory note to 3.11).

⁶³ Cf. Nethercut 1971: 437.

story attached to it.⁶⁴ The opening *versat meam vitam* is more than enough to prompt the reader to call up the long affair between Propertius and Cynthia.

That Propertius has established himself as a generally known myth is also shown by the tricolon he sets himself into in lines 5-8. The sailor knows the winds, the soldier the battlefield, the lover dangerous women. By comparison, Horace opens his *Odes* with a similar listing of typical occupations (the Olympic athlete, the politician, the storehouse manager, the farmer, the trader/sailor, the man drinking by the stream, the soldier, the huntsman), but he lists them as elements in a priamel meant to distinguish his own path (as shown by the emphatic *me* at *Od.* 1.1.29). Propertius is not setting up a priamel, but a parallel, and inserting himself into the ranks with the soldier and sailor.

Accordingly, when Propertius describes Cleopatra, he does so in such a way as to emphasize not military might, but her power over her lovers. The series of exempla mentioning Medea, Penthesilea, Omphale, and Semiramis all feature the control of women over their men, and Cleopatra's two great Roman lovers are an absent presence in the poem. Antony, of course, is nowhere mentioned explicitly and Julius Caesar is invoked only in passing (*tua si socero colla daturas eras*, "if you had been destined to offer your neck to your father-in-law," 3.11.38), but it is fairly easy to see Antony behind the image of Jason and Julius Caesar behind Achilles.⁶⁵ Propertius does not present Cleopatra as a powerful queen and leader, but instead turns her into a new version of Cynthia. Verbal parallels show the link: Cleopatra is said to have "demanded the Senate in her custody and under her control" (*poposcit / ... addictos in sua regna*

⁶⁴ Cf. Lausberg 1998: 264-6(§580).

⁶⁵ Nethercut 1971: 423-5.

Patres, 3.11.32) just as Cynthia leads Propertius “off in her custody and under her laws” (*trahit addictum sub sua iura*, 3.11.2). Cleopatra attempts to “pass judgments right beside Marius’ statues and weapons” (*iura dare et statuas inter et arma Mari*, 3.11.46). Even Propertius’ choice of Cleopatra as subject is an attempt to transform the world of myth into a more present reality. The exempla in 3.11.9-28 may all be mythological figures, but at 3.11.27-8 Propertius stops himself and turns to the historical example of Cleopatra.

nam quid ego heroas, quid raptem in crimina divos?
 Iuppiter infamat seque suamque domum.
 quid, modo quae nostris opprobria nexerit armis,
 et, famulos inter femina trita suos,
 coniugii obsceni pretium Romana poposcit
 moenia et addictos in sua regna Patres? (3.11.27-32)

30

But why should I drag in heroes and gods on these charges? Jupiter brings a bad reputation on himself and on his household.

What about the woman who has knotted shame into our weapons and demanded as the price of her foul marriage Rome’s walls and the senate in her custody and under her control, the woman “worn out” among her slaves?

Just as Cleopatra is recast as a Cynthia, Jupiter is here recast as a Propertius. The phrases *raptem in crimina* (27) and *infamat seque suamque domum* (28) recall the charges placed on Propertius’ head in the poem’s opening lines, *criminaque ignavi capitis mihi turpia fingis* (3).⁶⁶

In Propertius’ history, Augustus becomes the learned lover. He is not affected by Cleopatra’s wiles. He has the proper fear for Cleopatra and does not succumb to her seduction. Propertius takes the fearful learned lover (*exemplo disce timere meo*, 8) and applies it twice to Augustus’ victory over Cleopatra:

⁶⁶ Gurval 1995: 195.

‘non hoc, Roma, fui tanto tibi cive **verenda!**’

vix **timeat** salvo Caesare Roma Iovem. (3.11.55, 66)

“With such a citizen as this, Rome, I need not have been feared!”

While Caesar is safe, Rome need hardly fear Jupiter.

This is not the only occasion on which Propertius has identified Augustus with Jupiter.

In 2.7 Propertius is rejoicing with Cynthia at the repeal of a law which would have affected their relationship for the worse.⁶⁷ Propertius mocks Jupiter, whom he quickly elides into Augustus:

...quamvis diducere amantes
non queat invitos Iuppiter ipse duos.
‘at magnus Caesar.’ sed magnus Caesar in armis:
devictae gentes nil in amore valent.

...still, even Jupiter himself cannot split up two lovers against their will. ‘But Caesar is powerful.’ Yes, but Caesar is powerful when it comes to weapons: conquered peoples have no value in love.

Now Augustus is powerful in love as well, and therefore is even more powerful than Jupiter, who remains, as we saw in lines 27-8, a suffering Propertian lover. Augustus breaks the *servitium amoris* that brought down his contemporary Antony and his adoptive father Julius. He has—at least in this version of Propertius’ own making—learned from Propertius’ exemplum:

Ancora una volta, dopo aver metonimicamente ridotto tutto il mondo alla sola tematica d’amore, l’elegiaco Properzio dilata questo area ristretta a inglobare metaforicamente il mondo: un evento capitale della storia di Roma può così essere celebrato perchè al poeta è stato possibile leggerlo come un esempio del *servitium amoris*.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ What the law was, and what the effect would have been, are still somewhat cloudy; cf. Badian 1985.

⁶⁸ Gazich 1995: 234.

Roberto Gazich is perhaps even a little too timid in his claims here: if Propertius is taken at his word (*exemplo disce meo*), then the audience must assign to Propertius the role of teacher for Augustus in his victory over Cleopatra. The tricolon of careers (3.11.5-8) takes on an added dimension now, because it is through the combination of sailor, soldier, and Propertian lover that Augustus was victorious over Cleopatra. The Propertian myth has played a part in the course of history.

