



THE ORIGINALITY  
OF  
PROPERTIUS

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## SUMMARY OF THESIS

This thesis seeks to assess the extent of Propertius' originality under specific headings. Chapter I deals with the theory of imitatio and what it involved for Greek and Roman writers. With reference to Longinus, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Isocrates, Horace, Seneca and Quintilian, a study is made of imitatio itself and the allied concepts of aemulatio and uariatio. Following this, a study is made of Propertius' relationship to Callimachus and Philetas with special attention to the question of subjective-love elegy and to Callimachus' literary theory.

In chapter II the extent of Propertius' indebtedness to his Greek predecessors is studied under three headings - the commonplace, verbal similarity and allusion. In each case, passages, and even whole poems, from Propertius are compared with their parallels in Greek literature, and an attempt is made to discover whether Propertius is merely copying his models or using them in an original way. The context of each Propertian passage and its parallel, any significant differences in wording, and the 'contamination' of two or more sources to make one Propertian passage are given special attention.

Propertius' indebtedness to Roman poets is the topic of chapter III, in which a method similar to that of chapter II is used. Propertian passages are compared with their parallels from other poets under the headings of the commonplace, verbal similarity and allusion. Likewise, the context of each Propertian passage and its parallel, any significant differences in wording, and 'contamination' are treated in detail.

Chapter IV deals with perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of Propertius' poetry - his original employment of myth and symbol. After a very brief examination of the place of mythology in Greek and Latin literature, and especially of mythological allusion in Tibullus and Catullus, attention is drawn to particular passages from Propertius which best illustrate his use of mythological undertones either to glorify or to condemn Cynthia. His accumulation of exempla and his use of *recherche* myths are noted. Special studies are then made of his symbolic use of Amor, and of the symbols represented by Bacchus and Apollo. In the conclusion an assessment of Propertius' success in using myth and symbol is offered.

In chapter V further aspects of Propertius' style - his linguistic peculiarities and his use of picturesque language - are discussed. His linguistic peculiarities are treated with examples under the headings of difficulty of expression, indirect expression, syntactical ambiguity, exploitation of various meanings of a word, varied word-order, juxtaposition, and boldness of expression. Propertius' use of picturesque language in I.xx. 33-42 and IV.vii. 7-12 is studied, as these poems best illustrate his descriptive powers. It is noted in conclusion that those wholly original aspects of Propertius' art balance his imitatio, where his originality, however striking, must always be viewed within the framework of a literary heritage.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except when due reference has been made in the text of the thesis.

B. M. Roper.



## CHAPTER I

### IMITATIO

tu satius memorem Musis imitere Philitan  
et non inflati somnia Callimachi.<sup>1</sup>

With this advice to the love-sick Lynceus Propertius directs our attention to an important aspect of literary composition as it was conceived by both Greek and Roman writers - μίμησις or imitatio, the dependence of a poet, historian or orator on the work of the masters in their respective genre. The reason for imitatio can be seen in the following words from Longinus -  
...ὡς καὶ ἄλλη τις παρὰ τὰ εἰρημένα ὁδοῦ ἐπὶ τὰ ὑψηλὰ  
τείνει. ποία δὲ καὶ τίς αὕτη; ἢ τῶν ἔμπροσθεν μεγάλων  
συγγραφέων καὶ ποιητῶν μίμησις τε καὶ ζήλωσις.<sup>2</sup>

Quintilian also adds his testimony to this in the words,

neque enim dubitari potest quin artis pars magna  
contineatur imitatione.<sup>3</sup>

For Dionysius of Halicarnassus,

μίμησις ἐστὶν ἐνέργεια διὰ τῶν θεωρημάτων  
ἐκματτομένη τὸ παράδειγμα.<sup>4</sup>

and it is with imitatio in mind that Horace tells the Pisones,

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<sup>1</sup>Propertius II.xxxiv.31-32.

<sup>2</sup>Longinus De Sublimitate xiii.2.

<sup>3</sup>Quintilian X.ii.1.

<sup>4</sup>Dionysius De Imitatione fr. 3.

uos exemplaria Graeca  
nocturna uersate manu, uersate diurna.<sup>5</sup>

What was it that a poet was supposed to imitate? Firstly, he had to keep to the subject matter appropriate to his particular genre, as Horace makes clear at Ars Poetica 74-88. If a poet transgressed these rules he was, in Horace's opinion, not worthy of the name. Thus, when Ennius and Vergil wished to write epic themes, they wrote in the traditional metre - hexameters. Horace wrote in lyric metres when he wished to mention the iuuenum curas and to write sympotic poems. Similarly, Tibullus and Propertius wrote their erotic narratives and meditations in elegiacs, the metre which had been appropriated for this purpose from its votive and lamentatory origin by Mimnermus, Philetas and Callimachus.

Secondly, the subject matter of earlier poets and even certain passages from their works were available for imitation. In his advice to the Pisones who were contemplating an attempt at tragedy, Horace writes,

. . . tuque  
rectius Iliacum carmen deducis in actus,  
quam si proferres ignota indictaeque primus.<sup>6</sup>

for the Trojan Wars were publica materies.<sup>7</sup> Seneca supports such a statement when he writes concerning Lucilius' proposed poem,

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<sup>5</sup>Horace Ars Poetica 268-269.

<sup>6</sup>Horace Ars Poetica 128-130.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 131.

nec illis manus inicit tamquam alienis; sunt enim publica.<sup>8</sup>

To justify his choice of a theme, previously employed by Gorgias and Lysias, Isocrates exclaims,

αἱ μὲν γὰρ πράξεις αἱ προγεγενημέναί κοιναὶ πᾶσιν ἡμῖν κατελείφθησαν.<sup>9</sup>

Hence ancient writers had a wealth of material on which to base their own composition. Vergil could draw on Homer's Odyssey XI, which deals with Odysseus' visit to the world of the dead, for the setting of his Aeneid VI, in which the Trojan Aeneas enters the Underworld in search of his father. Anchises' prophecy of Aeneas' glorious future recalls the prophecy given to Odysseus by Teiresias. Vergil's reading public should relate Aeneas' encounter with deceased Trojans to Odysseus' encounter with his former fellow-soldiers at Troy. Even Dido's pained silence is, as it were, an echo of Ajax's refusal to speak to Odysseus. In the same way, Propertius could write I.xx. on the same theme as Theocritus xiii. and Apollonius Rhodius' Argonautica I.1207-1272.<sup>10</sup> Imitatio was a regular practice at Rome.

But was it merely the slavish copying of originals? Undoubtedly, for some it was, as Horace says about Celsus in his letter to Julius Florus.<sup>11</sup> Celsus is likened to a crow preening itself in others' plumage. Take away these fine feathers and

<sup>8</sup> Seneca Epistulae Morales LXXIX.6.

<sup>9</sup> Isocrates Panegyricus 9.

<sup>10</sup> Infra, pp. 20-33.

<sup>11</sup> Horace Epistles I.iii.15-20.



the crow is an object of ridicule. Horace is condemning plagiarism, not the considered adaptation of models by talented poets. On this question Longinus claims,

ἔστι δ' οὐ κλοπή τὸ πρόβλημα, ἀλλ' ὡς ἀπὸ καλῶν ἠθῶν ἢ πλασμαίων ἢ δημιουργημάτων ἀποτύπωσις.<sup>12</sup>

Imitatio is not plagiarism; it is an aid to better writing. In an earlier paragraph he likens its results to the effects of the mysterious vapour on the Pythian priestess.<sup>13</sup> It is obvious that he sees imitatio not as end in itself, but as the source of artistic composition.

However, it was only the source. The young poet was meant not merely to copy, but to rival his models. In the first extract which we have quoted from Longinus we see that alongside μίμησις he has placed ζήλωσις, or aemulatio. Elsewhere, when commenting on Plato's style, he states,

καὶ οὐδ' ἂν ἐπακμάσαι μοι δοκεῖ τηλικαυτὰ τινα τοῖς τῆς φιλοσοφίας δόγμασι καὶ εἰς ποιητικὰς ὕλας πολλαχού συνεμβῆναι καὶ φράσεις, εἰ μὴ περὶ πρωτείων νῆ Δία παντὶ θυμῷ πρὸς Ὅμηρον, ὡς ἀνταγωνιστῆς νέος πρὸς ἤδη τεθραυμασμένον, ἔσως μὲν φιλονικότερον καὶ οἶονεὶ διαδορατιζόμενος, οὐκ ἀνωφελῶς δ' ὅμως διηριστέετο.<sup>14</sup>

In his rivalry with Homer Plato is likened to a young hopeful who enters a ring with a great champion. Longinus considers that he has set a precedent for all aspiring writers to follow, for

οὐκοῦν καὶ ἡμᾶς, ἡνίκ' ἂν διαπονώμεν ὑψηγορίας τι

<sup>12</sup> Longinus, Op.cit., xiii.4.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., xiii.2.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., xiii.4.

καὶ μεγαλοφροσύνης δεόμενον, καλὸν ἀναπλάττεσθαι ταῖς  
 ψυχαῖς πῶς ἂν εἰ τύχοι ταντὸ τοῦθ' Ὅμηρος εἶπεν, πῶς  
 δ' ἂν Πλάτων ἢ Δημοσθένης ὑψωσαν ἢ ἐν ἱστορίᾳ Θουκυδίδης.<sup>15</sup>

Thus for the writer imitatio must always be associated with  
aemulatio. Similarly, Seneca writes to Lucilius,  
 iam cupis grande aliquid et par prioribus scribere.<sup>16</sup>  
 and previously, after remarking that Cornelius Severus, Ovid  
 and Vergil have written on the same theme, he has remarked that  
 qui praecesserant non praeripuisse mihi videntur  
 quae dici poterant, sed aperuisse.<sup>17</sup>

Quintilian also claims that orators  
 contendere potius quam sequi debent.<sup>18</sup>

Therefore, we must conclude that Roman writers were meant to vie  
 with their models, rather than mimic them, like Celsus. This  
 would explain Horace's reference to Ennius as

alter Homerus,  
 ut critici dicunt.<sup>19</sup>

The critics considered that he had successfully rivalled Homer  
 whose spirit he claimed possessed him. Similarly, we learn that  
 dicitur Afrani toga convenisse Menandro,  
 Plautus ad exemplar Siculi properare Epicharmi.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., xiv.1.

<sup>16</sup> Seneca Epistulae Morales LXXIX.7.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>18</sup> Quintilian X.ii.9.

<sup>19</sup> Horace Epistles II.i.50-51.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 57-58.

Elsewhere Horace recalls an incident where a certain elegist overwhelms him with praise and he, in turn, is compelled to return the compliments -

discedo Alcaeus puncto illius; ille meo quis?  
quis nisi Callimachus? si plus adposcere uisus,  
fit Mimnermus et optiuo cognomine crescit.<sup>21</sup>

Because of his success with his Odes Horace is called an Alcaeus after the famous Greek lyric poet. The elegist is styled Callimachus after the Alexandrian master, or Mimnermus after the first elegist to write his meditations on love. It is possible that the elegist in this poem is Propertius, for in his own poems he refers to himself as Romanus Callimachus<sup>22</sup> and elsewhere prays,

Callimachi Manes et Coi sacra Philitae,  
in uestrum, quaeso, me sinite ire nemus,<sup>23</sup>

thereby furnishing yet other instances of Roman poet's rivalry of Greek masters. Hence there should be no doubt that aemulatio was considered an important addition to imitatio.

The best method of aemulatio is set out at Isocrates Panegyricus 7-8. Isocrates considers that to rival one's predecessors one should vary the treatment of one's subject. The great can be made lowly, the little can be given a grand treatment and old things can be dealt with in a new way, or vice versa. A similar thought can be found in Seneca's letter to Lucilius in which he says that the man at the end of a series of writers on

<sup>21</sup>Horace Epistles II.ii.99-101.

<sup>22</sup>Propertius IV.i.64.

<sup>23</sup>Propertius III.i.1-2.

a certain subject is fortunate, for

parata uerba inuenit, quae aliter instructa nouam  
faciem habent.<sup>24</sup>

Quintilian adds weight to this, when he writes,

Qui uero etiam propria his bona adiecerit, ut suppleat  
quae deerunt, circumcidat si quid redundabit, is erit,  
quem quaerimus, perfectus orator.<sup>25</sup>

What applied to a perfectus orator applied also to a perfectus poeta.

Variatio, then, allowed ancient poets great scope for originality. They were able to take the subjects about which their predecessors had written and alter them so that, while a reader could still recognize the source of the passages, the poet's originality of treatment would be obvious. Thus in Aeneid VI Aeneas' descent into the Underworld, though based on Odyssey XI, differs significantly from its model. Firstly, Aeneas descends into the Underworld, whereas the spirits ascended to Odysseus. Secondly, in the Underworld Aeneas sees not only his personal destiny but the destiny of his descendants, unlike Odysseus who sees only his own. Thirdly, Vergil is able to sing the praises of Rome and Augustus in this book; Odyssey XI contains no propaganda. These few examples serve to illustrate how a poet could give an original twist to a traditional subject. In similar fashion, the Republican poet Catullus could take Alexandrian genres - poems about pets, letters, etc - and vary them for his own purposes. Thus poem III, though apparently

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<sup>24</sup>Seneca Ep. Mor. LXXIX.6.

<sup>25</sup>Quintilian X.ii.28.

concerned with a pet, is really a revelation of his burning passion. Poem XXII is supposedly a letter to a friend, but enables the poet to write about literary criticism. Propertius could also employ traditional themes and forms for his own purposes. Thus the traditional sepulchral epigram enables him to draw his readers' attention to the tragedy at Perugia,<sup>26</sup> and like Catullus, he employs a letter-poem for a statement of his literary theory.<sup>27</sup> He also takes traditional tales, such as the tale of Hylas, and deals with them in his own way.<sup>28</sup>

An ancient poet was able to borrow certain passages from his models and incorporate them into his work, provided he showed some originality of treatment. Plain borrowing without variation was the fault Horace blamed in Celsus.<sup>29</sup> Conversely, his advice to the Pisones applied to all-

nec uerbo uerbum curabis reddere fidus  
interpres,<sup>30</sup>

A reminiscence was all that was allowed. If we compare Ennius, fr. 187-191<sup>31</sup> with Aeneid VI.179-182 we note that Ennius' arbusta alta becomes Vergil's antiquam siluam and Vergil adds for his poem's atmosphere stabula alta ferarum, the epithet alta recalling Ennius' expression. Vergil's procumbunt piceae recalls Ennius' percellunt magnas quercus and sonat icta securibus illex

<sup>26</sup>Propertius I.xxi.

<sup>27</sup>Propertius I.ix; III.ix.

<sup>28</sup>Propertius I.xx.

<sup>29</sup>Supra, p.3.

<sup>30</sup>Horace Ars Poetica 133-134.

<sup>31</sup>Ennianae Poesis Reliquiae, ed. Ioannes Vahlen (Teubner; Lipsiae; 1928).

is a "contamination" of securibus caedunt, exciditur ilex and omne sonabat arbustum. These are only some ways in which Vergil has varied Ennius' expression, but they show something of Roman literary methods. Similar examples of verbal reminiscence of Greek or Roman passages can be found in Propertius, e.g. I.xi. 23, II.vi.1-2, III.vii.9-10, III.xiii.39-42.<sup>32</sup>

Provided he showed some originality in the treatment of his material, a Roman poet had to observe the traditions of his chosen genre, and both in his subject and in individual passages he had to avail himself of the "common property", i.e. the poems of his predecessors. Propertius was no exception to this rule. We have seen that he claims rivalry with Callimachus and Philetas,<sup>33</sup> but, we may ask, in what way? Firstly, he wrote elegy, the genre of which the two Alexandrians, Callimachus in particular, were regarded as masters. Secondly, he wrote about subjects which had been treated by these two poets. When Propertius claims to be the Romanus Callimachus,<sup>34</sup> he is referring to his attempts at writing aetiological poems about local legends. Such poems gained Callimachus lasting fame in the ancient world. He treated obscure legends, e.g. why the Parians sacrificed to the Graces without flutes and garlands,<sup>35</sup> or why many evils came upon the people of Thasos.<sup>36</sup> These and other such topics enabled him to write

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<sup>32</sup>These and other such passages will be discussed in chapters II and III.

<sup>33</sup>Supra, p.6.

<sup>34</sup>Propertius IV.i.64.

<sup>35</sup>Callimachus, fr.iii-vii.14.

<sup>36</sup>Callimachus, fr.civ.

many fine stories, such as the Return of the Argonauts<sup>37</sup> and the tale of Acontius and Cydippe,<sup>38</sup> where he effectively treats reactions to the power of love. Propertius followed Callimachus in the type of poems he wrote, but not in the subjects, for his poems deal with Roman Legends. They treat the origins of the name Vertumnus,<sup>39</sup> the legend around the Tarpeian Rock,<sup>40</sup> the reason why Augustus dedicated a temple to Apollo,<sup>41</sup> the reason why there was an uproar in the Esquiline,<sup>42</sup> and the origin of the names Sanctus<sup>43</sup> and Jupiter Feretrius.<sup>44</sup>

There is a theory that Propertius imitated Callimachus and Philetas when he wrote his love elegies.<sup>45</sup> Although only an insignificant portion of Philetas' work has survived, there is evidence that he did indeed write love poetry. In his Leontion Hermesianax refers to βιττιδα μολπάζοντα θοήν φιλίταν and Ovid supports this in Ex Ponto III.i.57-58 and Tristia I. vi.1-2. In his elegies Propertius also considers Philetas as a

<sup>37</sup>Callimachus, fr. vii.19-xxi.

