

## Propertius 1. 3: Cynthia Rescripted

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In Propertius 1. 3, the drunken lover arrives at the bedside of his sleeping mistress and compares her, in a cluster of similes, to a series of mythical figures. He desires to touch Cynthia but fears waking her, so he offers gifts to the sleeping woman. When the moon shines through the windows, Cynthia awakens and complains about the lonely night which she has spent without Propertius. A number of critics have discerned two distinct portraits of Cynthia in Propertius 1. 3, an idealized sleeping Cynthia represented through the mythological similes and the real awakened mistress who angrily scolds her lover. R. O. A. M. Lyne writes, "in 1. 3, belief in romance is forced to yield to an awareness of prosaic reality."<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Hans-Peter Stahl sees "an illusion which had yielded again to the real-life, abusive woman . . .,"<sup>2</sup> and Leo C. Curran writes of "an imaginative vision of the ideal" and of "a contrasting reality."<sup>3</sup>

While these commentators all distinguish between an ideal and a real portrait of Cynthia, more recent scholars have argued that elegy does not present a portrait of a real flesh-and-blood mistress.<sup>4</sup> Rather, as Maria Wyke notes, "the characteristics of elegiac women are determined by the general idioms of the elegiac discourse of which they form a part."<sup>5</sup> The elegiac woman is a literary construct shaped, in part, by generic conventions,<sup>6</sup> and thus the woman in elegy is a *scripta puella*<sup>7</sup>—the creation of the poet, as is the male speaker. In light of this view of the depiction of the elegiac mistress, the proposed existence of a portrait of the "real" Cynthia in 1. 3 calls for revision: Although 1. 3 appears to present a real

<sup>1</sup> R. O. A. M. Lyne, *The Latin Love Poets From Catullus to Horace* (Oxford 1980) 99–100.

<sup>2</sup> H.-P. Stahl, *Propertius: "Love" and "War"* (Berkeley 1985) 75.

<sup>3</sup> L. C. Curran, "Vision and Reality in Propertius 1. 3," *YCS* 19 (1966) 189.

<sup>4</sup> For some examples of this argument, see D. F. Bright, *Haec Mihi Fingebam: Tibullus in his World*, Cincinnati Classical Studies, n.s. 3 (Leiden 1978) 99–123; I. M. Le M. Du Quesnay, "The Amores," in J. W. Binns (ed.), *Ovid* (London 1973) 2–3; P. Veyne, *Roman Erotic Elegy* (Chicago 1988) 58 ff., 91; M. Wyke, "Written Women: Propertius' *Scripta Puella*," *JRS* 77 (1987) 47–61; eadem, "The Elegiac Woman at Rome," *PCPhS* 33 (1987) 153–78; eadem, "Mistress and Metaphor in Augustan Elegy," *Helios* 16 (1989) 25–47.

<sup>5</sup> Wyke, "Mistress and Metaphor" (previous note) 35.

<sup>6</sup> Wyke, "Elegiac Woman" (above, note 4) 170.

<sup>7</sup> For this term, see Wyke, "Written Women" (above, note 4).

woman, Wyke points out that "realism itself is a quality of a text, not a direct manifestation of a 'real' world."<sup>8</sup> Thus, the distinction that was formerly drawn between an ideal and a real Cynthia is more appropriately described as one between an idealized and a realistic representation of Cynthia.

The purpose of this study is to examine more fully the presence of realistic and idealizing elements in the representation of Cynthia in 1. 3. While the use of mythological examples, similes, and conventional devices presents an elevated portrait of the elegiac woman and creates an idealized image, the use of dialogue and everyday features and settings presents a lifelike portrait and creates a realistic image. This examination will show that a distinction between an initial, idealized description and a later, realistic one is not clear-cut,<sup>9</sup> for both portraits mingle idealizing and realistic elements. This study will focus, first, on the way in which the initial, "idealized" description of Cynthia reflects the realistic dramatic circumstance of the male speaker, specifically his return from a drinking party; next, on the generic conventions present in the later, "real" description, specifically echoes of the portrait of the elegiac lover which the poet constructs in 1. 1 and throughout the collection; and finally, on the way in which these generic conventions lead to a reassessment of the tone of Cynthia's speech in the second half.

