

Characters of Love: Propertius and Cynthia in *Elegies I*

By

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Rachel Sanders

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Chairperson Tara Welch

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Anthony Corbeill

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Emma Scioli

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The Thesis Committee for Rachel Sanders  
certifies that this is the approved version of the following thesis:

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Chairperson Tara Welch

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## ABSTRACT

In the *Monobiblos*, the characterizations of Cynthia and Propertius develop in traceable trajectories. The goal of this thesis is to provide a close analysis of specific poems in Propertius' *Elegies* that contribute to and shape the development of characterization in the first book, as well as to show how Propertius' and Cynthia's characterizations interact with and build upon each another. In the first chapter I look at four poems that delineate the evolution of Propertius' characterization from a victimized lover to a man who eventually accepts his situation and vows to love Cynthia for all time. In the second chapter I again examine four poems, this time with a view to Cynthia's development. She begins as a master teacher and in the end becomes someone who has changed Propertius' heart and tested him so that she is confident in his devotion to her.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## DEDICATION

*Ad meum patrem, qui mihi Latinam et amorem Dei docuit.*

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## INTRODUCTION

In 1976, J.P. Sullivan published an introduction to Propertius. In this book he addresses Sigmund Freud's paper, "A Special Type of Choice of Object Made by Men," that elucidates the characteristics of a lover (usually characters in poetry and fiction) who develops a devotion to a unique kind of love object.<sup>1</sup> Freud gives several conditions necessary for this kind of lover: there must be an injured third party, the woman loved must be questionably faithful, the lover departs from the usual because he loves a woman who is not prized for her sexual integrity and he is entirely consumed by this relationship, he creates an idealized personal loyalty, jealousy on the part of the man is prevalent, and finally, the male lover persuades himself that the woman needs him and that he saves her reputation by loving her.<sup>2</sup> As Sullivan goes on to remark, "the character of the lover that emerges from Propertius' poetry fits exactly the character-type described by Freud, as is seen when the characteristics of the lover in Propertius are compared with the general traits enumerated by Freud."<sup>3</sup> The traits Freud describes and upon which Sullivan expands provide us with a framework for discussing Propertius' and Cynthia's characterization in the *Elegies*, which is the topic of this thesis. The word "characterization," as it will be used in this thesis, refers to the personalities, descriptions, and qualities of the characters in Propertius' work as well as how Propertius the author portrays each character based upon language, speech, and scene descriptions.<sup>4</sup>

Within the discussion of characterization, there is an ongoing debate concerning whether Cynthia is a real woman, based upon a real woman, or a figure of Propertius' poetic imagination. Alison Keith provides a detailed discussion on the context for and scholarship surrounding the

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<sup>1</sup> J.P. Sullivan (1976), *Propertius: A Critical Introduction*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 91.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 91-92.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>4</sup> I do not use the word "persona" in this thesis because it connotes a perceived, masked, or donned, image or person. Characterization has connotations of direct analysis and evaluation and can distinguish better the author from the character. As a result, my discussion can sound repetitive and redundant at times, but I would rather have such repetitions than to use terms that connote what I do not intend.

multi-faceted ideas and opinions, both ancient and modern, for Cynthia's identity.<sup>5</sup> Cynthia ranges from a real woman whose name is Hostia, to an embodiment of Callimachean poetics, to a commentary on social politics in Rome, to a generic representation of the women of comedy, elegy, and epigrams.<sup>6</sup> I do not want this thesis to enter into the discussion of her reality or identity apart from the poetry because it would distract from my focus of her as a character, but there are times that I will mention her potentiality to be real, if it is relevant to the conversation concerning specific aspects of her characterization; additionally I occasionally analyze her as an embodiment of elegy, but this is also done to supplement my existing discussion.

As mentioned above, in the characterization of Cynthia, scholarly approach falls within an axis between whether she was a real woman or whether she is purely a poetic creation. Many of these approaches are made either within a broader topic, such as the historical and biographical life of Propertius and the role of Gallus, or they focus on Cynthia as real or unreal. Larry Richardson provides a list of her different transformations in book 1 and her gradual disappearance in subsequent books, and he believes that the poetry is based upon a real woman.<sup>7</sup> W.R. Johnson and Sharon James argue that Cynthia is the cause of Propertius' poetry, the embodiment of his inspiration, and the definer of his identity, but not necessarily real.<sup>8</sup> Paul Allen Miller questions the validity of theories concerning her status, as does Hans-Peter Stahl.<sup>9</sup> Maria Wyke adamantly views Cynthia as a poetic woman, unreal and entirely a creation of

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<sup>5</sup> Alison Keith (2008), "Cynthia rara: Propertius and the Elegiac Traffic in Women," *Propertius: Poet of Love and Leisure*, (London: Bristol Classical Press), 86-114.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 98-104.

<sup>7</sup> Richardson (1977), *Propertius: Elegies, I-IV*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press), 3-5.

<sup>8</sup> Johnson (2009), *A Latin Lover in Ancient Rome: Readings in Propertius and His Genre*, (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press), 58-65; James (2003), *Learned Girls and Male Persuasion: Gender and Reading in Roman Love Elegy*, (Berkeley: University of California Press), 15.

<sup>9</sup> Miller (2003), *Subjecting Verses: Latin Love Elegy and the Emergence of the Real*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 62; Stahl (1985), *Propertius: "Love" and "War": Individual and State Under Augustus*, (Berkeley: University of California Press), 143-145.

Propertian elegy.<sup>10</sup> These are just a few of the wide-ranging opinions, but even in their differences, scholars are ultimately questioning Cynthia's reality. Despite the differing views on characterization, this thesis takes a more direct and narrow approach by analyzing Propertius and Cynthia as characters and how each interacts with, develops, and shapes the other within the poems, regardless of his or her existence or non-existence in the real world.

Propertian scholarship uses a wide variety of approaches. Readings of Propertius have always been muddy because of the ambiguous and unclear nature of the manuscripts and manuscript tradition. Many of the manuscripts of Propertius that exist are, to put it bluntly, incongruous. The manuscripts have numerous lacunae and lack separations between poems.<sup>11</sup> Equally inconsistent is the development of editions and commentaries on Propertius, since, as can be imagined, there is quite a lot of poetic freedom when a text has missing content and lacks breaks.<sup>12</sup> In addition to the confusion provided by the manuscripts' qualities, Propertius is hard to decipher in terms of language; he uses many unfamiliar forms, names, and constructions.<sup>13</sup> As a result of all this, readings of Propertius vary significantly from editor to editor, from translation to translation, and from commentary to commentary. In this thesis I use the *Oxford Classical Text* as my "manuscript," and if I differ at all from what it says, I make note of my reasoning for doing so. I hope that by doing this I will provide a consistent analysis of the text. I hope that I have not overlooked vital voices in the field of Propertian studies, but I do also hope that I have created my own.

Any reader approaching Propertius' first book will discover a Cynthia who has a unique presence in the text, who is a topic of conversation with friends, a modern-day mythological

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<sup>10</sup> Maria Wyke (2002), "Mistress and Metaphor in Augustan Elegy," in *Oxford Readings in Classical Studies: Propertius*, eds. Ellen Greene & Tara S. Welch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 323-354.

<sup>11</sup> Tara S. Welch (2012), "Whose Reading of what Propertius?," in *Oxford Readings in Classical Studies: Propertius*, eds. Ellen Greene & Tara S. Welch, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 3-7.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

figure, and a metaphor for poetic creation. All of these, however, also entangle the reader in various understandings of Propertius—is he a lover? A poet? A friend? Her master or at her mercy? There is some difficulty, however, in analyzing Propertius as a character since sometimes it is hard to separate him from his role as an author. I hope to avoid this confusion in the thesis by treating him simply as a character, but there are specific moments in which I address his role as an author as well. This is done simply in support of my analysis of his character, or to make an important distinction between author and character that I find to be necessary to the discussion. Johnson in his recent book captures some of the dilemmas we face in trying to understand “Propertius.” Though he equates the lover and the author, this description well describes the character I analyze in my first chapter:<sup>14</sup>

Nearly half a century of civil wars had left the mechanics of the Roman masculine identity in some disrepair... Then, as their luck would have it, these poetic Roman males discovered for themselves new subjects of utterance and new styles of shaping and ornamenting those subjects. They became attracted to, and would soon be fascinated by, a new style of identity, that of a strange figure, a lover, a charming erotic monster, a creature whose passions dismantle what he wants and who he is and then help fashion, force him to fashion, from himself, for himself, a new identity, a new me.

I have chosen four poems that I feel best exhibit the facets of that character’s change and growth, namely 1.1, 1.9, 1.16, and 1.18. Across these poems we may see a development in Propertius’ understanding of Cynthia and his own self-identification in relation to her.

In my delineation of his progression, Propertius grew from a man struck with love and somewhat caught off guard, victimized, and troubled, to a man who then begins to confront his lovesickness in order to understand it. Other characters appear in his poetry, often addressees, and in many of the poems not addressed to Cynthia, Propertius is instructing a fellow poet. It is in these poems that Propertius is assuming the role of teacher, but not master teacher. It does not take long for Propertius to begin this instruction, and the way I view it in light of his character

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<sup>14</sup> Johnson (2009), 5.

development is that in those didactic moments, Propertius is asserting what little control he has left. Even in the didactic moments Propertius' control is weak; indeed, the weakness of the male lover's control is a trope of elegy as a whole, and, as Sharon James argues, Propertius' power will always be secondary to Cynthia's.<sup>15</sup> Propertius has been captured by Cynthia and will be influenced by and subordinate to her in their relationship. In his servitude to her he begins to learn the ways of love and the fickleness and harshness of his girl, and as the poetry continues, Propertius begins to grow desperate until he is entirely trapped by Cynthia, unable to control her in any way, and he laments his condition. Finally, Propertius comes to grips with his submission, accepts it, and lives committed to Cynthia. Such is his trajectory as a character.

Cynthia, however, is a bit more complicated to trace. This, I believe, is due to Propertius' overarching characterization of her as fickle (*leuis*, 1.18.11) as well as the fact that the poems are written from Propertius' perspective, not hers. Nevertheless, it is also possible to find growth in her characterization. Cynthia, in Propertius' *Monobiblos*, dominates.<sup>16</sup> She is the one that first captured him (*Cynthia prima...cepit*, 1.1.1), and she is the one that will be last in his life (*Cynthia finis erit*, 1.12.20). The poems I chose to map out her trajectory feature what I felt to be prominent characterizations and reflect well her changes within the *Monobiblos*. Genevieve Lively and Patricia Salzman-Mitchell argue that Propertius' poetry does not follow a storyline and that there is not beginning or end. In this thesis, however, I argue that Propertius' poems do connect, not necessarily in narrative, but definitely in characterization.<sup>17</sup>

Selecting the poems for chapter two was a bit more difficult than those of the Propertius chapter because Cynthia is a more complex figure. In the opening to his notes on 1.1, Richardson addresses a significant difference in Propertius' poems, namely that "we can look forward then

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<sup>15</sup> James (2003), 26.

<sup>16</sup> Joy K. King (1975), "Propertius' Programmatic Poetry," *CJ*, 71: 108.

<sup>17</sup> Genevieve Lively and Patricia Salzman-Mitchell, eds. (2008), *Latin Elegy and Narratology: Fragments of Story*, (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press), 3.

to learning much about him, but little about her,” a point which contributes to the difficulty in my analysis of Cynthia.<sup>18</sup> There are certain poems that drew my attention, and in the end I chose 1.5, 1.8 (which I treat in separate discussions as 1.8a and 1.8b), and 1.12. In each of these poems Cynthia does not change much when it comes to her power over Propertius, but she does change in terms of what she elicits from Propertius. 1.5 is, like 1.9 (explored for Propertius’ characterization), a “teaching poem,” but here we can see Cynthia’s role in teaching Propertius, who will then teach Gallus. Cynthia begins as a master teacher whose harsh lessons have challenged Propertius and pushed him to a lover’s limits.

From this point I analyzed a “departure poem”. A few times in his poetry, and not just in book 1, Propertius describes a departure that Cynthia makes (e.g., 1.11, 2.19). In 1.8a, Cynthia has gone on a journey in pursuit of wealth, riches, love, and extravagance, abandoning Propertius on the shore. It is in this characterization that Cynthia is testing Propertius’ fidelity. His lamentations indicate how anxious he is without her there, but when she returns in 1.8b, Propertius has proved loyal. In 1.8b, therefore, Cynthia’s characterization is that of a woman who rewards Propertius for his dedication to her and his proof that he is worthy of her love. Finally, in 1.12 Cynthia leaves again. Although she shows up later in book 1 (1.15), which is part of her elusive nature, Propertius does not end 1.12 the way he does other departure poems; rather, he ends by identifying himself with Cynthia, calling her his past and future (*Cynthia prima fuit, Cynthia finis erit*, 1.12.20). My reading will find that he is wholly hers, with her or not, and she is the determining factor in Propertius’ characterization. In other words, he has passed the “test” she set for him in 1.8a and b. Without her he is unable to identify himself, but because of her he becomes, as Johnson observed (cited above), a new man, completely shaped and formed by Cynthia.

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<sup>18</sup> Richardson (1977), 146.

I hope this thesis not only utilizes Propertius well, but also elucidates a topic that is not often the focal point of Propertian discussion. In doing this project I became more and more aware of the richness of studying Propertius and the types of ongoing debates that have puzzled and continue to puzzle scholars. My thesis will not likely provide groundbreaking material for Propertian studies, but my goal is, at the most basic level, that it is an interesting discussion drawn from close reading and close analysis of Propertius. I once had a professor tell me that the best way to write in the field of Classics is to start with the text, read it closely, read it carefully, look at the Latin (or Greek), and eventually you will see something you have never seen and sometimes something others have never seen. My hope is that I have done both.

## CHAPTER ONE: PROPERTIUS

The *Elegies* of Propertius contain a variety of characters. One of those characters is Propertius himself, manifested in his poetry and made out to be a lover of various kinds—active, submissive, praeceptorial, anxious, tractable, blameworthy, innocent. Each of his representations differs slightly from poem to poem, often overlapping as well, but there are some instances in which certain overarching characteristics repeat. I will focus on four poems from book one, all of which depict Propertius variously. The first poem is 1.1, the opening poem of all four books of the *Monobiblos*. It is in this poem that Propertius presents himself as a victim of both Love and Cynthia, but he also introduces aspects of his poetic endeavor. The next poem I consider is 1.9, in which Propertius instructs Ponticus, a friend and epic poet in the ways of love. In this poem we see Propertius as a leader, a teacher, and a wise lover who bases his advice on experience and on what he has learned from his master teacher, Cynthia. The third poem examined, 1.16, takes a very different perspective. Propertius speaks from the point of view of Cynthia's doorway, through which her many lovers frequently pass. The *paraclausithyron* is a common elegiac trope and refers to a lover's song at the closed doors of his girl. In Propertius' version, he presents himself not just as the lover, but as the threshold itself. Because of this he is characterized as a jealous lover but one that cannot prevent the licentiousness of his girl because of his complete helplessness as the inanimate threshold. The final poem I will discuss finds Propertius alone in a wood with nothing but his thoughts. This poem, 1.18, represents his endless love for Cynthia and characterizes Propertius as a loyal, lonely lover who so desperately longs for Cynthia that he writes her name on the trees.

Each of these poems develops a unique perspective on Propertius' characterization, but there is an underlying theme in all of them—namely, the presence of, lack of, or longing for control on the part of Propertius. Caroline Perkins and Maureen Ryan recognize this theme in

Propertius, and they even mention it in the introduction to their commentary on Ovid's *Amores* summarizing, "Propertius describes how his mistress Cynthia took control of him and how, consequently, Love stepped on his head...He also subscribes enthusiastically to the concept of *seruitium amoris* ("enslavement to love"), whereby he casts himself as a slave to the woman he loves. As a *seruus amoris* Propertius is passive, while the *puella* asserts her domination and control as if she were his master (*domina*) and he were her slave."<sup>1</sup> As they point out, the concept of *seruitium amoris* is quite prevalent in the *Elegies*, and in my analyses of various poems, the enslavement of Propertius will arise, continually and repeatedly pointing to the lack of or assertion of his control. But this helplessness is not monotonal, nor does Propertius react to it in an icy way; rather, in these four poems in particular, there is a trajectory of Propertius' characterization; he starts as a victim, becomes a teacher that attempts to assert his control, then he has a complete lack of control as an inanimate object, and finally, he, deserted and alone, gives up and complains to the trees of his trials in love. Ultimately, Propertius succumbs to love and writes his first book in such a way that it expresses his struggles and his determination to discover all love has in store as well as the power it has over him.

### Poem 1.1

In the first poem (1.1) Propertius portrays himself as a victim of love, someone who is not to blame for being in love, but rather was struck by Amor and Cynthia and could not escape. I will present this poem and subsequent poems in their entirety in order have context for my analyses. Here is the first poem of Propertius' *Elegies* (1.1.1-38):

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

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<sup>1</sup> Caroline A. Perkins and Maureen B. Ryan (2011), *Ovid's Amores, Book One: A Commentary*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press), 9.

improbus, et nullo uiuere consilio.  
 et mihi iam toto furor hic non deficit anno,  
 cum tamen aduersos cogor habere deos.  
 Milanion nullos fugiendo, Tulle, labores  
 saeuitiam durae contudit Iasidos. 10  
 nam modo Partheniis amens errabat in antris,  
 ibat et hirsutas ille uidere feras;  
 ille etiam Hylaei percussus uulnere rami  
 saucius Arcadiis rupibus ingemuit.  
 ergo uelocem potuit domuisse puellam: 15  
 tantum in amore preces et bene facta ualent.  
 in me tardus Amor non ullas cogitat artis,  
 nec meminit notas, ut prius, ire uias.  
 at uos, deductae quibus est fallacia lunae  
 et labor in magicis sacra piare focis, 20  
 en agedum dominae mentem conuertite nostrae,  
 et facite illa meo palleat ore magis!  
 tunc ego crediderim uobis et sidera et amnis  
 posse Cytæines ducere carminibus.  
 et uos, qui sero lapsum reuocatis, amici, 25  
 quaerite non sani pectoris auxilia.  
 fortiter et ferrum saeuos patiemur et ignis,  
 sit modo libertas quae uelit ira loqui.  
 ferte per extremas gentis et ferte per undas,  
 qua non ulla meum femina norit iter: 30  
 uos remanete, quibus facili deus annuit aure,  
 sitis et in tuto semper amore pares.  
 in me nostra Venus noctes exercet amaras,  
 et nullo uacuis tempore defit Amor.  
 hoc, moneo, uitate malum: sua quemque moretur 35  
 cura, neque assueto mutet amore locum.  
 quod si quis monitis tardas aduerterit auris,  
 heu referet quanto uerba dolore mea!