<sup>38</sup>Callimachus, fr. lxxvii-lxxv.

<sup>39</sup>Propertius IV.ii.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., iv.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., vi.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., viii - a humorous twist.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., ix.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., x.

<sup>45</sup>The Elegies of Propertius, ed. H.E. Butler & E.A. Barber (Oxford, 1933), pp. xxxvi-xxxvii. See also the statements of Diomedes and Quintilian quoted on pp. xxxvii-xxxviii.

love poet, as is shown where he claims that Calliope bade him write only love elegy

lymphisque a fonte petitis  
ora Philitea nostra rigauit aqua.<sup>46</sup>

However, we do not know for sure whether Philetas wrote subjective love elegies like Propertius, or whether his love poems were contained in his Paegnia or Epigrams.<sup>47</sup> Few titles of his poems have survived, and only one of these is known to have been the title of an elegy, and a narrative elegy at that, i.e. Demeter. However, Philetas was an elegist, wrote love poems, and in the prologue to the Aetia, he was claimed by Callimachus as a master of the slender style. These considerations justified Propertius' claim that he was writing in Philetas' tradition.

It is an established fact that Callimachus wrote subjective love poems. However, apparently all of these poems were epigrams.<sup>48</sup> In his Aetia he treats tales of love, such as the story of Acontius and Cydippe, but such stories are not strictly subjective, though he makes his characters analyse their passions and he sometimes allows his personality to intrude into the narrative.<sup>49</sup> As with Philetas, there seems to be no evidence that Callimachus ever wrote subjective elegies in the manner of Propertius. However,

<sup>46</sup> Propertius III.iii.50-51.

<sup>47</sup> This topic is discussed at length in A.A. Day, The Origins of Latin Love Elegy (Oxford: Blackwell, 1938), chpt. I, p.17. See also Day's treatment of the question concerning Callimachus, ibid., pp. 26-36.

<sup>48</sup> E.g. A.P. V.xxiii; XII.cii, cxxxix, cxlviii.

<sup>49</sup> E.g. Callimachus, fr. 1xxv.4-9, 44-49.



Propertius apparently considered him as a love poet, for in II,xxxiv he advises Lynceus to imitate him and Philetas in writing such verse<sup>50</sup> and elsewhere tells Maecenas,

inter Callimachi sat erit placuisse libellos  
et cecinisse modis, Coe poeta, tuis.  
haec urant pueros, haec urant scripta puellas,  
neque deum clament et mihi sacra ferant!<sup>51</sup>

the word urant signifying "inflamm with love." The other quotation dealing with Propertius' rivalry of Callimachus and Philetas<sup>52</sup> is placed at the beginning of the poem dealing with his intentions to write love poetry. Propertius claims that he is riding in a chariot

et necum in curru parui uectantur Amores.<sup>53</sup>

As these Amores represent his subject matter, Propertius is suggesting that, when he writes about love, he is writing in the elegaic tradition of Callimachus.

A third way in which Propertius imitated Callimachus was in the adoption of the literary theory found in the prologue to the Aetia - that a poem of slender style is by far superior to a long poem in the epic-tragic tradition. Usually when Propertius mentions Callimachus, it is in this context. Thus, when he tells Lynceus to imitate the two Alexandrians, he is advising him not

<sup>50</sup>Propertius II,xxxiv. 31-32.

<sup>51</sup>Propertius III.ix. 43-46.

<sup>52</sup>Propertius III.i. 1-2.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 11.

only to write love poetry, but also to abandon epic-tragic verse.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, he tells Maecenas that he is a love poet in the tradition of Callimachus and Philetas, and hence will not write epic verse.<sup>55</sup> His reference to Callimachus and Philetas at the beginning of book III is also connected with Callimachus' literary theory,<sup>56</sup> and the reference in the first poem of book II is an outright statement that, as Callimachus did not write epic-tragic verse, he will not either.<sup>57</sup>

Thus we can see that Propertius wrote in the tradition of Callimachus and Philetas. He adopted their genre, wrote on subjects which they had treated, and held Callimachus' literary theory. In the following chapter we shall see that he also composed individual lines reminiscent of his Greek predecessors and thus set himself firmly in the tradition they had founded.

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<sup>54</sup>Propertius II.xxxiv. 25-44.

<sup>55</sup>Propertius III.ix. 35-46.

<sup>56</sup>Propertius III.i. 1-2. For a detailed study of this poem see Infra, pp. 30-32, 58-61.

<sup>57</sup>Propertius II.i. 39-42.

## CHAPTER II

### THE EXTENT OF PROPERTIUS' INDEBTEDNESS TO HIS GREEK PREDECESSORS

This chapter is a study of particular examples of Propertius' imitation of his Greek predecessors. We shall consider individual passages, and some themes which occur throughout the four books, under three convenient headings - the commonplace, verbal similarity and allusion.

Throughout books I and II especially, Propertius makes extensive use of the commonplace. Even in his most original poem, I.iii., he claims that he restrained himself from raping the sleeping Cynthia,

.. quamvis duplici correptum ardore iuberent  
hac Amor hac Liber, durus uterque deus.<sup>1</sup>

A similar motif can be found in Callimachus,

Ἄκρητος καὶ Ἔρως μ' ἠνάγκασαν, ὧν ὁ μὲν αὐτῶν  
εἶλκεν, ὁ δ' οὐκ εἶα τὴν προπέτειαν εἶν.<sup>2</sup>

The situation in both poems is similar. The lovers are drawn to their beloveds by the combined force of wine and love. However, in Callimachus' epigram he does not enter the house, being content merely to kiss the door post, whereas in Propertius'

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<sup>1</sup>Propertius I.iii. 13-14.

<sup>2</sup>A.P. XII.cxviii. 3-4, cf. also Plautus *Aulularia* 745; Terence *Adelphi* 470; A.P. V.xciii (Rufinus); Achilles Tatius II.iii.3, but, of course, only Callimachus' lines are relevant here.

elegy he enters the house where Cynthia lies asleep and contemplates raping her. The commonplace is used to produce an effective contrast between the outward violence and the inner turmoil of the lover, and the outward peacefulness and latent anger of the sleeping Cynthia. Furthermore, Propertius' expression is much more vivid than that of Callimachus, who claims merely that strong drink and love drove him to his beloved's house and kept him befuddled. Propertius considers love and wine as gods, durus uterque deus, and replaces the common noun for wine with the name of the Italian wine-god Liber. He emphasises their power over him with the phrase duplici ardore. Unlike Callimachus, Propertius does not do what the "gods" compel, for there is a stronger force preventing him - fear of Cynthia's anger.

In II.iv Propertius employs another commonplace - the lover's recourse to witchcraft. In his reflections about love and his own experience of it, he recalls his anxious desperation -

nam cui non ego sum fallaci praemia uati?  
quae mea non decies somnia uersat anus?<sup>3</sup>

This reference can be paralleled by Theocritus'

καὶ ἐς τίνος οὐκ ἐπέρασα  
ἢ ποίας ἔλιπον γραίας δόμον ἄτις ἐπέδεν;<sup>4</sup>

The motif of recourse to magic is a common one in love poetry, being used elsewhere by Propertius<sup>5</sup> and Tibullus.<sup>6</sup> The Greek passage quoted agrees closely with Propertius' passage quoted

<sup>3</sup>Propertius II.iv. 15-16.

<sup>4</sup>Theocritus ii. 90-91.

<sup>5</sup>Propertius I.i. 19-24.

<sup>6</sup>Tibullus I.ii. 41-42.

above. On first seeing Delphis, Simaetha is overwhelmed by love and shows various symptoms, e.g. her hair changes colour and falls out, and she suffers from fever. To cure these ills and to get Delphis back she goes to many witches. Propertius' position seems similar, but he is not concerned with the sickness caused by love, but the frustration caused by rejection. He too goes to the witches to win his love back. Propertius employs this commonplace as a personal reference. However, the personal reference is but a particular instance to illustrate a general theme.

Propertius uses a commonplace also at II.xvi., where after complaining about Cynthia's fickleness he warns her,

non semper placidus periuros ridet amantis  
Iuppiter et surda neglegit aure preces.<sup>7</sup>

Propertius is perhaps referring to the commonplace as expressed by Plato,

ἐν ταῖς ἡδοναῖς ταῖς περὶ τὰ φροδίσια...καὶ τὸ  
ἐπιλορκεῖν συγγνώμην εἴληψε παρὰ θεῶν<sup>8</sup>

and Callimachus,

ᾠμοσεν· ἀλλὰ λέγουσιν ἀληθέα τοὺς ἐν ἔρωτι  
ὄρκους μὴ δύνειν οὐατ' ἐς ἀθανάτων.<sup>9</sup>

However, he tells Cynthia that Jupiter will not always be so lenient. He reminds her of his vengeance on fickle women. The commonplace is given an original twist by the introduction of a

<sup>7</sup>Propertius II.xvi. 47-48.

<sup>8</sup>Plato Phil. 65c.

<sup>9</sup>A.P. V.vi. 3-4.

negative and by its use as a transition from Propertius' wish that all the praetor's gifts may be removed to his stern warning of inevitable punishment for Cynthia, if she places too much value on the gifts.

In III.i, which sets forth his literary theory, Propertius writes in defence of poetry,

nam quis equo pulsas abiegnos nosceret arces,  
 fluminaque Haemonio comminus isse uiro,  
 Idaeum Simoenta Iouis cum prole Scamandro,  
 Hectora per campos ter maculasse rotas?  
 Deiphobumque Helenamque et Pulydamanta et in armis  
 qualemcumque Parim uix sua nosset humus.  
 exiguo sermone fores nunc, Ilion, et tu  
 Troia bis Oetaei numine capta dei.<sup>10</sup>

A parallel to these lines can be found in Theocritus xvi.48-50,

τίς δ' ἂν ἀριστήας Λυκίων ποτέ, τίς κομῶντας  
 Πριαμίδας ἢ θήλυν ἀπὸ χροιάς Κύκνον ἔγνω,  
 εἰ μὴ φυλόπιδας προτέρων ὕμνησαν δοῖδοί;

Propertius does not follow Theocritus closely; in fact he uses different examples to prove his case, although like Theocritus he takes his examples from Homer. But, both poets are writing in a common tradition.

Elegy II.xii is written around a commonplace theme - the aptness of the portrayal of Love. An epigram which resembles this elegy is that of the Athenian Eubulus,

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<sup>10</sup> Propertius III.i. 25-32.

Τίς ἦν ὁ γράψας πρῶτος ἀνθρώπων ἄρα  
 ἢ κηροπλαστήρας "Ἐρωθ' ὑπόπτερον;  
 ὡς οὐδὲν ἦδει πλὴν χελιδόνας γράφειν,  
 ἀλλ' ἦν ἄπειρος τῶν τρόπων τῶν τοῦ θεοῦ.  
 ἔστιν γὰρ οὔτε κοῦφος οὔτε ῥαῖδιος  
 ἀπαλλαγῆναι τῷ φέροντι τὴν νόσον,  
 βαρῦς δὲ κομιδῆ· πῶς ἂν οὖν ἔχοι πτερὰ  
 τοιοῦτο πρᾶγμα; λήρος, εἰ κᾶφησέ τις.<sup>11</sup>

There are many poems describing Love in Greek poetry,<sup>12</sup> but Eubulus' poem alone offers a striking parallel. Propertius' first couplet,

Quicumque ille fuit, puerum qui pinxit Amorem,  
 nonne putas miras hunc habuisse manus?

apparently recalls Eubulus' first couplet, but there is a noticeable difference between the two poets' attitudes, for Eubulus considers the artist ἄπειρος whereas Propertius credits him with miras manus. In addition, Eubulus treats the portrayal of Love as winged, while Propertius considers him as a boy, winged and armed with arrows. He treats each aspect individually and comments on the aptness of each. For example, he considers that the artist aptly portrayed Love as a boy, for

is primum uidit sine sensu uiuere amantis,  
 et leuibus curis magna perire bona.<sup>13</sup>

He continues in this vein, in one couplet mentioning that the

<sup>11</sup>Eubulus, apud Athenaeum XIII.dlxii.

<sup>12</sup>Moschus i; A.P. V. clxxvi - clxxx, ccxii.

<sup>13</sup>Propertius II.xii. 3 - 4.

artist is right in portraying Love in a certain way and in the next giving his judgement as to why he considers the description apt. He claims that Love was rightly depicted as winged, and here he disagrees with Eubulus. Love flies about within the human heart and this is why lovers are tossed about with emotion.<sup>14</sup> Propertius' pentameter,

fecit et humano corde uolare deum,<sup>15</sup>

alludes to Moschus'

καὶ πτερόεις ὡς ὄρνις ἐφίπταται ἄλλον ἐπ' ἄλλω,  
ἀνέρας ἠδὲ γυναῖκας, ἐπὶ σπλάγχνοις δὲ κάθηται.<sup>16</sup>

Propertius continues by discussing the aptness of representing Love as armed, showing that he wounds the lover grievously.<sup>17</sup> Then he gives the poem an original turn. The arrows remain stuck in him; so does the boyish image - but Love has lost his wings, for he cannot fly from Propertius' heart and hence must remain to wage war in his blood.<sup>18</sup> Here Propertius introduces a reminiscence from Meleager, for

euolat heu nostro quoniam de pectore nusquam<sup>19</sup>

recalls

ὦ πτανοί, μὴ καὶ ποτ' ἐφίπτασθαι μὲν, "Ἐρωτες,  
οἷδατ' ἀποπτῆναι δ' οὐδ' ὅσον ἰσχύετε;<sup>20</sup>

Propertius then proceeds to plead with Love to leave him for another as yet untouched by him, for, if he were to be destroyed,

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 5-8.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 6.

<sup>16</sup>Moschus i. 16-17.

<sup>17</sup>Propertius II.xii. 9-12.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 13-16.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 15.

<sup>20</sup>A.P. V.ccxii. 5-6.



who would sing Love's glories?<sup>21</sup> Thus Propertius introduces another motif - this time similar to Theocritus xvi.48-50.<sup>22</sup> He begins with a commonplace theme, and mingles personal references with motifs from different Greek sources.

In chapter I we have seen that the subject matter of former poets was regarded as common property and that a poet could tell a story previously told by another poet, without being accused of plagiarism, provided he varied its treatment.<sup>23</sup> Among the works of Apollonius Rhodius and Theocritus we can find the story of the Rape of Hylas. This story is also treated by Propertius.

Apollonius<sup>24</sup> deals with the Hylas - episode as one of the many incidents on the Argonauts' journey in quest of the Golden Fleece. While Hercules is preparing an oar for himself, Hylas sets off to find water. On reaching the spring of Pegae, he is seen by one of the water-nymphs who, attracted by his beauty, pulls him into the spring. His cries for help are heard by Polyphemus who runs to find him. When Polyphemus meets Hercules and tells him of the boy's disappearance, both men set out to find Hylas. This story mainly concerns Hercules' grief and serves to explain why he and Polyphemus do not continue with the Argonauts.

Theocritus<sup>25</sup> uses his tale to illustrate the fact that he and Nicias are not the only ones touched by Love. He tells how

<sup>21</sup>Propertius II.xii. 17-24.

<sup>22</sup>Supra, p.17.

<sup>23</sup>Supra, pp.7-9.

<sup>24</sup>Apollonius Rhodius Argonautica I. 1207-1272.

<sup>25</sup>Theocritus xiii.

Hylas, who has accompanied Hercules in the Argo, is kidnapped by the water-nymphs while he is searching for water. Theocritus emphasises the depth of Hercules' love and his anguish at the loss of the boy. Hercules' feelings seem more important for Theocritus' purposes and hence he tends to pass the story of the rape by.

Propertius' poem<sup>26</sup> is a warning to his friend and former rival Gallus to watch closely over his boy-friend Hylas, lest he lose him in the same way as Hercules lost his Hylas. Thus he seems to be imitating Theocritus in applying the myth to personal experience. However, Propertius himself is not involved in this affair and is writing the poem for a third person. He also draws a closer comparison between what befell Hercules' Hylas and what may easily befall Gallus' boy. He tells his friend that his Hylas is by no means inferior to Hylas of legend<sup>27</sup> and warns him, whenever he travels,

Nympharum semper cupidas defende rapinas  
 (non minor Ausoniis est amor Adryasin);  
 ne tibi sit duros montes et frigida saxa,  
 Galle, neque expertos semper adire lacus:  
 quae miser ignotis error perpessus in oris  
 Herculis indomito fleuerat Ascanio.<sup>28</sup>

He is probably saying that Gallus should beware of Italian girls who will wish to seduce Hylas, but he expresses this thought in such a way that he can liken the anguish that Gallus will feel

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<sup>26</sup>Propertius I.xx.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 5-6.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 11-16.

to the tortured emotions of Hercules. These couplets serve to introduce the story.