The elegy begins with three comparisons (1–6) in which Cynthia is compared to heroines in exotic settings. This stylized description presents an elevated and idealized portrait of Cynthia. In the verses immediately following the mythical exempla, the setting is described (7–10):

talis visa mihi mollem spirare quietem  
 Cynthia non certis nixa caput manibus,  
 ebria cum multo traherem vestigia Baccho,  
 et quaterent sera nocte facem pueri. 10

The reader learns that Cynthia both *was seen* by the speaker and also *seemed*<sup>10</sup> to the speaker to be similar to the women of the similes, and finally that the speaker was drunk. In response to the last revelation, Curran

<sup>8</sup> Wyke, "Mistress and Metaphor" (above, note 4) 27. On representation and reality, see D. Kennedy, *The Arts of Love* (Cambridge 1993) 1–23.

<sup>9</sup> For others' comments upon the problematic division between the idealized and the real in 1. 3 and upon the relationship between the poem and reality, see A. W. Allen, "Sunt qui Propertium malint," in J. P. Sullivan (ed.), *Critical Essays on Roman Literature: Elegy and Lyric* (London 1962) 132–34; idem, "'Sincerity' and the Roman Elegists," *CP* 45 (1950) 145–60; D. Harmon, "Myth and Fantasy in Propertius 1. 3," *TAPA* 104 (1974) 152, 165; R. Hodge and R. Buttimore, *The "Monobiblos" of Propertius* (Cambridge 1977) 87, 98; R. O. A. M. Lyne, "Propertius and Cynthia: Elegy 1. 3," *PCPhS* 16 (1970) 60–61; R. Maltby, *Latin Love Elegy* (Bristol 1980) 65; F. M. Dunn, "The Lover Reflected in the Exemplum: A Study of Propertius 1.3 and 2.6," *ICS* 10 (1985) 249.

<sup>10</sup> This ambiguity was first noted by E. Fraenkel, "Die klassische Dichtung der Römer," in W. Jaeger (ed.), *Das Problem des Klassischen und die Antike* (Leipzig and Berlin 1931) 55 ff. On the lover's subjectivity, see Dunn (previous note) 240 ff.

writes, "the frank admission of his drunkenness in 9, following the careful qualification of *visa mihi* in 7, begins to raise doubts about the initial vision; we realize that it is seen through the eyes of a lover who is quite drunk."<sup>11</sup> Thus, the romantic perception and idealization of Cynthia is to be attributed, at least in part, to the speaker's intoxication. However, the speaker's drunkenness does not simply influence the general tone of the similes,<sup>12</sup> for Cynthia herself is described in terms appropriate to the drinking party.<sup>13</sup>

The first simile compares Cynthia to Ariadne lying on the deserted shores as Theseus' ship sails away: *Qualis Thesea iacuit cedente carina / languida desertis Cnosia litoribus*. Ariadne is described as *languida*, weak or inactive. However, *languidus* is also used of an intoxicated gaze and carries a "latent resonance" of drunkenness,<sup>14</sup> a resonance which is no less appropriate for describing the condition of the drunk speaker than for describing Cynthia. In addition, this adjective sometimes refers to the post-coital lover,<sup>15</sup> but the speaker never, in this poem at least, accuses Cynthia of infidelity.<sup>16</sup> Therefore this adjective does not seem to reflect Cynthia's faithfulness or lack thereof. However, Cynthia's complaint about the speaker's infidelity includes this very adjective—*meae consumpsti tempora noctis / languidus* (37–38)—and the *convivium* offered ample opportunity for sexual encounters.<sup>17</sup> While the sexual connotations are not so obviously applicable to the speaker as the drunken ones—there is no external evidence

<sup>11</sup> Curran (above, note 3) 196. See also Hodge and Buttimore (above, note 9) 87; Lyne (above, note 9) 69; Maltby (above, note 9) 65.

<sup>12</sup> In this passage, the speaker's drunkenness encroaches upon the description of Cynthia. The speaker reveals his condition with the admission that he was dragging his drunken steps, *ebria . . . vestigia*. As F. W. Locke (*The Explicator* 18.5 [Feb. 1960] Item 31) notes, at first it appears that the adjective *ebria* modifies the feminine *Cynthia*, rather than the neuter plural *vestigia*. The grammatical ambiguity momentarily conflates the speaker and his mistress, as the language appropriate to describe the speaker's drunkenness is apparently transferred to Cynthia. Lyne (above, note 9) 69 notes that with one possible exception, "there is nothing closely similar to the Propertian usage, in which a part which exhibits symptoms of the drunkenness of a whole is actually said to be drunk." The novelty of the construction creates and thus emphasizes the grammatical ambiguity.