Cynthia was the first to capture unhappy me with her own eyes,  
 I was never touched by any desires before her.  
 Then Love cast down my eyes of constant disparagement  
 And he oppressed my head with his feet forced down,  
 Until wicked Love taught me to abhor chaste girls 5  
 And to live with no plan.  
 And now this whole year passion has not been absent from me,  
 Although I am nevertheless compelled to have the gods turned against me.  
 Milanion crushed the savagery of harsh Iasus' daughter  
 By fleeing no labors, O Tullus. 10  
 For once he was wandering delirious in Parthenian caves,  
 And that man was going to see the shaggy wild animals;  
 He also, pierced with a wound of Hylaeus' club,  
 Groaned, injured, on the Arcadian cliffs.

Therefore he was able to have subdued the swift girl: 15  
 The prayers and good deeds are so very strong in love.  
 Slow Love<sup>2</sup> did not think there was any skill in me,  
 Nor did he remember to go known ways, as before.  
 But you, for whom is deceit of the drawn down moon  
 And whose labor it is to perform expiatory rites on magic hearths, 20  
 Well then, change the mind of our mistress,  
 And make that face pale more than mine!  
 Then I would have trusted that you are able to lead  
 Both the stars and the Cytaein rivers in songs.  
 And you, friends, who call me back from my wandering too late, 25  
 Seek the help for an unwell heart.  
 Bravely we will endure both the sword and severe fires,  
 Only let there be freedom to convey what anger wishes.  
 Carry me through the furthest nations and through the waves,  
 Where no woman knows my path: 30  
 You remain, to whom the god nods assent with an easy ear,  
 And may you always be equal in safe love.  
 Our Venus cultivates bitter nights for me.  
 And never is Love inactive or enervated.<sup>3</sup>  
 Avoid this evil, I warn you: let the care of each delay him 35  
 And let him not change the bed when his love has been made familiar  
 But if anyone turns slow ears to these warnings,  
 Alas! He will recall my words with such profound grief!<sup>4</sup>

In these lines, Propertius immediately introduces himself as he will be characterized for the rest of the poem, and even for the rest of the *Monobiblos*. He is a passive lover, out of control of his circumstances, and a victim of Love and of Cynthia. His first four lines explain the situation he is in, what Cynthia has done to him, and what Love has done to him. To draw attention to his victimization he is often not the subject and many of the verbs refer to him passively, either in their grammatical form or by taking him as the object—for instance, *me* (1, 5, 17, 33), *mihi* (3, 7), *contactum* (2), and *cogor* (8). When he finally is the subject of an active verb, he is giving advice and warnings about love—*moneo* (35), and cf., *monitis* (37), *quod si quis...heu referet*

<sup>2</sup> See Genovese (1973), “Propertius’ ‘Tardus Amor’ (1.1.17-18),” *CJ* 68:138-143 for the various scholarly debates concerning the word *tardus*.

<sup>3</sup> My translation for this line is adapted from L. Richardson (1977), *Propertius: Elegies I-IV*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press), 149.

<sup>4</sup> All translations of Latin and Greek are my own unless otherwise noted. All Latin comes from Barber’s 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the *Oxford Classical Text* of Propertius: Sextus Aurelius Propertius, *Carmina*, ed. E.A. Barber (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960).

(37-38). He also markedly notes that it was Cynthia who captured him with her eyes (*cepit*, 1), making her the first word in the poem. She appears first in order for Propertius not only to open his *Elegies* with his main subject, but also to open them with his perpetrator and suppressor: the woman who made him the victim of her affections and will forever be superior to him and have priority over him in his poetry and in his life.<sup>5</sup> Not too long after her, he mentions Amor, who cast down Propertius' eyes (*deiecit*, 3), overwhelmed his head (*pressit*, 4), and taught him about love (*docuit*, 5). Propertius' subjectivity is not pleasant. He calls Love wicked (*improbis*, 6), he is inflamed with passion (*furor*, 7), forcefully pressed to love (*impositis pressit Amor pedibus*, 4), and has been compelled to be caught up in a matter that brings adverse gods (*aduersos cogor habere deos*, 8). Each of these phrases reiterates his victimization, and it is because of his bestowed passion that the gods are against him.<sup>6</sup> Robert J. Baker clarifies line 8 saying, "the point seems to be that ancient philosophers regarded love as a sort of madness sent by the gods as ideally good for the people it is sent to.... The paradox for Propertius lies in the idea of love as a divine presence which is not helpful, but hostile."<sup>7</sup> Part of the reason he sees this love as hostility is because he has been burdened by it for the whole year (*toto...anno*, 7), and will never be free of it, as he hints in line 34 with "never is Love inactive" (*nullo...tempore...defit Amor*). By opening his poetry with this poem and these themes, Propertius emphasizes his struggle with love and what it means to be in the service of love (*seruitium amoris*).

### **Milanion's Trials**

To supplement this introductory view of love as a burden, Propertius provides the example of Milanion and refers to Milanion's trials (*labores*, 10) to compare them to his own.

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<sup>5</sup> Propertius himself mentions Lycinna as his previous girlfriend in poem 3.15.

<sup>6</sup> Kerill O'Neill discusses Propertius' victimization and servitude, especially under the scope of gaze theory and Propertius' as an object of Cynthia's dominant and manipulative grasp via her eyes: (2005), "The Lover's Gaze and Cynthia's Glance," in *Gendered Dynamics in Latin Love Poetry*, eds. Ronnie Ancona & Ellen Greene, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005): 243-266.

<sup>7</sup> Robert J. Baker (2000) *Propertius I*, (Warminster, England: Aris & Phillips Ltd), 65.

Milanion loved Atalanta, but the only way to make her his bride was to defeat her in a race. He used Venus' golden apples to do so, and thus earned Atalanta as his bride.<sup>8</sup> This is not the portion of the myth to which Propertius refers, however. He speaks of Milanion's trials after he has won Atalanta as his bride. The only other account we have of these trials appears later in Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* (2.187-192)<sup>9</sup>:

saepe suos casus nec mitia facta puellae  
 flesse sub arboribus Milanion ferunt;  
 saepe tulit iusso fallacia retia collo,  
 saepe fera toruos cuspide fixit apros.      190  
 sensit et Hylaei contentum saucius arcum;  
 sed tamen hoc arcu notior alter erat.

Often they say Milanion wept under the trees  
 At his own failures and the ungentle acts of his girl (Atalanta);  
 Often he brought deceitful nets to his bidden neck,  
 Often he fixed fierce boars with a savage spear.      190  
 And wounded, he felt the drawn bow of Hylas;  
 But nevertheless there was another bow more known than this one.

Ovid's account of Milanion not only contains similar themes to Propertius', but it also mentions another bow in the final line, undoubtedly referring to Amor.<sup>10</sup> This is the indication that love is the harshest pain and a more familiar torment (*notior*, 192). Propertius' love is likewise painful and he even notes that Milanion suffers (*patiemur*, 27) and is not well (*non sani pectoris*, 26), and, if we look at Ovid's description as reflective of the same myth, is wounded (*saucius*, 191). Propertius also calls Milanion *amens* (11), which parallels the remark made earlier in his poem that he lives *nullo...consilio* (6). The theme of pain, sickness, suffering, and facing trials in love is prominent in the poem and in its mythological example of Milanion, but as Joan Booth argues,

<sup>8</sup> For an ancient source that provides this myth, see Apollodorus, *Library*, 3.9.2 in James G. Frazer, ed. and trans. (1921), *Apollodorus: Library, Books 1-3.9*, Loeb Classical Library, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).

<sup>9</sup> Richardson (1977) only notes Ovid as well, 147.

<sup>10</sup> We see the mention of the severity of Love's bow again in 1.9.21 discussed below. There the wound is described as piercing to the marrow (*pueri totiens arcum sentire medullis*). Also, in Ovid's passage Milanion sits under trees as he complains of his love, a similar situation to the one seen in Propertius' 1.18 discussed last in this chapter. Francis Cairns points out that "the figure of the neglected lover, wandering about in the countryside uttering a mixture of complaints and pleas, was a conventional one. Propertius himself sketches it at length in I xviii," (1974), "Some Observations on Propertius 1.1," *CQ* 24: 95.

Milanion eventually overcomes Atalanta's love through endurance.<sup>11</sup> Perhaps Propertius hopes that he likewise will endure in his trial. Regardless, Propertius brings up Milanion's tale in order to stress the victimization of Love. This example becomes a very foundational point in the trajectory of Propertius' characterization in book 1 because, as will be examined, there is a constant struggle for control on the part of Propertius and he faces assiduous conflict and hardship, much like Milanion.

### **Warning!**

After describing his situation and providing examples, Propertius concludes his poem with a warning. He warns (*moneo*, 35; *monitis*, 37) because love is dangerous and even referred to as evil (*malum*, 35). Based on his previous experiences—given in the perfect tenses (*cepit*, 1; *deiecit*, 3; *pressit*, 4; *docuit*, 5; etc.)—he is able to warn in the present moment (*moneo*, 35). His advice is therefore justified by former experience. Since his admonition falls at the end of the poem, Propertius is essentially telling his readers that what they are about to read in the *Elegies* can serve as a guide for living while in love and suffering from such love. He tells his listeners not to have slow ears (*tardus...auris*, 37) or they will face love with the same grief as he did. If, however, they heed his warnings, he implies that they will be ready for love. He never says that love is pain-free, but he hopes to lessen the pain for others by informing them of his own experience, which he shows when he mentions how much grief they will have if they do not pay attention (*si quis monitis tardus aduerterit auris, / heu referet quanto uerba dolore mea*, 37-38).

Poem 1.1 is not the only time in his poetry that he sends an exhortation concerning love; in poem 1.15 Propertius again uses *moneo* when he writes, *quis ego nunc pereo, similis moniturus amantis* / 'O nullis tutum credere blanditiis' (By which things I now perish, I will warn lovers in a similar situation / 'O, it is not safe to trust in any charms,' 1.15.41-42). Although in 1.1

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<sup>11</sup> Joan Booth (2001b), "Problems and Programmatics in Propertius 1.1," *Hermes* 129: 64.

he warns of love's hardships (*labores*, 1.1.10; *ferrum, ignis*, 1.1.27; *noctes...amaras*, 1.1.33; etc.) in 1.15 he specifically warns against its charms,<sup>12</sup> used to seduce and manipulate victims. The charms about which he speaks are specifically Cynthia's eyes. He mentions them in 1.15.33-34 as well: *tam tibi ne uiles isti uideantur ocelli,/per quos saepe mihi credita perfidia est!* (Let not those eyes seem to you so very worthless,/By which your deceit was often believed by me!). By making himself the victim, and in 1.15 the deceived victim who fell for the charms (*blanditiis*, i.e., *ocellis*) of love, he is able to warn others. If he had not experienced love's spells and been taught (*docuit*, 5) by love, he would not have the justification to warn others.

In 1.1 the active role he takes is to warn (*moneo*), and in 1.15 he perishes (*pereo*). The warning he was given in the opening poem carries over to those to whom he gives this advice fourteen poems later, namely those in a similar situation (*similis...amantis*, 1.15.41). Amor has snatched him and he realizes the danger and corruptibility of love to the point that he warns others about it as well. He is passive to love, but active to warn.

### **Magic and Spells**

There also exists in this poem the theme of magic and spells. Not only does Propertius repeat the idea of Cynthia's eyes as charms, as mentioned, but he also has very subtle allusions to myths of magic in this poem. In line 19 he mentions the "deceit of the drawn down moon" (*deductae...fallacia lunae*). S.J. Heyworth refers to these lines as a way "to define those to whom Propertius makes his prayer, and again in 23-4 to make the vow that he will fulfil (*sic*) if they grant his request—he will believe in their capacity to perform this trick."<sup>13</sup> In other words, Propertius' desperation and disparagement over his trials in love and the fact that the gods are against him (*aduersos...deos*, 8) challenge him in such a way that he even seeks aid from witches

<sup>12</sup> Or the charms of its mediator, who, in Propertius' case, is Cynthia.

<sup>13</sup> S.J. Heyworth (2007), *Cynthia: A Companion to the Text of Propertius*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 9; W.A. Camps also alludes to the magical elements of these lines. See Camps, ed. (1961), *Propertius Elegies: Book I*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 44.

(*uos, deductae quibus est fallacia lunae*, 19) and is willing to endure swords and fire (*ferrum...et ignis*, 27). This is not the only reference to magic and sorcery; in 20 he mentions *sacra piare*, which can also have connotations of witchcraft or ritual. Camps makes note of this and mentions that it is unique to find *sacra* as the object of *piare*, and because of this it has “a special overtone, very likely the idea of an elaborate and exact ritual.”<sup>14</sup> Richardson agrees that it is an idiom for dark rites.<sup>15</sup> This only emphasizes Propertius’ search for relief from love’s trials. Finally, to emphasize the theme of witchcraft even more, Propertius speaks of *Cytaeines* in line 24. *Cytaeines* refers to a Cytaean or Colchian woman, i.e., Medea.<sup>16</sup> *Cytaeines* can also be read as *Cytinaeis*, “Cytina” being another word for Thessalian, which connotes Thessalian witches.<sup>17</sup> In both readings witches are the reference point. There is also an obvious phonetic and visual relationship between these words and the name “Cynthia”, undoubtedly to make a direct connection between Cynthia and magic. By referring to Cynthia and Love’s entrapment of him with magical and ritual language, Propertius further emphasizes his characterization as the victim of Love and Cynthia’s spells and charms. He thus reveals the tremendous power of Cynthia and Love in capturing him in such a way that could only possibly be remedied by witchcraft.

### Concluding 1.1

By introducing his *Elegies* in such a way, Propertius shows that he has no choice but to fall in love. He faces victimization through the verbal, physical, and visual subjugation he describes; he notes specifically that Cynthia is a capturer and Love is an enforcer, and that all parts of him physically (*lumina*, 3; *caput*, 4), intellectually (*consilio*, 6), emotionally (*odisse*, 5),

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<sup>14</sup> Camps (1961), 44.

<sup>15</sup> Richardson (1977), 148.

<sup>16</sup> *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, Combined ed., s.v. “Cytæia,” ed. P. G. W. Glare, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 482; Richardson (1977), 149; Camps (1961), 45. Barber’s *apparatus criticus* notes that Herzberg, a Renaissance scholar, created these readings and that they do not actually exist in original manuscripts, see Barber (1960), 2.

<sup>17</sup> Camps (1961), 45. Also Heyworth (2007), 10 mentions this relationship and especially its emphasis in *Elegies* 3.24.9-10.

and artistically (*artis*, 17) have been taken over and are not his own. In fact, his counsel has been replaced with passion, which he indicates in lines 6 and 7, and *nullo...consilio* (6) implies chaos and disorder, since the word *consilium* connotes structure; *furor* is capricious and the very opposite of the order found in *consilium*. Propertius has come to realize that Love and Cynthia govern him, both of whom he now follows in every area of his life. He has been forced by love to live in a new way, to act in new ways, and as a result he writes these *Elegies* as a warning to others, concluding with the admonition: *quod si quis monitis tardas aduerterit auris,/heu referet quanto uerba dolore mea*, (but if anyone turns slow ears to these warnings/Alas! He will recall my words with such profound grief, 37-38).

### Poem 1.9

Though his opening poem suggests a stance of passivity and victimization, there are several poems in book 1 in which Propertius asserts his authority. Most of these poems—1.9, 1.10, 1.13, and 1.20— are “instructional” because Propertius usually speaks to another poet or elegist and informs him about certain characteristics of Love, Cynthia, and the trials that come with the territory of being in love. I argue that these poems in which Propertius acts as an authority reveal another facet of his subjectivity. I say that he asserts his control because it is clear that Cynthia is the master teacher and Propertius is only able to instruct because of what she has taught him. Thus, he is not entirely in control or the lead teacher, so to speak, he is more of a teaching assistant. Nonetheless, he is knowledgeable of love and of how to perform well in love. I will examine 1.9, a poem addressed to Propertius’ friend, Ponticus (1.9.1-34):

Dicebam tibi uenturos, irrisor, amores,  
 nec tibi perpetuo libera uerba fore:  
 ecce iaces supplexque uenis ad iura puellae,  
 et tibi nunc quouis imperat empta modo.  
 non me Chaoniae uincant in amore columbae  
 dicere, quos iuuenes quaeque puella domet.  
 me dolor et lacrimae merito fecere peritum:

atque utinam posito dicar amore rudis!  
 quid tibi nunc misero prodest graue dicere carmen  
 aut Amphioniae moenia flere lyrae? 10  
 plus in amore ualet Mimnermi uersus Homero:  
 carmina mansuetus lenia quaerit Amor.  
 i quaeso et tristis istos compone libellos,  
 et cane quod quaeuis nosse puella uelit!  
 quid si non esset facilis tibi copia? nunc tu 15  
 insanus medio flumine quaeris aquam.  
 necdum etiam palles, uero nec tangeris igni:  
 haec est uenturi prima fauilla mali.  
 tum magis Armenias cupies accedere tigris  
 et magis infernae uincola nosse rotae, 20  
 quam pueri totiens arcum sentire medullis  
 et nihil iratae posse negare tuae.  
 nullus Amor cuiquam facilis ita praebuit alas,  
 ut non alterna presserit ille manu.  
 nec te decipiat, quod sit satis illa parata: 25  
 acrius illa subit, Pontice, si qua tua est,  
 quippe ubi non liceat uacuos seducere ocellos,  
 nec uigilare alio limine<sup>18</sup> cedat Amor.  
 qui non ante patet, donec manus attigit ossa:  
 quisquis es, assiduas a fuge blanditias! 30  
 illis et silices et possint cedere quercus,  
 nedum tu possis, spiritus iste leuis.  
 quare, si pudor est, quam primum errata fatere:  
 dicere quo pereas saepe in amore leuat.