In three couplets Propertius passes over the events leading up to the Hylas-story. He depicts Hylas in search of water, when he is suddenly attacked by Calais and Zetes.<sup>29</sup> This attempted rape is mentioned by neither Apollonius nor Theocritus, although Apollonius does mention the two men as persuading Jason to abandon both Hercules and Polyphemus while they are searching for the lost boy - a deed for which Hercules later kills them. Perhaps this incident and Hellenistic epigrams about the rape of Ganymede influenced Propertius to introduce this scene involving the two men. By mentioning the attempted rape and Calais and Zetes at this point Propertius has given the story original treatment. The successful rape by the Nymphs is quickly passed over, the poet preferring to depict the charm of the scenery and Hylas' boyish ways. However, this in itself is effective, serving as a warning to Gallus that the loss of his boy-friend may be as sudden as it is unexpected. Hercules' anguish at the loss of Hylas is, at this juncture, only hinted, but has been mentioned more fully earlier.<sup>30</sup> Propertius completes his poem with a final warning to Gallus -

his, o Galle, tuos monitus seruabis amores,  
 formosum Nymphis credere uisus Hylan.<sup>31</sup>

Propertius has taken a myth already treated by others and varied

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 25-31.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 13-16.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 51-52.

it by recasting it into the form of a warning to a friend, drawing an analogy between the experiences of both lovers, adding a new episode and giving vivid descriptions of the scenery and Hylas himself.<sup>32</sup> Once again he has given a story his own stamp.

The above examples serve to show how Propertius has treated commonplaces in an original way. Now we must turn to verbal echoes. The passage which best illustrates an original application of these echoes is I.i.1-4,

Cynthia prima suis miserum me cepit ocellis,  
 contactum nullis ante cupidinibus.  
 tum mihi constantis deiecit lumina fastus  
 et caput impositis pressit Amor pedibus,

which recalls Meleager's

Τὸν με Πόθοις ἄτρωτον ὑπὸ στέρνοισι Μνίσκος  
 ὄμμασι τοξεύσας τοῦτ' ἐβόησεν ἔπος·  
 ἴτον θρασὺν εἶλον ἐγὼ· τὸ δ' ἐπ' ὄφρυσι κεῖνο φρύαγμα  
 σκηπτροφόρου σοφίας ἠνίδε ποσὶ πατῶ'.<sup>33</sup>

These couplets expressive of the lover's defeat have been used by Propertius as a starting point for this prologue poem. He proceeds to expand the motif by using the illustration of Milanion who suffered from love for Atlanta. He contrasts his own case with that of the successful Milanion, and hence introduces a note of pathos. To emphasise his utter despair he then addresses witches and his friends, to see if they can help him escape from Love's bondage. Hence he has made an

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<sup>32</sup> Esp. lines 33-38 and 39-44.

<sup>33</sup> A.P. XII.ci. 1-4.

original use of another's motif.

Perhaps even more interesting is a comparison of the language of the ~~two~~ passages. Propertius' cepit is nearly a direct translation of Meleager's εἶλον, only the person being changed. Propertius mentions that Cynthia has captured him with her eyes and Meleager refers to Myiscus as ὄμμασι τοξεύσας. The idea of arrogance expressed in

τὸ δ' ἐπ' ὀφρύσι κείνο φρύαγμα  
σκηπτροφόρου σοφίας.

is found in constantis lumina fastus. Meleager claims to be Πόθοις ἄτρωτον, which Propertius echoes in

contactum nullis ante cupidinibus.

Finally, Meleager has Myiscus claim ποσσί πατῶ and this is echoed in Propertius'

et caput impositis pressit Amor pedibus.

Superficially Propertius has followed Meleager very closely without adding anything original except in the general application.

However, some details not present in Meleager's poem are found in the elegy. In line 2,

contactum nullis ante cupidinibus,

the word contactum has the meaning "hit" found in ἄτρωτον, but, according to Postgate,<sup>34</sup> it also has the meaning "taint" which is not found in the Greek. If we follow Postgate here, we consider that Propertius has departed from his model by introducing a medical term. The lover is not only under his beloved's power,

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<sup>34</sup>J. P. Postgate (ed.), Select Elegies of Propertius (Macmillan: Lond: 1884), p.46 n.2.

but is also infected with love as with a poison.

The line,

et caput impositis pressit Amor pedibus,<sup>35</sup>

appears to echo Meleager's ποσσι πατῶ as we have already seen.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, we are inclined to take Cynthia as the subject of pressit because of the word-order, until we reach Amor. "Ἔρως does not appear in this epigram of Meleager's, but he does, though not by name, in another of the Greek poet's epigrams concerning the same situation -

Κεῖμαι· λᾶξ ἐπίβαινε κατ' ἀχένος, ἄγριε δαίμον·  
οἶδά σε, γὰρ μὰ θεούς, καὶ βαρὺν ἄντα φέρειν.<sup>37</sup>

Hence it seems that Propertius has 'contaminated' this passage by introducing a motif from another epigram and fusing it with a similar motif from the original epigram. When Amor is mentioned, Propertius' readers, who have already taken Cynthia as subject of pressit, now tend to identify the beloved with the power of love. This identification is not present in either of Meleager's epigrams, but has been obtained by a 'contamination' of the two.

In I.xi. Propertius, anxious about Cynthia's welfare at Baiae, tells her,

tu mihi sola domus, tu, Cynthia, sola parentes.<sup>38</sup>

This line is quite similar to Homer's

Ἔκτορ, ἀτὰρ σὺ μοῖ ἐσσι πατὴρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ  
ἠδὲ κασίγνητος, σὺ δέ μοι θαλερὸς παρακοίτης,<sup>39</sup>

<sup>35</sup>Propertius I.i.4.

<sup>36</sup>Supra, p.24.

<sup>37</sup>A.P. XII.xlviii. 1-2.

<sup>38</sup>Propertius I.xi.23.

<sup>39</sup>Homer Iliad VI. 429-430.

where Andromache reminds Hector, who is about to leave for battle, that Achilles has claimed the lives of her father and brother and that Artemis has slain her mother. Hector is all she has. This scene is recalled by Propertius. The reference to Hector and Andromache emphasises how deep his love for Cynthia is.

Usually Propertius adds details of his own to passages which he has imitated closely from former poets. One such example is II.vi.1-2,

Non ita complebant Ephyraeae Laidos aedis,  
ad cuius iacuit Graecia tota fores.

This picture is a reminiscence of Plato's

'Η σοβαρὸν γελάσασα καθ' Ἑλλάδος, ἢ τὸν ἐραστῶν  
ἔσμὸν ἐπὶ προθύροις Λαίης ἔχουσα νέων.<sup>40</sup>

In attempting to depict the crowds at Lais' door Propertius has drawn on Plato's dedicatory epigram, in which the former beauty is dedicating her mirror to Aphrodite. However, he has changed some details. Plato pictures a crowd of lovers in Lais' porch, whereas Propertius' iacuit introduces the idea of lovers excluded while others are enjoying her love. Plato refers to the ἐραστῶν ἔσμὸν νέων, but Propertius exaggerates with Graecia tota. He is concerned with the great number of Lais' lovers, and so has made these changes. We see that such imitations can be transformed into a new expression. It is also worth mentioning that Propertius has introduced a new detail - the learned epithet Ephyraeae, the Homeric word for "Corinthian".

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<sup>40</sup> A.P. VI.i. 1-2.

Another such verbal similarity can be found in IV.vii.1-2,

Sunt aliquid Manes: letum non omnia finit,  
Luridaque euictos effugit umbra rogos,

which recalls Homer's

"ὦ πόποι, ἦ βῆ τίς ἐστι καὶ εἶν' Αἴδαο δόμοισι  
ψυχὴ καὶ εἶδωλον, ἀτὰρ φρένες οὐκ ἔνι πάμπαν."

The Homeric passage refers to Achilles' reflections after seeing the ghost of Patroclus. The ghost appears to the hero, rebuking him for his failure to give him a tomb, and thereby robbing him of the right to enter Hades. He begs Achilles that they may be buried together, just as they have lived together. Achilles tries to embrace him, but fails to do so because his friend is merely spirit. Hence he realises that there are indeed spirits, but that they are empty forms. Likewise, Cynthia appears to Propertius in a dream, rebukes him for failing to carry out the due burial rites and for his faithlessness after her death. She also tells him about the Underworld and gives him definite instructions about honouring her servants and burning his poems. The verbal reminiscence from Homer is intended to link the elegy with the passage from the *Iliad* in the minds of Propertius' readers. Thus, Propertius likens his love for Cynthia to Achilles' love for Patroclus, which lasts beyond death. He creates an atmosphere of awe throughout the poem. The last part of the Homeric quotation, ἀτὰρ φρένες οὐκ ἔνι πάμπαν, is recalled by

inter complexus excidit umbra meos,<sup>42</sup>

which in turn reminds us of

"Ὡς ἄρα φωνήσας ὠρέξατο χερσὶ φίλησιν,  
οὐδ' ἔλαβε· ψυχὴ δὲ κατὰ χθονὸς ἤνυτε καπνὸς  
ῥχετο τετριγυῖα."<sup>43</sup>

<sup>41</sup>Homer *Iliad* XXIII. 103-104.

<sup>42</sup>Propertius IV.vii. 96.

<sup>43</sup>Homer *Iliad* XXIII. 99-101.



Thus Propertius has associated his poem even further with this Homeric episode by means of verbal reminiscence. Propertius is not a slavish copyist, but can transform his Greek models and use them in an original way for his own purposes.

The third heading for study concerns those passages which merely allude to lines from a Greek poem. In II.xviiiB Propertius asks Cynthia what would happen if he were old. As an example of a young woman's devotion to an old man he cites Aurora's love for Tithonus. He claims that

illum saepe suis decedens fouit in ulnis  
quam prius abiunctos sedula lauit equos.<sup>44</sup>

This reference to Aurora washing her horses recalls Callimachus' lines about Athene -

οὔποκ' Ἀθανῆα μεγάλην ἀπενίψατο πάχεις,  
πρὶν κόνιν ἵππειάν ἐξελάσαι λαγόνων·  
οὐδ' ὄκα δὴ λύθρῳ πεπαλαγμένα πάντα φέροισα  
τεύχεα τῶν ἀδίκων ἦνθ' ἀπὸ γαγενέων,  
ἀλλὰ πολὺ πρᾶτιστον ὑφ' ἄρματος αὐχένας ἵππων  
λυσάμενα παγαῖς ἐκλυσεν Ὠκεανῶ  
ἰδρῶ καὶ βαθάμιγγας, ἐφοίβασεν δὲ παγέντα  
πάντα χαλινοφάγων ἀφρὸν ἀπὸ στομάτων.<sup>45</sup>

There is no suggestion that Propertius wished to imitate Callimachus here directly, but he probably intended his readers to recall the Alexandrian poet's lines.

The bulk of Propertius' allusions to Greek poems are

<sup>44</sup>Propertius II.xviii. 9-10.

<sup>45</sup>Callimachus Hymns v. 5-12.

concerned with his literary theory. On being asked by Maecenas to write epic verse in honour of Augustus, he replies,

sed neque Phlegraeos Iouis Enceladique tumultus  
intonet angusto pectore Callimachus,  
nec mea conveniunt duro praecordia versu  
Caesaris in Phrygios condere nomen auos.<sup>46</sup>

The first of these couplets refers to Callimachus'

μηδ' ἄπ' ἐμεῦ διεφά]τε μέγα ψοφέουσαν δοιδίην  
τίκτεσθαι· βροντῶ]ν οὐκ ἐμόν, [ἀλλὰ] Διός. <sup>47</sup>

Both poets agree that epic writing is not for them. The

correspondences are μέγα ψοφέουσαν δοιδίην / tumultus, Διός / Iouis and βροντῶν / intonet. The phrase angusto pectore recalls

ἑτέρων ἔχνια μὴ καθ' ὁμά  
δίφορον ἐλ]ξεν μηδ' οἶμον ἀνὰ πλατύν, ἀλλὰ κελεύθους  
ἀτρίπτο]υς, εἰ καὶ στε]ι]νοτέρην ἐλάσεις. <sup>48</sup>

With these allusions Propertius signifies that he accepts Callimachus' literary doctrine and refuses to write epic. This refusal was of greater importance to Propertius than to Callimachus. For Callimachus to write epic he would have had to swallow his pride only, but, if Propertius had yielded to Maecenas' request, he would have been surrendering his freedom as a poet. Thus elegy II.i. is a refusal, a statement of his freedom as a poet. It is no coincidence that book II both begins and ends with a recusatio.

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<sup>46</sup> Propertius II.i. 39-42.

<sup>47</sup> Callimachus, fr. i. 19-20.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 26-28.

A poem in which Propertius draws heavily on Callimachus and others is III.i. The parallels are

primus ego ingredior puro de fonte sacerdos  
Itala per Graios orgia ferre choros,<sup>49</sup>

cp.

Ἀποῖ δ' οὐκ ἀπὸ παντὸς ὕδωρ φορέουσι μέλισσαι,  
ἀλλ' ἦτις καθαρὴ τε καὶ ἀχράαντος ἀνέρπει  
πίδακος ἐξ ἱερῆς ὀλίγη λιβάς ἄκρον ἄωτον,<sup>50</sup>

and

non datur ad Musas currere lata uia,<sup>51</sup>

cp.

ἐτέρων ἵχνια μὴ καθ' ὁμά  
δίφρον ἐλ]φν μηδ' οἶμον ἀνὰ πλατύν, ἀλλὰ κελεύθους  
ἀτρίπτο]υς, εἰ καὶ στελινοτέρην ἐλάσεις.<sup>52</sup>

Both of Callimachus' passages are put into the mouth of Apollo as his pronouncements on literary criticism. The first passage suggests that the ideal poem should lack the verbal rubbish of epic and be pure like the trickling stream from which Demeter's priestesses draw. The epithet ὀλίγη contrasts with μέγας in Apollo's previous statement,

'Ἀστυρίου ποταμοῖο μέγας ῥόος, ἀλλὰ τὰ πολλὰ  
λύματα γῆς καὶ πολλὸν ἐφ' ὕδατι συρφετὸν ἔλκει.<sup>53</sup>

The second passage deals with a similar thought. The poet should not follow the majority, but should adhere to the narrow

<sup>49</sup>Propertius III.i. 3-4.

<sup>50</sup>Callimachus Hymns ii. 110-112.

<sup>51</sup>Propertius III.i. 14.

<sup>52</sup>Callimachus, fr. i. 26-28.

<sup>53</sup>Callimachus Hymns ii. 108-109.

path.<sup>54</sup> Propertius refers to both of these passages, because he supports Callimachus' doctrine. He too refuses to write epic; he would rather write elegy - the same genre as Callimachus and Philetas.<sup>55</sup> A possible reason for this has been suggested above.<sup>56</sup>

Other allusions from Callimachus, fr.i. are found in single words. Tenuastis<sup>57</sup> and temui<sup>58</sup> with their suggestions of slenderness allude to Callimachus' Μοῦσαν λεπταλέην,<sup>59</sup> and when Propertius writes nata,<sup>60</sup> he is probably alluding to Callimachus' τίκτεσθαι.<sup>61</sup> Such allusions indicate that he intends to write in Callimachus' tradition, i.e. to write elegy and to avoid epic.

But it must not be thought that in this poem Propertius is a slavish imitator of Callimachus. He shows originality in his use of 'contamination' of passages from various Roman authors, principally Horace, with Callimachus' passages.<sup>62</sup> He also incorporates a commonplace from Theocritus to illustrate the

<sup>54</sup>Supra, p.29.

<sup>55</sup>Propertius III.i. 1-2.

<sup>56</sup>Supra, p.29.

<sup>57</sup>Propertius III.i.5.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 8.

<sup>59</sup>Callimachus, fr.i.24.

<sup>60</sup>Propertius III.i.10.

<sup>61</sup>Callimachus, fr.i.20.

<sup>62</sup>Infra, pp. 58-59.

importance of poetry.<sup>63</sup> He employs the motifs of the triumph and the race, and through these stresses his pre-eminence in love elegy.<sup>64</sup> He also indicates his desire for immortality - a theme he takes up again in III.ii.<sup>65</sup> Thus he shows originality in this elegy, as will become even more evident in chapter III.