With the end of the poem, Propertius seeks to etch *his* version of history into the minds of his audience:

Curtius expletis statuit monumenta lacunis,	61
admisso Decius proelia rupit equo,	
Coclitis abscissos testatur semita pontes,	
est cui cognomen corvus habere dedit:	64
Leucadius versas acies memorabit Apollo:	69
tanti operis bellum sustulit una dies.	70
at tu, sive petes portus seu, navita, linques,	
Caesaris in toto sis memor Ionio. (3.11.61-72)	

Curtius established a monument when the chasm was filled; Decius broke open the battle when he let his horse loose; the path of Cocles is a testament to the cutting of the bridge; and there is the one to whom the crow gave a name. Leucadian Apollo will memorialize the turned battle-line: one day removed a war of such size.

But you, sailor, whether you are heading for port or leaving, do not forget Caesar over all the Ionian sea.

Each couplet contains words emphasizing monuments or memory: *monumenta* (61),

testatur (63), *memorabit* (69), *sis memor* (72).⁶⁹ Now that this sailor has heard

Propertius' version of the story—the Propertian myth of Augustus at Actium—he

should remember it and spread it across all the Ionian. Propertius has challenged myth

right at its roots, on its appropriateness as exemplum, found it wanting, and replaced it

⁶⁹ I hope I will not seem to be arguing circularly, since the transpositions in the verses here follow Shackleton Bailey 1956: *ad loc.*, and one of his arguments for this arrangement *is* the series of words thus produced. The logical order of thought, however, was his primary criteria.

with his own myth. With 3.11, he shows his own myth operating in history, and encourages his audience to adopt it as their own.

CHAPTER FIVE WRITING ELEGIAC REALITY

Folks, I'm no fan of reality, and I'm no fan of encyclopedias. I've said it before: who is Britannica to tell me that George Washington had slaves? If I want to say he didn't, that's my right. And, now, thanks to Wikipedia...it's also a fact. We should apply these principles to all information. All we need to do is convince the majority of people that some factoid is true—for instance, that Africa has more elephants today than it did ten years ago. Now, I don't know if that's actually true. But if it was true, boy would that be a big blow to environmentalists....Nation, it's time we use the power of our numbers for a real internet revolution. We're going to stampede across the web like that giant horde of elephants in Africa. In fact, that's where we can start. Find the page on elephants on Wikipedia, and create an entry that says the number of elephants has tripled in the last six months. Folks, it's the least we can do to save this noble beast. Together, we can create a reality that we can all agree on—the reality we just agreed on.

—Stephen Colbert, on “Wikiality”

Book Four: The End of Elegy?

The traditional narrative: Propertius begins his writing career without a patron, or at least with a patron of relatively low status in Tullus. Book 2 begins with a poem which mentions Maecenas twice and Caesar three times, showing that Propertius has now become a client of Maecenas (and therefore Augustus); other poems sprinkled throughout books 2 and 3 also concern or are addressed to Augustus (2.7, 2.10, 2.16, 2.31, 2.34, 3.4, 3.9, 3.11, 3.18). In books 2 and 3, however, Propertius still maintains a certain distance from the establishment.¹ With book 4, though, the former writer of love elegy is transformed. Book 4 is a “volte face,”² an abandonment (forced or otherwise) by Propertius of his earlier identity. The combination of Propertius' promise to write about

¹ The dissenting view is Cairns 2006: *passim*, but especially 320-1: “from the moment of his entry into Maecenas' circle, as throughout his subsequent poetic life, Propertius' literary services were fully at the disposal of the *princeps*.”

² Janan 2001: 13.

the “rites and gods and ancient names of locations” (4.1.69) and the sudden absence of his domination as speaker (he cedes that position in poems 1b, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, and 11) have even been taken to signal not just an acceptance of imperial ideology,³ but the end of elegy.⁴ Even scholars who are careful to dissociate book 4 from any idea of imperial pressure still speak of Propertius’ changes in similar terms, for example: “It would be a further gain if 4.1 began that crucial feature of book 4, the narrator-poet’s loss of monopoly over voicing.”⁵ “Loss,” Hutchinson writes, as if it were not Propertius’ choice to set as narrator of his poems whatever voice he liked. The position is argued most thoroughly by P. A. Miller in his recent attempt at a “New History” of elegy. Miller claims that the position of Augustus in Roman society is so powerful and overwhelming that it leaves the elegiac narrator no vantage point from which to speak; Propertius has been “interpolated” by the institutions of Augustus.⁶ All this results from a fundamental assumption that breaks book 4 apart from the rest of the Propertian corpus and breaks the Propertius of book 4 apart from the Propertius of books 1-3: instead of an authoritative speaker, Propertius in book 4 is seen as “a figure that sometimes represents

³ Hubbard 1974: 177-8 believes that book 4 was most likely built around 4.6 and 4.11 (the “Augustan” poems); these elegies seem to be commissioned works and the poet “built the book around them.” Others who hold to the idea that Propertius is with book 4 thoroughly assimilated to Augustus include Grimal 1952: 325, Boucher 1965: 158-9, Alfonsi 1979: 72, d’Elia 1981: 59-80, and Fantham 1996: 110-11 (as well as, of course, Cairns 2006). The parallel with the interpretation of Horace book 4 is intriguing. Whether Horace’s panegyric is dictated by imperial will is also under debate; cf. Johnson 2004.

⁴ Miller 2004: 188, Stahl 1985: 265.

⁵ Hutchinson 2006: 61.

⁶ Miller 2004: 186-7; for the similar view on Horace, cf. Fowler 1995: 248-66, Oliensis 1998: 150-3, Lowrie 1997: 343-52.

Propertius, but who has no discernible location and seems oddly separate from the first-person speaker of books 1-3.”⁷

The problem in reading book 4 begins in books 1-3. Critics make Propertius into a writer detached from society, or opposed to it, or unwilling to participate in it. Hidden behind the elegiac *persona*, Propertius has no interest, or very little, in the world around him other than to distance himself from it. When in book 4 Propertius ‘suddenly’ and explicitly announces his involvement in Rome, then critics are forced to break the back of the Propertian corpus to separate the two Properti, the elegiac poet of book 1-3 and the so-called nationalist poet of book 4. Books 1-3 are elegy; book 4 is something else.