I was saying to you, Mocker, that loves would come,  
 And your words would not be free forever:  
 Look how you succumb and come as a suppliant to the orders of the girl,  
 And now the girl you purchased orders you every which way.  
 The Chaonian doves wouldn't conquer me in love, 5  
 Saying which youths each girl tames.  
 Grief and tears made me experienced rightly:  
 And would that I might be said to be naïve with love set aside!  
 What does it benefit you, miserable, to speak a serious song now  
 Or to mourn the walls of the Amphionian lyre? 10  
 The verses of Mimnermus are stronger in love than those of Homer:  
 Tamed Love seeks gentle songs.  
 Go, I beg, and put away those serious little books of epic  
 And sing that which any girl wants to know!  
 What if the opportunity was not so easy for you? 15

<sup>18</sup> In this line (1.9.28) Barber provides *nec uigilare alio nomine cedat Amor*, rather than *alio limine*, which is the reading of the Heinsius text and the preferred reading of the Loeb edition, G.P. Goold., ed. and trans. (1990), *Propertius: Elegies*, rev. ed. Loeb Classical Library, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 64-65. I prefer the Loeb edition on this line in particular since it is significant in relation to poem 1.16, to be discussed below. Otherwise the poem follows the Oxford text of Barber (1960).

Now, crazy man, you are seeking water mid-stream.  
 You do not yet even grow pale, certainly you are not touched by true fire:  
 This is the first spark of a coming evil.  
 At that point you will desire more to approach Armenian tigers  
 And more to know the chains of the infernal wheel 20  
 Than to feel so often the bow of the boy in your marrow  
 And to be able to deny nothing to your angry girl.  
 No Love provides for anyone such easy wings,  
 That he hasn't pressed him with the alternate hand.  
 Nor let it deceive you, *that* girl was prepared enough: 25  
*She* becomes harsher, Ponticus, if she is yours<sup>19</sup>  
 That is to say, Love would not concede to lead away your empty eyes, where it is  
 Not permitted, nor would he concede to keep watch at another threshold.  
 He does not become known until his hand touches bone.  
 Whoever you are, ah—flee Love's constant charms! 30  
 Oaks and flint stones would be able to yield to them,  
 You are by no means able to, your spirit is fickle.  
 So, for shame, confess as soon as possible your errors:  
 Often in love it helps to say why you perish.

Propertius is teaching Ponticus, a minor epic poet and contemporary of Propertius, about love.<sup>20</sup>

He notes that there is a coming evil (*uenturi...mali*, 18), which implies that he himself has come to discover what results derive from love, what it means to love, and what it was like before this “evil”. He characterizes himself as an expert in love. As an expert of love (*peritum*, 7),

Propertius knows what is in store for Ponticus, and identifies these in the future tenses (*uenturos*, 1, *fore*, 2, *uenturi*, 18, *cupies*, 19). He is predicting Ponticus' future and knows the result of

Love's captivity and violence, because he has gone through the same results in his own experience. He even remarks that tigers and Ixion's wheel are preferable to the frequent wounds of Love's bow (*magis Armenias cupies accedere tigris/et magis infernae uincula nosse rotae,/quam pueri totiens arcum sentire medullis*, 19-21). It is not just Ponticus to whom

Propertius gives these instructions, but anyone who may face love. He writes that Love does not provide an easy experience for anyone (*nullus Amor cuiquam facilis...praebuit alas*, 23) and that

<sup>19</sup> Emphasis in 25 and 26 is my own.

<sup>20</sup> Note also that 1.7 is addressed to the same Ponticus, but it is not so much instructive as it is almost a lament of Propertius that he writes love elegy and Ponticus writes epic. He compares Ponticus with himself and hints that at some point Ponticus too will be struck by love (1.7.26), which is what happens in 1.9.

whoever should encounter its charms should flee (*quisquis es, assiduas a fuge blanditias*, 30). As we saw with 1.15.41-42 discussed above, charms (*blanditias*) here again are dangerous and a seduction and manipulation of the victims that fall for them.

### **Ponticus the Victim**

Just as in 1.1 when Propertius is made the victim of Love and as a result lives *nullo consilio*, Ponticus likewise will become a victim, as indicated by the supplication and groveling that Propertius mentions in line 3: *ecce iaces supplexque uenis ad iura puellae*. Here already, the girl Ponticus interacts with is his commander and orders him around (*iura*, 3, *imperat*, 4), even though he purchased her (*empta*, 4) and it would therefore seem that she should be subordinate to him. Propertius warns Ponticus that if he attempts elegy, he must sing whatever any girl wants to know (*cane quod quaeuis nosse puella uelit*, 14), because it will look the same for all girls—they all want the theme of love. Additionally Propertius warns that Ponticus should deny nothing to his angry girl (*et nihil iratae posse negare tuae*, 22) because in the game of love he will and it is best to admit his suffering (*dicere quo pereas saepe in amore leuat*, 34). All of these points identify the female as the dictator of the man and the one that does the commanding.

As a commander, we see her authority repeated is in the theme of eyes. As examined in 1.1.1 and 1.15.33-34 discussed above, so also do we see *ocellos* again in line 27. In this line it is Ponticus' eyes that have the potential to be seduced by love, which is what happened to Propertius in 1.1.3-4 when Love cast down his eyes (*mihi constantis deiecit lumina fastus...Amor*). Not only does Ponticus have to listen to the girl's orders, but he also has to watch out so that her eyes do not seduce him. He, like Propertius, is victimized by the charms (eyes) of his woman. Propertius' subjugation by eyes is directly connected to his loss of power and even his ability to write what he wants. The theme appears in multiple poems because Propertius repeatedly emphasizes his subordination to Cynthia and the great amount of power even her eyes

have against him.<sup>21</sup> Propertius shows that if Cynthia can do so much with just her gaze, she can do even more to him physically with words (as in 1.3), literarily with elegy (as in 1.9), emotionally with his attitude (as in 1.18), and mentally with his identity (as in 1.12).

In addition to these victimizations, Propertius also gives pointers to Ponticus concerning the female nature and the nature of love. He tells him that the girl becomes harsher when she gains possession of a man (*acrius illa subit...si qua tua est*, 1.9.26), that Ponticus is not strong enough to succumb to a girl's love (*cedere...nedum tu possis, spiritus iste leuis*, 31-32), and that it is necessary to practice humility if love is to be understood (*quare, si pudor est, quam primum errata fatere*, 33). In all of this advice, Propertius has shown himself to be an expert in love, but he has also made it clear that he knows the authority of the female and he understands exactly how enticing love is because he is experienced (*peritum*, 7).<sup>22</sup>

### Allied Poets

Because of this experience Propertius warns Ponticus about undertaking a subject with which he is unfamiliar. There is a sense of history here in the words of Propertius. He notes that Ponticus is seeking water mid-stream, in other words, Ponticus is diving into a subject by which he will be overwhelmed and with which he is unfamiliar, which implies that Propertius *is* familiar with it. This is both literary and metaphorical. It is literary because Ponticus is an epic poet and he either has crossed or wants to cross genres to write elegy, a genre in which Propertius is expert. Propertius is warning Ponticus that to attempt to be an elegist when he is an epic poet is like stepping on hot coals or attempting deep waters when he cannot swim. Propertius is once again warning about love. The instructions are for Ponticus, but they are also for the generic lover and poet who may think he either wants to be in love or to write about love, or may be blind to the charms of writing love elegy. The poem is also metaphorical because

<sup>21</sup> See O'Neill (2005), on the seductive power of Cynthia's gaze, 246-247.

<sup>22</sup> Joy K. King (1975), "Propertius, Programmatic Poetry and the Unity of the 'Monobiblos'," *CJ*, 71: 111.

Propertius understands the drastic effect love has on his own life, and he warns Ponticus about this. Why does Propertius encourage writing about love when in 1.1 and 1.15 he so adamantly warns against falling for love's charms? The reason has to do with writing. Whereas before he warns about falling in love, here he encourages writing about it so that Ponticus too can divulge the severity of love and the fickle temperament of the female, but only when he is truly struck by Love.<sup>23</sup> Also, however, if Propertius has a "partner in crime," so to speak, he can gain more control over his own situation. If he knows that Ponticus likewise struggles with love and its hardships, then they can be supporters both of each other and of men that can strive for some sort of control alongside one another. If Ponticus, an *epic* poet, turns to love, Propertius, whose songs are not as noble (*carmina...lenia*, 12), can have a strong ally in his endeavor.

### **Concluding 1.9**

In the first poem Propertius was not in charge, but rather Cynthia and Amor were the dominant figures that seduced him. In poem 9 he admits his seduction, but he has learned from it and understands its power as well as how best to deal with it. He has taken the leadership position in instructing Ponticus in the same ways he had to learn what love is, but Propertius is only in control because he was first pacified and struck by Cynthia; thus, his control is only over his passivity since he is supervised by the master teacher, Cynthia. Ultimately, Cynthia and Love make up Propertius' characterization, and his identity as well, as we will come to see.

### **Poem 1.16**

In the third poem I have chosen to discuss, we see an entirely different perspective on the dynamics of Propertius' love affair and characterization, although this poem again portrays him as passive. Propertius' perspective is that of Cynthia's threshold and doors and cries out as an

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<sup>23</sup> Genovese (1973) makes the distinction that Ponticus has been in love but has never been struck. He implies that there is a difference between everyday love and the entrapment of Amor, 138.

inanimate object incapable of having any effect or influence on her behavior or her licentious acts. The *paraclausithyron*—song at the closed door—is a trope of elegiac poetry,<sup>24</sup> but Propertius takes a different spin; rather than speaking from the voice of the rejected lover outside the doors, he speaks as the doors themselves<sup>25</sup> (1.16.1-48):

‘Quae fueram magnis olim patefacta triumphis,  
   ianua Tarpeiae nota pudicitiae;  
 cuius inaurati celebrarunt limina currus,  
   captorum lacrimis umida supplicibus;  
 nunc ego, nocturnis potorum saucia rixis,                   5  
   pulsata indignis saepe queror manibus,  
 et mihi non desunt turpes pendere corollae  
   semper et exclusis signa iacere faces.  
 nec possum infamis dominae defendere noctes,  
   nobilis obscenis tradita carminibus;                   10  
 (nec tamen illa suae reuocatur parcere famaе,  
   turpior et saecli uiuere luxuria.)  
 has inter grauius cogor deflere querelis,  
   supplicis a longis tristior excubiis.  
 ille meos numquam patitur requiescere postis,           15  
   arguta referens carmina blanditia:  
 “Ianua uel domina penitus crudelior ipsa,  
   quid mihi iam duris clausa taces foribus?  
 cur numquam reserata meos admittis amores,  
   nescia furtiuas reddere mota preces?                   20  
 nullane finis erit nostro concessa dolori,  
   turpis et in tepido limine somnus erit?  
 me mediae noctes, me sidera plena iacentem,  
   frigidaque Eoo me dolet aura gelu:  
 tu sola humanos numquam miserata dolores           25  
   respondes tacitis mutua cardinibus.  
 o utinam traiecta caua mea uocula rima  
   percussas dominae uertat in auriculas!  
 sit licet et saxo patientior illa Sicano,  
   sit licet et ferro durior et chalybe,                   30  
 non tamen illa suos poterit compescere ocellos,  
   surget et inuitis spiritus in lacrimis.  
 nunc iacet alterius felici nixa lacerto,  
   at mea nocturno uerba cadunt Zephyro.  
 sed tu sola mei tu maxima causa doloris,           35  
   uicta meis numquam, ianua, muneribus.

<sup>24</sup> For a brief outline of the *paraclausithyron* in elegiac poetry, see Richardson (1977), 189.

<sup>25</sup> Catullus 67 speaks to the door, but not *as* the door or door frame: R.A.B. Mynors, ed. (1958), *C. Valerii Catulli Carmina*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press), lines 1-48.

te non ulla meae laesit petulantia linguae;  
 quae solet †irato dicere tanta ioco†  
 ut me tam longa raucum patiare querela  
 sollicitas triuio peruigilare moras. 40  
 at tibi saepe nouo deduxi carmina uersu,  
 osculaque impressis nixa dedi gradibus.  
 ante tuos quotiens uerti me, perfida, postis,  
 debitaque occultis uota tuli manibus!”  
 haec ille et si quae miseri nouistis amantes,  
 et matutinis obstrepit alitibus. 45  
 sic ego nunc dominae uitiiis et semper amantis  
 fletibus aeterna differor inuidia.’

I who once opened for great triumphs,  
 Doors known for Tarpeian chastity,  
 Whose threshold gilded chariots frequented,  
 Wet with the supplicatory tears of captives  
 Now I complain, wounded from nighttime brawls of drunken men, 5  
 Often beaten by shameful hands,  
 And disgraceful crowns never fail to hang on me  
 And always torches lie near, signs of those shut out.  
 I am not able to ward off the disreputable nights of my mistress,  
 A remarkable door handed over to obscene songs; 10  
 (Nevertheless that woman is not called back to spare her own reputation,  
 And to live more shameful than the luxuries of the age.)  
 I am forced to mourn these acts amidst serious complaints,  
 More sorrowful because of the long watches of a suppliant.  
 That man never permits my doorposts to rest, 15  
 Recalling songs with eloquent flattering:  
 ‘Door crueller than my mistress herself inside,  
 Why are you silent, closed to me with such hard gates?  
 Unbarred, why do you never admit my loves,  
 Unaware of how to be moved to transmit secret prayers? 20  
 Will there really be no end allowed for our grief,  
 And will sleep be shameful on a warm threshold?  
 The middle of nights, The stars outstretched,  
 The breeze cold with morning frost all grieve me lying there.  
 You alone never pitied human sorrows 25  
 You respond in return with silent hinges  
 O would that my voice, sent through the hollow chink  
 Would turn and alert the struck ears of my mistress!  
 Though she be more enduring than Sicanian rock,  
 Though she may be even harder than iron or steel, 30  
 Nevertheless that woman will not be able to restrain her own eyes  
 And her breath will rise with uncontrollable tears.  
 Now she lies, leaning on the lucky arms of another man,  
 But my words fall with the nightly west wind.  
 But you alone are the greatest cause of my grief, 35

Never conquered by my gifts, o Door.  
 No insolence of my tongue offends you,  
 Which is accustomed †to say all things in an angry place†  
 That you would endure me, hoarse with long complaints,  
 To keep watch for worrisome delays at the crossroads. 40  
 But I often brought songs with a new verse to you,  
 And I gave supportive kisses on the pressed upon steps.  
 O disloyal door, how many times before your posts did I turn myself,  
 And did I bear votive gifts owed by hidden hands!"  
 These things and those, which you miserable lovers come to know, 45  
 He cries out to the early morning birds.  
 So I now am confounded with endless jealousy  
 By the faults of my mistress and always by a lover's tears.

As stated in the start of this section on Propertius, Propertius' characterization is actually that of Cynthia's doorway and threshold.<sup>26</sup> The identity of the threshold is of some debate, however. Because no names or specific identities are mentioned, scholars have provided varying opinions on the identity of the threshold's owner.

### Whose Door?

Anthony Corbeill takes a religious viewpoint on the characterization of the threshold arguing, "the poem portrays the doors of the Temple of Fides lamenting her mistress's recent moral decline."<sup>27</sup> While I agree with his stance, I also think that Propertius is providing a twofold meaning for this poem. Corbeill's evidence for the Fides characterization is well-grounded and actually contributes to the view that Propertius is also crying out to Cynthia's lack and loss of faithfulness. Corbeill again argues that the poem "constitutes not a specific complaint against an unfaithful mistress but a general interrogation of the nature of erotic fidelity,"<sup>28</sup> a point that I believe is partially true and related to my view as well. While I disagree with the notion that

<sup>26</sup> Camps (1961) argues that the woman referred to is not necessarily Cynthia, although paired with 1.18 and even 1.3, this poem's parallels indicate that it is likely Cynthia; also, the recurrent theme of unfaithfulness in Cynthia's characterization also lends credence to view this threshold as Cynthia's, 82. Richardson (1977) likewise thinks that this poem has nothing to do with Propertius or Cynthia, 189.

<sup>27</sup> Anthony Corbeill (2005), "The Topography of *Fides* in Propertius 1.16," *Defining Genre and Gender in Latin Literature: Essays Presented to William S. Anderson on his 75<sup>th</sup> Birthday*, eds. William W. Batstone and Garth Tissol, (New York: Peter Lang), 94.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

Propertius does not address a mistress (since in line 46 he specifically calls out to his *domina*), I do agree that the threshold is making an interrogation of fidelity. The voice of the threshold is both an argument for the loss of *fides* in Rome, but also an embodiment of Propertius' emotions at the amorous and unfaithful actions of Cynthia (*dominae uitii...differor*, 46-47). Even if we can view the threshold as that of the temple of Fides, that does not preclude an interpretation of the poem as Propertius' lamentation of Cynthia's erotic behavior.

In another stance, Christopher Nappa calls this *paraclausithyron* a mockery of the generic *paraclausithyron*, since the perspective is from the threshold itself. While I think this is too strong a statement, I do agree that Propertius is playing with the trope through the unique perspective of the threshold.<sup>29</sup> Nappa argues that the owner of the house is the mistress, presumably Cynthia, but ultimately that this *paraclausithyron* embodies “a criticism of elegiac protocols and values” and “suggests that readers are complicit in the very behaviors which they are invited to turn up their noses at.”<sup>30</sup> This viewpoint is quite different from Corbeill's and my own, but it nonetheless suggests that Propertius uses this *paraclausithyron* differently than his predecessors and in the end, each of these views points to the presence of erotic infidelity and the lamentation at the loss of faithfulness and morals. In the view I present, the infidelity is Cynthia's.

### **Propertius as the Threshold**

Propertius embodies—or should I say is disembodied—as something that is able to witness Cynthia's affairs, the drunken men who frequent her home, and the activities that happen day and night. The threshold represents a boundary, both of chastity, and of social behavior. By choosing this particular guise from which to speak, Propertius emphasizes the disgraceful acts of Cynthia and his own inability to correct her since the threshold has “already been crossed,” so to

<sup>29</sup> Nappa (2007), “Elegy on the Threshold: Generic Self-Consciousness in Propertius 1.16,” *CW* 101: 57.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

speak. He is a very passive lover here because he watches all of Cynthia's affairs take place, but he can do nothing about them. His perspective as something that once represented chastity (*ianua Tarpeiae nota pudicitiae*, 2) but now is tainted<sup>31</sup> is very emblematic of his relationship with Cynthia but also with licentious behavior as a whole.<sup>32</sup> In the case of Tarpeia, she opened the boundaries of Rome to let the Sabines in, but the boundaries of Rome represented the safety and wellbeing of Rome. As a result, when she broke that boundary, the rupture not only symbolized her individual loss of virginity, but also the wellbeing of the Roman state.<sup>33</sup> Here Propertius hearkens to that story in line 2 in order to evoke the severity of Cynthia's actions and what he represents as the threshold.<sup>34</sup>

### *Exclusus Amator*

In line 8 Propertius mentions the lovers left outside and neglected because presumably a more worthy lover is within.<sup>35</sup> He does this in order to reflect that he has felt her disregard as well, not only other men (*exclusis*, 8).<sup>36</sup> Their torches—sexual passions—are left to fade (*iacere faces*, 8) and some luckier man sleeps with Cynthia (*nunc iacet alterius felici nixa lacerto*, 33). Propertius, however, is even worse off than these men because he is a threshold, an inanimate,

<sup>31</sup> Corbeill (2005) argues that the pluperfect is indicative of time past. His argument is also relevant to the idea that chastity is lost, although he asserts that it indicates the age of Fides, 81. He also states that the Tarpeian reference is necessary to understand the loss of *pudicitia*, which aligns well with the view that Propertius sees Cynthia's acts as unchaste, 88.