Elegy III.iii. deals with the opposition of epic and elegy. Propertius dreams that he is about to drink from Hippocrene on Mt. Helicon in order to write epic verse about Roman subjects, when he is prevented from doing so by Apollo who orders him to write only elegy. The god then leads him to the Muse Calliope who tells him that love poetry is his province. Thus Propertius attempts to justify his position as a love elegist. In this poem he has employed important motifs from Callimachus. Firstly, the elegy relates a dream. Only one fragment of this poem is now extant, but the epigram of Diodorus<sup>66</sup> gives some useful information. Apparently the whole *Aetia* is in the form of a dream in which Callimachus is told of many legends by the Muses. This is supported by the fragment still extant.<sup>67</sup> However, Propertius applies this motif to this one poem only, and, when he finally writes aetiological verse, he discards it. Secondly, he follows Callimachus in his reference to the Muses. However, here he differs from his model in that only one Muse, Calliope, addresses him, whereas it is the *Μουσῶν ἑσμός*,<sup>68</sup> which

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<sup>63</sup>Supra, p.17.

<sup>64</sup>Propertius III.i. 9-14. Also infra, pp. 59-60.

<sup>65</sup>Propertius III.i. 35-36, cf. III.ii. 17-26.

<sup>66</sup>A.P. VII.xlii.

<sup>67</sup>Callimachus, fr.ii.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 2.

formerly met Hesiod, which addresses Callimachus. In both cases the Muses direct the poet towards suitable subject matter. Thirdly, Propertius adopts the same scenery as Callimachus - the neighbourhood of Hippocrene on Mt. Helicon.<sup>69</sup> Here Propertius diverges from his model by introducing another fountain,<sup>70</sup> from which Calliope sprinkles him with the water of Philetas.<sup>71</sup>

Fourthly, both poets claim that they have been addressed by Apollo. This god appears twice in Callimachus' poems to support the slender style,<sup>72</sup> but it is the passage in the Aetia which is the more significant. Apollo tells Callimachus not to drive his chariot along common nor wide paths, but to keep to unworn and narrow paths. Similarly, Propertius is told to travel on mollia prata<sup>73</sup> and to keep his boat, a light one, close to the shore, and not venture out to sea. One couplet here is of particular interest -

alter remus aquas alter tibi radat harenas,  
tutus eris: medio maxima turba mari est.<sup>74</sup>

The placing of the oars signifies the uneven rhythm of the elegiac couplet. No mention is made by Callimachus of his metre. The last clause of the quotation is probably a reference to Callimachus'

ὁ Φθόνος 'Απόλλωνος ἐπ' οὔατα λάθριος εἶπεν·  
'οὐκ ἄγαμαι τὸν δοιδὸν ὃς οὐδ' ὄσα πόντος δαίδει.'<sup>75</sup>

Thus Propertius has 'contaminated' two passages of Callimachus

<sup>69</sup>Callimachus, fr.ii.1,4; Propertius III.iii. 1-2.

<sup>70</sup>Propertius III.iii. 31-32.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., 51-52.

<sup>72</sup>Callimachus Hymns ii. 107-112; fr.i. 21-30.

<sup>73</sup>Propertius III.iii. 18.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 23-24.

<sup>75</sup>Callimachus Hymns ii. 105-106.

for his own purposes and to these he has added details of his own. Elegy III.iii. leans heavily on Callimachus for motifs. By this deliberate dependence Propertius allies himself with Callimachus' literary theory. However, he treats the borrowed motifs in an original fashion, and he adds certain details that are entirely his own, i.e. the mention of Roman subjects for his proposed epic,<sup>76</sup> his own speech for Calliope<sup>77</sup> and his own description of the Muses' grotto.<sup>78</sup>

An attempt has been made to examine the extent of Propertius' dependence on his Greek models, under the headings of commonplace, verbal similarities and allusions. However, it has emerged that his purpose in writing is usually different from that of his sources and he invariably contributes fresh details. He is obviously no slavish copyist of the Greek poets.

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<sup>76</sup> Propertius III.iii. 3-12; cf. 40-46.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 39-50.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 25-36.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE EXTENT OF PROPERTIUS' INDEBTEDNESS TO ROMAN POETS

As in the previous chapter, we shall study parallel passages and themes under the headings of the commonplace, verbal similarity, and allusion. The commonplace provides many interesting examples of Propertius' artistry. In I.viii he has been worried about Cynthia, who, it seems is about to desert him and travel overseas with a rich praetor. However, apparently at the last moment, she decides to remain at Rome with Propertius. In his ecstasy he cries,

nunc mihi summa licet contingere sidera plantis.<sup>1</sup>

The same motif is found in Catullus'

sed quamquam me nocte premunt uestigia diuum<sup>2</sup>

and Vergil's

sub pedibusque uidet nubes et sidera Daphnis.<sup>3</sup>

Catullus' line is spoken by Berenice's lock, which, separated from its mistress and transformed into a constellation, claims that the gods step on it at night. In Vergil's poem Menalcas, singing of the deification of Daphnis, depicts him as walking on the constellations. When Propertius claims that he can do the same, he is claiming to be like the gods. He is so blessed. Here he has made an original application of this commonplace by

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<sup>1</sup>Propertius I.viii.43.

<sup>2</sup>Catullus LXVI.69.

<sup>3</sup>Vergil Eclogues v.57.



applying it to his own emotional state.

In II.xvi.46 Propertius writes,

quae tibi terra, uelim, quae tibi fiat aqua,

which apparently recalls Tibullus I.ix.11-12,

at deus illa

in cinerem et liquidas munera uertat aquas.

The situation in both poets is similar. Marathus has been captured from Tibullus and Cynthia has been taken from Propertius - both by gifts. Both elegists have drawn on Homer Iliad VII.99,

ἀλλ' ὑμεῖς μὲν πάντες ὕδωρ καὶ γαῖα γένοισθε,

where Menelaus curses his fellow-Greeks for not accepting Hector's challenge. Tibullus and Propertius have taken this motif from its context of war and applied it to gifts instead of men. Apparently Tibullus was the first to do this, and was followed by Propertius.<sup>4</sup> Tibullus varies Homer's wording, putting cinerem for γαῖα and liquidas aquas for ὕδωρ. Propertius follows Homer's wording more closely. Here he has not shown the same degree of originality as in the previous examples.

Propertius again has borrowed a motif from Tibullus in II.ix, for

haec mihi uota tuam propter suscepta salutem,

cum capite hoc Stygiae iam poterentur aquae,

et lectum flentes circum staremus amici?

hic ubi tum, pro di, perfida, quisue fuit?<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup>According to F.Solmsen, "Propertius in his Literary Relations with Tibullus and Vergil", Philologus (1961), p.274, Tibullus I was published later than Propertius I and before Propertius II. This motif does not appear in Propertius I.

<sup>5</sup>Propertius II.ix.25-28.

recalls

ille ego cum tristi morbo defessa iaceres  
 te dicor uotis eripuisse meis;  
 ipseque te circum lustravi sulphure puro,  
 carmine cum magico praecinuisset anus;  
 ipse procuravi, ne possent saeva nocere,  
 somnia, ter sancta deueneranda mola;  
 ipse ego uelatus filo tunicisque solutis  
 uota nouem Triuia nocte silente dedi.  
 omnia persolui: fruitur nunc alter amore,  
 et precibus felix utitur ille meis.  
 at mihi felicem uitam, si salua fuisses,  
 fingebam, demens, et renuente deo.<sup>6</sup>

Both poets have excluded by their mistresses for another lover. Tibullus expresses his regrets about his love and recalls the services he has performed for Delia in the hope that, when she recovers, they can live a peaceful, idyllic existence. However, this is not to be. Then Tibullus proceeds to show what is to blame for his present situation and give a warning to Delia's new lover. Propertius inveighs against fickleness of women in general and then prays for death. He promises to remain faithful to Cynthia. The poem ends with a curse on the successful lover and a warning to him. The elegies of both poets cover the same basic theme - yet each poet's treatment is different. A major difference is the role of the above motif. In Tibullus' elegy it serves merely as proof of his great love for Delia. Propertius' motif

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<sup>6</sup>Tibullus I.v. 9-20.

is placed after the mythological exempla of faithful women and the contrasting picture of Cynthia. Propertius' devotion, as he worries about her sickness, provides a striking contrast with Cynthia's infidelity and serves to liken him to the heroines whom he has previously mentioned. Furthermore, it is contrasted with that of the new lover who was nowhere around during the crisis. Thus the motif has greater importance in Propertius' elegy than in Tibullus'. There is also an important contrast in the very description. Tibullus is the central character in his motif, Delia being quite subordinate. He emphasises all the deeds he performed to save her. Propertius mentions only that he performed the vows and that he was among the friends who stood anxiously around her sick-bed. The figure of the critically-ill Cynthia is as important as, if not more important than, the figure of the grieving Propertius. The phrase Stygiae aquae would have aroused in Propertius' contemporaries all the memories of descriptions of the Underworld, adding horror to the situation. Pathos also is aroused by the picture of the anxious friends. All of this is lacking in Tibullus, save for the pathos in his cry that all his dreams have come to nothing. Propertius' outburst against the successful lover reveals him as a strong character, unlike Tibullus. He evokes pathos for Cynthia and expresses righteous indignation on his own behalf.

Another motif common to Propertius and Tibullus concerns the mistress's worship of Isis. Whether it was deliberately borrowed from Tibullus by Propertius is not certain. Perhaps both mistresses were actually Isis-worshippers, for this mystery religion was certainly fashionable among Roman women at that time.

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Anyway, both elegists treat this motif in an entirely different way. In Tibullus I.iii. 23-32 the poet is lying sick far away from home. He asks Delia what good all her vows to Isis have done, now that he is dangerously ill. Yet, he asks the goddess to heal him, with the promise that Delia will pay her vows as before. Perhaps he wants her to perform these vows for the sake of her chastity as much as for his recovery.<sup>7</sup> Propertius<sup>8</sup> is not at all happy about Cynthia's worship of Isis, for these rites rob him of his love. He reminds the goddess that she was once in love and because of this was transformed into a cow. She should not interfere with Roman lovers, or else her horns may grow again.<sup>9</sup> Unlike Tibullus, Propertius treats Isis-worship with tongue-in-check humour.

"The protection of the lover" is a motif treated by both elegists. When Propertius is summoned by Cynthia to come to her by night, he is afraid both of making a long, hazardous journey and of risking Cynthia's anger if he disobeys her summons. He reasons that he had better go, for

nec tamen est quisquam, sacros qui laedat amantis:  
 Scironis media sic licet ire uia,  
 quisquis amator erit, Scythicis licet ambulet oris,  
 nemo adeo ut noceat barbarus esse uolet.  
 luna ministrat iter, demonstrant astra salebras,  
 ipse Amor accensas percutit ante faces,  
 saeva canum rabies morsus auertit hiantis:  
 huic generi quouis tempore tuta uia est.

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<sup>7</sup>Tibullus I.iii. 83-84 possibly suggests this interpretation.

<sup>8</sup>Propertius II.xxxiii. 1-22.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 18

sanguine tam paruo quis enim spargatur amantis  
 improbus? exclusis fit comes ipsa Venus.<sup>10</sup>

Likewise Tibullus writes,

en ego cum tenebris tota uagor anxius urbe,

nec sinit occurrat quisquam qui corpora ferro

uulneret aut rapta praemia ueste petat.

quisquis amore tenetur, eat tutusque sacerque

qualibet; insidias non timuisse decet.

non mihi pigra nocent hibernae frigora noctis,

non mihi cum multa decidit imber aqua.

non labor hic laedit, reseret modo Delia postes

et uocet ad digiti me taciturna sonum.<sup>11</sup>

Tibullus is an excluded lover, for Delia has a guard and her door is bolted. He begs her to trick the guard, for Venus, he says, helps those in love - and to illustrate this he writes the lines quoted above. He uses the motif to illustrate a general statement, but Propertius assigns it a more important role in his elegy - it is the central motif around which the whole elegy is constructed. In fact, the section about the journey seems merely an excuse to write about the protection of the lover and the honour paid him if he dies obeying love's dictates. Tibullus employs the motif as one of many. There is also a difference in the description of the lover. Tibullus claims that he is protected by Venus from violence and the ill-effects of the weather.<sup>12</sup> Propertius

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<sup>10</sup>Propertius III.xvi. 11-20.

<sup>11</sup>Tibullus I.ii. 25-32.

<sup>12</sup>lines 25a-28 (protection from violence) and lines 29-30 (protection from ill-effects of the weather).

only hints at divine protection;<sup>13</sup> it is rather the lover's very helplessness<sup>14</sup> and the fear his madness inspires<sup>15</sup> which protect him. Anyone who wishes to harm the lover must be improbus.<sup>16</sup> Propertius is concerned with acts of violence alone.

In Propertius III.ii. two Horatian motifs occur. This elegy belongs to that group at the beginning of the third book in which he sets out his attitude towards life and literature. After mentioning his literary theory in elegy i, Propertius now turns to the role of poetry in his life. He claims that a crowd of girls worship his words and

quod non Taenariis domus est mihi fulta columnis,  
nec camera auratas inter eburna trabes,  
nec mea Phaeacas aequant pomaria silvas,  
non operosa rigat Marcius antra liquor;  
at Musae comites et carmina cara legenti,  
et defessa choris Calliopea meis.<sup>17</sup>

This motif recalls Horace's

Non ebur neque aureum  
mea renidet in domo lacunar,  
non trabes Hymettiae  
premunt columnas ultima recisas  
Africa, neque Attali  
ignotus heres regiam occupavi,

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<sup>13</sup>Propertius III.xvi. 15-16, 20.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 19-20.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 17.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 20.

<sup>17</sup>Propertius III.ii. 11-16.

nec Laconicas mihi  
 trahunt honestae purpuras clientae:  
 at fides et ingeni  
 benigna uena est, pauperemque diues  
 me petit: nihil supra  
 deos lacesto nec potentem amicum  
 largiora flagito,  
 satis beatus unicis Sabinis.<sup>18</sup>

The context of Horace's poem is somewhat different. The ode concerns the contrast between the greedy rich man and the man content with his lot. Horace begins by describing some possessions of the very rich. He has none of these. Yet he has enough - honesty, talent and his modest Sabine farm. Propertius follows his example by listing the typical possessions of a rich man. Propertius' lines 11-12 are similar to Horace's lines 1-5. Like Horace, Propertius does not have columns to support his home. Horace mentions columns from Africa, but Propertius diverges from this by saying that they come from Taenarus in Sparta. Horace uses an active verb (premere) to express their supporting function, whereas Propertius uses a passive verb (fulciri) to express the same thoughts. Propertius' auratas trabes recall Horace's trabes Hymettiae, while auratas recalls also Horace's aureum lacunar. Horace's ebur and lacunar are echoed by Propertius' camera eburna. However, Propertius alters his picture slightly by using camera which signifies a vaulted ceiling, whereas Horace's lacunar suggests a pannelled ceiling. Propertius then continues, like

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<sup>18</sup>Horace Odes II.xviii. 1-14.

Horace, with examples of riches, but refers to Phaeacian orchards and a private supply from the Marcian aqueduct, whereas Propertius refers to a kingdom and purple-clad women. Both poets contrast the world's riches with their own possessions. Unlike Horace, who mentions honesty, talent and his farm, Propertius mentions only talent. But this thought that talent is sufficient serves to introduce another motif from Horace.

Fortunata, meo si qua es celebrata libello!  
 carmina erunt formae tot monumenta tuae.  
 nam neque Pyramidum sumptus ad sidera ducti,  
 nec Iouis Elei caelum imitata domus,  
 nec Mausolei diues fortuna sepulcri  
 mortis ab extrema condicione uacant.  
 aut illis flamma aut imber subducet honores,  
 annorum aut ictu, pondere uicta, ruent.  
 at non ingenio quaesitum nomen ab aeuo  
 excidet: ingenio stat sine morte decus.<sup>19</sup>

These lines obviously recall Horace's

Exegi monumentum aere perennius  
 regalique situ pyramidum altius,  
 quod non imber edax, non Aquilo impotens  
 possit diruere aut innumerabilis  
 annorum series et fuga temporum.  
 non omnis moriar, multaque pars mei  
 uitabit Libitinam: usque ego postera  
 crescam laude recens, dum Capitolium  
 scandet cum tacita uirgine pontifex.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Propertius III.ii. 17-26.

<sup>20</sup>Horace Odes III.xxx. 1-9.



Both poets use the word monumentum to describe their poems. Horace claims that his monument is

regali... situ pyramidum altius.<sup>21</sup>

The pyramids are mentioned also by Propertius, who writes of them as ad sidera ducti,<sup>22</sup> expressing the height implied by Horace. Unlike his model, Propertius adds two more wonders of the Ancient World - the Temple of Elean Zeus and the Mausoleum. Great though these monuments are,

(nec) mortis ab extrema condicione uacant.<sup>23</sup>

Thus Propertius echoes the thought behind Horace's aere perennius and lines 3-5 of the Ode. He is unconcerned with the loftiness of his verse, but its immortality is all-important. To reinforce this concept, Propertius echoes lines 3-5 of Horace's ode in his lines 23-24. He echoes Horace's imber without edax, but adds flamma to denote another destructive element. Horace's diruere is recalled by Propertius' subducet honores and ruent. Horace's

possit diruere aut innumerabilis  
annorum series et fuga temporum

is echoed by Propertius'

annorum aut ictu, pondere uicta, ruent,

which expresses the violence in destruction, unlike its model. Both poets consider that the monument of genius will outlast monuments of stone. Horace's expression is more picturesque, for he mentions the avoidance of Libitina and the growth of his praise as long as the priest and virgin climb the Capitol;<sup>24</sup> and

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>22</sup>Propertius III.ii. 19.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 22. - the word nec appears in the previous line.