<sup>13</sup> These three comparisons have received much attention, but no one fully examines the possible influence of the *convivium*. Although F. Cairns, "Two Unidentified *Komoi* of Propertius I. 3 + II. 29," *Emerita* 45 (1977) 325–53, has analyzed this poem in the generic context of the *komos*, and although he identifies the night-turning-to-day motif in 2. 29 as "symposiastic" (338), he does not examine the possible symposiastic content of 1. 3.

<sup>14</sup> Harmon (above, note 9) 157.

<sup>15</sup> M. Rothstein on 1. 3. 38: *Propertius Sextus Elegien*, 2nd ed. (Berlin 1920; repr. Dublin/Zürich 1966).

<sup>16</sup> Lyne (above, note 9) 67 writes about the sexual sense: "here it is ruinous to the picture the poet is carefully building up."

<sup>17</sup> See J. Griffin, *Latin Poets and Roman Life* (Chapel Hill 1986) 84 and the sources cited therein. This reading would also answer the concern expressed by Lyne (above, note 9) 61–62, that Cynthia accuses the male speaker of returning to their bed having left another woman, whereas the male speaker seems to have come from a drinking-party, not from another woman: The two are not mutually exclusive.

to corroborate Cynthia's charge<sup>18</sup>—the language of the simile is certainly suggestive of the drinking and sexual activity characteristic of the *convivium*.

The second simile compares Cynthia to Andromeda asleep after being freed from the rocks: *qualis et accubuit primo Cepheia somno / libera iam duris cotibus Andromede* (3–4). *Accumbere*, which means “to lie at rest,” is appropriate for describing Cynthia's dramatic circumstance—clearly, she sleeps. But Curran suggests that “*accubuit* must carry some of the same sexual connotation here that it does elsewhere in Propertius.”<sup>19</sup> This sexual innuendo, like that of *languidus*, may be attributed to the speaker's earlier activities.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, *accumbere* also means “to recline at a banquet.”<sup>21</sup> This verb recalls the couches of the drinking party from which the speaker returns, and thus the poet continues to describe Cynthia in terms appropriate for, or perhaps appropriated from, the *convivium*.

The correspondence between the language of the second simile and language describing the speaker's reaction to his sleeping mistress further links the description of Cynthia with the world of the *convivium*. Upon seeing Cynthia, the speaker attempts to approach her and is urged by Amor and Bacchus to embrace her (11–16):

hanc ego, nondum etiam sensus deperditus omnis,  
 molliter impresso conor adire toro;  
 et quamvis duplici correptum ardore iuberent  
 hac Amor hac Liber, durus uterque deus,  
 subiecto leviter positam temptare lacerto  
 osculaque admota sumere tarda manu . . .

15

The poet describes the motivation for the speaker's drunken attempts upon his mistress with Bacchic imagery. *Liber, durus* (14) recalls *LIBERA iam duris* (4).<sup>22</sup> The verbal echo calls attention to the presence of the god *Liber* in the description of Cynthia and links it to the world of Bacchus.

Bacchus is, in fact, implicit in all the similes: This second one suggests the god's name; the first comes from the myth of Bacchus, Ariadne, and

<sup>18</sup> The speaker's obvious desire for Cynthia does not preclude an earlier sexual encounter, as 2. 22. 23–24 attests to the lover's immense sexual energy.

<sup>19</sup> Curran (above, note 3) 197.

<sup>20</sup> Locke (above, note 12) identifies this verb with “the condition of the poet.” He suggests, however, that the poet “engages in a fantasy which projects Cynthia as the mythological woman and himself as their lovers,” because of his drunken state. I am suggesting that it is his dramatic reality, rather than his fantasy, which conditions the verb.

<sup>21</sup> W. A. Camps, *Propertius. Elegies: Book I* (Cambridge 1961) 48; Lyne (above, note 9) 67, imagines that Cynthia lies in a position that resembles someone reclining at a table, and he suggests that the verb intimates the physical structure of Cynthia's bed.