This view, dominant in discussions of book 4, is based on the faulty assumption that Propertius and his poetry must *essentially be* one or the other: the love poet or the Augustan *vates*, the private or public, the erotic or the political. But, as I have been arguing, Propertius connects himself tightly to reality from the very beginning of his poetic career. From the beginning, Propertius erases the line between these artificial categories and asserts the power of his elegy to affect and interact with society. The Propertius of book 4 is no new Propertius, no changed Propertius, not assimilated, or displaced. In book 4 Propertius culminates his poetic project by showing how reality is always potentially open for interpretation and revision: even Propertius himself can be rewritten.

⁷ Miller 2004: 187. Cf. Fox 1996: 153: “For the poet to speak of Rome’s history is a breach of the long-established divide between private and public which was fundamental to Propertius’ earlier poetry.”

Horos and the Drama of 4.1

Propertius would certainly not be surprised by the response of critics to book 4. In fact, his prologue dramatizes the very course that criticism has taken. Propertius begins his fourth book by presenting present-day Rome to a visitor, a *hospes*, contrasting it with the humbler beginnings of the city (4.1a.1-38). This sets the poem in the tradition of Tibullus 2.5 and Vergil, *Aeneid* 8.⁸ Then Propertius turns to the myth of Troy and Rome's origins (4.1a.39-54), ending finally with a proclamation of his poetic project: he will write about the "rites and gods and ancient names of locations":

optima nutricum nostris, lupa Martia, rebus,	55
qualia creverunt moenia lacte tuo!	
moenia namque pio coner disponere versu:	
ei mihi, quod nostro est parvus in ore sonus!	
sed tamen exiguo quodcumque e pectore rivi	
fluxerit, hoc patriae serviet omne meae.	60
Ennius hirsuta cingat sua dicta corona:	
mi folia ex hedera porrige, Bacche, tua,	
ut nostris tumefacta superbiat Umbria libris,	
Umbria Romani patria Callimachi!	
scandentis quisquis cernit de vallibus arces,	65
ingenio muros aestimet ille meo!	
Roma, fave, tibi surgit opus; date candida, cives,	
omina; et inceptis dextera cantet avis!	
sacra deosque canam et cognomina prisca locorum:	
has meus ad metas sudet oportet equus. (4.1a.55-70)	70

Martian wolf, greatest of nurses for our affairs, what walls have grown from your milk. I would attempt to set out these walls in pious poetry. Oh my, what a small voice in my mouth! Still whatever stream flows from my thin chest, it will serve my country entirely. Let Ennius crown his poems with a shaggy garland. Bacchus, extend to me leaves from your ivy so that Umbria can swell with pride because of my books—Umbria, the homeland of the Roman Callimachus! Let anyone who catches sight of the citadels climbing up from the valley judge these walls by my talents! Rome, show me favor; this work rises for your benefit. Citizens, grant me shining omens. Let a bird sing on my right to my undertakings. I will sing of rites

⁸ On this aspect of 4.1, see Welch 2005: 19-34 and Rea 2007: 103-13.

and gods and the ancient names of locations. My horse should exert itself toward this goal.

With these lines, Propertius seems to have said enough to complete his prologue and to downsize his voice. But it is at this point that another voice intrudes:

quo ruis imprudens, vage, dicere fata, Properti?⁹
non sunt a dextro condita fila colo.
accersis lacrimas: aversus cantat Apollo:
poscis ab invita verba pigenda lyra.
certa feram certis auctoribus, aut ego vates 75
nescius aerata signa movere pila, 76
felicisque Iovis stellas Martisque rapacis 83
et grave Saturni sidus in omne caput. 84
me creat Archytæ suboles Babylonius Horops 77
Horus, et a proavo ducta Conone domus.
di mihi sunt testes non degenerasse propinquos,
inque meis libris nil prius esse fide. 80
nunc pretium fecere deos et fallimus auro
(Iuppiter!) obliquae signa iterata rotae. (4.1b.71-82)

Where are you thoughtlessly rushing to, wandering Propertius, to tell your future? The threads have not been spun from an auspicious staff. You are bringing tears on yourself. Apollo sings against you. You are seeking unwelcome words from an unwilling lyre.

I speak sureties from sure sources, or I am a *vates* who does not know how to move the constellations on the bronze sphere, the stars of favorable Jupiter or greedy Mars or the star of Saturn which is oppressive to everyone. Horops of Babylon, the offspring of Archytas, bore me, Horos, and my house descends from Conon as a forefather. The gods are my witnesses that I have not disgraced my relatives and that in my books nothing is put ahead of trustworthiness. Now they have made the gods into moneymaking and we deceive (by Jupiter!) the returning signs of the tilted wheel for gold.

The interjection of Horos has proven problematic; specifically, what is the relation of Horos' words (4.1b.71-150) to the first part of the prologue (4.1a.1-70)?¹⁰ Is this the

⁹ This line is sometimes emended, especially *vage* and *dicere*. Goold reads *fuge discere fata*, but I think the MS. reading can, and should, be defended, because of the importance these words have for understanding the nature of Horos' interruption; see below.

continuation of one poem, a new development in the poem, or should it be read as an entirely separate poem?¹¹ The opening lines of this section, though, show how close the connection is between the two parts. Horos, an astrologer, butts in on Propertius' proclamation in order to stop him in his tracks. The scene is, of course, reminiscent of Apollo's appearance in Call. *Aet.* fr. 1 or at Verg. *Ecl.* 6.3-5 or Hor. *Od.* 4.15.1-4, where the form of the *recusatio* is in force, and here likewise Horos instructs Propertius that he is acting as Apollo's proxy, so to speak, and delivering his message. That message is that the god is against his new project.