<sup>24</sup>Horace Odes III. xxx. 6-9.

yet Propertius achieves more force with a clause which stands out like the most immovable of monuments,

. . . ingenio stat sine morte decus.<sup>25</sup>

Both poets consider their poems as monuments, but Horace considers his as a monument to himself, conferring immortality on himself,<sup>26</sup> whereas Propertius considers that his poems are an immortal monument to his beloved's beauty.<sup>27</sup> Propertius has borrowed two motifs from Horace and by keeping certain details, adding others, omitting still others and by varying the expression he has incorporated them into a single poem which is far from a direct imitation of his model.

The paraclausithyron is a very common theme in Greek and Roman love poetry, which has been treated by, among others Callimachus, Theocritus, Catullus, Tibullus, Ovid and Propertius.<sup>28</sup> The poet to whom Propertius is the most heavily indebted here is Catullus, for from him he has borrowed the device of the talking door. In both poems the door claims that it was once respectable,<sup>29</sup> but now is no longer so,<sup>30</sup> and that, though innocent, it is blamed for the scandals of the house's inhabitants.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, it can

<sup>25</sup>Propertius III.ii. 26.

<sup>26</sup>Horace Odes III. xxx. 6-9.

<sup>27</sup>Propertius III.ii. 17-18.

<sup>28</sup>A.P. V.xxiii (Callimachus); Theocritus vii.122; Catullus LXVII; Tibullus I.ii,v; Ovid Amores I.vi; Propertius I.xvi.

<sup>29</sup>Catullus LXVII 3-4; Propertius I.xvi. 1-4.

<sup>30</sup>Catullus LXVII 5-8; Propertius I.xvi. 5-8.

<sup>31</sup>Catullus LXVII 11-14; Propertius I.xvi. 18-44, 47-48.

tell much about certain scandals.<sup>32</sup> These similarities suggest that Propertius had Catullus' poem in mind when he was writing.<sup>33</sup> However, the poems are vastly different in content and purpose. Catullus' *paraclausithyron* is obviously a vehicle for personal abuse such as can be found elsewhere in his verse.<sup>34</sup> Propertius deals with the traditional theme of the excluded lover. Using the device of the personified door, he is able to show the despair and degradation of the lover as seen by an involved third person, and thus to arouse pathos in his public. This elegy also paves the way for elegies xvii and xviii in which the poet himself is excluded from Cynthia's love.

Frequently Propertius borrows motifs which are either commonplaces or the inventions of other Roman poets. He transforms this material and leaves some details as a reminiscence of his model, but he adds much that is his own. These motifs are the raw materials from which he constructs his poems.

The next heading to be studied is verbal similarity. In I.viii we read,

tu pedibus teneris positas fulcire pruinas,  
tu potes insolitas, Cynthia, ferre niues?<sup>35</sup>

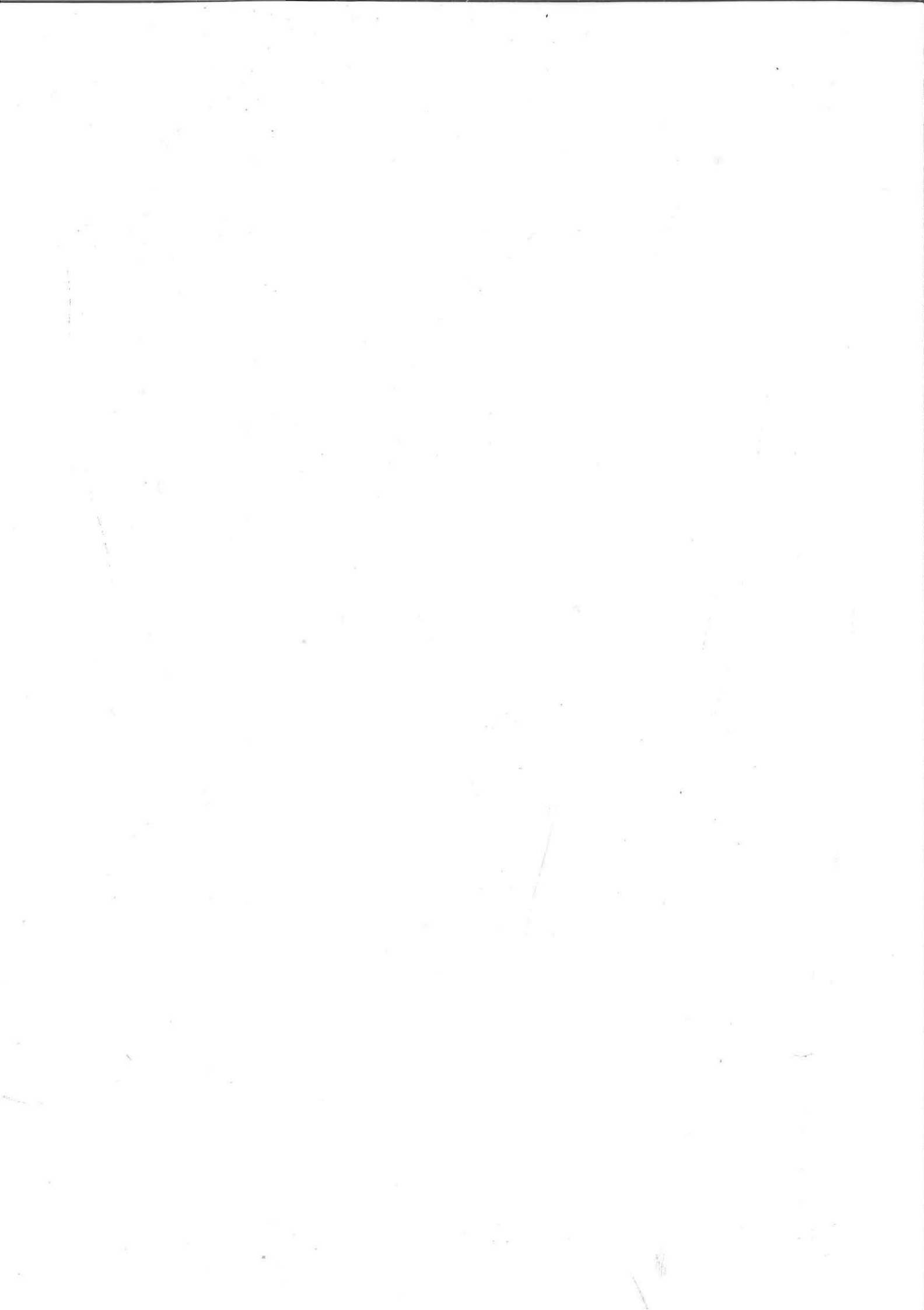
which recall Vergil's lines about Gallus -

<sup>32</sup>Catullus LXVII. 19-28, 35-36; Propertius I.xvi. 18-44.

<sup>33</sup>Copley, F.O. Exclusus Amator. A Study in Latin Love Poetry ("Philological Monographs" XVII A. PhA, 1956), p118 considers that Propertius did not have Catullus' *paraclausithyron* in mind, but that both poems were based on street songs. However, I feel that the similarities between the poems suggest imitation by Propertius. The lack of survivals from these street songs prevents us from following Copley's thesis with any degree of certainty.

<sup>34</sup>E.g. Catullus XVII, XXI, XXV, XXVIII, XXIX, XXXIII, XLII, XCIV, CVI.

<sup>35</sup>Propertius I.viii. 7-8.



tu procul a patria (nec sit mihi credere tantum)  
 Alpinas a! dura, niues et frigora Rheni  
 me sine sola uides. a! te ne frigora laedant!  
 a! tibi ne teneras glacies secet aspera plantas!<sup>36</sup>

Both poets are treating a similar situation - the desertion of a lover by a mistress who has gone far away to the lands of ice and snow. Both poets mention niues, but Propertius qualifies it with insolitas, which is only hinted by Vergil. Vergil mentions frigora and glacies aspera, whereas Propertius covers both expressions with positas pruinas. Vergil expresses the girl's discomfort with laedant and secet; Propertius hints at this with fulcire and ferre and the phrase pedibus teneris which recalls Vergil's teneras plantas. Although there is obviously a close relationship between the two passages, Propertius has not copied Vergil verbatim. By using similar expressions he has recalled Vergil's passage in order to identify his situation with Gallus'. He has also transformed Gallus' pathetic outburst into a warning question directed at Cynthia. If, as it has been suggested, Vergil was imitating a now-lost passage from Gallus,<sup>37</sup> perhaps Propertius also was imitating Gallus. However, we must confess our ignorance on this point.

A very interesting example of verbal similarity is found in a comparison of Propertius II.v. 21-24,

nec tibi periuro scindam de corpore uestis,  
 nec mea praeclusas fregerit ira fores,  
 nec tibi conexos iratus carpere crinis,  
 nec duris ausim laedere pollicibus,

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<sup>36</sup>Vergil Eclogues x. 46-49.

<sup>37</sup>G. Luck, The Latin Love Elegy (Methuen: London, 1959), p.44.

and Tibullus I.x. 53-56,

sed ueneris tunc bella calent, scissosque capillos  
femina, perfractas conqueriturque fores;  
flet teneras subtusa genas: sed uictor et ipse  
flet sibi dementes tam ualuisse manus,

and lines 61-62,

sit satis e membris tenuem rescindere uestem,  
sit satis ornatus dissoluisse comae.<sup>38</sup>

Both poets are treating a lovers' battle. In Tibullus' elegy the lover has been present at a peaceful country feast and now, flushed with wine, turns to love's battles. Tibullus rejoices in this, although he considers that only a madman could beat his beloved. It should be enough to tear at her clothes and disarray her hair. None of this suits Propertius, who, although angry with Cynthia, refuses to resort to rustic violence. The correspondences between these passages are as follows: scindam uestis / rescindere uestem; fregerit fores / perfractas fores; conexos carpere crinis / ornatus dissoluisse comae and scissos capillos; duris laedere pollicibus / teneras subtusa genas. An important difference is the negative in Propertius. All that pleases Tibullus displeases Propertius, for

rusticus haec aliquis tam turpia proelia quaerat,  
cuius non hederæ circuire caput.<sup>39</sup>

Rusticus, always used in a good sense by Tibullus, is used in a pejorative sense by Propertius. The rusticus who seeks battles

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<sup>38</sup>For this example and some comments I am indebted to F. Solmsen, "Propertius in his Literary Relations with Tibullus and Vergil," Philologus (1961), pp. 273-277.

<sup>39</sup>Propertius II.v. 25-26.

with women is contrasted with the ivy-crowned poet. Thus Solmsen claims,

While apparently saying that a rustic who engages in such fights has the excuse of knowing nothing about the arts and the refinement of manners which goes with them, Propertius actually says that a poet who stoops to such matters is a rusticus (and not a poeta doctus).<sup>40</sup>

He is probably correct in his assumption that Propertius is indulging in literary backbiting, for Tibullus was a literary rival of his and Propertius need only have looked to Callimachus to find a precedent for such backbiting.

In III.v. Propertius is speaking of his creed as a poet and a man. He is a man of peace and will always be so. While young, he will delight in love poetry, but, when he grows old, he will seek to learn the nature of things, e.g.

sit uentura dies mundi quae subruat arces,  
purpureus pluuias cur bibit arcus aquas.<sup>41</sup>

The first line of this couplet recalls Lucretius II. 1148-1149,

sic igitur magni quoque circum moenia mundi  
expugnata dabunt labem putrisque ruinas,

and Lucretius V. 94-96,

tris species tam dissimilis, tria talia texta,  
una dies dabit exitio, multosque per annos  
sustentata ruet moles et machina mundi.

<sup>40</sup>Solmsen, op.cit., p.275.

<sup>41</sup>Propertius III.v. 31-32.

Propertius obviously refers to these passages from Lucretius as typical of a philosophical poet. His dies recalls Lucretius' una dies, while mundi subruat arces, the metaphor of the world as a fortification under siege, is based on Lucretius' ruet moles et machina mundi. The second line of the couplet is an echo of Vergil Georgics I. 380-381,

. . . . . et bibit ingens  
arcus . . . . . ,

which concerns one of the signs preceding rain. Propertius has added some details not present in Vergil's line. He has given bibit an object - pluuias aquas, and has replaced Vergil's ingens by purpureus, thus giving the passage a picturesque detail. Finally, Propertius' line is noticeable for its alliteration, particularly of the sounds (p) and (s).

Propertius at III.vii. 9-10,

et mater non iusta piaae dare debita terrae  
nec pote cognatos inter humare rogos,

echoes Catullus LXVIII. 97-98,

quem nunc tam longe non inter nota sepulcra  
nec prope cognatos compositum cineres.

The Catullan passage is part of the long elegy in which the poet tells of his love for Lesbia, compares it with the love of Laodamia for Protesilaus and meditates on the death of his brother. He is buried far away in Troy, not among familiar graves nor near the ashes of his kinsfolk. Propertius' poem is a lament for Paetus, drowned at sea. Wishing to evoke for Paetus pathos similar to Catullus', Propertius has imitated the earlier poet's

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couplet. His cognatos rogos recalls Catullus' cognatos cineres, and the equivalent of Catullus' compositum is Propertius' humare. Propertius' picture of Paetus' mother unable to pay the due rites is reminiscent of Catullus' non inter nota sepulcra. Further, Propertius' nec pote resembles in sound Catullus' nec prope. However, Propertius' couplet conveys something more tragic than Catullus', for his brother, though far away, is buried, whereas Paetus does not have even a grave -

. noua longinquis piscibus esca natat.<sup>42</sup>

Line 45 from the same poem,

uiueret ante suos dulcis conuiua Penatis,

recalls Horace's

. . . . . ipse meique  
ante Larem proprium uescor . . .<sup>43</sup>

Horace is treating the contrast between town and country life. He dislikes the hustle and bustle of town life, and is happy to dwell in the country and eat before his own Lar. Propertius has taken this motif and transformed it into a line evoking pathos. If Paetus had been content to plough the fields with his father's ox and had regarded warnings, he would now be alive, a pleasant table-companion, before his own Penates. Propertius' ante suos Penates is a variant of Horace's ante Larem, and conuiua recalls uescor. However, conuiua is not the crux of Propertius line as uescor is for Horace's. The crux is uiueret - a pathetic word, for Paetus is now dead.

Propertius' farewell wish to Cynthia,

<sup>42</sup>Propertius III.vii. 8.

<sup>43</sup>Horace Satires II.vi. 65-66.

uellere tum cupias albos a stirpe capillos,  
a! speculo rugas increpitante tibi,<sup>44</sup>

is a very close reminiscence of Tibullus' warning to Pholoe,

tollere tum cura est albos a stirpe capillos  
et faciem dempta pelle referre nouam.<sup>45</sup>

The first line of each couplet is similarly constructed. Both poets begin the line with a present infinitive - Propertius has uellere, Tibullus tollere. Tum is the second word in both these lines, and both poets complete their lines with albos a stirpe capillos. The main difference is that Propertius uses cupias for his main verb, while Tibullus uses cura est. The context is similar in both elegies. Tibullus urges Pholoe not to demand gifts from Marathus, but to be compliant to him. She should yield to him while she is young. When she is old, she will no longer be able to gain lovers, for her looks will betray her age. What Tibullus says as a warning, Propertius says as a prayer. He has had enough of Cynthia's harsh ways. As he leaves, he curses her. He pictures her vainly trying to look young, while the mirror tells her otherwise. Propertius' picture is more personal than Tibullus', and hence harsher.

In IV.xi. the dead Cornelia says to her sons,

quod mihi detractum est, uestros accedat ad annos:  
prole meâ Paullum sic iuuet esse senem.<sup>46</sup>

This couplet recalls Tibullus'

uiue diu mihi, dulcis anus: proprios ego tecum,  
sit modo fas, annos contribuisse uelim.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>44</sup>Propertius III.xxv. 13-14.

<sup>45</sup>Tibullus I.viii. 45-46.

<sup>46</sup>Propertius IV.xi. 95-96.

<sup>47</sup>Tibullus I.vi. 63-64.

Tibullius claims that because of Delia's betrayal of her husband and him a prophetess has named a punishment for her. Yet he would have her saved for her mother's sake. He prays that the mother may live long. If heaven allowed, he would add his own years to hers to bring this about. In Propertius' poem, Cornelia, who has died prematurely, prays that the years she has lost may be added to her sons' lives. The difference of context has transformed this motif.

A significant example of verbal similarity is found in

corniger Idaei uacuum pastoris in aulam  
 dux aries saturas ipse reduxit ouis;  
 dique deaeque omnes, quibus est tutela per agros,  
 praebant uestri uerba benigna foci,<sup>48</sup>

which is a 'contamination' of Vergil's

. . . melior uacua sine regnet in aula<sup>49</sup>

and

atque ipsae memores redeunt in tecta suosque  
 ducunt et grauido superant uix ubere limen<sup>50</sup>

and

dique deaeque omnes, studium quibus arua tueri.<sup>51</sup>

The first Vergilian passage describes the result of the battle of the bees, i.e. how the victorious king is sole ruler of the hive. The second passage describes the she-goats returning with their young to be milked. Vergil is giving advice on the feeding of sheep and goats. The third passage is part of Vergil's invocation at

<sup>48</sup>Propertius III.xiii. 39-42.