<sup>32</sup> Nappa (2007): 62-63. See Tara S. Welch (2015) *Tarpeia: The Workings of a Roman Myth*, (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press) and (2005) "Amor versus Roma: Gender and Landscape in Propertius 4.4," in *Gendered Dynamics in Latin Love Poetry*, eds. Ronnie Ancona & Ellen Greene, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005): 296-317 for background on Tarpeia's myth and Tarpeia in Propertius.

<sup>33</sup> On the story of Tarpeia, her symbolism and effect on Rome, and her role as a Vestal Virgin, see Rachel A. Smith (2014), "Vestals Remembered: An Examination Of The Myths Of Rhea Silvia, Tarpeia, And Tuccia," (undergraduate thesis, Baylor University), 35-58. See also Francis Cairns' discussion of literary traditions concerning Tarpeia's myth and this poem in particular, Cairns (2011), "'Tarpeia Pudicitia' in Propertius 1.16.2 – and the Early Roman Historians," *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*, 154:183-184.

<sup>34</sup> Nappa (2007): 64; Cairns (2011): 183-184.

<sup>35</sup> Camps (1961), 83.

<sup>36</sup> If we read lines 17-44 as from the voice of an excluded lover, as many do (e.g., Sharon James, Barber) then this point is even more poignant. He speaks from the voice of the excluded lover because he has been one. James (2003), *Learned Girls and Male Persuasion: Gender and Reading in Roman Love Elegy*, (Berkeley: University of California Press), 138; Barber (1960), 22-23.

ignored object whose role in Cynthia's life is nothing more than to be trampled on. As Christopher Nappa argues, "[Propertius] is, on the one hand, perpetually frustrated, but he is not always excluded, for the woman within does have lovers, and the *exclusus amator* may well have been one of them from time to time,"<sup>37</sup> but I do not entirely agree. Propertius creates tiers of importance: the lover within, the abandoned lover, and the disregarded and impotent threshold. Each tier of lover is an experience Propertius has undergone throughout his poems. Before he became the threshold in 1.16, Propertius was at one point the lover within, which poem 8b makes evident in lines 33-34, *illa uel angusto mecum requiescere lecto...maluit* (that girl preferred to rest with me on a narrow bed). Propertius was also the *exclusus amator* in previous poems and in his relationship with Cynthia. He was neglected by Cynthia or felt threatened that he would be replaced by a better rival, as in 1.5, in which poem he explicitly calls out Gallus and begs him not to seek to love Cynthia (*quare, quid possit mea Cynthia, desine, Galle,/quaerere: non impune illa rogata uenit*, 31-32) and tells him that he will learn what it is like to be excluded from home (*discere et exclusum quid sit abire domum*, 1.5.20), or in 1.8 where Propertius mentions the rival (*iste*, 1.8a.3; *riualis*, 1.8b.45) whom Cynthia accompanied in her travels. Now in 1.16, however, he is even less than the one rejected, now he envies the man within and the man rejected. Poem 16 reveals Propertius' complete lack of control. At various points throughout his poetry, Propertius has inhabited all three states that the characters of this poem inhabit, and he has come to the point in which he cannot even teach the neglected lover about love, as he does in 1.9 with Ponticus; rather, he has lost even his praeceptorial control and is left only to complain in his thoughts.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Nappa (2007): 58.

<sup>38</sup> Richardson (1977) characterizes the male lover as "gentle and melancholy" in this poem, 189; I strongly disagree. I think that Propertius is quite forceful, just unheard.

## Triumph and Supplication

We also see in this section the theme of triumph versus supplication. He complains of the base garlands that adorn him (*mihi non desunt turpes pendere corollae*, 1.16.7). These garlands are called *turpes*, which contrast the crowns of victory that one would wear, or use to adorn thresholds in triumph.<sup>39</sup> These garlands also allude to poem 1.3, in which Propertius decorates sleeping Cynthia with garland crowns (*corollas/ponebam...tuis, Cynthia, temporibus*, 1.3.21-22) like a mannequin.<sup>40</sup> The garlands that he crowned her with then were meant to decorate her and were a result of his infatuation, but here in 1.16 they seem to be a mockery of Propertius' previous love for her now made *turpes* because of her infidelity and from other lovers contending to be with her. In 1.3 Propertius asserted his control in adorning her and dressing her up with little decorations, but in 1.16 his control has disappeared. In addition to the garlands Propertius presents more triumphal imagery in the chariots of line 3 (*cuius inaurati celebrarunt limina currus*) and the very opening line 1.16.1 (*quae fueram magnis olim patefacta triumphis*). His use of the perfect *celebrarunt* shows explicitly that the door no longer receives celebratory triumphs. Instead he contrasts great triumphs once welcomed (*magnis olim patefacta triumphis*, 1) with the unworthy hands that now beat the doors (*nunc...pulsata indignis...manibus*, 5-6).

There is also an idea of supplication that contrasts with the imagery of the victory garland. This comes in lines 41-44 where Propertius notes the devotion he once gave to her and all he did in bringing kisses to her steps (*oscula...gradibus*, 42) and prayers with his hands (*uota...manibus*, 44). Propertius once groveled at her door as a suppliant begging for her love as the abandoned lover of 1.8 who cries out for her to return to him (1.8a.15-16 and 1.8b.28). Not

<sup>39</sup> See Corbeill (2005) on his discussion of triumphal garlands for temples, 87. Nappa (2007) also discusses the triumphal theme, 62.

<sup>40</sup> Corbeill (2005) notes that the addressees of 1.3 and 1.16 are not Cynthia, 80. For the idea of a mannequin see Ellen Greene (1995), "Elegiac Woman: Fantasy, *Materia* and Male Desire in Propertius 1.3 and 1.11," *AJP* 116: 307.

only was Propertius the supplicant, but he has also received the supplication of others. In 1.5 Gallus comes entreating Propertius to tell him what Cynthia is capable of. In this poem, however, Propertius is still the receiver but has lost all agency. He has sunk lower than a suppliant and is incapable of responding in any way but to receive the tears of other supplicants (*semper amantis/fletibus aeterna differor invidia*, 47-48), and just as Ponticus came as a suppliant to the commands of his girl in 1.9 (*iaces supplexque uenis ad iura puellae*, 1.9.3), so too does Propertius bow to Cynthia.

### **Concluding 1.16**

In poem 1.1 he was a victim of love, caught unwillingly by Amor. In 1.9 he was an instructional lover, someone who knew the ins and outs of love and had learned from experience how to love best. In this poem he is a jealous lover who is caught between his knowledge of Cynthia's affairs and his ignorance and even incapability of how to handle them. He is passive in this poem, but not in the same way we saw in poem 1. In poem 1 he gave in to passion because he had no choice, but in 1.16 he is literally an inanimate object that cannot help even if it wanted to and metaphorically his words fall to the winds if he tries to speak (*at meo nocturno uerba cadunt Zephyro*, 34); because of his inability to help and his muteness, he has succumbed entirely to a loss of control. This characterization is that of an unwillingly passive lover, in other words, a passive lover that desires to be in control but cannot achieve control. The point of Propertius depicting himself in this way is to show his awareness and consciousness of what his lover is doing so that he does not seem to be a naïve, unknowing lover as he was in 1.1 when he was first caught. Also underlying this poem is Propertius' fear of Cynthia's revenge. In poems 1.4 and 1.5 Propertius tells Bassus and Gallus of Cynthia's retribution if she is slighted. In this poem we see Propertius himself fearful of her power and strength through his characterization of himself as helpless and inanimate. Cynthia too, however, is inanimate. She is compared to rock

(*saxo*, 29) and iron (*ferro*, 30) and steel (*chalybe*, 30), and although these reflect her strength, they also make her lifeless and meaningless. This meaninglessness can be seen in the use of the word *duris* in line 18 and *durior* in line 28 as well.<sup>41</sup> In the first instance Propertius describes the doors of the threshold as hard, in the second he describes Cynthia as harder. In both these descriptions (*saxo/ferro/chalybe* and *duris/durior*), it is as if Propertius is attempting to assert control again, but simply cannot. He is trapped (18), silent (34), and unheard (38) by the woman whose erotic infidelity tramples her threshold.

### Poem 1.18

In the final example of Propertius' characterization (1.18) we see Propertius presented as a pining lover who ponders Cynthia and wavers between frustration in love and deep affection in love. Propertius is neither in control nor out of control; rather he is alone in the woods simply mulling over his circumstances and grappling with his love life (1.18.1-32):

Haec certe deserta loca et taciturna querenti, et uacuum Zephyri possidet aura nemus. hic licet occultos proferre impune dolores, si modo sola queant saxa tenere fidem.	
unde tuos primum repetam, mea Cynthia, fastus? quod mihi das flendi, Cynthia, principium?	5
qui modo felicis inter numerabar amantis, nunc in amore tuo cogor habere notam. quid tantum merui? quae te mihi carmina mutant? an noua tristitiae causa puella tuae?	10
sic mihi te referas, leuis, ut non altera nostro limine formosos intulit ulla pedes. quamuis multa tibi dolor hic meus aspera debet, non ita saeua tamen uenerit ira mea,	15
ut tibi sim merito semper furor, et tua flendo lumina deiectis turpia sint lacrimis. an quia parua damus mutato signa colore, et non ulla meo clamat in ore fides?	
uos eritis testes, si quos habet arbor amores, fagus et Arcadio pinus amica deo.	20

<sup>41</sup> The word *durus* is also affiliated with the dominant lover in elegy, which is exactly the point, James (2003), 139. Cynthia is dominant, and his use of *durus* to describe the doors is his attempt to be the dominant one in the relationship, but it fails because he is left to cry to the birds. But it is the shut out lover who calls him *durus*.



In this poem we see so many aspects of Propertius' grief, joy, love, and thoughts all collected. He is alone but cannot be free from thoughts and even echoes of Cynthia. He speaks of her demanding behavior (25) and her arrogance (24), but the angry thoughts that consume him are those of bitterness. He let her control him (9); he allowed her to be unjust unfairly (25) and he did nothing to fight back (26). Now his only way to rebut her is to separate himself from her. Even in this isolation, however, Propertius cannot be free from his love for her. Propertius is always under Love's sway, even in the woods apart from Cynthia. In this poem Propertius has finally realized that he has no control, but that his whole life is inferior to and dependent on Love and Cynthia.

### **Silent Doors**

In poem 1.18 Propertius echoes a line in 1.16. In both poems he complains of his mistress's injustices and mentions silence and doors. In 1.16 the threshold is silent, and in 1.18 doors are silent. Propertius writes, *quid mihi iam duris clausa taces foribus* (why are you [threshold] so silent, closed to me with your hard gates, 1.16.18) and *quae solum tacitis cognita sunt foribus* ([the results of your injustices] which were made known only to silent doors, 1.18.24). What Propertius does in the first scene is not that surprising given his persona as a threshold, but in the second situation, he is in the middle of a forest crying out complaints. He thus recalls in 1.18.24 the scene two poems earlier in which he complained silently to silent doors. Now, in this situation he is able to complain out loud. He mentions that his previous occasion of complaint in 1.16 was equally as hopeless because only silent doors heard his pleas, just as the empty forest and deserted rocks (*uacuum...nemus, 2; deserta...saxa, 32*) hear him now but

cannot and do not listen; instead they simply echo his laments back to him (*resonant mihi 'Cynthia' siluae*, 31).<sup>42</sup>

### Poetic Threshold

There is also a correspondence with 1.16 in the image of the threshold. In 1.16 Propertius mentions a threshold that is warm (*tepidum limine*, 22), indicating Cynthia's frequent lovers. While he was cast as the doorframe, Propertius witnessed the licentious acts of Cynthia and the accepted and neglected lovers that passed through her arms and her doorway. He was jealous and even cried out in vain at her erotic infidelity. The threshold in 1.16 represented the breaking of chastity, and it carries its representations of fidelity into 1.18, in which poem, however, we see not Cynthia's but Propertius' threshold. The thresholds are quite different.

In 1.18, Propertius notes that no other feet have crossed his threshold (*non altera nostro/limine formosos intulit ulla pedes*, 11-12). The threshold provides an interesting contrast in the two poems in relation to the visitors that pass through the doors. With the numerous visitors Cynthia receives, Propertius admits to no visitors besides her. He contrasts his fidelity with her amorousness. Cynthia's threshold seems to be in a busy area, but Propertius is here, alone in the woods, yet mentions his pristine threshold. Whereas before he felt trapped within the threshold and was not able to utter audible complaints, now he is able to complain to the woods, and he knows that it was her infidelity that trapped him and made him helpless so he contrasts his faithful threshold with hers to emphasize his freedom. Alone in the woods he is able to affirm his love for her by recalling that his threshold was solely for her and that even if hers is warm, his was not trod by others.

There is a deeper meaning to *limen* in Propertius' poetry, however. On the one hand Propertius means a literal threshold, but on the other, he means a poetic threshold. *Pedes* in line

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<sup>42</sup> Friedrich Solmsen (1962), "Three Elegies of Propertius' First Book," *Classical Philology*, 57: 74-75.

12 can also be read as feet in poetic meter, in which case Propertius is implying that Cynthia is the only girl present in his poems and poetry. Cynthia's frequented threshold is thus a metaphor for her frequent use as a poetic figure or even real lover.<sup>43</sup> Ellen Greene sees Cynthia as a metaphor for poetic use as well and likewise compares the *puella* to material for the man's use.<sup>44</sup> Cynthia's threshold is popular, but Propertius' threshold is empty of visitors; in other words, Cynthia is the only woman he writes about, and tangentially elegy is the only genre in which he participates. The poetic threshold is therefore the boundary between elegy and other genres, and the boundary between Cynthia as his female subject and other women. He does not cross his threshold except through Cynthia, and no visitors cross through his except Cynthia. He emphasizes his fidelity in this contrast. Whereas in 1.16 we see her frequent affairs and his inability to control his or her situation, in this poem we see his faithfulness and dedication to one lover and one "threshold-crosser". By doing so Propertius' complaints become more justified since he was faithful even though she was wanton. Since he has recognized his lack of control, he stresses an area where he still holds the reins: his sexual acts and loyalty, but also his act of writing and his use of her as a poetic figure.

### Then and Now

There has been a progression in Propertius' characterization throughout the four poems I have analyzed, and lines 7 and 8 depict part of that growth and change. Propertius uses the parallels *modo* and *nunc* to reveal where he has come. He writes (1.18.7-8):

qui modo felicis inter numerabar amantis,  
nunc in amore tuo cogor habere notam.

I who once was counted with those lucky among lovers,  
Now I am forced to hold a mark from your love.

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<sup>43</sup> This does not prove, however, that she is a real woman, only that it is one view. I do not seek to posit my opinion one way or another, Maria Wyke and many others have entered into this debate already. See Wyke (1987), "Written Women: Propertius' *Scripta Puella*," *The Journal of Roman Studies*, 77: 47-61.

<sup>44</sup> Greene (1995): 311-312.

Propertius creates the contrast between *modo* (once I was...) and *nunc* (now I am...). At the start of his poems Propertius was an unwitting victim of love, then he undergoes a change through the experiences he has with Cynthia until finally he bears a *notam*—a brand or mark from this love. Before Cynthia, Propertius is said to have loved a woman named Lycinna.<sup>45</sup> Perhaps this is what he means by “lucky among lovers” in line 7 because, as we saw in 1.9, Propertius informs Ponticus that although Ponticus has had girlfriends, he has never truly been pierced by love. In the same way Propertius may have loved Lycinna, but Love struck him and his relationship with Cynthia is far different. His previous relationship could be what he is referring to as lucky because it came with no trials, no challenge, and no Cynthia-like figure who was superior to Propertius and had control. This contrasts well with his use of *tuo* in line 8 (*in amore tuo*) because it distinguishes an earlier love from love with Cynthia. But this is only one interpretation, and Propertius does not mention his relationship with Lycinna until poem 15 of book 3 and it is not clear if his readers would have known of Lycinna. This view also enters into the reality of Propertius’ relationship with Cynthia outside of the text, which is an ongoing debate, as discussed in the introduction. Thus, another implication Propertius could be putting forth with line 7 is that until he really started the relationship with Cynthia he thought he was simply in love, but then he realized that what he thought was a happy love was really a love so rich and deep that it marked him and caused him to remain forever in its grasp to the point that he marks trees (22) and cannot clear her from his mind (30-32). Poetically speaking, before Cynthia he never wrote elegy, but then he became someone who could not help but be influenced by love and in turn he began to write about it. In other words, his *modo/nunc* can be interpreted as his journey to becoming a true elegist, and the trees on which he writes her name are the pages of his poetry.

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<sup>45</sup> See n. 5 of this chapter.

## Futile Lamentation

Propertius uses the word *impune* in line 3, and although it seems subtle since it is not in a particularly important or emphasized part of the line or meter, nevertheless it provides a glimpse at a greater point he is trying to make. He states in these lines (1.18.1-4):

Haec certe deserta loca et taciturna querenti,  
 et uacuum Zephyri possidet aura nemus.  
 hic licet occultos proferre impune dolores,  
 si modo sola queant saxa tenere fidem.

Certainly these places are deserted and quiet for one complaining,  
 And the western breeze fills an empty wood.  
 Here it is allowable to bring forth hidden sorrows without consequence,  
 If only the rocks alone are able to keep the secret.

Propertius notes that in these places, clearly deserted (*deserta*) and empty (*uacuum*), he can complain *impune*. This implies that in the presence of Cynthia he cannot complain or even express sorrows without being punished. It is after these four lines that Propertius begins his lamentations with rhetorical questions and explanations of his grief.<sup>46</sup> Cynthia, however, will never hear his miseries because Propertius cannot speak of them in her presence. In fact when he is in her presence he uses words like *consueui timidus perferre...neque...queri* (1.18.25-26), or *dolor* (1.18. 3, 13, and 26) and *aspera* (1.18.14). Once again these are indications that Propertius finds himself under the sway of Cynthia, unable even to complain about his hardships or to speak of them at all. His sorrows are many and there are many harsh things, but he only says them when he is away and alone—*impune*. Cynthia punished him when he was in her presence and he unwittingly became the victim.