<sup>22</sup> See Curran (above, note 3) 196–97 and Hodge and Buttimore (above, note 9) 89. Curran notes other resonances of Bacchus in the description of the male speaker. Harmon (above, note 9) 153 writes: “The lover in a Bacchic pose is a familiar sight from the literature of revelry; we think, for example, of the ivy-crowned Alcibiades, who unmistakably portrays himself as Dionysus when he bursts in upon the symposium.”

Theseus;<sup>23</sup> and the third describes a follower of Bacchus. Given the dramatic circumstance of this particular poem, the Bacchic imagery could well reflect the proximity of the *convivium* in the narrative. The speaker ostensibly returns from a drinking party, and wine invokes Bacchic imagery and mythology. Griffin notes that the cups, tripods, mosaics, and paintings at the *convivium* "were very likely to have Dionysiac themes."<sup>24</sup> He adds that wild parties, in life and in verse, appear to have taken on Dionysiac features, and "the Dionysiac orgies of Messallina, featuring not only wine but regular maenads and thyrsi, were no doubt only an exaggeration of the sort of thing that went on elsewhere."<sup>25</sup>

The presence of maenads at the *convivium* suggests that Propertius continues to describe Cynthia in the convivial context in the third simile, which introduces the Thracian bacchant, tired out from dancing and lying in the grass: *nec minus assiduis Edonis fessa choreis / qualis in herboso concidit Apidano* (5–6). There is obviously a general connection between drinking parties and dancing.<sup>26</sup> In 2. 3, moreover, Propertius explicitly compares the Bacchic chorus and the dance at the *convivium*: *quantum quod posito formose saltat Iaccho, / egit ut euhantes dux Ariadna choros . . .* (17–18). This comparison suggests that the description of Cynthia in the bacchant simile of 1. 3 reflects the dramatic proximity of the drinking party.<sup>27</sup> The fact that this maenad is specifically identified as Thracian is also significant. Horace, in the only earlier passage in which the adjective *Edonis* occurs, writes of a party to celebrate Pompey's homecoming: *non sanius, / bacchabor Edonis* (*Odes* 2. 7. 26–27). The reveler describes himself as acting like a bacchant at a drinking party, and this bacchant is specifically Thracian. The Horatian passage further suggests that this image is imported from the *convivium*, the world which the speaker has just left—at least physically, if not entirely in thought.

The description of the sleeping Cynthia in 1. 3 suggests Ovid's warning about the dangers for women falling asleep at a drinking party: *nec somnis posita tutum succumbere mensa: / per somnos fieri multa pudenda solent* (*Ars* 3. 767–68). A woman attending the *convivium* should not fall asleep, since shameful things can befall a sleeping woman. The speaker in 1. 3 also imagines that Cynthia may suffer shameful things while she sleeps: *et quotiens raro duxti suspiria motu, / obstipui vano credulus auspicio, / ne qua tibi insolitos portarent visa timores, / neve quis invitam cogeret esse suam* (27–30). It has been noted that the suppressed desire of the speaker

<sup>23</sup> See W. Hering, "Properz I 3," *WS* 85 (1972) 52, on these similes and the myth, and A. Wlosok, "Die dritte Cynthia-Elegie des Properz (Prop. 1,3)," *Hermes* 95 (1967) 338 ff. and Curran (above, note 3) 196–97, 207 for these similes and Catullus' version of that story.

<sup>24</sup> Griffin (above, note 17) 69.

<sup>25</sup> Griffin (above, note 17) 84.

<sup>26</sup> See 3. 10. 21–23 and Griffin (above, note 17) 65 and the sources cited therein.

<sup>27</sup> For a more complex reading of the relationship between 1. 3. 5–6 and 2. 3. 17–18, see Harmon (above, note 9) 158.

and his inclination to approach his sleeping mistress (13–16) are transferred onto the assailant whom the speaker imagines forcing himself upon an unwilling Cynthia.<sup>28</sup> However, the idea of assaulting a sleeping woman may not be inspired simply by the speaker's desire, or by mythical precedents,<sup>29</sup> but also by the events and setting of the *convivium* from which the speaker supposedly returns. Less specific traces of the drinking party appear in the portrait of the *sleeping* Cynthia who seemed *mollem spirare quietem* (7). Several drinking parties end in sleep,<sup>30</sup> and Ovid describes the drunken sleepers at a banquet as *compositi* (*Am.* 2. 5. 22), an adjective with which Propertius describes Cynthia's eyes (1. 3. 33). Also, in Ennius, the sleep which is *mollissimus* (*An.* 12. 363–65 Skutsch) follows a drunken celebration.<sup>31</sup>