<sup>49</sup>Vergil Georgics IV. 90.

<sup>50</sup>Vergil Georgics III. 316-317.

<sup>51</sup>Vergil Georgics I. 21.

the beginning of his Georgics. The context of Propertius' lines is entirely different. He is denouncing luxury and greed in women. They are, he claims, too ready to sell themselves for gifts. In the old days it was not so. In a bucolic setting couples made love for no payment. The lines quoted are a description of the idyllic setting. Propertius draws heavily on Vergil's phrasing. His uacuum in aulam echoes Vergil's uacua in aula, but he uses aula to mean "a court for cattle", whereas Vergil uses it to mean both "palace" and "hive". Propertius' saturas ouis recalls grauido ubere in Vergil. Here Vergil's expression is the more picturesque. The phrase dique deaque omnes is vocative in Vergil, but nominative in Propertius. Further correspondences are tutela / tueri and agros / arua. The three Vergilian passages are combined into one, and with the addition of the Idaean shepherd and the corniger dux aries Propertius has created a peaceful bucolic scene.

Often Propertius employs the phrases of other poets for his own ends. He sometimes places them in an entirely different context so that the whole meaning of the phrases changes, e.g. III.vii. 9-10, 45. Sometimes he adds his own details to make the passage more picturesque, e.g. III.v. 32. Sometimes he recalls certain passages of other poets to identify his situation with theirs, e.g. I.viii. 7-8. There is one passage where he seems to be imitating another's passage in order to ridicule him - II.v. 21-24. In each case he has added some original twist to his borrowed material.

The third heading to be studied concerns allusion to the works of other Roman authors. In writing

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Qualis Thesea iacuit cedente carina  
 languida desertis Cnosia litoribus,<sup>52</sup>

Propertius was thinking of Catullus' picture of Ariadne deserted on Naxos.<sup>53</sup> Here she is depicted as distraught and angry on finding that she has been deserted by the unfaithful Theseus. Into this one couplet Propertius has condensed the essentials of Catullus' description. Ariadne is sleeping on a deserted shore as Theseus' craft sails quietly away. This couplet compares the sleeping, deserted Cynthia to a heroine of mythology, and thus Propertius' own love-affair gains in stature.

A further allusion to another Roman poem is found in IV.xi. About to speak in her own defence in the Halls of the Dead, Cornelia claims that she is now only a wraith, living among the swamps

et quaecumque meos implicat unda pedes.<sup>54</sup>

The description and the word implicat in particular recall Vergil's picture of the Underworld,

quos circum limus niger et deformis harundo  
 Cocyti tardaue palus inamabilis unda  
 alligat et nouiens Styx interfusa coercoet.<sup>55</sup>

Propertius alludes to this passage to conjure up the horror of Cornelia's situation, now that she is separated from life.

From the same elegy lines 21-26,

assideant fratres, iuxta et Minoida sellam  
 Eumenidum intento turba seuera foro.  
 Sisyphæ, mole uaces; taceant Ixionis orbes;

<sup>52</sup>Propertius I.iii. 1-2.

<sup>53</sup>Catullus LXIV, 52-75.

<sup>54</sup>Propertius IV.xi. 16.

<sup>55</sup>Vergil Georgics IV. 478-480.

fallax Tantaleus corripere liquor;  
 Cerberus et nullas hodie petat improbus umbras;  
 et iaceat tacita laxa catena sera,

allude to Vergil's description of the Underworld's reaction to Orpheus' playing,

quin ipsae stupere domus atque intima Leti;  
 Tartara caeruleosque implexae crinibus anguis  
 Eumenides, tenuitque inhians tria Cerberus ora,  
 atque Ixionii uento rota constitit orbis.<sup>56</sup>

Both poets refer to the Eumenides, Cerberus and Ixion; to this list Propertius adds Sisyphus, Tantalus, Minois and Rhadamanthus. All of these characters are mentioned during Aeneid VI, especially Cerberus, who

. . . haec ingens latratu regna trifauci  
 personat, aduerso recubans immanis in antro.<sup>57</sup>

Propertius was obviously thinking of these lines when he wrote this passage, as indeed he must have been thinking of Vergil's caeruleos implexae crinibus anguis when he pictured the Furies as turba seuera. Vergil's passage is stated as fact; Propertius' passage is in the form of a wish. Vergil describes a reaction; Propertius describes Cornelia's wish for silence during her defence and in alluding to Vergil's passages from the Georgics and the Aeneid succeeds in depicting the breathless anticipation of the Underworld.

In two elegies of book II Propertius seems to allude to Vergil Eclogues vi.64-73, where he writes about Gallus' inspiration

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 481-484.

<sup>57</sup>Vergil Aeneid VI. 417-418.

to write about the Grove of Grynium.<sup>58</sup> Propertius' first allusion is II.x. 25-26,

nondum etiam Ascræos norunt mea carmina fontis,  
sed modo Permessi flumine lauit Amor.

He is using symbols culled from Vergil to express his inability to write poems in another style. The phrase Ascræos fontis refers to Hesiodic verse, such as Gallus was urged to write, while the Permessus suggests love poetry. Gallus was wandering near this river when he was led by a Muse to be charged with a new style of verse. Propertius claims that Amor bathed him in the river, which he obviously takes to be a symbol of Gallus' elegiac verse. Hence he must continue to write love elegy.

His second allusion to the Vergilian passage is II.xiii. 3-8,

hic me tam gracilis uetuit contemnere Musas,  
iussit et Ascræum sic habitare nemus,  
non ut Pieriae quercus mea uerba sequantur,  
aut possim Ismaria ducere ualle feras,  
sed magis ut nostro stupefiat Cynthia uersu:  
tunc ego sim Inachio notior arte Lino.

Propertius refers to Vergil's lines about the power of Hesiod's pipes,

. . . . . quibus ille solebat  
cantando rigidas deducere montibus ornos.<sup>59</sup>

He does not wish to perform such miracles himself; he wants only to win over Cynthia and to surpass Linus in verse. He considers

<sup>58</sup> Propertius seems to be alluding to this passage, but possibly he may have been alluding to the prologue to Gallus' Grove of Grynium which is no longer extant.

<sup>59</sup> Vergil Eclogues vi.70-71.

here the Ascraeum nemus, Hesiod's grove, to be the correct abode for a love poet, whereas in the previous poem a distinction is made between the two.<sup>60</sup>

The above examples have shown us how Propertius makes use of allusion to create atmosphere for his own poems. Now we must turn to one poem in which he makes full use of borrowed motifs, verbal similarity and allusion - his literary manifesto, III.i. The second couplet of this elegy,

primus ego ingredior puro de fonte sacerdos  
 Italica per Graios orgia ferre choros,

echoes three passages from other Roman poets - Vergil's

. . . tibi res antiquae laudis et artis  
 ingredior, sanctos ausus recludere fontis,  
 Ascraeumque cano Romana per oppida carmen<sup>61</sup>

and

primus ego in patriam mecum, modo uita supersit,  
 Aonio rediens deducam uertice Musas<sup>62</sup>

and Horace's

princeps Aeolium carmen ad Italos  
 deduxisse modos . . . .<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>Further allusions to Vergil can be found in Propertius II.xxxiv, e.g. lines 63-64, cf. Aeneid I. 1-3; lines 69-70, cf. Eclogues iii. 70-71; lines 73-74, cf. Eclogues ii. 1-2; lines 83-84, cf. Eclogues ix. 35-36.

<sup>61</sup>Vergil Georgics II. 174-176.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., III. 10-11.

<sup>63</sup>Horace Odes III.xxx. 13-14.



These three passages are introduced by their authors as a claim to originality. Propertius imitates Vergil in his use of primus ego and ingredior - a 'contamination' of two passages - but he has drawn more closely on Horace, for his Itala orgia recalls Horace's Aeolium carmen and per Graios choros is obviously an imitation of ad Italos modos, 'Italian' and 'Greek' being reversed. Another Horatian reminiscence can be seen in the word sacerdos, an allusion to Odes III.i. 1-4,

Odi profanum vulgus et arceo;  
faucete linguis: carmina non prius  
audita Musarum sacerdos  
uirginibus puerisque canto.

Probably Propertius is also alluding to Callimachus' μέλισσαι, the priestesses of Demeter.<sup>64</sup> As priest, Propertius must perform certain rites, and so he claims to orgia ferre, just as Vergil claims sacra fero in Georgics II. 476. Thus Propertius' second couplet is the result of a 'contamination' of passages from Vergil, Horace and the Greek Callimachus.

The passage,

quo me Fama leuat terra sublimis, et a me  
nata coronatis Musa triumphat equis,  
et mecum in curru parui uectantur Amores,  
scriptorumque meas turba secuta rotas.  
quid frustra missis in me certatis habenis?  
non datur ad Musas currere lata uia<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>Callimachus Hymns ii. 110. See footnote to this line in Callimachus and Lycophron, ed. & tr. A.W. Mair; Aratus, ed. & tr. G.R. Mair (Loeb Classical Library: London: Heinemann, 1921). See also supra, p.30.

<sup>65</sup>Propertius III.i. 9-14.

echoes Vergil's

. . . temptanda uia est, qua me quoque possim  
tollere humo uictorque uirum uolitare per ora.<sup>66</sup>

Propertius expands and interprets Vergil's lines. Whereas Vergil can rise from the ground under his own power, it is Fama who lifts Propertius up. Vergil's uictor and the line,

Aonio rediens deducam uertice Musas,<sup>67</sup>

are echoed in Propertius' description of the triumph. Whereas Vergil is leader in the triumph, both Propertius and the Muse, born from him, triumph. In his chariot Propertius takes the Amores, as though they were his children. With this symbolism Propertius stakes his claim to be a love poet. The crowd following him are the followers of a triumphant general. The metaphor suddenly changes and these followers soon turn out to be rivals, vying for leadership in the chariot-race of fame. Yet, Propertius will win. Here perhaps another meaning is given to Vergil's uictor. Again Propertius has expanded and interpreted a passage from another Roman poet.

A reminiscence of Lucretius' lines,

Ennius ut noster cecinit qui primus amoeno  
detulit ex Helicone perenni fronde coronam,<sup>68</sup>

is found in Propertius' couplet,

sed, quod pace legas, opus hoc de monte Sororum  
detulit intacta pagina nostra uia.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>66</sup>Vergil Georgics III. 8-9.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 11.

<sup>68</sup>Lucretius I. 117-118.

<sup>69</sup>Propertius III.i. 17-18.

The verb detulit is used in the same sense by both poets. Propertius' phrase de monte Sororum echoes Lucretius' ex Helicone. Lucretius makes coronam the object of detulit, while Propertius has opus hoc, a more prosaic, but more personal, reference. The subject of Lucretius' lines is Ennius; Propertius is bolder in his use of language with pagina nostra. There is a contrast in that Lucretius denotes the immortality of Ennius' work with perenni fronde, whereas Propertius writes intacta uia to denote his originality. This elegy which concerns Propertius' originality is full of borrowed motifs, verbal similarities and allusions to other Roman poets. His originality is seen in the way in which he employs and transforms his borrowings.

In this chapter an attempt has been made to assess the degree of Propertius' indebtedness to other Roman poets. We have seen that he generally adapts his sources rather than copying them and that, even when he does remain close to the wording of these sources, he quite often transforms the meaning of those words by his context. Often in alluding to the works of other Roman poets he deepens the significance of his own. Propertius' verse depends on his models to a great extent, but it is in his adaptation that his originality lies.

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## CHAPTER IV

### MYTH AND SYMBOL IN PROPERTIUS

One quite noticeable feature of Propertius' work is the abundance of mythological allusion. Although at first sight this may seem to be nothing more than tedious erudition and thus irrelevant to its context of subjective love, on closer inspection it can be found that the allusions are not divorced from his personal experience, and hence serve as a useful means of expression. Propertius directs his readers to stories which should be well-known to them from their background of Greek and Latin literature.

In Greek literature mythology plays a large role. Homer's Iliad and Odyssey both concern stories from mythology and many of the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides are based on well-known myths, e.g. Seven against Thebes, Oedipus Rex, Antigone, Electra and Medea. Much of the literature of Alexandria also concerns stories from mythology, e.g. Philetas' Demeter, Callimachus' Hecale and Aetia, Apollonius' Argonautica and Alexander Aetolus' collection of love-stories. Even in epigrams we can find allusions to myths, especially to the stories of Eros<sup>1</sup> and Ganymede.<sup>2</sup> The early Roman dramatists wrote about mythological subjects in imitation of their Greek models. Thus any educated Roman would have been familiar with most Greek myths. Indeed, so well-known

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<sup>1</sup>E.g. A.P. V.clxxvii; XII.lxxvi.

<sup>2</sup>E.g. A.P. XII.lxiv, cccxxiii.

were these myths that Roman orators and poets were able to allude to them with the minimum of explanation in order to illustrate any point which they wished to make, e.g. Cicero De Officiis III. xxvi. 97-98 and Lucretius I. 84-101.

Unlike both Cicero and Lucretius, Propertius applies his exempla to a personal context, i.e. he attempts to express his own feelings about love in general, and Cynthia in particular, in a more picturesque way. Tibullus alludes to mythology only twice, and a brief comparison with him and Catullus is worthwhile. Unfortunately we lack the elegies of Cornelius Gallus. It is known that the poet Parthenius wrote a book of mythological love-stories for him as a source-book for epic and elegiac poems.<sup>3</sup> However, we do not know how he employed these stories. He could have anticipated Propertius' manner, but obviously there can be no certainty on the point.

At I.v. 45-46 Tibullus writes in praise of Delia's softness and beauty,

talis ad Haemonium Nereis Pelea quondam  
ucta est frenato caerula pisce Thetis.

These lines probably recall a well-known painting, or perhaps Catullus LXIV, and indeed they are successful in expressing Delia's beauty. However, they lack the undertones found in Propertius. The second Tibullan exemplum is that of Apollo lovesick,<sup>4</sup> by which the poet intends to justify his own manual labour. Propertius seldom relates a mythological passage in detail; he is content to make a passing allusion.

<sup>3</sup>Luck, op.cit., p.44.

<sup>4</sup>Tibullus II.iii. 11-28.

In Catullus' poems we can find three similes from mythology. In LXV. 11-14 the poet compares his mournful verse to the lament of Procne for Itylus. The point of contact between reality and the myth depends on the expression of grief and the sense of loss felt. Here Catullus has anticipated Propertius in the application of mythology to personal emotion. Likewise, in poem LXVIII, he uses two exempla. The first is that of Laodamia and Protesilaus.<sup>5</sup> Catullus likens his own rapture on seeing Lesbia enter the house which they shared to the rapture which Protesilaus must have felt on seeing Laodamia enter their house for the first time. The myth, however, indicates that all will not be well. Just as the love of Laodamia and Protesilaus was overshadowed by the tragedy to come, so the love of Lesbia and Catullus will not last long. When after a digression about Troy and his dead brother he returns to the story, instead of comparing Lesbia to Laodamia he compares himself to her. Laodamia had sufficient love to recall her husband from the dead; so Catullus has sufficient love to recall Lesbia. The description of the lovemaking of Laodamia and Protesilaus effectively expresses the joy Catullus feels when he and Lesbia are together. Thus Catullus has made symbolic use of mythology in the manner of Propertius. The two poets differ in that Catullus treats the story of Laodamia and Protesilaus at length, which is necessary for the structure of his poem, whereas usually Propertius relies more upon the knowledge of his public and makes only an allusion to the well-known stories. However, in the same poem Catullus moves closer towards the Propertian manner.<sup>6</sup> He likens himself

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<sup>5</sup>Catullus LXVIII. 70-86, 105-130.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 135-140.

to Juno who, though angry with the promiscuous Jupiter, holds her peace and continues to love him. Here Catullus is alluding to the many stories about Jupiter's promiscuity and Juno's jealousy, expecting Allius (or a wider audience) to recall them and understand the comparison made. Catullus has influenced Propertius in the employment of mythological exempla, but they are not a major feature of his style. Even so, Propertius has taken these early experiments and surpassed Catullus in his application of them.