There seems to be a counterintuitive correlation between his being absent and her still being in control. Although he is alone, rather than escaping her to lament, he writes that the woods resound Cynthia's name to him and that she inhabits even the rocks and he therefore

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<sup>46</sup> James (2003) provides a thorough explanation of the theme of *querelae* in elegy and specifically in poem 1.18. She argues specifically that the mistress's cruelty, his loneliness, and his faithfulness are recurring tropes of *querelae*, as well as the constant presence of the mistress, even when he is far apart from her, 113.

cannot be free from her presence (*resonent mihi 'Cynthia' siluae,/nec deserta tuo nomine saxa uacent*, 31). In a sense, he cries to the trees and they simply cry back. Every inhabitant of the forest, animate or inanimate, speaks of Cynthia, but there is no resolution. There is no freedom for Propertius from Cynthia, and even in the place where he can complain freely, his cries are simply returned to him, reinforcing his pain. He begins the poem with *deserta loca* and *uacuum...nemus* and ends it with *siluae,/nec deserta...saxa uacent*. Even the poem reflects the empty echoes of the forest and deserted rocks. Propertius' endeavor is futile.

### **Concluding 1.18 and Chapter One**

Propertius' characterization as a figure in his poetry is multi-faceted, but also static in some ways. He changes from person to gatekeeper (as Ponticus' instructor), to gate/threshold, to echo, but he always remains a victim of Love and of Cynthia. The trajectory we see for him is very much shaped by the characterization of Cynthia, examined in chapter two. If other poems of the *Monobiblos* were to be examined, they would likewise reveal one of these characterizations of Propertius. Ultimately what Propertius does in his first book is reveal his state of submission and his journey in love. He progressively loses control until he at last gives up his control and realizes that he cannot escape or manipulate Cynthia as she can him, but he will continue remaining faithful even when she is fickle or harsh.

## CHAPTER TWO: CYNTHIA

Characterization is important in the *Elegies* because it allows the reader to develop a perspective on the author and his poetic creation and voice. Something deeper happens when we closely examine poems; not only do we find layers in the text and language, but also in the person writing and the people that make up that text. As we saw in the previous chapter, Propertius the character, as Propertius the poet portrays him, is constantly a victim, but also appears as very in-love and in endless desire to learn and grow from the trials he faces both as the receiver of love and as the giver of love. Cynthia and Amor challenge him repeatedly, either with assiduous desire or with the fear of infidelity. The four poems examined are just a simple glance into the heart of Propertian characterization and the depiction of poetic growth and growing pains, so to speak.

Characters in the *Elegies* are interactive and have strong dynamics between them. Each is necessary for the other and as the poems play out, it becomes more and more clear just how much they two lovers' characterizations help define the other. They interact and respond to each other literally, but also within the broader scope of the overarching characterization. Just as Propertius repeatedly characterizes himself as a lover in control or out of control, Cynthia too is characterized in different lights. We have to keep in mind first person narrative because almost all of Propertius' poems are from his perspective. Sharon James, however, argues that many of the poems in elegy are from the female perspective, not necessarily in voice, but definitely in portrayal.<sup>47</sup> Propertius often dons her perspective to get something out of her<sup>48</sup> or to control her, as he does in 1.3 when he decorates her as she sleeps. Because of perspective or voice, intention or persuasion, Propertius is able to paint a picture of her that varies throughout his first book.

In this second chapter, I will examine three poems in particular—treating 1.8 as two

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<sup>47</sup> Sharon James (2003), *Learned Girls and Male Persuasion: Gender and Reading in Roman Love Elegy*, (Berkeley: University of California Press), 7.

<sup>48</sup> James (2003) argues that this could be sex, 20.

poems—that heavily emphasize Cynthia and create interesting perspectives on her many-faceted characterization. The first poem, 1.5, is a warning to Gallus of Cynthia’s wrath. Propertius portrays her as a woman who ought not be trifled with because she will be fierce and even brings with her a poison of sorts whose effects are incurable. It is in this poem that Propertius shows her dominance and how she asserts her authority over him and all other men. The next poem I focus on is 1.8. Many texts separate this poem into two halves,<sup>49</sup> and because of this I will focus on each half in separate discussions, although I do treat them as a pair. The poem’s first half, 8a, describes a journey of Cynthia, and it is fraught with jealousy for Propertius since he worries that with her away he can have no knowledge of her whereabouts and interactions; as a result, he fears affairs. It is with this poem that we see Propertius’ loyalty being tested by Cynthia. We learn that in 8a Cynthia is capricious, free-spirited, and sails to see the kingdom and wealth of others, willingly leaving behind Propertius. In the second half, however, Cynthia returns swayed by Propertius’ faithfulness, and Propertius feels worthy and loved again, taking credit that he won her heart and that she favors him above others. The final poem I will examine is 1.12, in which Propertius concludes that Cynthia is gone for good (even though she returns later in 1.15 and elsewhere). He bemoans her loss and yet he still loves her. She has found Propertius loyal and has at last influenced him in such a way that she defines and makes up his whole life. Even though this is not the final poem of the *Monobiblos*, we nevertheless see that Cynthia has become Propertius’ one and only love and that he will forever honor her. In all of these poems Propertius continues to face the trials of love and is learning more and more about Cynthia; her trajectory throughout his poems begins with one who asserts her control and authority, who tests

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<sup>49</sup> Some texts that separate the poems include: Sextus Aurelius Propertius, *Carmina*, ed. E.A. Barber (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960); G.P. Goold., ed. and trans. (1990), *Propertius: Elegies*, rev. ed. Loeb Classical Library, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press); Barbara Gold (1986), “Time, Poetry, and Immortality in Propertius (‘Propertius’ 1.8),” *CJ* 81: 148-157; H.E. Butler and E. A. Barber (1933; repr. 1969), *The Elegies of Propertius* (Oxford); Joy K. King (1975), “Propertius’ Programmatic Poetry,” *CJ*, 71: 108-124. Gold (1986) also mentions the status of the poem and the relationship between 8a and b even though she separates them, 154.

his faithfulness by traveling and coming back, and, finding favor in him, leaves him knowing that he loves her, that he has confessed that he will always remain faithful, and that she has become his very identity.

### Poem 1.5

There are two poems in book 1 that portray Cynthia as vengeful and retributive. These poems (1.4 and 1.5) are not only right next to each other, but they are also two of the poems in which Propertius instructs a fellow poet in proper poetic writing or the trials of love—the first is addressed to Bassus, the second to Gallus. I will focus on the latter for the sake of this discussion, but the former is similar in its characterization of Cynthia. In 1.5 Propertius gives Gallus advice on love, specifically love in relation to Cynthia. Although the back story of the poem is unclear, it seems to imply that Gallus is either seeking a relationship with Cynthia or has at least flirted with her, or he has asked Propertius what it is like to love Cynthia, which may be a general question for what it is like to love any girl<sup>50</sup> (1.5.1-32):

Inuide, tu tandem uoces compesce molestas  
 et sine nos cursu, quo sumus, ire pares!  
 quid tibi uis, insane? meos sentire furores?  
 infelix, properas ultima nosse mala,  
 et miser ignotos uestigia ferre per ignis, 5  
 et bibere e tota toxica Thessalia.  
 non est illa uagis similis collata puellis:  
 molliter irasci non solet illa tibi.  
 quod si forte tuis non est contraria uotis,  
 at tibi curarum milia quanta dabit! 10  
 non tibi iam somnos, non illa relinquet ocellos:  
 illa feros animis alligat una uiros.  
 a, mea contemptus quotiens ad limina curres,  
 cum tibi singultu fortia uerba cadent,  
 et tremulus maestis orietur fletibus horror, 15  
 et timor informem ducet in ore notam,  
 et quaecumque uoles fugient tibi uerba querenti,

<sup>50</sup> Francis Cairns argues that Gallus (a third party) is trying to cause a rift between Propertius and Cynthia and specifically that he is drawing Cynthia away from Propertius. Cairns (1984), “Propertius 1.4 and 1.5 and the ‘Gallus’ of the Monobiblos,” in *Oxford Readings in Classical Studies: Propertius*, eds. Ellen Greene & Tara S. Welch, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 142.

nec poteris, qui sis aut ubi, nosse miser!  
 tum graue seruitium nostrae cogere puellae  
 discere et exclusum quid sit abire domum; 20  
 nec iam pallorem totiens mirabere nostrum,  
 aut cur sim toto corpore nullus ego.  
 nec tibi nobilitas poterit succurrere amanti:  
 nescit Amor priscis cedere imaginibus.  
 quod si parua tuae dederis uestigia culpae, 25  
 quam cito de tanto nomine rumor eris!  
 non ego tum potero solacia ferre roganti,  
 cum mihi nulla mei sit medicina mali;  
 sed pariter miseri socio cogemur amore  
 alter in alterius mutua flere sinu. 30  
 quare, quid possit mea Cynthia, desine, Galle,  
 quaerere: non impune illa rogata uenit.

Envious man, at once restrain your vexing cries  
 And allow us to go as equals on this course, where we are!  
 What do you want for yourself, crazy man? To feel my passions?  
 Unhappy man, you are quick to know the greatest evils,  
 And as a pitiable man you are quick to bring your footsteps through 5  
 Unknown fires and to drink poison from all of Thessaly.  
 That girl, when compared, is not similar to inconstant girls:  
 She is not accustomed to grow angry at you calmly.  
 But if perhaps she is not contrary to your promises,  
 How many thousands of cares she will give you! 10  
 Now that girl will not leave your sleep nor your eyes:  
 She alone captures the senses of men fierce in spirit.  
 Ah, how many times will you run scorned to my threshold,  
 When your strong words will fall in a sob,  
 And a trembling dread will rise in sorrowful mourning, 15  
 And fear will bring an ugly mark on the face,  
 And whatever words you want will flee for you as you seek them,  
 You will not be able to know who or where you are, miserable man!  
 You will be compelled to learn the serious servitude of our girl  
 And to learn what it is to go home, shut out; 20  
 Now you will not marvel so many times at our pallor,  
 And why I am no one in my whole body.  
 Nobility will not be able to support you when you're a lover:  
 Love does not know how to yield to old ancestral masks.  
 But if you will have left small traces of your blame, 25  
 How quickly you will be an object of rumor from such a great name!  
 Then I will not be able to bring the solaces to one asking,  
 Since for me there is no medicine for my evil;  
 But equally we wretches will be compelled in an allied love  
 Each to mourn our grievances on the understanding lap of another. 30  
 Wherefore, O Gallus, put off to ask what my Cynthia can do,  
 That girl when invited comes not without retribution.

Cynthia is fierce in this poem. She brings cares (*curarum milia quanta dabit*, 10), captures men's senses (*nec poteris, qui sis aut ubi, nosse*, 18), forces them into servitude (*seruitium nostrae cogere puellae/discere*, 19-20), she is irremediable (*nulla mei sit medicina mali*, 28), and brings retribution (*non impune illa rogata uenit*, 32). All of these traits appear in Propertius' description of what she is capable of, which ironically is the very question he tells Gallus not to ask (31).<sup>51</sup> Propertius only adds to these characteristics when he describes her as irascible (*molliter irasci non solet*, 8), in opposition (*contraria*, 9), burdensome (*curarum milia quanta dabit*, 10), a presence in dreams and wakefulness (*non...somnos...non illa relinquet ocellos*, 11), a tamer of men (*illa feros animis alligat una uiros*, 12), a fear inducer (*tremulus maestis orietur fletibus horror*, 15), and one who will leave an ugly mark (*informem ducet in ore notam*, 16). Propertius seems to have endless examples and thoughts full of remorse and hardship from Cynthia stored up and ready to utter in moments like this. It is this cruelty from which Propertius draws in order to represent the servitude he enters and the submission he succumbs to in loving Cynthia.

He shows his servitude to her even in his language. Cynthia is the subject of eight verbs (7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 31, 32) and even more clauses, and five times she is explicitly identified as "illa" (7, 8, 11, 12, 32) as opposed to any generic girl. Propertius even says in line 22 that he is no one (*sim...nullus ego*), and implies that he has lost his very identity to Cynthia and no longer has control of who he is apart from her. We will also see this in 1.12.11, examined below, where Propertius confesses that he is not who he was before being captured by Cynthia (*non sum ego qui fueram*). Even in the advice Propertius gives Gallus in poem 1.5, he states that Gallus will become passive (*nec poteris*, 18; *cogesis*, 19) and will not be able to know who or where he is once he is in the servitude of love and Cynthia in particular (*nec poteris, qui sis aut ubi, nosse miser!/tum graue seruitium nostrae cogere puellae/discere*, 18-20). He, like Propertius, will lose

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<sup>51</sup> Cairns (1984), 144.

his identity to Cynthia. In 1.5, Cynthia is fierce and Propertius admits it and gives in. He has no other choice and warns Gallus that the same thing will happen to him. Cynthia's characterization in this poem is a woman who asserts her authority to such an extent that she consumes Propertius (and others) so that he is under her grasp and servile to her in every way, and the punishments she brings leave a mark and are difficult to endure.

### Themes of Terror

In addition to her dominance, Propertius uses language that gives the sense that Cynthia is a sort of terror, a figure whose love is harsh and terrifying to engage in. He begins this characterization in line 3 with *furores*, and although this is a common word in love poetry,<sup>52</sup> it nonetheless prompts in this poem the theme of passionate feelings.<sup>53</sup> To call his feelings for Cynthia *furores* is to reveal not only how strongly he loves her, but also how brutal that love can be, since it denotes both passion and fury. Propertius is warning Gallus that love is not just 'warm and fuzzy'; rather, love must be questioned before being entered into. Hence his interrogatives in 1.5.3: *quid tibi uis, insane? meos sentire furores?* Propertius' use of *insane* only adds to the emphasis that Gallus has been consumed by irrational passions, and Propertius refers to love as evil akin to a sickness in line 28 (*mali*), contributing to the strength and severity of love. Continuing in line 6 he mentions Thessalian poison (*toxica*), which like any poison is vicious and lethal. Propertius compares love to this poison, which, as defined by the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, is specifically arrow poison<sup>54</sup>—a reference to Amor's deleterious arrows. Propertius points out that Gallus is quick to dabble with evils (*mala*), fires (*ignis*), and with poison (*properas ultima nosse mala,/et miser ignotos uestigia ferre per ignis,/et bibere e tota toxica Thessalia*, 4-6). Even *toxica* is incomparable to what Cynthia brings, however, because

<sup>52</sup> Michael Lipka (2001), *Language in Vergil's Eclogues*, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter), 104.

<sup>53</sup> L. Richardson, Jr. (1977), *Propertius: Elegies I-IV*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press), 159.

<sup>54</sup> *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, Combined ed., s.v. "toxica," ed. P. G. W. Glare, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 1954.

she is not like other inconstant girls (7), presumably the ones who are associated with the *mala, ignis, et toxica* with which Gallus involves himself. Cynthia as a terror is a prominent characterization and one that further reveals what she is capable of.

But Propertius is not done with his comparisons or his characterization of Cynthia as a terror. *Curarum milia quanta* appears in line 10, and while this phrasing seems hyperbolic, Propertius' intention is likely an honest warning, since he does provide numerous examples of Cynthia's rage and personality just in this poem. *Tremulus...horror* in line 15 connotes a very fearful and terrifying experience that continues this trail of the harsh reality of love. This tremulous dread is undoubtedly the state Propertius was in when he first began to realize what love and Cynthia would do to him, and is likely the point at which he realized there was no turning back. It is through all of these instances that Gallus must be warned. Propertius over-emphasizes perhaps because he is a jealous lover that does not want Cynthia in the hands of another man, but more likely because he really feels her oppression and lives perpetually as her victim. If he were only jealous, he would not wish Gallus to be his ally in line 29 (*sed pariter miseri socio cogemur amore*). Additionally, as we saw in the first chapter, in 1.18 Propertius is able to present his complaints and cares *impune* to the woods, rocks, and trees. In this poem Propertius explicitly states that Cynthia does not come without punishment (*non impune*), and he warns Gallus of this fact as a point of summation (32). In other words, Cynthia will hold sway over both him and Gallus, should Gallus be hers too.

The *furores, toxica, tremulus, horror, milia curarum* that all form the theme of passionate feelings and terror, are only part of how Propertius describes being in love with Cynthia. These are mere personality traits and descriptive indications of what she is capable of and the effect she has on others; at the deeper level, Cynthia is even more manipulative and transformative. Propertius mentions that she can control men fierce in spirit (*feros animis alligat...uiros*, 12). Put

another way, she can tame untamed (*feros*) men. Cynthia causes these men to become senseless and even forgetful of their identities (18). She has emotional, physical, and mental effects on men and the *furor* she possesses is deeply overpowering and manipulative.

### **Cynthia as Dominant Dictator**

Because she is so consuming, Propertius is able to teach Gallus based on what he has undergone himself. Just as we saw in the analysis of Propertius' didactic characterization in 1.9 of the previous chapter, here too we see that Propertius is speaking from experience. Cynthia has become Propertius' teacher because he has seen her various facets, her harshness, her control, and her terror, and he in turn teaches Gallus of these things. What are all of these descriptions of Cynthia besides lessons? Gallus will read or hear this and know many of the ways in which Cynthia acts so that he knows why to avoid Cynthia. Cynthia is a slave master that brings men into her service, but she is also a master teacher that is not afraid to treat her pupils harshly. As a result they—or rather Propertius—in turn, are wary of any interaction with her and are warned that she surpasses class (*nec tibi nobilitas poterit succurrere amanti*, 23) and ancestry (*nescit Amor priscis cedere imaginibus*, 24) and transforms identities (*nec poteris, qui sis aut ubi, nosse*, 18), leaving her pupils helpless and lost without her. She is a teacher, but also a sort of dictator.

Cynthia's configuration in this poem is that of an overpowering, dominant woman who has already trapped Propertius' feelings and thoughts and will likewise trap Gallus' should he choose to love her. Not only is Cynthia a teacher of Propertius, but also Gallus because Gallus learns from Propertius, who learned from Cynthia. Both of them teach Gallus in different ways. Propertius teaches through warning and Cynthia through her severity. Indeed, Gallus' learning is evident in the poem's language. Propertius notes that Gallus was eager to know of the evils (of love) (*nosse mala*, 4) and that he will not be able to know himself (*nec poteris nosse*, 18). He also remarks that Gallus will learn what it means to be ignored (*discere et exclusum...domum*,

20) and to stop seeking information on Cynthia (*desine...quaerere*, 31-32). We see that Propertius sometimes uses litotes to warn Gallus of what not to learn in order for him to understand Cynthia's character better.