Horos' words pick up immediately from Propertius' pronouncement of his plans. Propertius' *oportet*, "should, ought to, must," signals Horos' entry point.¹² Propertius is making a mistake, and Horos is the one who knows what Propertius "ought" to do. With *vage*, which must not be emended away, Horos tells Propertius, in fine Callimachean fashion, that he is wandering from his path.¹³ With *dicere fata*, which likewise must not be changed to *discere*, Horos confronts Propertius as a rival prophet.¹⁴ Horos challenges Propertius by offering two examples of his own past accuracy in prediction (4.1b.89-108) and offering Calchas as an example of a misguided prophecy (109-118). Especially stressed throughout these lines is Horos' *fides*, "trustworthiness." The word appears four

¹⁰ Goold separates the poem into 4.1a and 4.1b. I will employ this numeration as well, though I do not endorse the view that there are two separate poems here: if nothing else, though, this numeration allows for easier reference to the two parts.

¹¹ See Sandbach 1962, Macleod 1977, Kidd 1979.

¹² Hutchinson 2006: *ad loc.*

¹³ Butler and Barber 1933: *ad loc.*

¹⁴ There is no sense in which Propertius is attempting to learn his fate anywhere in lines 1-70; however, he does attempt to predict his own future with his pronouncement of his poetic program.

times (4.1b.80, 92, 98, 108). Horos means to assert his authority to prophesy for Propertius, and the remainder of the poem consists of his prediction:

hactenus historiae: nunc ad tua devehar astra; incipere tu lacrimis aequus adesse novis.	120
Umbria te notis antiqua Penatibus edit— mentior? an patriae tangitur ora tuae?—	
qua nebulosa cavo rorat Mevania campo, et lacus aestivis non tepet Umber aquis,	
scandentisque Asis consurgit vertice murus, murus ab ingenio notior ille tuo.	125
ossaque legisti non illa aetate legenda patris et in tenuis cogeris ipse lares:	
nam tua cum multi versarent rura iuveni, abstulit excultas pertica tristis opes.	130
mox ubi bulla rudi dimissa est aurea collo, matris et ante deos libera sumpta toga,	
tum tibi pauca suo de carmine dictat Apollo et vetat insano verba tonare foro.	
at tu finge elegos, fallax ¹⁵ opus (haec tua castra!), scribat ut exemplo cetera turba tuo.	135
militiam Veneris blandis patiere sub armis, et Veneris pueris utilis hostis eris.	
nam tibi victricis quascumque labore parasti, eludet palmas una puella tuas:	140
illius arbitrio noctem lucemque videbis; gutta quoque ex oculis non nisi iussa cadet.	143 144
et bene cum fixum mento decusseris uncum, nil erit hoc: rostro te premet ansa tuo.	141 142
nec mille excubiae nec te signata iuvabunt limina: persuasae fallere rima sat est. (4.1b.119-146)	145

That is far enough with these stories. Now I turn to your stars. Get ready to attend your new tears calmly. Old Umbria gave you birth from well-known Penates—am I lying, or have I hit on your paternal borders?—where misty Mevania lays dew on the hollow plain and the Umbrian lake warms with the summer streams and the wall of rising Assisi climbs up, the wall made more famous by your talents. You gathered your father’s bones—bones you should not have needed to gather at that young age—and you were forced into restricted *lares*, because although many bulls had traversed your fields, the stern surveyor’s rod took away your well-tended wealth. Then when the golden *bull* was taken from your still ignorant neck and you took up the *toga libera* in front of your

¹⁵ Goold prints Heinsius’ *pellax*.

mother's gods, then Apollo speaks to you a bit about your song and says that you cannot roar your words in the crazy forum.

But you compose elegy, that tricky task. These are your camps. That way the others can write by your example. You will endure the *militia amoris* under charming weapons, and you will be a useful enemy for Venus' boys, because, no matter what victories you gain through your efforts, one girl will escape your triumphs. You will look upon day and night at her whim; teardrops will fall from your eyes only if she orders. And when you have shaken free from the hook fixed in your chin, that will be no use: the loop will press you at your beak. A thousand night-watches and sealed doors will not help you: a crack is enough for a girl who has decided to deceive.

Horos' opening lines show that he is reacting as if Propertius tried to tell his own future (*dicere fata*, 4.1b.71). Horos views Propertius' words in 4.1a.69-70 as a rival prophecy; he enters and counters with his own.¹⁶ In place of Propertius' new program, Horos claims that Apollo is instructing the poet to remain a love poet.¹⁷ Horos puts Propertius back on the proper course, the one he followed in book 1-3: love poet.

Horos' intervention, however, does not entirely fit the typical phrasing of a prophetic pronouncement. With the phrase *nunc ad tua devehar astra* ("Now I will come down to your stars," 4.1b.119), Horos purports to turn to his horoscope for Propertius; yet what follows, at least in 4.1b.121-134, is a recitation of Propertius' past, not his future. Moreover, Horos includes language that reproduces almost identically words that Propertius spoke just before (compare 4.1b.121-6 with 4.1a.63-6); in fact, the conjunction of *murus* and *ingenium* in 66 is echoed in Horos' words at 126 and

¹⁶ Hutchinson 2006: 61, DeBrohun 2003: 73.

¹⁷ Janan 2001: 15.

scandentis (65) is even repeated in the same metrical *sedes* (125).¹⁸ In addition, *novis* (120) seems unexplained.¹⁹ In what sense are Propertius' tears going to be new?

These problems disappear when we realize that, in dramatizing the 'correction' of Horos, Propertius is offering prophesy as a model for 'rewriting.' The contest between Propertius and Horos—and it is a contest—is fought over the representation of Propertius himself. Each offers a version of Propertius' life; first Propertius himself, then Horos. The use of past tense narrative fits poorly with prophesy (which of course should deal with the future), but well with a poet foregrounding the reinterpretation of his own story. It is also, then, no issue if Horos repeats some of Propertius' phrasing: Horos is not really attempting to prove any prophetic skill. He is instead parrying Propertius' attempt to rewrite himself as a public poet by reasserting Propertius' identity as a love-elegist, thus offering his own "new" rewriting of Propertius.