On the dramatic level, the speaker's drunken entrance disrupts the peaceful scene which he describes. As Archibald W. Allen notes, "there is a brutal realism in the lover's entrance which could not be in sharper contrast with the calm loveliness of the girl."<sup>32</sup> Similarly, on the narrative level, the presence of the realistic world of the *convivium* in these similes contrasts sharply with the idealization of Cynthia. The opening similes present a portrait of Cynthia through the use of mythological exempla featuring gods and heroines.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, commentators have noted that the diction is heightened and the syntax is contrived.<sup>34</sup> These features of the opening couplets elevate Cynthia's status and represent her in an idealized manner.<sup>35</sup> However, the language of the similes also reflects the world of the *convivium* from which the speaker returns. Realistic images of drinking, revelry, and sexual activity intrude upon the exotic, romantic, and heroic,<sup>36</sup> undermining the idealization. Thus, the portrait of Cynthia in the first half of the poem is based upon realistic as well as idealizing elements.

The world of the *convivium* enters the poem physically at line 21, when the speaker approaches Cynthia, places his garland on his mistress' head, and gives her apples, apparently from the party. The transference of the tokens coincides with the transference of perspective. For at this point the

<sup>28</sup> Curran (above, note 3) 203; Harmon (above, note 9) 161; Lyne (above, note 1) 118; Lyne (above, note 9) 74; Maltby (above, note 9) 70; L. Richardson, *Propertius. Elegies I–IV* (Norman 1977) 155.

<sup>29</sup> On mythical precedents, see Wlosok (above, note 23) 332 and the sources cited therein; Maltby (above, note 9) on 1. 3; B. Otis, "Propertius' Single Book," *HSCP* 70 (1965) 19–20.

<sup>30</sup> Prop. 3. 17. 13 ff., 42; Hor. *Odes* 3. 21. 4; Plato, *Symp.* 223c–d.

<sup>31</sup> Harmon (above, note 9) 153–54.

<sup>32</sup> Allen, "Sunt qui" (above, note 9) 133. See also Maltby (above, note 9) 65.

<sup>33</sup> Curran (above, note 3) 190; Lyne (above, note 1) 98.

<sup>34</sup> Curran (above, note 3) 192–93; Hodge and Buttimore (above, note 9) 87–88; Lyne (above, note 1) 99; Lyne (above, note 9) 66.

<sup>35</sup> Lyne (above, note 9). See also Maltby (above, note 9) 65.

<sup>36</sup> Lyne (above, note 1) 99–100 adds that certain aspects of the myths, such as the fact that Ariadne had been deserted and would have "harsh things to say to her Theseus," foreshadow the "real world" and Cynthia's response to Propertius.

form of the narration changes, and the third-person references to the sleeping mistress become second-person.<sup>37</sup> Thus the poem seems to move toward a more realistic description which includes the woman directly.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, Cynthia appears to return the apples which the speaker bestows upon her—*munera de prono saepe voluta sinu* (26)<sup>39</sup>—and Antonie Wlosok interprets the exchange of the apples as part of a movement toward the dialogic.<sup>40</sup> However, the exchange of apples and the move towards the dialogic do not necessarily herald the presence of a real woman, but rather a more realistic representation of the elegiac mistress.

The apples, a traditional lover's gift,<sup>41</sup> may simply characterize what follows as elegiac, without signaling any complementary movement from the ideal to the real, for it is the elegiac more than the mythical or the real world which shapes the final picture of Cynthia. The final picture presents a Cynthia rewritten in the role of the elegiac lover rather than as the elegiac beloved—the role which she has previously occupied in Book 1. Cynthia seems to display those elegiac sentiments which the lover Propertius expresses throughout his poetry and especially in 1. 1,<sup>42</sup> and these generic conventions undermine the realistic quality of her discourse and create a new image of Cynthia.