Also in this poem, Cynthia teaches in her presence and absence since she is very much present for Propertius, but absent for Gallus, at least at the point in which this poem addresses Gallus. Presumably Propertius was—like Gallus will be—forced into servitude (*seruitium nostrae cogere puellae*, 19), shut out from Cynthia's house (*discere et exclusum quid sit abire domum*, 20), made a rumor (*de tanto nomine rumor eris*, 26), not comforted (*non ego tum potero solacia ferre roganti*, 27), and still suffers from his hardships (*cum mihi nulla mei sit medicina mali*, 28). Cynthia holds the power, which is why Propertius concludes with the instructional warning that Gallus ought not ask what she is capable of, but simply be prepared for her severity and retribution. Also, Propertius tells Gallus that they will mourn their grievances on the understanding lap of another (*mutual...sinu*, 30), which implies that he is not understood by Cynthia. Propertius mentions his equality with Gallus in line 2: *et sine nos cursu, quo sumus, ire pares!* If Gallus enters into a similar love Propertius will finally have an ally; he just hopes it is not Cynthia that Gallus loves. Much like 1.9 discussed in the first chapter, Propertius' instructional poems long for a comrade in love. In 1.9 Propertius wanted Ponticus to truly understand love so that he could share in his sufferings with a fellow elegist, lover, and friend. Here too Propertius wants to be an equal with Gallus so that he has a companion who understands his trials and the evils of love; he longs for understanding and empathy because Cynthia has consumed his life in every way. She has made Propertius endure harsh trials and has caused him to feel as if he is alone in love. Gallus would be the ally that Cynthia is not.

### **Concluding 1.5**

In 1.5 Cynthia is the overarching figure. Although the discussion speaks of Propertius

often, it is crucial to emphasize that Propertius would not be giving any of these instructions to Gallus had he not learned them first from Cynthia. In this way we see that Cynthia's characterization is predominantly that of an asserter of authority and one whose lessons shape not one man, but two, and whose severity affects every man that encounters her. Propertius warns Gallus because Cynthia is not someone with whom to trifle, she has control and brings hardships. These hardships are part of the trials Propertius faces to become an expert at loving Cynthia and a teacher of love, just as in 1.9 examined in chapter 1 where Propertius instructs Ponticus based upon his own experience. In both 1.5 and 1.9 Propertius instructs a fellow writer in the ways of love, the character of Cynthia, and the harshness faced in love, all of which have first been taught to him by Cynthia.

### Poem 1.8a

The second poem I look at is not instructional, but, rather, it provides a glance into a side of their relationship that is more personal in the sense that it involves something she has done to him and he addresses her and her actions. In this poem, Propertius writes of a trip Cynthia takes, and Cynthia is portrayed as capricious, flighty, and greedy. As we will find out, however, this poem tests Propertius, pushing him to the limits in order to see how faithful he is to Cynthia. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Cynthia changes in character halfway through poem 1.8, which is one reason many texts separate the poem into 8a and 8b.<sup>55</sup> Although I use Barber's *OCT* for the Latin, which does not separate the poem, I will nonetheless show the oft-incorporated separation for the purpose of this discussion, treating the poem's separate halves as

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<sup>55</sup> Texts that separate the poem include S.J. Heyworth (2007), *Cynthia: A Companion to the Text of Propertius*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), Goold (1990), W.A. Camps (1961), *Propertius: Elegies Book I*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). Richardson (1977) describes an "inner" and "outer" poem, but treats it as a whole otherwise, 166.

if they were individual poems.<sup>56</sup> In 1.8a, Cynthia travels and causes Propertius to feel a tremendous amount of jealousy since he is unable to know all she is doing while she is away

(1.8a.1-26):

Tune igitur demens, nec te mea cura moratur?  
 an tibi sum gelida uilior Illyria?  
 et tibi iam tanti, quicumque est, iste uidetur,  
 ut sine me uento quolibet ire uelis?  
 tune audire potes uesani murmura ponti 5  
 fortis, et in dura naue iacere potes?  
 tu pedibus teneris positas fulcire pruinas,  
 tu potes insolitas, Cynthia, ferre niues?  
 o utinam hibernae duplicentur tempora brumae,  
 et sit iners tardis nauita Vergiliis, 10  
 nec tibi Tyrrhena soluatur funis harena,  
 neue inimica meas eleuet aura preces!  
 atque ego non uideam talis subsidere uentos,  
 cum tibi prouectas auferet unda ratis,  
 ut me defixum uacua patiat in ora 15  
 crudelem infesta saepe uocare manu!  
 sed quocumque modo de me, periura, mereris,  
 sit Galatea tuae non aliena uiae;  
 ut te, felici praeuecta Ceraunia remo,  
 accipiat placidis Oricos aequoribus. 20  
 nam me non ullae poterunt corrumpere, de te  
 quin ego, uita, tuo limine uerba querar;  
 nec me deficiet nautas rogitare citatos  
 ‘Dicite, quo portu clausa puella mea est?’  
 et dicam ‘Licet Artaciis considat in oris, 25  
 et licet Hylleis, illa futura mea est.’

So then, are you really crazy, does concern for me not delay you?  
 Or am I more worthless to you than icy Illyria?  
 And now does that one, whoever he is, seem to you of such greatness  
 That you desire to go wherever the wind takes you without me?  
 Or are you able to hear the murmurs of a wild sea, 5  
 Brave one, and are you able to lie down on a hard ship?  
 Are you able to support your tender feet on solid hoarfrost,  
 Are you able to endure unfamiliar snows, Cynthia?  
 O would that the times of winter solstice would double,  
 And the sailor might be stagnant with the constellations slow, 10  
 May your rope not be released from the Tyrrhenian shore,  
 Nor the unfavorable breeze blow away my prayers!

<sup>56</sup> Richardson is very adamant that you cannot read the second half separately from the first without a loss of power, but I disagree in light of characterization. They can be read together or separately, although they must be read consecutively because they are at the very least a pair even if not a whole. See Richardson (1977), 169.

And may I not see such winds subside,  
 When the wave will carry away your set-sail boat,  
 With the result that it permits me, fixed on an empty shore,                   15  
 To call her often, bitter with a vexed hand!  
 But however you have deserved of me, o unfaithful girl,  
 May Galatea not be foreign to your journey:  
 So that, having traveled past Ceraunia with a happy oar,  
 Oricus may accept you with still waters.   20  
 For not any women will be able to stop me  
 From complaining words about you, my life, on your threshold;  
 Nor will I fail to ask summoned sailors,  
 ‘Tell me, in what port is my girl kept?  
 And I will say, ‘Whether she settle on Atrician shores,                               25  
 And whether she settle on Hyllean shores, that girl will be mine.’

In this poem there again seems to be little control on Propertius’ part, but much in the hands of Cynthia. As she travels, Propertius has no command over her actions or her wanderings and so he worries. He mentions her control in line 4 when he notes that the winds take her where she pleases, but markedly without him (*sine me*). It is in this moment that we see Propertius’ apprehensiveness at her departure because she goes where she wants on the wind, which blows many different directions, just like Propertius fears Cynthia will. In contrast he describes himself later as a fixed object (*defixum*, 15) and insinuates that Cynthia is the person responsible for his abandonment and the one that fixed him there. This is one indication that her desertion is a way of testing Propertius; even though she has left, he stands fixed and does not leave her, but remains, awaiting her uncertain return.

### **Pretenses in Longing**

Propertius questions her abilities in 1.8a as if to weaken her; he asks, repeating the verb *potes*, if she is seafaring (5), able to sleep on a ship (6), or familiar with walking on ice and snow (7-8). Propertius attempts to diminish her capabilities and creates the pretense that she is delicate in order to make her seem less powerful than she is because he cannot bear her departure and absence. He mocks her in his use of *fortis* (6) and *pedibus teneris* (7) because he does not want to

admit her bravery, so he contrasts it with emphatically harsh conditions (*dura naue iacere*, 6) normally undertaken by men, and he wants to dissuade her due to her delicate, feminine feet (*teneris*, 7). In his distraught state, he pretends to be a protector in caring for her wellbeing, but his words are actually selfishly driven to keep Cynthia for himself since he grows more and more anxious the longer she is gone.<sup>57</sup> Regardless of whether he is upset or not, pretending or insulting or not, he still indicates that he calls her often (*infesta saepe uocare manu*, 16) and that he seeks after her in various places (*quo portu clausa puella mea est?*, 24). Her departure serves as a test of Propertius' fidelity. With her gone he could easily move on, have affairs, or play around since she is neither there to catch him nor stop him, but he does not. Instead, he firmly waits for her and seeks her return. He even says no girl will prevent him from thinking about her and lamenting her loss (21-22). In other words, he will not be distracted by any dalliances. He weakens her in an attempt to make himself look even more loyal and more faithful to her. By her departure Propertius is tested in his will to remain faithful and he fixes himself to the shore and endlessly pursues her whereabouts to show that he truly is dedicated to her and that even when she leaves, he will not. In addition to this, Propertius' greatest attempt at control is actually writing about Cynthia. He can choose to keep her there in his poetry—as he does in 8b upon her return—and control her actions that way, but because he does not keep her with him in 8a, his lack of control is even more prominent, and in the end, Propertius calls her his life (*uita*, 22) and says that she will be his (*illa futura mea est*, 26). This confession proves his dedication to her and emphasizes that although he undergoes a trial of separation, he will be faithful.

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<sup>57</sup> Sarah Lindheim (2011), "What's Love Got to do with It?: Mapping Cynthia in Propertius' Paired Elegies 1.8A-B and 1.11-12," *AJP* 132: 633-665. Lindheim's overarching argument concerning 1.8a-1.8b and 1.11-1.12 is that Propertius' attempt at control is his reaction to the changing boundaries of Rome and that Cynthia's wanderings represent the geographically growing empire. I do agree with her that Propertius does attempt to control what is out of his control, but the reasoning behind that could be his fear at the growing empire or his fear that Cynthia is gone forever—either interpretation elicits control as a result of her absence.

## Faithless Girl

There are other times at which Propertius uses many loaded words that question the validity of Cynthia's faithfulness as well as his own jealousy in the matter. He says that she is crazy (*demens*, 1), and that she thinks he is commoner (*uilior*, 2) to her than an icy meaningless place, and later he even refers to her as faithless girl (*periura*, 17). All of these moments are points in which Propertius yet again attempts to draw her closer to him. In other words, without her he begins to question their relationship and because she left she must be *demens* and *periura*, not just a girlfriend traveling. Propertius shames Cynthia with these derogatory cries intending to make her out to be the perpetrator. Through this shaming, he makes Cynthia's characterization out to be that of a faithless lover, and he becomes someone desperate in his desertion and enduring trials in love. Add to this that he pours out wishes, introduced by *utinam* (9), in order to express his sense of worry, but we realize that they are just wishes and nothing concrete, hence the use of the subjunctives and/or passives (*duplicentur*, 9; *sit*, 10; *soluatur*, 11; *eleuet*, 12). Cynthia seems faithless when she is apart from Propertius, and he emphasizes this when he says that she pays no heed to his cares (1), she travels without him (4), his prayers are spoken to the wind (12), and he is left on an empty shore (15). Not only this, but he explicitly states that he will complain about her on her threshold (*tuo limine*, 22), a place where on the one hand, as we saw in 1.16 from chapter 1, many licentious affairs happened, but on the other hand, where Propertius felt stuck because he was loyal and she was not; thus, the threshold can refer to the Cynthia's infidelity, his steadfastness, or both. Since we do not know what Cynthia does while she is away on this journey in 1.8a, Propertius' words are all we can rely on, and we see that he is being tested and strives to endure his abandonment. As we will see in 8b, Cynthia returns and finds favor and Propertius reverses the infidelity previously imputed on her characterization. 8a thus proves that Propertius faced a "trial by fire" of sorts in learning what it means to endure a

life without Cynthia there with him.

### **Clinging to Cynthia**

There are several subtle ways in which Propertius attempts to hold onto his departing Cynthia and contrast his loyalty with hers. First of all he includes numerous possessives (adjectives and pronouns, etc.). Propertius begins this series of emphatic possessive words in line 1 with *mea cura*, then *sine me* (4), *meas...preces* (12), the emphatic *ego* of line 13, *me defixum* (15), *de me* (17), *me non ullae poterunt corrumpere* (21), *ego* again in 22, *me deficiet* (23), *puella mea* (24), *illa futura mea est* (26). This may seem normal for poems, but contrast it with his use of *tu/tibi/te*. Propertius is setting up an intentional contrast between what he does and what Cynthia does. His very first word is *tu*, and he often directly compares something of himself with her, as in lines 1-3 where he says “does *my* care not delay *you*? Or am *I* more worthless to *you* than icy Illyria? And now does that one, whoever he is, seem to *you* of such greatness that you desire to go wherever the wind takes you without *me*?” It is these sorts of pairings that Propertius includes to set himself in a contest between her decisions and his wishes. The pattern continues in his use of *tibi* and *meas* in lines 11-12, *tibi* and *me* in lines 14-15, and *me...de te* and *ego...tuo limine uerba querar* in line 22. All of these direct and intentional oppositions create a clearer picture of Propertius attempting to hold onto Cynthia by persistently attaching himself to her in his poetic phrasing. In fact, the rival of whom he is jealous is only explicitly mentioned once, which creates a distancing between Cynthia and that man (*iste*, 3) and a closer bond between Cynthia and Propertius.<sup>58</sup> Second, he binds her to himself metaphorically with a rope. In line 11, Propertius hopes that her rope will remain tied to the shore (*nec tibi Tyrrhena soluatur funis harena*), and thereby tied to him. He binds her to him by wishing that her boat never leaves but even more so that her boat is unable to leave because it is connected to

<sup>58</sup> Richardson (1977) writes concerning *daret* in line 37 in 1.8b, “note the finesse with which P. persists in ignoring his rival,” 169. This only contributes to the distancing in the first half.

the shore on which he is fixed (*defixum...in ora*, 15).

Of course, Propertius's words are mere wishing and hoping, hence the repeated use of the subjunctives *duplicentur*, (9), *sit* (10), *soluatur* (11), *eleuet* (12), *uideam* (13), *patiatur* (15), *querar* (22), *deficiet* (23), and *considat* (25), as well as the wishful word *utinam* in 9. At the very end of this first half of poem 8 is the point at which Propertius not only hints at what is to come, but also allows his readers to realize that whether Cynthia is far away or ever returns, he is bound to her. He states, "I will say, 'Whether she settle on Atrician shores, and whether she settle on Hyllean shores, that girl is my future.' (*dicam 'Licet Artaciis considat in oris,/et licet Hylleis, illa futura mea est*, 25-26). She is his future; even if she is not faithful to him, as he seems to think and depict, he remains faithful and forever connected to her.

### **Concluding 1.8a**

Unlike Propertius, Cynthia is in control of where she travels, what she does along the way, and the interactions she chooses to have with people (men) she encounters. As stated previously, Propertius emphasizes this when he mentions Cynthia's ability to go where she wants (*quolibet ire uelis*, 4) and again in his repeated questioning of her ability to endure hard situations at sea (*potes...potes...potes* 5-8). Through these questions Propertius is trying to undermine her control and make himself all the more loyal to show her that he can withstand their separation, even though it is hard, and that he remains hers with or without her. In moments like these Cynthia is clearly more powerful than Propertius, and in being tested by her absence, Propertius is able to prove his loyalty; the worry and anxiety he endures test his fidelity and love for her. He tells her that regardless of what she should deserve from him (*sed quocumque modo de me, periura, mereris*, 17) he still gives her fair wishes (18-20) and forges a bond between them, concluding that Cynthia will be forever his (25-26). In the next poem, the loyalty he has shown causes her return; he has withstood the test and Cynthia approves of his love.

**Poem 1.8b**

Because he proved faithful in 8a, Cynthia comes back to him in 8b. Propertius does not credit her with this decision, but proudly boasts that it was he that got her back and his faithfulness that resulted in her return. He passed the test, so to speak, his love remained true, and Cynthia admires his loyalty. In 1.8b we find Propertius rejoicing that he has her back (1.8b. 27-46):

Hic erit! hic iurata manet! rumpantur iniqui!  
 uicimus: assiduas non tulit illa preces.  
 falsa licet cupidus deponat gaudia liuor:  
 destitit ire nouas Cynthia nostra uias. 30  
 illi carus ego et per me carissima Roma  
 dicitur, et sine me dulcia regna negat.  
 illa uel angusto mecum requiescere lecto  
 et quocumque modo maluit esse mea,  
 quam sibi dotatae regnum uetus Hippodamiae, 35  
 et quas Elis opes ante pararat equis.  
 quamuis magna daret, quamuis maiora daturus,  
 non tamen illa meos fugit auara sinus.  
 hanc ego non auro, non Indis flectere conchis,  
 sed potui blandi carminis obsequio. 40  
 sunt igitur Musae, neque amanti tardus Apollo,  
 quis ego fretus amo: Cynthia rara mea est!  
 nunc mihi summa licet contingere sidera plantis:  
 siue dies seu nox uenerit, illa mea est!  
 nec mihi riualis certos subducit amores: 45  
 ista meam norit gloria canitiem.

She will be here! She stays—as she swore! Let unjust men be broken!  
 We won: that girl did not bear our continual prayers.  
 Surely desirous envy is allowed to put away false joys:  
 Our Cynthia put off traveling new paths. 30  
 I am dear to her and because of me Rome is said to be dearest  
 And without me she denies that the kingdoms are sweet.  
 That girl preferred to rest on a narrow bed with me  
 And also to be mine only, in every possible way,  
 Rather than obtain the ancient kingdom of endowed Hippodamia, 35  
 And what wealth Elis prepared in horses long ago.  
 Although he was giving great things and would have given better things  
 Nevertheless that avaricious girl did not flee my lap.  
 I was not able to sway that girl with gold, nor was I able to persuade  
 Her with Indian pearls, but with the service of a charming song. 40  
 Therefore there are Muses, Apollo is not slow for a lover,

I, relying on whom, love: Cynthia is my remarkable girl!  
 Now it is permitted for me to reach the highest stars with my feet:  
 Whether the day or the night has come, that girl is mine!  
 A rival will not carry off my certain loves: 45  
 That glory shall have knowledge of my white hair.