At I.iii. 1-10 Propertius compares the sleeping Cynthia to three other sleeping women - Ariadne, Andromeda and a Bacchanal. However, these three pictures are intended as illustrations not only of a sleeping beauty, but also of different aspects of Cynthia. The story of Ariadne was well-known to the Romans. Even without the phrase desertis litoribus<sup>7</sup> they would have remembered that, while sleeping, Ariadne was deserted by her lover Theseus. Propertius intends her to be a symbol of Cynthia asleep in her loneliness. His Roman readers would also have known the story of Andromeda, who was rescued from a sea-monster by Perseus. The epithet libera<sup>8</sup> suggests that she was sleeping peacefully after spending much time in fear and anxiety. Propertius is representing Cynthia asleep after much anxiety over his absence. Every Roman knew about the worship of Bacchus, for this cult had touched Rome. Hence the picture of the Bacchanal would conjure up visions of a raging woman under the power of the wine-god. Thus Propertius represents Cynthia as asleep, but about to rage in her anger. All

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<sup>7</sup>Propertius I.iii. 2.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 4.

of these suggestions are supported by Cynthia's speech.<sup>9</sup> The effect of these mythological exempla can be appreciated when compared with Ovid Amores I.x. 1-8, which was written in imitation of this passage. Ovid's heroines (Helen, Leda and Aymone) are desirable, just as his girl is desirable, but their inclusion into the poem does not enable the poet to create the same atmosphere of awe and wonder as Propertius does. Propertius' pictures play a more important role in his poem.<sup>10</sup>

At II.xiv. 1-10 Propertius likens his joy over a successful night with Cynthia to the joy felt by Agamemnon after the fall of Troy, by Ulysses after finally reaching Ithaca, by Electra after seeing again Orestes whom she thought dead, and by Ariadne when Theseus arrived safely from the Labyrinth. In his study on the relevance of the last two couplets of this elegy, John Vaio<sup>11</sup> reveals that these exempla express not only present joy, but tragedy to come. Agamemnon rejoiced at the completion of his labours, but he was to return home where Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus were preparing his assassination. Ulysses rejoiced on reaching Ithaca, but he still had to overcome his wife's suitors. Electra rejoiced, but tragic trials awaited her. Ariadne rejoiced, but, because she had helped an enemy, she was compelled to flee from Crete with Theseus, by whom she would be deserted later. These undertones would not have been missed by Propertius' Roman public, and they should not be missed by us. In the midst of his rejoicing

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 35-46.

<sup>10</sup>In this passage I acknowledge my indebtedness to Luck, op.cit., p.115.

<sup>11</sup>J. Vaio, "The Authenticity and Relevance of Propertius II.xiv. 29-32", C.Ph., LVII. (October, 1962), pp. 236-238.



Propertius is well aware that at some later time he may be rejected, as the last couplet of the poem suggests.

Propertius makes considerable use of mythology in order to praise Cynthia's beauty. In II.ii he claims that he has decided to live a love-free existence, but the beauty of Cynthia haunts him. He thinks of her golden hair, her long hands, her tall stature and introduces Juno, Pallas, Isomache and Brimo into his comparisons. He likens her gait to that of Juno. The goddess is not mentioned by name, but Cynthia is called Ioue digna soror.<sup>12</sup> The comparison between Cynthia and Juno reveals not only Cynthia's beauty and stature, but also her dignity. Propertius likens her gait to that of Pallas also. The identification of Cynthia with Pallas is particularly apt, for Pallas Athene was regarded as the patron-goddess of the arts and Cynthia is often praised for her accomplishments in music and verse.<sup>13</sup> The verb spatiatur<sup>14</sup> suggests that the goddess's (and hence Cynthia's) walk is dignified, thus continuing the idea of dignity from the previous comparison. However, in the following line Propertius pictures his beloved as awe-inspiring by describing Pallas as

Gorgonis anguiferae pectus operta comis.<sup>15</sup>

With two exempla he reveals that Cynthia has other qualities besides beauty. He continues his list of comparisons with the picture of

<sup>12</sup>Propertius II.ii.6. An example mentioned by P. Boyancé, "Properce", L'influence grecque sur la poésie latine de Catulle à Ovide (Entretiens Hardt, tome II: Geneva, 1956), P. 176-177.

<sup>13</sup>Propertius I.ii. 26-30; II.iii. 17-18, xi.6.

<sup>14</sup>Propertius II.ii. 7.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 8.

Isomache, whom he represents as

Centauris medio grata rapina mero,<sup>16</sup>

Thus he reveals Cynthia's desirability. The fourth comparison is made between Cynthia and Mercury's beloved Brimo,<sup>17</sup> who was in ancient times identified with Proserpina, a woman noted for her beauty. The picture of her enjoying Mercury's love follows on naturally from the picture of desirability. Perhaps we are meant to liken the lovemaking of Cynthia and Propertius to that of these two deities. However, as this couplet is corrupt, we cannot base much on it. After making these comparisons, Propertius continues by showing the superiority of Cynthia's beauty in the lines,

cedite iam, diuae, quas pastor uiderat olim

Idaeis tunicas ponere uerticibus!<sup>18</sup>

He considers that her beauty far surpasses that of Juno, Pallas and Venus, the three goddesses who were responsible for the Trojan War. With these exempla Propertius glorifies Cynthia's beauty, for all of these goddesses and heroines were beautiful. However, he reveals also the different aspects of her beauty which draw him to her.

Often Propertius employs mythology to contrast Cynthia's behaviour or his own state with that of heroes or heroines.<sup>19</sup> At I.i. 9-18 he contrasts his lot with that of Milanion, who by undergoing pain and suffering was able to win Atlanta's love. Although Propertius suffers, he cannot win Cynthia's love. This

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 10.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 11-12.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 13-14.

<sup>19</sup>P. Boyancé, op.cit., pp. 179-182.

exemplum is based on a less well-known myth, but it serves to express Propertius' dilemma well. At II.ix. 3-16 he contrasts Cynthia with Penelope and Briseis. He refers to Penelope's deception of her suitors as an example of faithful constancy, for in spite of Odysseus' long absence she remained true. Briseis, the slave girl, showed great devotion to the dead Achilles, even though she was a Trojan and therefore an enemy. How different Cynthia is, for

. . . tu non una potuisti nocte uacare,  
 impia, non unum sola manere diem!  
 quin etiam multo duxistis pocula risu:  
 forsitan et de me uerba fuere mala.<sup>20</sup>

Then Propertius continues by referring to his own faithfulness, which he likens to that of the heroines by contrasting it with Cynthia's fickleness. At II.xviii. 7-18 he describes Aurora's love for old Tithonus. He shows how she did not scorn his old age, but made love to him and complained when she had to leave him to perform her duties. Her love for Tithonus was even greater than her grief for Memnon. However, Cynthia, soon to be an old woman, hates Propertius, even though he is still youthful. Like the others above, this mythological exemplum contrasts the ideal state with reality.

Another feature of Propertius' use of mythology is his accumulation of exempla. This aspect of his style can be seen in most elegies containing exempla, as in some passages mentioned above, i.e. I.iii. 1-10 where he uses three references, II.ii. 5-14 where he uses five, II.ix. 3-16 where he uses two, and II.xiv. 1-10 where he uses five. Accumulation can also be discovered in

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<sup>20</sup>Propertius II.ix. 19-22.

I.ii. 15-20, iv. 5-7, xiii. 21-24 and 29-32; II.vi. 15-24, xxi. 11-14 and III.xix. 11-26, to name a few instances. With this stylistic device Propertius supports his statements or arguments to the full. Thus the exempla he cites in I.ii. 15-20 add force to his claims for the power of natural beauty. Similarly, the accumulation of exempla in II.ii. 5-14 leads his readers to think of Cynthia in more exalted terms than they normally would.

Before we finish our discussion of Propertius' use of exempla we must say something about his use of recherché myths. At I.i. 9-16 he refers to a story about Milanion found nowhere else except Ovid Ars Amatoria II. 185-192, which was perhaps written as a reminiscence of Propertius. In other works, e.g. Callimachus Hymns iii. 222-224, it is Atlanta, not Milanion, who fights and kills the Centaurs. Propertius' version of this myth suits his own case better. At II.i. 61-62 he mentions the restoration of Androgeon's life - a story found nowhere else. At II.ii. 9 he refers to the Lapith bride as Isomache, whereas she is usually called Hippodamia. The story of Briseis' lamentation over the corpse of Achilles in II.ix. 9-16 is not found in other poets or authors except the later Quintus Smyrnaeus. Similarly, recherché myths are found in III.vii. 21-24, IV.ix. 7-8 and IV.x. 9. In using such myths Propertius is presumably hoping to imitate Callimachus as a poeta doctus.

Further light may be thrown on Propertius' art if we trace a symbolic character throughout his work - the character of Amor. An interesting passage is I.i. 1-6,

Cynthia prima suis miserum me cepit ocellis,  
contactum nullis ante cupidinibus.

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tum mihi constantis deiecit lumina fastus  
 et caput impositis pressit Amor pedibus,  
 donec me docuit castas odisse puellas  
 improbus, et nullo uiuere consilio.

As we have noted previously,<sup>21</sup> the picture of Amor with his feet on Propertius' head is influenced by one of Meleager's epigrams, but there it is Myiscus who has Meleager under his feet, as it were. Propertius refers to Amor as oppressing him and compelling him to live in an undisciplined manner, as indeed he mentions in other elegies.<sup>22</sup> The grammatical confusion over the subject of pressit in line 4 tends to make Propertius' readers identify Cynthia with Amor.<sup>23</sup> To Propertius Cynthia is Amor, for she is responsible for all his sufferings. In the following exemplum<sup>24</sup> the sacuitia durae Iasidos which caused Milanion to undergo his sufferings corresponds to tardus Amor which oppresses Propertius. More force is added to this comparison if Cynthia is identified with Amor. This identification can be seen also at I.xii. 16 and xiv. 8.

In II.xii Propertius analyses the conventional representation of Amor as a winged boy armed with bow and arrows.<sup>25</sup> The fact that Amor is represented as a boy is, he writes, symbolic of the childishness of lovers. The wings represent the fickleness of love, while the arrows warn that love can strike at any time.<sup>26</sup> After

<sup>21</sup> Supra, p.23.

<sup>22</sup> E.g. Propertius II.xxx. 1-2, 6-7.

<sup>23</sup> Supra, p.25.

<sup>24</sup> Propertius I.i. 9-16. Also supra, pp. 68-69.

<sup>25</sup> I acknowledge my debt to K. Quinn, Latin Explorations, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), pp. 168-182.

<sup>26</sup> Propertius II.xii. 11-12.

this analysis Propertius proceeds to claim that in his case Amor has lost his wings. Therefore, he remains in Propertius' heart, oppressing him with his arrows. Thus Propertius turns from the conventional symbol of Amor to show how love is ever with him. To him Amor is not Cupid; he is a power existing both outside and within him. Seldom can Amor, as treated by Propertius, be identified with Cupid at all. He cannot be likened to the hard-hearted, but mischievous, Cupid of Ovid.<sup>27</sup> He cannot be likened to the Amor of Tibullus<sup>28</sup> who seems always conventional. Generally Propertius conceives of him as a personal deity helping, rewarding or oppressing his devotees.<sup>29</sup> In this poem he has ceased to identify Amor with Cynthia.

In II.xxix Propertius describes an adventure befalling him during one of his nocturnal wanderings. He is met by a crowd of boys carrying torches, arrows and chains. Their trappings identify them as Cupids, although Propertius names them neither Cupidines nor Amores. They rebuke him for his faithlessness to Cynthia and lead him bound to her house, releasing him only when he shows signs of repentance. The Cupids, as Propertius represents them, are definitely conventional Hellenistic creations. Most probably Propertius was thinking of pictures of Cupids as he wrote. With this representation of the Cupids he gives his poem a humorous twist, for the picture of these naked little boys leading a drunkard back to his mistress is nothing short of

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<sup>27</sup>Ovid Amores I.i,ii.

<sup>28</sup>Tibullus I.iii. 21, 57; vi. 1-4, 30; II.i. 80, ii. 17-18.

<sup>29</sup>Propertius I.vii. 25-26; II.xxxiv. 1-2; III.xvi. 16.

ludicrous. If we are to regard II.xxix A and B as one poem, as the manuscripts suggest, we see that the whole poem deals with a situation similar to I.iii. Perhaps II.xxix A is a comic expansion of the lines,

. . . . duplici correptum ardore iuberent  
 hac Amor hac Liber, durus uterque deus.<sup>30</sup>

By pursuing this study we can see that the power of Amor over Propertius is waning. In I.i he is serious about the power, in II.xii, although still ruled by it, he can rationalise his predicament, while in II.xxix he seems to be laughing about his bondage.

Twice only does Propertius use nature symbolism, but even this is used in an original way. In I.xvii he represents himself as caught in a storm on a deserted shore, while seeking to escape Cynthia. The storm-tossed lover is a commonplace in ancient literature, but Propertius seems to have been the first poet to place the lover on a deserted shore, as Solmsen indicates.<sup>31</sup> Perhaps he was thinking of the picture of the deserted Ariadne, when he wrote the poem. Anyway, he does give the commonplace an original twist. Solmsen claims further originality for Propertius in the identification of Cynthia's person in the storm. Nature-imagery is used symbolically to express the poet's state of mind. Without Cynthia Propertius feels completely deserted and, if he seeks to flee from her, he will feel the storm of her wrath.

<sup>30</sup> Propertius I.iii. 13-14.

<sup>31</sup> F. Solmsen, "Three Elegies of Propertius' First Book", C.Ph., LVII (April 1962), p. 79.

A similar employment of nature to express loneliness in I.xviii has been noted by Solmsen.<sup>32</sup> After a quarrel with Cynthia Propertius enters a lonely wood. The motif of withdrawal is quite conventional, as is the carving of the beloved's name on a tree. However, again Propertius gives his theme an original twist, for he refers to the trees as the witnesses of his true love for Cynthia.<sup>33</sup> The very solitude of the countryside, which he has hoped will comfort him, begins to reflect his inner loneliness. The rock becomes frigida<sup>34</sup> and the silence dura<sup>35</sup> and he is forced to admit,

et quodcumque meae possunt narrare querelae,  
 cogor ad argutas dicere solus auis,  
 sed qualiscumque es resonent mihi 'Cynthia' siluae,  
 nec deserta tuo nomine saxa uacent.<sup>36</sup>

Thus again Propertius has employed nature-imagery in an original way by applying it to his own emotions.

However, love is not the only preoccupation of Propertius, for he is also concerned with poetry as art and for this he employs various symbols, two of which are Bacchus and Apollo. Both of these gods were long considered the inspirers of verse,<sup>37</sup>

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., pp. 73-75.

<sup>33</sup>Propertius I.xviii. 19.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 27.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 28.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 29-32.

<sup>37</sup>Bacchus - Theocritus xvii. 112-114; Callimachus in A.P. IX.dlxv, dlxvi. Apollo - Callimachus, fr.i and Hymns ii.



Bacchus being pictured as leading Maenads dancing to pipe music and drums, and Apollo as playing the lyre. Boyancé claims that Propertius and his friends Tullus, Ponticus, Bassus, Gallus, Lynceus and Demophoon were all members of a college of writers who regarded Bacchus as their patron<sup>38</sup> - a theory based on passages of Ovid and Horace.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, for Propertius Bacchus is an important symbol. In II.xxx the god is identified with love-poetry. Propertius begs Cynthia to join him in a party (a symbolic one) in which she will see the Muses. He tells her,

hic ubi te prima statuent in parte choreae,  
 et medius docta cuspidē Bacchus erit,  
 tum capiti sacros patiar pendere corymbos:  
 nam sine te nostrum non ualet ingenium.<sup>40</sup>

The dance led by Bacchus is symbolic of Propertius' poetry. It is noticeable that Bacchus dances docta cuspidē, for Propertius' poetry is learned and he himself was called a poeta doctus. Thus Bacchus appears here as a symbol of the learned love-poetry written by Propertius. However, in this poem, though Bacchus is important, it is Cynthia whom Propertius claims to be the inspirer of his verse. In a later poem<sup>41</sup> Propertius considers that Bacchus himself can inspire verse. In III.i. 4 he claims that he will be the first to bring Itala orgia. In spite of Propertius' dependence on Callimachus, Vergil and Horace in this poem<sup>42</sup>

<sup>38</sup>P. Boyancé, op.cit., p.196.

<sup>39</sup>E.g. Ovid Tristia IV.x. 45-48; V.iii. 1-6; Horace Epistles II.ii. 77-78.

<sup>40</sup>Propertius II.xxx. 37-40.

<sup>41</sup>Propertius III.xvii. 19-20. See P. Boyancé, op.cit., pp.199-200 for the importance of this elegy.

<sup>42</sup>Supra, pp. 30-31, 58-59.

the word orgia is his own, and this word refers to Bacchic rites. Hence Propertius has again connected Bacchus with his poetry. The symbols in III.iii. 27-30 have a Bacchic flavour, for Propertius writes about the orgia Musarum and the image of Bacchus' tutor Silenus. He considers that the god symbolises his own style of verse, and hence he includes the above references to him and his symbols. The clearest indication of Propertius' attitude to Bacchus can be found at IV.i. 61-64,

Ennius hirsuta cingat sua dicta corona:  
 mi folia ex hedera porrige, Bacche, tua,  
 ut nostris tumefacta superbiat Umbria libris,  
 Umbria Romani patria Callimachi!