Essentially the traditional narrative of the elegiac Propertius, outlined at the beginning of the chapter, has adopted Horos' limited point of view. Propertius, to them, should be nothing more than a 'love-poet,' safely consigned to a private and artificial world with little concern for a larger public voice. When Propertius introduces Horos' objections, he signals that he foresaw this reaction and chose to give it voice within his elegy. It is perhaps appropriate, then, to reconsider the program that Propertius asserts within the exchange with Horos:

¹⁸ Butler and Barber 1933: 322: "The sole argument for [the separation of 4.1a from 4.1b] is the fact that in 121-6 the astrologer to prove his powers tells the poet that he comes from Umbria, a fact of which Propertius himself has already informed him in 63-6."

¹⁹ Cf. Hutchinson 2006: *ad loc.*

...his famous programmatic statement draws attention to the names of places—*cognomina prisca locorum*—not the places themselves. These names, moreover, are not simply *nomina*, names given at birth, but rather *cognomina*, names bestowed afterward to clarify and redefine identities.²⁰

Propertius' Horos rehearses very specifically Propertius' lineage, the topography of his hometown, and the bones buried in Umbria—all details from the end of book 1 (1.21, 1.22). Horos has read Propertius, and in doing so can not help but blend together the public and private, the past and future, in his prophesy. He cannot help reading Propertius real. And if real, the contest between Propertius and Horos asks just who will control the story.

Catullus 16 and the Cynthia Poems: Contested Reality

The contest between Propertius and Horos corresponds in an obvious way with the dramatic scenario of Catullus 16. In that poem, Furius and Aurelius have read Catullus' poetry and responded by accusing Catullus of a bit too much femininity. Catullus responds by writing a response to clear up definitions:

pedicabo ego vos et irrumabo,
Aureli pathice et cinaede Furi,
qui me ex versiculis meis putastis,
quod sunt molliculi, parum pudicum. 5
nam castum esse decet pium poetam
ipsum, versiculos nihil necesse est;
qui tum denique habent salem ac leporem,
si sunt molliculi ac parum pudici,
et quod pruriat incitare possunt,
non dico pueris, sed his pilosis
qui duros nequeunt movere lumbos. 10
vos, quod milia multa basiorum
legistis, male me marem putatis?
pedicabo ego vos et irrumabo.

²⁰ Welch 2005: 27.

I will stick it in your ass, and shove it down your throat, Aurelius you pathetic, you catamite Furius, for thinking I was immodest because my poems are effeminate. A pious poet ought to be chaste himself, but there is no need for his poems to be. In the end, they only show wit and charm if they are effeminate and immodest, if they can stir up what itches—not in boys, but in those hairy men who cannot rouse their stuff. Just because you have read my *milia multa basiorum*, you think I am no real man. I will stick it in your ass, and shove it down your throat.

Furius and Aurelius attempt to rewrite Catullus as *male mas*, “not much of a man.”

Catullus answers back by rewriting himself as well as Furius and Aurelius. Immediately with the opening of the poem Catullus is an aggressive and dominant male. Furius and Aurelius are written as *pathicus* and *cinaedus*. It is easy to see the potential for an infinite series in this sort of writing and rewriting, this jockeying for representation and perception by the public. In poems 4.7 and 4.8, the ‘Cynthia poems,’ Propertius too explores this strategy as Propertius and Cynthia in turn attempt to write themselves and rewrite the other. Each vies to control their own representation.

In 4.7 Cynthia appears from beyond the grave in a dream to Propertius (4.7.1-12). She chastises him for his treatment of her at his funeral (4.7.13-34). She orders him to punish his servants and denounces her replacement (4.7.35-48). Cynthia swears that she was faithful to Propertius (4.7.55-70) and proves it by asserting her position as one of the blessed dead (4.7.55-70). She then gives Propertius instructions for her epitaph (4.7.71-86), before disappearing as suddenly as she appeared (4.7.87-96). The appearance of Cynthia from beyond the grave, especially when the reader last heard of her in 3.24-5, where Propertius renounced her and wrote her off, instantly introduces the problem of closure. If her mere appearance were not enough, Propertius makes the issue clear with the second half of the opening line: *letum non omnia finit* (“death does not close off everything,” 4.7.1). The struggle to gain any final sense of closure is further emphasized

by the presence of *limen* imagery scattered through the poem: Propertius refused to pass beyond the city gates for Cynthia's funeral (4.7.29-30), Cynthia invokes the gates of dreams (4.7.87-8), and when she finally leaves, she crosses once again the gates of death (4.7.91-4).²¹

Cynthia does not appear merely to close off 'Cynthia poetry': Propertius had already done that before the dream, as a result of 3.24-5. The image of Cynthia that Propertius left before the reader's eyes was far from a kind one. He ended his renunciation of Cynthia with a curse, praying that old age will come upon her and that she would become ugly, wrinkled, and spurned by another (3.25.11-16).²² No, Cynthia's purpose is not closure, but recuperation and gaining control over her story.

In this sense, Cynthia's presence should be seen as reopening. She must appear to 'reopen her case,' as it were, make a defense of herself and her actions and try to enforce it upon Propertius. She first finds fault with Propertius for not mourning appropriately when she died, nor tending to her rites properly. She calls him ungrateful (*ingrate*, 4.7.31) and accuses him of being too stingy to offer simple flowers. He has even given his affections to a common prostitute (4.7.39-40)! She, on the other hand, was faithful:

non tamen insector, quamvis mereare, Properti:
longa mea in libris regna fuere tuis.
iuro ego Fatorum nulli revolubile carmen,
tergeminusque canis sic mihi molle sonet,
me servasse fidem. si fallo, vipera nostris
sibilet in tumulis et super ossa cubet. (4.7.49-54)

²¹ DeBrohun 2003: 152-3.

²² In fact, the lines mimic prophetic forms; cf. 3.25.17: *has tibi fatalis cecinit me pagina diras*, "My page predicts these dread curses for you." Both *cano* (OLD 8) and *fatalis* (OLD 1 and 2) are associated with prophesy; cf. their appearance together in 3.4.9 and 3.4.11.