Here we see a different Cynthia from 8a, even though this poem is its pair. Propertius takes us through her various actions in this half stating that she is staying (*manet*, 27), that she has put off leaving (*destitit ire*, 30), and that she denies sweet kingdoms (*dulcia regna negat*, 32). Whereas before he lamented her departure (1.8a.1-4), strove to cling to whatever bit of her he could (1.8a.11), and complained of her infidelity and abandonment (1.8a.15-18), here he overly-praises her and makes the verbs which she performs active in order to credit her with the decision to return to him. As a result he also comes across as deserving of her return because of his loyalty, indicating that she could not bear his cries any longer, but returned because they were continuous and demonstrative of his long-term devotion (*assiduas non tulit illa preces*, 28). He wants to emphasize her loyalty reciprocated to his own loyalty in 8a; he makes Cynthia's choices binding (*iurata*, 27), voluntary (*maluit*, 34), and reinforced using alternatives that she rejects (*quamuis magna daret...non tamen illa meos fugit sinus*, 37-38), and in lines 33 and 34 he mentions that her preference is his narrow bed (*angusto...lecto*), not the hard ship (*in dura naue iacere potes*) of 1.8a.6, a contrast he makes explicit because they are both places to sleep (*iacere*, 1.8a.6) and rest (*requiescere*, 1.8b.33).

These last lines, however, are not so much references to Cynthia as they are to elegy and epic.<sup>59</sup> *Angustus*, a Callimachean word, refers to the slender verse of elegy, and the *nauis*, to the harsh seas and sailors of epic. Knowing this, Propertius' poetry can also be seen as having overcome love's trials. In a sense, he has become a good elegist, dedicated to his genre and committed to what he writes and what it takes to write it. Even if we do not read these lines as a

<sup>59</sup> Gold (1986): 154; Lindheim (2011): 645.

a metonymy for love poetry, Cynthia's return to Propertius approves of his dedication to her.

### ***Cynthia Rara***

In line 42 Propertius calls Cynthia *rara*. This word appears four times in book 1 (3.27, 8b.42, 17.16, and 20.24). In poem 3 Propertius speaks of an “occasional movement” (*raro...motu*, 27); in 17.16, he pairs the word with *dura*, but also refers to Cynthia as a “rare girl” (*quamuis dura, tamen rara puella fuit*). Finally, in 20.24 he speaks of *raram...aquam*, which in this context means “dispersed or scattered water”. Here in 8b.42, his use is most similar to that of 17.16 but is still difficult to render. What did Propertius intend with this word? “Rare,” as we know it, would mean exceptional or uncommon, and the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* cites this passage to mean “exquisite, rare; or unusual,”<sup>60</sup> but the sense remains opaque. How is she exquisite/remarkable or unusual/uncommon? What does he want to convey by using an uncommon word to describe an uncommon girl? This perplexing word is, ironically enough, rarely has a consistent meaning in Propertius, but that is the point. Propertius is emphasizing that Cynthia is *rara* because she is harsh, beautiful, flighty, loyal, unfaithful, and a lover. She is all of these at different times throughout Propertius' poetry, thus she is *rara*. Since this word is neither positive nor negative in sense, even with this exclamation, Propertius makes evident that despite her changing nature, he still stands devoted to her.

*Rara* has another side as well, however. The idea here is that she is of exceptional quality as a girl who turns back from the briberies of jewels and riches (39) for a mere song (40) and desperate poet-lover. If we also compare this use of *rara* to what was previously said in the poem, namely that she returned having rejected kingdoms and kingly riches, Cynthia is *rara* because of her preference for Propertius over wealth; whereas before Propertius seemed common to her (*uilior*, 1.8a.2), now he knows he is more desirable to her than her travels or gems.

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<sup>60</sup> *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, s.v. “*rara*,” ed. P. G. W. Glare (1982), 1575.

Propertius also creates a contrast between *auara* in line 38 and *rara*, both of which words not only rhyme but also end in *-ara*. The sound play of *auara* and *rara* only heightens the contrast, as well as their placement in the same part of their respective lines. Propertius draws this parallel to emphasize that even though Cynthia seemed greedy, he still calls her *rara* and has won her favor with his song (*flectere...sed potui blandi carminis obsequio*, 39-40) and love (*amo: Cynthia rara mea est*, 42).

### Concluding 1.8b

In this poem we have seen Cynthia's characterization shift, even since 8a. She has become someone *rara*, and someone who rewards Propertius' loyalty by returning. Her reasons for returning are humble. He incessantly cried, he sought after her endlessly, and finally, he offered her poetry. All Propertius has is poetry and love, and, whether it was poetry she wanted or not, she accepts it and returns because of his faithfulness.

### Poem 1.12

In the final poem I will examine, Cynthia is gone again, but this time not just on a journey. Propertius writes as if they have separated for good. Even though she appears in future poems (e.g., 1.15, 1.17, 1.18, 1.19), the situation in this poem depicts a life without Cynthia. As with 1.8a, in her absence Propertius still remains loyal. In fact, he dedicates all of who he is to her, noting that she was first and she will be everything that follows (1.12.1-20)<sup>61</sup>:

Quid mihi desidia non cessas fingere crimen,  
 quod faciat nobis, conscia Roma, moram?  
 tam multa illa meo diuisa est milia lecto,  
 quantum Hypanis Veneto dissidet Eridano;  
 nec mihi consuetos amplexu nutrit amores  
 Cynthia, nec nostra dulcis in aure sonat.

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<sup>61</sup> Lindheim (2011): 633-665. Lindheim mentions the pairing of 1.11 with 1.12, which is important, but I do not treat 1.11 since in most editions 1.11 and 1.12 are evaluated separately, unlike 1.8, which is roughly 50/50 in the various editions. Richardson (1977) treats 1.8 as a whole, but 1.11 and 1.12 separately; thus, he seems to view the connection of the latter two as not as important as that of 1.8, 178.

olim gratus eram: non ullo tempore cuiquam  
 contigit ut simili posset amare fide.  
 inuidiae fuimus: non me deus obruit? an quae  
 lecta Prometheis diuidit herba iugis? 10  
 non sum ego qui fueram: mutat uia longa puellas.  
 quantus in exiguo tempore fugit amor!  
 nunc primum longas solus cognoscere noctes  
 cogor et ipse meis auribus esse grauis.  
 felix, qui potuit praesenti flere puellae; 15  
 non nihil aspersionis gaudet Amor lacrimis:  
 aut si despectus potuit mutare calores,  
 sunt quoque translato gaudia seruitio.  
 mi neque amare aliam neque ab hac desistere fas est:  
 Cynthia prima fuit, Cynthia finis erit. 20

Why don't you stop devising the charge of sloth for me,  
 O Rome, since you know what would make me stay here?<sup>62</sup>  
 That girl was separated as many thousands miles from my bed,  
 As far Hypanis is from Venetian Eridanus;  
 Cynthia does not nourish my customary loves with an embrace 5  
 Nor does she sound sweet in our ear.  
 Once I was dear: not then did it happen for anyone  
 That he was able to love with a similar loyalty.  
 We were the subject of envy: did a god not stop me? Or what  
 Herb chosen from Promethean mountains divided us? 10  
 I am not who I was: a long path changes girls.  
 How much love flees in a short amount of time!  
 Now at first I am forced to figure out long nights while alone  
 And I myself am forced to be heavy to my ears.  
 Happy is he who was able to mourn for his present girl; 15  
 Love rejoices somewhat in harsh tears:  
 Or he is happy who, if he is scorned, is able to change passions  
 There are also delights in a transferred servitude.  
 It is not right for me to love another nor to leave from this one:  
 Cynthia was first, Cynthia will be last. 20

Cynthia has left Propertius for reasons unknown and he is weary without her, yet he does not  
 accuse her.<sup>63</sup> Propertius compensates for her absence by attempting to excuse it with various  
 disconnected ideas and rhetorical questions (herbs, a god, journeys, etc., 9-11), giving external  
 reasons for why she might have left.<sup>64</sup> To emphasize why he does not want to admit defeat and  
 the loss of Cynthia, he alludes to the strength of their previous relationship and what they were

<sup>62</sup> See Richardson (1977), 179 for the explanation of this line's ambiguity.

<sup>63</sup> Richardson (1977), 179.

<sup>64</sup> Lindheim (2011): 635.

like together, remarking that Cynthia once found him dear and even loved loyally as he did (7-8). Propertius refers to his former love as customary (*consuetos...amores*, 5),<sup>65</sup> but pointedly notes that he no longer pleases her as he once did (*olim gratus eram*, 7), and that they *were* enviable together (*invidiae fuimus*, 9), but are not anymore. He contrasts *olim* with *nunc* in line 13 to show what he suffers at present. As we saw in 1.8b, Propertius often insults Cynthia because he is frustrated at her flightiness, but ultimately continues to love her. Here too, even though he speaks of past instances, nevertheless he concludes with his never-ending loyalty and commitment. Propertius notes that the time of their loving was short, but he goes on to clarify that he means their time together. Their relationship will always exist, whether both parties are present or not. Cynthia has moved on, hence Propertius' transferred servitude in line 18 (*translato...seruitio*), but she is still characterized as someone who has left on Propertius a permanent mark, a permanent loyalty, and a permanent love.

### Propertius' Transformation

Propertius reminisces not so much to mourn the loss of their relationship, although that is partially his reasoning, but more to emphasize his change in identity. We read in line 11 that Propertius admits he is not who he was (*non sum ego qui fueram*), a shift that is crucial to Cynthia's characterization because it points toward the final line *Cynthia prima fuit, Cynthia finis erit*. As discussed in the first poem above, Propertius says that he is no one (*sim...nullus ego*, 1.5.22), and again in the second poem that Cynthia transforms the souls of powerful men (*feros animis alligat uiros*, 1.5.12). In this poem, Propertius is not who he was because he has become, in a way, Cynthia; he has no identity independent of her.<sup>66</sup> She was his first love, and she will be his last everything.

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<sup>65</sup> I read *consuetos* to apply to Propertius alone, but it can also be read as just accustomed love, which would apply to both Propertius and Cynthia, although it is unclear.

<sup>66</sup> W.R. Johnson (2009), *A Latin Lover in Ancient Rome: Readings in Propertius and His Genre*, (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press), 87.

I say “everything” because many scholars are troubled by the literary argument that *Cynthia prima* opens the *Monobiblos* and all the *Elegies*, but *Cynthia finis* does not close either.<sup>67</sup> They think that Propertius means in this line that Cynthia was the first in his poetry and therefore he intends to end with her, but never does.<sup>68</sup> The irresolution is bothersome, and while other theories exist, I believe that what Propertius means by this is not so much how he starts and ends his poetry, but that he has become what his poetry claims he is: the victim, servant, and lover of Cynthia. Cynthia was the first in his writing, and she may or may not be last in his elegies, but she will be last in Propertius’ life. Line 11 is essential not only in the characterization of Cynthia as so powerful that she is able to change Propertius so he is not who he was, but also because this defines Propertius’ characterization as well.<sup>69</sup> He is characterized by what and who Cynthia is. In that sense, he has become her victim of characterization as well as her victim of love. All that I have argued in this chapter about Cynthia’s control is not simply to characterize her as powerful, which is obvious and basic, but more significantly to display the interaction between characters and their roles in the poems. Ultimately, Cynthia has been guiding Propertius, albeit harshly at times, so that his faithfulness is tested and proves true.

### **Author vs. Character**

It is here that I wish to step back briefly to discuss Propertius as author vs. character. Since it is an impossible endeavor to speak of Propertius the author’s intentions, personality, and character, I will not tread on those grounds. I do think it is possible and not inferential, however, to use the text at hand to show what he has done, regardless of whether he meant to or whether it

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<sup>67</sup> Hans-Peter Stahl (1985), *Propertius: “Love” and “War”*: Individual and State Under Augustus, (Berkeley: University of California Press), 26-27; Paul Allen Miller (2013), *Latin Erotic Elegy: An Anthology and Reader*, (London: Routledge), 349.

<sup>68</sup> Stahl (1985) in particular implies that “prima” is not the opposite of “finis,” but “postrema,” and that “prima” does not so much refer to her placement in the poetic sphere as it does the time or order at which events occur. This implies that Propertius does not necessarily intend to end the *Monobiblos* or the elegies with Cynthia, just that she first captured him, 26-27.

<sup>69</sup> Miller (2013), 349.

reflects who he actually was. Thus, if we examine this change of Propertius the character, whom I will refer to as Propertius C, we can see that what Propertius the author, whom I will refer to as Propertius A, has done is create Cynthia to define Propertius C. In other words, Propertius C depends upon Cynthia, perhaps not at first, but most definitely by his admission in 12.11 that he is not who he was and in 12.20 that Cynthia is his last. *Cynthia finis* never appears as an ending to any book, section, poem, or line of Propertius except here, and this is because Propertius A states this not so much referring to his poetry, but to the life of Propertius C as a character in poetry. Cynthia was the first to capture him, and the reason he exists in his poetry at all.<sup>70</sup>

### ***Fides***

In regards to their “break-up”, Propertius does not blame Cynthia but attributes her changing mind to a long journey (*uia longa*, 11),<sup>71</sup> time (*in exiguo tempore fugit amor*, 12), a god (*non me deus obruit*, 9), an herb (*quae...diuidit herba*, 9-10), and changing passions (*nec mihi consuetos amplexu nutrit amores...nec nostra dulcis...sonat*, 5-6). Although we mainly see Propertius’ loyalty for her especially in the final line, we also see her loyalty in lines 7-8 when Propertius writes, “not then did it happen for anyone/that he was able to love with a similar loyalty” (*non illo tempore cuiquam/contigit ut simili posset amare fide*). He implies that even if she gives herself to another, their loyalty was especially notable. As a whole, however, Cynthia’s role is that of a faithful lover who changed but then (as a result of the change?) left and did not maintain the *fides* Propertius implies they once shared. This then begs the question, what is Propertius’ definition of *fides*? If it really was so good that no one else could love with such devotion, why is it that now he finds himself spending nights alone (*nunc primum longas solus cognoscere noctes/cogor*, 1.12.13-14)? *Fides* for Propertius seems to have a distinct meaning. It

<sup>70</sup> S.J. Heyworth (2007) argues that the final line of 1.12 is Propertius’ insistence on writing elegy and that he has no intention to switch genres or break up with Cynthia, 60.

<sup>71</sup> Lindheim (2011): 650.

does not necessarily connote that she will stand by his side; rather, *fides* transgresses relational bonds and refers, in his use of it, to what it does to a person—hence the change just discussed in the preceding paragraph. *Fides* is, for Propertius, Cynthia’s ability to strike him in such a way that he will never be the same but will be defined by whom she is. In Propertius’ eyes she is still faithful in that sense, even though she has left. She will always be his first and last love.

### **Concluding 1.12**

1.12 is a poem that does not explain why Cynthia has left, but it does reveal Propertius’ matter-of-fact confession that she was his first and will always be a part of his life. The trajectory we have seen of Cynthia in 1.5, 1.8a, 1.8b, and 1.12 is diverse, but cohesive. Cynthia begins as an asserter of authority and a master teacher, whose lessons in love prompted Propertius to warn Gallus of her retribution and harsh character (1.5). She then becomes a woman whose travels provide a test of Propertius’ loyalty (1.8a). Then we see her as responsive to Propertius’ pleas and approving of his fidelity (1.8b). This is not enough, however, because in the final poem analyzed, Propertius has proved even more worthy than ever, reflectively stating that Cynthia is everything and that his very identity has been wrapped in her characterization. Propertius proved his love and offered her all he had in order to become all she is. 1.12 differs from 1.8a because in the latter, Propertius’ anxiety is rampant and he seeks everywhere for Cynthia; thus, we can interpret 1.8a as a test, because Propertius’ fears of her whereabouts drive his actions. In 1.12, however, although he does question her at first (lines 1-2), he nonetheless goes on to reminisce of their past times together and he has grown wise, knowing that Cynthia has likely moved on, but that he should not worry about her. He should simply continue to love her.

The first chapter on Propertius and this chapter on Cynthia both examined poems that traced their characters’ trajectories. The poems overlap in language, content and themes, and they all paint a picture of Propertius and Cynthia as they function in the *Monobiblos*. Propertius

begins as a man victimized by Cynthia, overwhelmed by his captivity to the point of frustration, accepting of his servitude, and finally willing to define himself according to Cynthia's identity. Cynthia is a master teacher, a traveler who leaves Propertius to test his fidelity and, after finding him loyal, becomes satisfied in his love for and devotion to her. Propertius' victimization is directly linked to the power and domination of Cynthia in her own trajectory. He repeatedly faces trials and hardships in the poems and as he learns how to understand Cynthia and how to be under her sway; he begins to grow in his knowledge of love, and in the end his very identity changes. In the conclusion of this thesis one final poem will be examined. In this poem (1.3), Propertius and Cynthia are physically together and interact very directly. Whereas in the poems examined thus far Cynthia is only spoken about by Propertius, in 1.3 Cynthia speaks her own words and admonishes Propertius for his late arrival and inconsiderate attitude towards her. The poem is a very direct representation of how their characterizations are dynamic and interwoven in the *Elegies*.

## CONCLUSION

As a final part of this thesis, I would like to analyze one last poem that depicts the interactions of Propertius and Cynthia and the characterizations that stem from those interactions. Chapters one and two provided a clear trajectory of Propertius' and Cynthia's characterizations, and it is obvious that these trajectories were examined consecutively in order of the poems as they fall in book one, but I hope to show in this final analysis that the specific order in which the poems are read does not necessarily contribute to the traits of characterization.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, if my readings were closely connected to the order of the poems in the *Monobiblos*, I would not have examined poems 1.16 and 1.18 in chapter one before looking at 1.12 as the final close to Cynthia's character in chapter two. In this conclusion I will discuss poem 1.3—one of the most well-known poems in the Propertian corpus—and in this analysis I will show that the trajectories of characterization are not so much about order as they are about the content of the poems.

### Poem 1.3

This poem intersects with the various dimensions I have explored in the previous chapters. It is instructional, with Cynthia teaching Propertius directly, but we also see Propertius attempting to assert some control. Cynthia reprimands Propertius in this poem, and her lesson is harsh but potent for Propertius as he faces the trials of love and learns within his victimhood.

Poem 1.3 is very different in content from the ones analyzed previously, and it is the only poem in which we hear Cynthia speak. In 1.3, Cynthia sleeps and a drunk Propertius enters infatuated and debating whether he should wake her. Instead he gently decorates her in her sleep and admires her and she awakens only to admonish him for his recklessness (1.3.1-46):

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<sup>1</sup> I do want to note, however, that 1.1 is the only poem that I find important to the trajectory in terms of order because it is in this poem that he creates his victimization, which influences the growth throughout the rest of the *Monobiblos*.