In this passage Bacchus serves as a symbol for Callimachean poetry - the type of poetry Propertius wishes to write. Thus for Propertius Bacchus represents poetry. As he moves away from writing about Cynthia alone and becomes more engrossed in the art of poetry, so the symbol of Bacchus becomes more important, no longer being subordinate to another source of inspiration as in II.xxx. 37-40.

Throughout Propertius' works Apollo appears as both a god of love and a god of song. In I.ii he appears as a lover<sup>43</sup> and as one who, along with Calliope, gives the power of song.<sup>44</sup> In I.viii Propertius claims that both Apollo and the Muses really exist.<sup>45</sup> The fact that Apollo is linked with the Muses suggests that he is a god of poetry, while the phrase neque amanti tardus

<sup>43</sup>Propertius I.ii. 17-18.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 27-28.

<sup>45</sup>Propertius I.viii. 41-42.

suggests his sympathy with a lover. Again Apollo plays a dual role. However, in the second book other roles are given to him. He is still regarded as an inspirer of song,<sup>46</sup> but he is also identified with the Sun-god as in mythology.<sup>47</sup> Yet, most important of all, for the first time in Propertius he appears as Augustus' patron<sup>48</sup> - a role which is to assume importance later. In the third book Apollo's role becomes more important. In III.i. Propertius represents him as a god of poetry, but more emphasis is added to the recusatio if Apollo is recognised also as a war-god. Hence there is some force in

a valeat, Phoebum quicumque moratur in armis!<sup>49</sup>

as Nethercut<sup>50</sup> suggests, especially since a few lines later Lycian Apollo is regarded as inspiring verse. The role of Apollo in elegy iii is emphasised by such a consideration. In book IV, although the god still plays a dual role, the antithesis soon disappears. In elegy i he appears still as a god of poetry opposing the new style to be written by Propertius,<sup>51</sup> but in IV.vi the symbol of Apollo is used to express Propertius' new attitude to poetry - he is now prepared to write pro-Augustan verse. In

<sup>46</sup>Propertius II.i. 3-4.

<sup>47</sup>Propertius II.xxxii. 28. Also thus in III.xx. 11-12, xxii. 30.

<sup>48</sup>Propertius II.xxxi, xxxiv. 61-62.

<sup>49</sup>Propertius III.i. 7.

<sup>50</sup>W.R. Nethercut, 'Ille Parum Cauti Pectoris Egit Opus', T.A.Ph.A., XCII (1961), p.390.

<sup>51</sup>Propertius IV.i. 73-74, 133-134.

this elegy Apollo is represented not as the peaceful Lyrist, but as the god who laid low Agamemnon's camp and killed the Python<sup>52</sup> — and as the god who granted Augustus victory. He exhorted Augustus<sup>53</sup> and took an active part in the battle.<sup>54</sup> When the fighting ceased, he cast aside his bow and took up his lyre again to lead the dances.<sup>55</sup> His return to the role of the Lyrist symbolises the necessity for poetry in celebration of Actium. No longer does Apollo prevent Propertius from singing of war. Even Bacchus, symbol of Propertius' verse, joins Apollo in his singing.<sup>56</sup> With these symbols Propertius expresses his change from poet of subjective-love to poet of Rome's glory.

Propertius employs various Greek myths to express his own feelings and to glorify his mistress Cynthia, and the undertones of these myths reveal particular aspects of a general situation or of his mistress's beauty or other traits. Also, Propertius has adapted and elaborated the conventional picture of Amor, while giving Apollo and Bacchus a deepened significance. Catullus' employment of mythology foreshadows the Propertian style only in the vaguest way. In Propertius myth and symbol assume a new importance. His extensive adaptation of them to his own personal situation is one of the most distinctive and original aspects of his work.

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<sup>52</sup>Propertius IV.vi. 31-36.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 37-54.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 55-58.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 69-70.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 76.

## CHAPTER V

### SOME ASPECTS OF PROPERTIUS' STYLE

This chapter will deal with some aspects of Propertius' style, especially linguistic peculiarities and picturesque language in general. Anyone who reads the elegies of Propertius cannot fail to be struck by the difficulty of his expression. In his poems can be found such abnormal Latin as

et duo in aduersum mitti per moenia currus  
nec possent tacto stringere ab axe latus,<sup>1</sup>

or

. . . . . haec lympa puellis  
auia secreti limitis unda fluit.<sup>2</sup>

Sometimes he tends to become incoherent as in

te scelus accepto Thracis Polymestoris auro  
nutrit in hospitio non, Polydore, pio,<sup>3</sup>

or just involved as in

Ecquid te mediis cessantem, Cynthia, Bais,  
qua iacet Herculeis semita litoribus,  
et modo Thesproti mirantem subdita regno  
proxima Misenis aequora nobilibus,  
nostri cura subit memores a! ducere noctes?<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Propertius III.xi. 23-24.

<sup>2</sup>Propertius IV.ix 59-60.

<sup>3</sup>Propertius III.xiii. 55-56.

<sup>4</sup>Propertius I.xi. 1-5.

Such difficulty of expression is notably lacking in Tibullus, for his language is particularly clear, e.g. in the first ten lines of I.i where he contrasts the man desirous of wealth with himself. The utter simplicity of phrases like contentus uiuere paruo<sup>5</sup> and longae deditus esse uiae,<sup>6</sup> as well as the clearly constructed clauses dealing with the pictures of the rich and poor men enable Tibullus' readers to appreciate the poem with ease.

Very often Propertius has a tendency to be somewhat indirect in his expression.<sup>7</sup> Thus he writes such expressions as uacuo uiuere lecto,<sup>8</sup> when he wishes to say that he desired to live alone, and una amare domo,<sup>9</sup> when he wants to say 'to love one girl'. To express 'fire-breathing bulls' he writes flagrantis tauros.<sup>10</sup> This is particularly picturesque, for 'burning' is how the bulls would appear to an observer. Further examples of this indirectness are

nec noua quaerendo semper amicus eris,<sup>11</sup>  
 altera si quando non sinit esse locum,<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Tibullus I.i. 25 - In the Loeb edition line 25 is included in the first ten lines.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 8.

<sup>7</sup>In this section I am heavily indebted to Postgate's introduction to his edition of Propertius (op.cit.) and to M.W. Edwards, "Intensification of Meaning in Propertius and Others", T.A.Ph.A. XCII (1961), pp. 128-144.

<sup>8</sup>Propertius II.ii. 1.

<sup>9</sup>Propertius II.xxiv. 24.

<sup>10</sup>Propertius III.xi. 9.

<sup>11</sup>Propertius I.xiii. 12.

<sup>12</sup>Propertius II.xxii. 38.

and

illius ex oculis multa cadebat aqua?<sup>13</sup>

Such an employment of language may be picturesque and written for that effect, but often Propertius in his deep emotion seems to be at a loss for words and searching for an effective means of expression.

We can find many examples of ambiguity in Propertius' language, as Edwards indicates. Often we find syntactical ambiguity, as at I.xxii. 4,

Italiae duris funera temporibus,

where the genitive Italiae can be taken with either funera or temporibus, and at II.i. 45,

nes contra angusto uersantes proelia lecto,

where proelia is the object of either uersantes or the verb enumeramus understood. Similarly, at II.xi. 5,

et tua transibit contemnens ossa uiator,

ossa can be the object of either transibit or contemnens. At II.xix. 11,

illic assidue tauros spectabis arantis,

the adverb assidue qualifies arantis or spectabis, and at II.xxviii. 22,

haec eadem Persei nobilis uxor erat,

nobilis can be either a genitive agreeing with Persei or a nominative agreeing with uxor. A more difficult example can be found at III.iv. 7-8,

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<sup>13</sup>Propertius III.vi. 10.

ite agite, expertae bello date lintea prorae  
 et solitum armigeri ducite munus equi,

where either prorae is a genitive with lintea and equi a genitive with munus, or both are vocatives with date and ducite respectively. Another example of syntactical ambiguity is IV.vii. 43,

nostraque quod Petale tulit ad monumenta coronas,  
 for here the adjective nostra can agree either with Petale or monumenta. Sometimes we find in Propertius ambiguity of construction. We have already noted I.i. 3-4, where Cynthia appears to be the subject of deiecit and pressit until Amor is seen.<sup>14</sup> Another example can be found in I.xix. 7-8,

illic Phylacides iucundae coniugis heros  
 non potuit caecis immemor esse locis,

where iucundae coniugis seems to be a genitive of description attached to Phylacides until we see immemor on which the genitive must depend. We may wonder whether Propertius always intended these ambiguities to exist, or whether they are sometimes due to carelessness of style.

Another aspect of Propertius' originality of style is his exploitation of the numerous meanings of a word. A good example of this is

uni si qua placet, culta puella sat est.<sup>15</sup>

As the poem from which this line comes concerns Cynthia's use of adornment, the expected meaning of culta is 'adorned'. However, the meaning 'cherished' needs to be supplied because of the

<sup>14</sup>Supra, pp. 25, 71.

<sup>15</sup>Propertius I.ii. 26.



immediate context, and, as the following couplet refers to Cynthia's accomplishments, the meaning 'cultured' must be added. Hence Propertius has employed the one word with three different shades of meaning. A similar exploitation can be seen in nec te mea cura moratur,<sup>16</sup> where mea cura can mean 'my grief', 'my love for you' or 'your love for me'.<sup>17</sup> Sometimes this device leads Propertius to make puns, e.g.

nec sic caelestem flagrans amor Herculis Heben  
sensit in Oetaeis gaudia prima iugis.<sup>18</sup>

where flagrans, an erotic word here applied to amor, recalls the literal flames from his poisoned cloak which consumed Hercules on Mt. Oeta. A similar pun appears in ut Semela est combustus<sup>19</sup> where the reference concerns Jupiter's passion for Semele with a suggestion of her horrible death by burning. Incidentally, Propertius is the only Roman poet to have used comburare in an erotic sense. Such exploitations of word-meanings are deliberate and show originality in use of language.

An inflected language is not bound by rigid word-order. Hence Propertius uses varied word-order to gain particular effects. To depict a Bacchanal asleep in her disorder, he writes,

nec minus assiduis Edonis fessa choreis  
qualis in herboso concidit Apidano,<sup>20</sup>

the word-order being as disorganised as the woman. Similarly, the

<sup>16</sup> Propertius I.viii. 1.

<sup>17</sup> The interpretations of this and the previous example are borrowed from M.W. Edwards, op.cit., pp. 134-135.

<sup>18</sup> Propertius I.xiii. 23-24.

<sup>19</sup> Propertius II.xxx. 29.

<sup>20</sup> Propertius I.iii. 5-6.

word-order in

nec sic incolumem Minois Thesea uidit,  
Daedalium lino cum duce rexit iter<sup>21</sup>

is involved, probably because it is the poet's intention to express the winding turns taken by Theseus as he left the Labyrinth. Often Propertius employs word-order for emphasis. Any word placed at the beginning or end of a line of Latin verse acquires special emphasis. A case in point is

quamuis Ida Parim pastorem dicat amasse  
atque inter pecudes accubuisse deam.<sup>22</sup>

The word deam is stressed; it is amazing that a goddess of all beings should act in such a way. A further example of this device can be found in

Ino etiam prima terris aetate uagata est:  
hanc miser implorat nauita Leucothoen.<sup>23</sup>

In this example both Ino and Leucothoen are emphasised by their positions. The verb uagata est is also emphasised. Thus Propertius draws attention to the fact that Ino and Leucothoe are one and the same and that the apotheosis occurred after her wandering.

Juxtaposition is also exploited by Propertius. To express his loneliness on a deserted beach he writes,

nunc ego desertas alloquor alcyonas.<sup>24</sup>

Desertas is attached grammatically to alcyonas, but its position between the first person pronoun ego and the verb alloquor would

<sup>21</sup>Propertius II.xiv. 7-8.

<sup>22</sup>Propertius II.xxxii. 35-36.

<sup>23</sup>Propertius II.xxviii. 19-20.

<sup>24</sup>Propertius I.xvii. 2.

suggest that its sense is bound to these words, i.e. that Propertius is saying,

'Now, deserted I address the sea-mews.'

A similar example can be found in

Iuppiter Alcmenae geminas requieuerat Arctos.<sup>25</sup>

The juxtaposition of Iuppiter, Alcmenae and geminas gives the sense of 'Jupiter-Alcmena-twins', which is apt in view of the myth. The verb requieuerat can mean either 'lay with', in which case geminas Arctos would be an accusative of extent of time, or 'stopped' in which case geminas Arctos would be its direct object. The epithet geminas is particularly apt, because Jupiter doubled the span of the night in order to enjoy love. The phrase geminas Arctos is used in this way by Propertius alone and is an example of his search for originality of expression. In III.xi. 39-40,

scilicet incesti meretrix regina Canopi,

una Philippeo sanguine adusta nota,

the juxtaposition of incesti, meretrix and regina gives the sense of 'the lewd strumpet-queen', a typically Augustan judgement on Cleopatra. Similarly, in IV.i. 8,

et Tiberis nostris aduena bubus erat,

Propertius employs juxtaposition quite effectively, for, though nostris is attached to bubus, Tiberis nostris suggests 'our Tiber', as the Romans would have called their river. Aduena is placed beside Tiberis nostris to give the impression of 'our Tiber a stranger', which effectively sets the scene in pre-Roman Italy.

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<sup>25</sup>Propertius II.xxii. 25.

These examples reveal the use to which Propertius puts the device of juxtaposition.

Occasionally Propertius indulges in a certain boldness of expression. We have already seen one example of this in geminas Arctos,<sup>26</sup> and further such expressions of time can be found in paucis Luciferis,<sup>27</sup> meaning 'in a few days' and ad hesternas lucernas,<sup>28</sup> meaning 'last night'. More examples of bold language are armigera humo,<sup>29</sup> a reference to the armed men who sprang from the dragon's teeth sown by Jason, and in multis mortem habitura locis,<sup>30</sup> a reference to the death of Dirce buffeted by the wild bull to which she was bound. Propertius' language is here quite effective. In

nec tulit iratam ianua clausa sitim,<sup>31</sup>

Hercules' thirst is said to be wrathful and the door is said to be unable to withstand 'the wrathful thirst' rather than 'Hercules enraged by thirst'.

Propertius' originality manifests itself in his language. His experimentation sometimes obscures his meaning, but on the whole he achieves the desired effect, especially with juxtaposition. Now we must turn our attention to another aspect of his language -- the descriptive passage. In I.xx. 33-42 we find the very beautiful

<sup>26</sup>Supra, p.85.

<sup>27</sup>Propertius II.xix. 28.

<sup>28</sup>Propertius III.viii. 1.

<sup>29</sup>Propertius III.xi. 10.

<sup>30</sup>Propertius III.xv. 40.

<sup>31</sup>Propertius IV.ix. 62.

lines,

hic erat Arganthei Pege sub uertice montis  
 grata domus Nymphis unida Thyniasin,  
 quam supra nullae pendebant debita curae  
 roscida desertis poma sub arboribus,  
 et circum irriguo surgebant lilia prato  
 candida purpureis mixta papaueribus.  
 quae modo decerpens tenero pueriliter ungui  
 proposito florem praetulit officio,  
 et modo formosis incumbens nescius undis  
 errorem blandis tardat imaginibus.

Here Propertius sets out a peaceful scene - the spring of Pege. He tells us that it is a grata domus for the Nymphs and then proceeds to show why - wild fruit and flowers grow in abundance. The phrase nullae debita curae signifies that this beauty is Nature's. The epithet roscida applied to the fruit also adds to the beauty of the scene. The juxtaposition of roscida and desertis signifies once again that this is the beauty of Nature. The other picture is even more beautiful; here Propertius is describing the mixture of flowers. The juxtaposition of candida and purpureis effectively expresses the colour of the scene. There is still another picture - that of young Hylas entranced by this beauty. Propertius depicts the boy's wonder as he picks the flowers and gazes at his reflection in the water. This is an idyllic scene. It is ironic that in the midst of all the beauty tragedy will come.

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Propertius is just as effective in his description of horror. In IV.vii. 7-12 we read,

eosdem habuit secum quibus est elata capillos,  
 eosdem oculos: lateri uestis adusta fuit,  
 et solitum digito beryllon adederat ignis,  
 summaque Lethaeus triuerat ora liquor.  
 spirantisque animos et uocem misit: at illi  
 pollicibus fragiles increpuere manus.

This is, of course, the description of Cynthia's ghost. Propertius' picture is not a pretty one - her clothing is burnt to her side, fire has eaten the gem from her ring and her mouth is worn away by Lethe. As if this is not enough, Propertius continues by describing her voice and the creaking of her hands, brittle because of the funeral fire. If this seems bad enough, we need not mention IV.v. 67-70 in which he describes the death of the old bawd. Other passages which show Propertius' descriptive powers are I.iii. 31-33, II.xxix. 3-7, III.iii. 27-36 and lines 8 and 11 of II.vii. This is not an exhaustive list, but does serve to illustrate Propertius' talent as a descriptive poet.

The early part of this thesis was devoted to Propertius' borrowings, in which he nevertheless showed independent judgement and originality. When we consider Propertius' use of myth and symbol and his mastery over the Latin language his claim to originality gains infinitely in strength.

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