Still I am not harping at you, Propertius, even though you deserve to be harped at. My reign in your books was a long one. I swear by the Fates' irrevocable song, and so may the triple-headed dog howl softly for me, I acted faithfully. If I am lying, may a snake hiss on my tomb and nest over my bones.

Cynthia asserts her authority. Her enjambment of *me servasse fidem* emphasizes her loyalty.²³ Swearing on Cerberus, Cynthia continues to buttress her claims by depicting herself as part of the dead who roam the Elysian Fields, narrating their stories of mistreatment to each other (4.7.55-70).²⁴ She closes with a bit of *praeteritio* about Propertius' indiscretions (*celo ego perfidiae crimina multa tuae*, "I conceal the many crimes of your faithlessness," 4.7.70).

Once she has established herself as a figure speaking with the authority of both a faithful lover and a member of the Elysian class of the dead, she moves to reconstructing her image:

'sed tibi nunc mandata damus, si forte moveris,	
si te non totum Chloridos herba tenet:...	50
et quoscumque meo fecisti nomine versus,	77
ure mihi: laudes desine habere meas.	
pelle ²⁵ hederam tumulo, mihi quae praegnante corymbo	
mollia contortis alligat ossa comis.	80
pomosis Anio qua spumifer incubat arvis,	
et numquam Herculeo numine pallet ebur,	
hic carmen media dignum me scribe columna,	
sed breve, quod currens vector ab urbe legat:	
HIC TIBURTINA IACET AUREA CYNTHIA TERRA:	85
ACCESSIT RIPAE LAUS, ANIENE, TUAE....	86
nunc te possideant aliae: mox sola tenebo:	93
mecum eris, et mixtis ossibus ossa teram.'	
haec postquam querula mecum sub lite peregit,	95
inter complexus excidit umbra meos. (4.7.49-50, 77-86, 93-6)	

²³ Hutchinson 2006: *ad loc.*

²⁴ Compare this attempt by Cynthia to generate the authority to speak decisively with that of Horos mentioned above.

²⁵ Goold prints *pone*, but see Flaschenriem 1998: 58.

“But now I give you these commands, if you are moved by me and Chloris’ herbs do not have complete hold over you....and whatever poems you wrote in my name, burn them for me. Quit holding my praises. Drive the ivy from my tomb which is with its heavy clusters tying up my soft bones in its spun vines. Where foamy Anio lays atop the fruit fields and ivory never dulls because of Hercules’ wishes, there write me a worthy song on the middle of a column, a brief one that a passing traveler from the city can read: ‘Here in Tibur’s earth lies golden Cynthia. Praise is added to your banks, Anio.’...Other women may have you now, but soon I alone will hold you. You will be with me, and my bones will rub on yours.” After she completed this complaint with me under law, her shadow slipped between my arms.

Cynthia’s speeches—when she is allowed to speak—always reveal a dissonance between Propertius’ representation of her and what her own would be.²⁶ Cynthia’s requests here illustrate a blatant desire on her part to control her image, an image which she would like to be different from that in Propertius’ books. (Note that Propertius does not appear in her epitaph.)²⁷ This is the precise reason that she on the one hand asks Propertius to burn his poems about her and on the other asks him to inscribe an epitaph on her tomb: this time, she is author.²⁸

Cynthia gives her instructions then slips away from Propertius, another metaphor for the elusiveness of representation and closure. Propertius can never quite possess her completely, and at the end of 4.7, “event and poem deny the narrator a reply.”²⁹ But the next poem (4.8) opens the door for just that! Cynthia is alive again in 4.8, first deserting Propertius for another lover (under the premises of attending a ritual), then storming back in to discover him with two women and thrashing them. The quick back-and-forth

²⁶ Cynthia’s speeches: 1.3.35-6, 2.15.8, 2.29b.31-8, 3.6.19-34. Note especially the speech in 1.3 which totally upsets Propertius’ expectations and fantasies of her behavior.

²⁷ Flaschenriem 1998: 60.

²⁸ Cf. Flaschenriem 1998: 53-61 and Wyke 1995: 124.

²⁹ Hutchinson 2006: *ad* 96.

between dead and alive challenges any easy view of the chronology. Has Cynthia really died since the close of book 3? How can Cynthia be dead in 4.7 and alive in 4.8?

Realities are being rewritten. Just when Cynthia in 4.7 attempts to rewrite herself, in 4.8 Propertius in turn undertakes to rewrite her again. She slips from his grasp at the end of 4.7, but there is always another poem to write. In 4.8 Propertius shows again the Cynthia of books 1-3: she is deceitful and unfaithful. In yet another movement within this pair of poems, Propertius takes this opportunity to write another version of himself, this time one without Cynthia:

cum fieret nostro totiens iniuria lecto,
mutato volui castra movere toro.
Phyllis Aventinae quaedam est vicina Dianae,
sobria grata parum: cum bibit, omne decet.
altera Tarpeios est inter Teia lucos,
candida, sed potae non satis unus erit.
his ego constitui noctem lenire vocatis,
et Venere ignota furta novare mea. (4.8.27-34)

Since she so often was damage to my bed, I wanted to move camp and swap beds. A certain Phyllis lives near Aventine Diana. Sober, she is not much fun; when she drinks, she is all charm. Another girl is Teia, among the Tarpeian groves. Pretty, but one man is not enough for her if she is drunk. I decided to invite them and waste the night with them, and to have some new deceits with some unknown loves.

Propertius changes camps and resolves to pursue two women: the *una puella*, Cynthia, is replaced. But Propertius' plan is unsuccessful. There are bad omens, the dice keep coming up wrong (4.8.43-46). Propertius is unable to enjoy the sights or sounds of the naked, singing, duo. All his thoughts are with Cynthia at the gates of Lanuvium (*Lanuvii ad portas, ei mihi, totus eram*, 4.8.48).