Qualis Thesea iacuit cedente carina  
 languida desertis Gnosia litoribus;  
 qualis et accubuit primo Cepheia somno  
 libera iam duris cotibus Andromede;  
 nec minus assiduis Edonis fessa choreis 5  
 qualis in herboso concidit Apidano:  
 talis uisa mihi mollem spirare quietem  
 Cynthia consertis nixa caput manibus,  
 ebria cum multo traherem uestigia Baccho,  
 et quaterent sera nocte facem pueri. 10  
 hanc ego, nondum etiam sensus deperditus omnis,  
 molliter impresso conor adire toro;  
 et quamuis duplici correptum ardore iuberent  
 hac Amor hac Liber, durus uterque deus,  
 subiecto leuiter positam temptare lacerto 15  
 osculaque admota sumere †et arma† manu,  
 non tamen ausus eram dominae turbare quietem,  
 expertae metuens iurgia saeuitiae;  
 sed sic intentis haerebam fixus ocellis,  
 Argus ut ignotis cornibus Inachidos. 20  
 et modo soluebam nostra de fronte corollas  
 ponebamque tuis, Cynthia, temporibus;  
 et modo gaudebam lapsos formare capillos;  
 nunc furtiua cauis poma dabam manibus;  
 omniaque ingrato largibar munera somno, 25  
 munera de prono saepe uoluta sinu;  
 et quotiens raro duxti suspiria motu,  
 obstupui uano credulus auspicio,  
 ne qua tibi insolitos portarent uisa timores,  
 neue quis inuitam cogeret esse suam: 30  
 donec diuersas praecurrens luna fenestras,  
 luna moraturis sedula luminibus,  
 compositos leuibis radiis patefecit ocellos.  
 sic ait in molli fixa toro cubitum:  
 ‘tandem te nostro referens iniuria lecto 35  
 alterius clausis expulit e foribus?  
 namque ubi longa meae consumpsti tempora noctis,  
 languidus exactis, ei mihi, sideribus?  
 o utinam talis perducas, improbe, noctes,  
 me miseram qualis semper habere iubes! 40  
 nam modo purpureo fallebam stamine somnum,  
 rursus et Orphea carmine, fessa, lyrae;  
 interdum leuiter mecum deserta querebar  
 externo longas saepe in amore moras:  
 dum me iucundis lapsam sopor impulit alis. 45  
 illa fuit lacrimis ultima cura meis.’

Just as the girl of Cnossus lay languid

On the deserted shores with the Thesean ship withdrawing;  
 Just as also Cephean Andromede lay in first sleep  
 Now free from the hard rocks;  
 Not less like a person exhausted by the continuous Thracian chorus, 5  
 Fell down on the shore of grassy Apidanus:  
 Just so Cynthia, having rested her head on her crossed hands,  
 Seemed to me to breathe a gentle rest,  
 When I, inebriated with much Bacchus, was dragging my feet,  
 And the boys shook the torches late at night. 10  
 I, not yet even foregone of all senses,  
 Softly tried to approach the girl on the occupied couch;  
 And although Love on this side, Liber on that,  
 Both harsh gods, ordered me, seized by a double ardor,  
 To try to put my arm gently under her laying there, 15  
 And to snatch kisses †and my weapon† with my hand moved forth,  
 Nevertheless I did not dare disturb the rest of my mistress,  
 Fearing the chastisement of experienced savagery;  
 But thus standing still I was clinging with intent eyes,  
 As Argus at the unknown horns of Io. 20  
 And at one point I was removing the crowns from my brow  
 And I was putting them on your temples, O Cynthia;  
 And at another I was delighting to form your fallen hair;  
 Now I was giving apples secretly to your open hands:  
 And all the gifts I was granting to thankless sleep, 25  
 Gifts often rolling from your prone lap;  
 And as many times as you made breaths with sparse motion,  
 I stood still, trusting in an empty auspice,  
 Lest anything seen would reveal to you unaccustomed fears,  
 Or anyone would rape you against your will: 30  
 While the moon running beyond the open windows,  
 The moon sluggish in rays that would linger,  
 Opened your peaceful eyes with slight beams.  
 Thus she spoke leaning on her elbow on the soft couch:  
 ‘At last is injury bringing you back to our couch 35  
 From the closed doors of another girl?  
 Ah woe to me, where did you, sluggish, spend a long portion of my night,  
 With the stars having been drawn out?  
 O would that you, wicked man, spend the same sorts of nights  
 As you always force miserable me to spend! 40  
 For I was just now trying to cheat sleep by weaving purple thread,  
 And again worn out by the song of the Orphean lyre;  
 Meanwhile I, deserted, was complaining to myself quietly  
 Often about long delays in foreign love:  
 While Sleep impelled me tired with its joyful wings. 45  
 That was the final care for my tears.’

The importance of the mythological references in the first six lines of this poem is to characterize Cynthia and Propertius. In other words, every mythological female mentioned lends credence towards Cynthia's role—Ariadne, Andromeda, and a Bacchante—and with every female character there is a male counterpart, who, although left unmentioned, still contributes to Propertius' characterization. Hérica Valladares discusses these myths specifically focusing on their visual imagery and design in the narrative Propertius creates. She argues that “the names are intended to recall pictorial associations through which the reader could both visualize an otherwise unknown and unseen woman and immediately learn the nature of the relationship between the two protagonists—at least as that relationship is initially perceived by Propertius upon his drunken entrance.”<sup>2</sup> To understand this distinction between protagonists, I will discuss each of these mythological figures in order to provide the background on each story as context for my analysis.

### **Ariadne**

Propertius mentions very specific mythological women to whom he compares Cynthia.

The first woman, Ariadne, was abandoned by Theseus on Naxos after having helped him escape the Minotaur. Diodorus Siculus gives a detailed account of her myth (*Library of History* 4.61.5)<sup>3</sup>:

ἀνακομιζόμενος δ' εἰς τὴν πατρίδα καὶ κλέψας τὴν Ἀριάδην ἔλαθεν ἐκπλεύσας νυκτός, καὶ κατῆρεν εἰς νῆσον τὴν τότε μὲν Δίαν, νῦν δὲ Νάξον προσαγορευομένην. καθ' ὃν δὴ χρόνον μυθολογοῦσι Διόνυσον ἐπιφανέντα, καὶ διὰ τὸ κάλλος τῆς Ἀριάδνης ἀφελόμενον τοῦ Θησέως τὴν παρθένον, ἔχειν αὐτὴν ὡς γυναῖκα γαμετὴν ἀγαπωμένην διαφερόντως.

And Theseus carrying off Ariadne to his fatherland, whom he stole, set out, sailing at night. After he docked at the island, which was then Dia, but is now called Naxos, just then, at the time the myths say, Dionysus appeared, and because of Ariadne's beauty he took the maiden from Theseus, and held her as his married wife, loving her honorably.

<sup>2</sup> Valladares (2005), “The Lover as Model Viewer: Gendered Dynamics in Propertius 1.3,” in *Gendered Dynamics in Latin Love Poetry*, eds. Ronnie Ancona & Ellen Greene, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005): 219.

<sup>3</sup> C.H. Oldfather, ed. and trans. (1939), *Diodorus Siculus: Library of History, Books 4.59-8*, Loeb Classical Library, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).

In this mythological example of 1.3, Propertius is comparing Cynthia to Ariadne and thereby himself to Bacchus since he has come home drunk. He finds Cynthia very beautiful and even feels as though he protects her by not disturbing her and by hoping that fearful things are absent from her dreams, from which he is closed off by her sleep (29-30). We see the word *languida* (2), the connotations of which are not serene but instead exhausting and despairing. Ariadne was taken by Theseus and then taken again by Dionysus. In a different version, Catullus relates the myth that Theseus captured her, and after she awoke from sleep she discovered that he had abandoned her (*Carmina* 64. 52-59)<sup>4</sup>:

namque fluentisono prospectans litore Diae  
 Thesea cedentem celeri cum classe tuetur  
 indomitos in corde gerens Ariadna furores,  
 necdum etiam sese quae uisit uisere credit,  
 utpote fallaci quae tunc primum excita somno  
 desertam in sola miseram se cernat harena.

For looking forth from the flowing shore of Dia  
 At Theseus leaving with his swift fleet Ariadne watches  
 Bearing unmanageable rage in her heart,  
 Not yet even does she believe that she sees the things she sees,  
 As she, who was then first awakened from deceptive sleep,  
 Discovered that she was deserted and miserable on a lonely shore.

Here, like in Propertius' poem, Ariadne is asleep, but she has been left behind without knowing it, and this is the same story Propertius seems to provide. If we combine the first account of the myth and this version from Catullus, Propertius paints himself as the hero who rescues the abandoned Ariadne since he comes back drunk, which is a sign of his embodiment of Bacchus. Looking at the words of Cynthia in the final lines, however, Cynthia characterizes him as a Theseus figure instead, even calling herself *deserta* in line 43. Propertius refers to Ariadne at the start of the poem in order to foreshadow this; just as Ariadne was left abandoned by Theseus, so

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<sup>4</sup> R.A.B. Mynors, ed. (1958), *C. Valerii Catulli Carmina*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

too Cynthia feels abandoned by Propertius since she awaited his arrival and he never came.<sup>5</sup> She explicitly notes Propertius' abandonment of her when she states in the final lines, "meanwhile I, deserted, was complaining to myself quietly/often about long delays in foreign love" (*interdum leuiter mecum deserta querebar/externo longas saepe in amore moras*, 43-44). Although Propertius attempts to appear as her savior, he instead shows himself in a negative light as the one that caused her exhaustion and left her behind. In the end we see that Cynthia is teaching him how to treat her, not as the one who fatigues her, but as the savior-figure of the woman in the story.

### Andromeda

The second comparison Propertius gives is that of Andromeda's first night sleeping after having been exposed to the sea monster Cetus.<sup>6</sup> This woman is also not in a particularly peaceful situation. Although she is free from the sea and the monster, nonetheless she just endured an extremely terrifying situation. As we see in Ovid's account of the myth, Andromeda was so petrified all she could do was cry (*Metamorphoses* 4.672-675)<sup>7</sup>:

quam simul ad duras religatam bracchia cautes  
uidit Abantiades (nisi quod leuis aura capillos  
mouerat et tepido manabant lumina fletu,  
marmoreum ratus esset opus)...

As soon as Perseus saw Andromeda bound to hard rocks  
with her arms (she would have been a fixed work of marble  
except for a slight breeze moving her hair and her eyes  
were wet with warm tears)...

Andromeda in Greek mythology was the character that was rescued, exhausted by the rigorous situation, and in *Elegies* 1.3 Cynthia too was exhausted, having stayed up all night waiting for

<sup>5</sup> Ellen Greene (1995), "Elegiac Woman: Fantasy, *Materia* and Male Desire in Propertius 1.3 and 1.11," *AJP* 116: 307; Greene makes the comparison of Propertius with Bacchus, who rescues abandoned Ariadne.

<sup>6</sup> For her myth, see Apollodorus *Library* 2.4.3 in James G. Frazer, ed. and trans. (1921), *Apollodorus: Library, Books 1-3.9*, Loeb Classical Library, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).

<sup>7</sup> R.J. Tarrant, ed. (2004), *P.Ovidi Nasonis Metamorphoses*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

Propertius. The irony is that she does not feel rescued, and Propertius is no hero. Yet again, however, Propertius uses this myth to make himself the savior of Cynthia. It seems as if the hard rocks (*duris cotibus*, 4) to which Propertius' Andromeda (Cynthia) was bound were actually his failure to come home for her and that he has not saved her from the rocks, but was the one who bound her to them.

Propertius makes the comparison to Andromeda because he wants to be Cynthia's savior, but he does not see his mistake in coming home late and drunk; rather, he tries to make Cynthia the damsel in distress when in reality she is on a couch (12), not a bed of rocks. Andromeda faced a monster, but Cynthia faced negligence. Propertius' comparison pushes his own self-image to be that of a savior, but Cynthia did not need saving, she needed his return. Cynthia turns the tables on Propertius, making him realize that he is the one that caused her sorrow. Through her speech she makes him realize that she is not freed like Andromeda, but that she is forced by his absence to spend the nights miserably alone (*o utinam talis perducas, improbe, noctes, / me miseram qualis semper habere iubes*, 39-40). We see that she is not free (4), as Propertius thinks, but the one hurt, forced, and exhausted by Propertius's wiles; in a sense, his *Liber* has made her *non libera*.

### **Bacchante**

The third and final comparison Propertius makes in his three similes is to a Bacchante who is exhausted and rests on the grass (5-6). Even though this scene does not necessarily indicate the presence of Bacchus with the sleeping maenad, it is simply her identity as a maenad that implicates Bacchus, which aligns with Propertius' own presentation of himself since he is drunk. He again compares himself to Bacchus to reiterate that he thinks he is the savior of Ariadne, but instead the image of revelry cannot help but characterize both him and Cynthia. She is cast as one who is subject to a god, as the Bacchantes are to Bacchus, but also as a reveler,

which is not the case in this poem. Cynthia instead remained home weaving thread (*nam modo purpureo fallebam stamine somnum*, 41), a very ladylike, sane act entirely opposite the frenzied Bacchanal raves.

Cynthia inverts his comparison in lines 5-6 by questioning his outings. She exclaims, “Ah woe to me, where did you, sluggish, spend a long portion of my night with the stars having been drawn out?” (*namque ubi longa meae consumpsti tempora noctis, / languidus exactis, ei mihi, sideribus?*, 37-38). She and Propertius both know that he was out drinking and partying. Thus, when he compares her to a Bacchante, he is actually blind to the fact that he is more of a reveler than her. His drunkenness starkly contrasts with her domesticity and womanly acts, and she makes this obvious when she interrogates him and justifies herself.

### **Teaching and Learning**

By making these comparisons it is clear that Propertius has not yet learned what it means to be faithful. If he really knew he would not have kept Cynthia waiting and subjected her to fatigue, and he would not have come home drunk and under the assumption that all was well. He was “fearing the chastisement of experienced savagery” (*expertae metuens iurgia saevitiae*, 18) so he tried to act gently, but he angered her nonetheless. In this line the *expertae saevitiae* implies that he has experienced her anger before this. Propertius is learning from past actions; he deliberately acts so that he will not make her angry. He aggravates her anyway, but not for disturbing her but for staying out late and making her wait for him in vain. In the first chapter we saw another instance in which Propertius indicates his past instruction. In 1.9.7 he states, “grief and tears made me experienced rightly” (*me dolor et lacrimae merito fecere peritum*). Even though he uses a different word, nonetheless the idea of Propertius growing in his knowledge of love and of Cynthia is evident because in both cases he has prior experience with some aspect of her character in a certain situation or a certain action he performs. Shelley Kaufhold argues that

in this poem Propertius reverses Cynthia's role because in Cynthia's speech she uses words that are most often in the mouth of Propertius in his other poems, thereby switching Cynthia into the role of the elegiac lover.<sup>8</sup> Given the trajectory I laid out in the first chapter, here we see that this poem is one in which a lover teaches another (often a poet) concerning the ways of love. Because it is Propertius' words that Cynthia uses, in a backwards sort of way it is Propertius teaching himself about love.

### Eyes

As we saw in the characterization of Propertius in the first chapter, the theme of eyes (*ocelli*) recurs throughout his poetry as a metonym for the charms of love. The same sort of occurrence appears in line 19 when he says that he gazes with intent eyes on Cynthia (*intentis haerebam fixus ocellis*). In the opening line of the *Elegies*, Propertius states that Cynthia was the first to capture him with her eyes (*Cynthia prima suis miserum me cepit ocellis*, 1.1.1). In this line he is called miserable, she is the capturer, and it is her eyes that capture. In this poem Propertius is the one attempting to capture Cynthia with his eyes and she is called miserable (*miseram*, 40). Propertius also treats her as an object he can manipulate, as Ellen Greene argues in her article.<sup>9</sup> She notes that Propertius treats Cynthia like a mannequin by playing with her hair, putting apples in her hands, all while she sleeps. This decorating makes Cynthia lifeless and meaningless, similar to the lifelessness Propertius depicts in 1.16 when comparing Cynthia to rock (*saxo*, 29), iron (*ferro*, 30), and steel (*chalybe*, 3). Here, however, although he does not compare her to inanimate objects, he does treat her like a plaything that he can decorate and control. The reason Propertius does this is because the same sort of manipulation was done to him in a slightly different way. Cynthia captured and controlled him when he was not expecting it, and likewise he tries to "capture" her when she does not expect it. He is learning about love

<sup>8</sup> Kaufhold (1997), "Propertius 1.3: Cynthia Rescripted," *Illinois Classical Studies*, 22: 97.

<sup>9</sup> Greene (1995): 307.

from Cynthia, his instructor. Cynthia has consumed his life and controls it so that he lives with no counsel (*nullo uiuere consilio*, 1.1.6) is no one in his whole being (*sim toto corpore nullus ego*, 1.5.22), and is not who he once was (*non sum ego qui fueram*, 1.12.11). He attempts to decorate her while she is unaware and with no counsel, since she sleeps. In other words, in 1.3 Propertius acts with good intentions, but he is still learning from Cynthia what it means to be show his loyalty and love. He asserts control, as in the instructional poems, but in the end she is still the master teacher.

### **Conclusion**

The order of poems is not crucial to the understanding of characterization in Propertius; rather, the poems all adhere to the trajectory of growth that we see in Propertius and Cynthia. Propertius' use of exemplary mythology works backwards and ultimately provides examples of what he should not do or be when it comes to love. The trajectory we saw in chapter one moved from victim (1.1) to asserter of control (often in the guise of a teacher, 1.9), to the complete lack of control as a threshold (1.16), and finally to the acceptance of his victimhood and willingness to love Cynthia forever (1.18). Chapter two provided the growth of Cynthia that maintained her control throughout and showed how fierce and manipulative she was (1.9), how she tested Propertius (1.8a), saw his devotion (1.8b), and was assured of his love for her knowing that she made up all of his identity (1.12). This final analysis of 1.3 has shown how the two characters are evaluated together and how they interact within the poetry. Ultimately the characters of Propertius and Cynthia cannot exist without the other. Propertius' acceptance of his victimization is directly entwined with Cynthia's control, testing, and approval, and Cynthia would not control, test, or approve without Propertius as a victim. Just as we see this unbreakable connection between characters, so too does Propertius realize that his existence and all he is or does is due to Cynthia; she is his identity, his first and last (1.12.20): *Cynthia prima fuit, Cynthia finis erit*.

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