Then Propertius' thought becomes real. Cynthia enters with a commotion (4.8.51). When she returns, this is no longer the Cynthia of 4.7, protesting her faithfulness

calmly. This is elegiac Cynthia again, a rage and a whirl of anger, commanding and overpowering Propertius. Propertius' attempt at becoming an elegist with other women is interrupted by Cynthia, who (like Horos in 4.1b) insists that she belongs to him alone. She beats the women, runs them out of the house (4.8.61-2), and takes control of Propertius.

Cynthia returns Propertius to the typical elegiac posture, supplication before one's mistress (*supplicibus palmis tum demum ad foedera veni*, "Then finally I agreed to her terms with my palms held out in supplication," 4.8.71). Cynthia commands Propertius to follow certain behaviors in public and to sell Lygdamus, his servant (4.8.73-80). She sets about purifying the room, removing all the traces of Propertius' two escorts. In essence she is rewriting his poem right in the middle of it; burning, in a sense, the pages he had begun, erasing the new Propertius that Propertius was writing.

The poem closes with Cynthia and Propertius making peace on their bed (*noto solvimus arma toro*, 88). But this gesture of closure, too, seems deceitful. Together, 4.7 and 4.8 demonstrate the impossibility of closure in representation. Propertius and Cynthia can always rewrite each other, at any point, no matter what gestures of finality they make. They are interdependent on each other, so that neither can break away. They will forever continue to define and redefine each other mutually.

Writing Together

The interrelation and codependence of Propertius and Cynthia, of poems 4.7 and 4.8, are on display also in 4.3. In this letter written by Arethusa to her husband Lycotas off on campaign, the tight relations between love and war, marriage and empire, the erotic and the political, elegy and *arma* are vividly on display. Nevertheless, this poem

is usually overlooked, written off as a charming portrait of a loving wife and passed over for the ‘sexier’ elegies on Actium (4.6) or Cornelia (4.11).³⁰ Yet this poem is the first of Propertius’ experiments in adopting the female voice in book 4 (and hence a true example of the strictly rhetorical *prosopopoeia*)³¹ and emphasizes the medium of writing through its imitation of a letter; combined with the content of a wife longing for the return of her campaigning husband, 4.3 is a perfect microcosm of the subjects of book 4.

The pain of war depicted in 4.3 represents a very real concern for the period in which Propertius wrote. The Greek names used for the participants of the poem (Arethusa and Lycotas) should not be understood to distance the reader from the reality of the situation. Roman military activity was spreading under Augustus as he sought to bring his empire under control.³² This meant that soldiers and officers would be spending more time away from their homes, and if married, away from their wives. As James Dee writes, “Propertius’ real achievement was to summon up and express what must have gone largely unspoken in his day, a woman’s reaction to the privations caused by the military way of life.”³³ The separation of man and wife, of course, would also run counter to Augustus’ other great initiative, the reformation of the institution of marriage, which would give rise to Cornelia’s noble sentiments in 4.11.

³⁰ See the comments of Janan 2001: 53-4, especially on Hubbard’s interpretation of the poem.

³¹ The poem, of course, has strong parallels to a treatment of a similar theme in 3.12 (discussed in chapter three). But there, Propertius spoke in his own voice on behalf of the wife; here the wife speaks herself and the voice of Propertius is mediated through hers.

³² On Augustus’ foreign policy, see Gruen 1990: 395-416, Isaac 1992: 372-418, and Whittaker 1994, especially 10-98.

³³ Dee 1974: 96.

The separation of Lycotas from Arethusa is the essence of the poem. At home, she cannot see what he sees or hear what he hears; she therefore has to create his experience for herself, if she wants to understand. This she does by reading maps (4.3.37-42) or getting secondhand reports (4.3.27). Her desire to eliminate the distance between them, however, goes far beyond this. Arethusa wants to collapse the worlds of love and war. She attempts in 4.3 to write her husband back with her, and to write herself out with her husband:

dic mihi, num teneros urit lorica lacertos? num gravis imbellis atterit hasta manus?	
haec noceant potius, quam dentibus ulla puella det mihi plorandas per tua colla notas!	25
diceris et macie vultum tenuasse: sed opto e desiderio sit color iste meo.	
at mihi cum noctes induxit vesper amaras, si qua relictæ iacent, osculor arma tua;	30
tum queror in toto non sidere pallia lecto, lucis et auctores non dare carmen aves.	32
Craugidos et catulae vox est mihi grata querentis: illa tui partem vindicat una toro.	55 56
noctibus hibernis castrensia pensa laboro et Tyria in chlamydas vellera secta suo;	33
et disco, qua parte fluat vincendus Araxes, quot sine aqua Parthus milia currat equus;	35
cogor et e tabula pictos ediscere mundos, qualis et haec docti sit positura dei, quæ tellus sit lenta gelu, quæ putris ab aestu, ventus in Italiam qui bene vela ferat.	40
assidet una soror, curis et pallida nutrix peierat hiberni temporis esse moras.	
felix Hippolyte! nuda tulit arma papilla et textit galea barbara molle caput.	
Romanis utinam patuissent castra puellis! essem militiae sarcina fida tuae,	45
nec me tardarent Scythiae iuga, cum Pater altas astrictam in glaciem frigore vertit aquas. (4.3.23-48)	

Tell me, does the breastplate burn your delicate shoulders? Does the heavy spear chafe your unwarlike hands? I would rather these things hurt you than some girl

give you marks on your neck for me to cry over! You are said to be wasting away in your face, but I hope this color is because of desire for me.

When the evening brings me bitter nights, I kiss what weapons of yours remain here, if any do. Then I complain that the blanket does not settle over the whole bed, and that the birds, authors of dawn, do not sing their songs. Even the whining of my dog Craugis is pleasant to me when I am complaining; she lays claim to your side of the bed.

During winter nights I work on camp weaving and sew sections of Tyrian leather into a cloak. And I learn where the soon to be conquered Araxes flows, how many miles a Parthian horse can run without water, and I have to learn from a map the lands painted on it and what the learned god's position of them is, what land is sluggish with snow and what land is rotten with heat, what wind brings sails back well to Italy. My lone sister sits by me, and my nurse, pale because of my concerns swears falsely that there are delays because of wintertime.

Lucky Hippolyta! With her chest bared she took up arms and covered her soft head with a helmet (the barbarian!). I wish that camps were open to Roman girls! I would be the faithful suitcase to your service. The Scythian mountains would not slow me down, even when Jupiter turns the high mountain streams into solid ice with cold.

Arethusa rewrites Lycotas the soldier as an elegiac lover. If he is on his fourth campaign (at least), as seems to be implied by the fact that she is working on a fourth cloak for him (18), then he is no *rudis* when it comes to war. Nevertheless, Arethusa shows concern that his shoulders are too delicate (*teneros*, 4.3.23) and that his spear-throwing hand is unwarlike (*imbellis*, 4.3.24). Her concern for his wounds is that they may be from lovemaking, not fighting (4.3.25-6), and she hopes his weight loss is due to longing for her (4.3.27-8).³⁴ All of these attributes are far more suitable to an elegiac lover, to a Propertius, than to a soldier,³⁵ but in her mind Arethusa endows Lycotas with them all as a way of bringing him away from the war and back closer to her.

If he will not come to her, she will go to him. Arethusa will write herself into camp with Lycotas. She will kiss his weapons (*osculator arma tua*, 4.3.30) and sew his military

³⁴ Dee 1974: 87.

³⁵ Wyke 1987b: 164; cf. Janan 2001: 58-9 and 64-5.

cloaks (*castrensia pensa laboro*, 4.3.33). Arethusa employs the terminology of the field, speaking of the *lorica* and the *hasta* in an effort to bridge the gap between her and her husband.³⁶ She even goes so far as to make herself into Hippolyta, or a suitcase, moving among the soldiers (4.3.43-6)!

Propertius writes the poem in the form of a letter, but why? First, the letter emphasizes the distance and separation between Arethusa and Lycotas. Letters sent by messengers are virtually their only means of communication. Second, these letters come to represent the people themselves. Just as the map becomes Arethusa's sole means of tracking Lycotas, the words on the page of Arethusa's letter are representations of the people themselves. If part is smudged, it is her tears that made it so; if the letters are shaky, it is because her hand is as well (4.3.3-6). Of course, as we have seen, the words on a page are representations of people in a broader sense too. Propertius' focus on letter-writing in this poem illustrates the importance writing has in mediating the world—just as the letter must mediate Lycotas to Arethusa and vice versa. Writing can create a reality, or change a reality. Reality is always subject to another interpretation, never completely closed, and is unavoidably linked with interpretation. After all, is there a reality uninterpreted? Propertius demonstrates in book 4 the power that writing can have precisely because of its inherently close link with reality. And if he cedes his voice and allows others to write 'instead' of him, perhaps he is only following Horos' advice:

at tu finge elegos, fallax opus (haec tua castra!),
scribat ut exemplo cetera turba tuo. (4.1b.135-6)

³⁶ Merklin 1968: 467: "den Abergund zu überbrücken, durch den die sich von ihm und seiner Welt getrennt weiss."

But you compose elegy, that tricky task. These are your camps. That way the others can write by your example.

CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSION

Propertius' interest in reality and in affecting the world around him is present from the beginning of his writing to the end, and cannot be shielded away by a *persona* or divvied out to only certain of his books. He sets out in book 1 to write in a style that encourages his readers to read him biographically, sets up his own story as a persuasive and useful 'real' exemplum, and ends by driving home the point that reality is never closed, but always open to interpretation and reinterpretation.

By way of conclusion, then, I would like to make a bit of an opening into larger contexts. The model argued for in this study is not meant to be specific to Propertius. During the same period that Propertius is writing, wrangling over interpretation and representation is going on in Rome around him. To take competing examples: Augustus has his *Res Gestae* inscribed with a carefully weighed portrayal of himself, especially in the section describing his vengeance on Julius Caesar's murderers. His self-representation—a version of *prosopopoeia* no less than Propertius'—was of course massively influential in creating a particular picture of Augustus. Contrast the *Tristia* of Ovid. Ovid too portrays Augustus; Ovid knew that representation was always open to rewriting. How much of our opinion of Augustus, especially in relation to the poets and as a moralist, is due to the persuasive version of Augustus presented by Ovid? Had Ovid not survived, had he not been exiled, how different would the image be of Augustus, and how different would scholarship on subjects such as his moral legislation or his patronage be?

Even this study can be seen as merely one version of reality, competing among others. The mere act of selecting passages and poems to discuss is a version of rewriting too; but my Propertius must not stray too far from reality (or dissent from scholarly consensus) if it is to persuade, and I am well aware that I have made this Propertius, in a sense, speak my words for me.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Randall Lawrence Childree was born on April 23, 1978 in Montgomery, Alabama to Robert and Katherine Childree. He lived in Montgomery along with his brother Jeremy and sister Amy all the way through his graduation from Jefferson Davis High School in 1996. Maybe it was because he could never remember not being a Crimson Tide fan, or maybe because he could not envision leaving the South, but it had always been taken for granted, at least by Randall, that he would attend the University of Alabama. That is indeed where he spent the next four years of his life, enjoying a truly liberal arts education centered mostly around English literature and the Classics, with bits of psychology, religion, and art history thrown in as well. In May of 2000 he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Classics.

After an eye-opening trip to Greece that summer, Randall enrolled in the graduate program in Classics at the University of Florida, where he found an incredibly friendly group of fellow-students. After writing his thesis on a Greek topic, and earning a Master of Arts degree in Classical Studies in 2002, he joined the Ph.D. program at the University of Florida and turned his attention to Latin studies. When he receives his Ph.D. in Classical Studies in August of 2007, it will be just the second in the field conferred by the University of Florida.

In the fall of 2007, Randall will begin his career in Classics by joining the faculty at Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina as Visiting Assistant Professor.