The second half of the poem begins when the rays of the moon open Cynthia's eyes: *luna moraturis sedula luminibus, / compositos levibus radiis patefecit ocellos* (32–33). This juxtaposition of *luminibus* and *ocellos* recalls the beginning of the collection (1. 1–4):<sup>43</sup>

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

<sup>37</sup> Hering (above, note 23) 66.

<sup>38</sup> Maltby (above, note 9) 69.

<sup>39</sup> While there is some debate about whose lap the apples fall from, Camps (above, note 21) 50, P. J. Enk, *Sextus Propertii Elegiarum: Liber I (Monobiblos)* (Leiden 1946) 41, Richardson (above, note 28) 155, Rothstein (above, note 15) 80, and Wlosok (above, note 23) 345 suggest that the apples fall from Cynthia's lap.

<sup>40</sup> Wlosok (above, note 23) 346.

<sup>41</sup> See Cairns (above, note 13) 327 n. 3; Enk (above, note 39), on 24; Hodge and Buttimore (above, note 9) 93 n. 23; Lyne (above, note 9) 72; Maltby (above, note 9) 69; Wlosok (above, note 23) 345 n. 1.

<sup>42</sup> For an analysis of emotional parallels within the poem, see G. Petersmann, "Properz I 3," *Latomus* 37 (1978) 954 ff., who recognizes the elegiac style of Cynthia's report of her deeds in lines 41–46. Wyke, "Mistress and Metaphor" (above, note 4) 33, writes that "even the physical features, psychological characteristics, direct speeches, and erotic activities with which Cynthia is provided often seem subject to literary concerns. Thus the realist devices of the Propertian corpus . . . often direct us instead toward the features and habits of characters in other Augustan texts." However, the implications of the intertextual literary quality of Cynthia's discourse, which has been described as tragic (Wlosok [above, note 23] 351–52) and as natural (Hering [above, note 23] 72), remain largely unexamined. On the intertextuality, see Cairns (above, note 13) 335–36; Curran (above, note 3) 205; Harmon (above, note 9) 161–65.

<sup>43</sup> Hering (above, note 23) 68.

1. 1 describes the poet's first encounter with love, both love for Cynthia and love in the form of Amor. The lady, with her lunar associations,<sup>44</sup> affects the poet, and this confrontation between *lumina* and *ocellis* is the beginning of the poet's career as an elegist, of his elegiac poetry. This echo of the beginning of the collection raises the possibility that 1. 3 presents the roles as reversed and that Cynthia, now the one affected by the moon, will speak as the elegiac lover usually does.

The wakened Cynthia begins to speak: *sic ait in molli fixa toro cubitum* (34). Literally, she is in bed propped up on her elbow, but the verb *figo* is used to describe Propertius' passion, which results from the darts that Amor has fixed in his breast (2. 13. 2). *Fixa* then could suggest here that Cynthia is "pierced" by love's arrow<sup>45</sup> and in the position of the elegiac lover. Indeed, the language echoes that which describes the speaker in 19, where he stands before his mistress, *fixus*.<sup>46</sup> Cynthia's first pose recalls the speaker's posture in relation to his *domina* (17), suggesting that on a figurative level she is now in the position he previously occupied.

Cynthia's first words associate her thematically with the elegiac tradition when she accuses the male speaker of having been expelled from the closed doors of another woman: *tandem te nostro referens iniuria lecto / alterius clausis expulit e foribus?* (35–36). It is worth considering the parallels between this passage and 1. 16.<sup>47</sup> Although Cynthia's accusation in 1. 3, expressed in terms of the traditional motif of the *paraklausithyron*, seems to be at odds with the speaker's apparent return from the *convivium*, the accusation need not be taken literally. Cynthia, when she accuses the male speaker of unfaithfulness, speaks about him in the same way that he usually speaks about her,<sup>48</sup> by echoing the form which expresses her unfaithfulness in 1. 16, where the male lover lies outside the door (22) while she is in the arms of another (33).<sup>49</sup> The reference to doors may simply be an appropriation of the thematic imagery of elegiac poetry which articulates the supposed unfaithfulness, emphasizing Cynthia's new posture in this poem as the lover in a reversal of roles with the male speaker.

<sup>44</sup> On Cynthia's lunar associations, see E. N. O'Neil, "Cynthia and the Moon," *CP* 53 (1958) 1–8.

<sup>45</sup> On the lexical ambiguity of *figo* in line 19, see Lyne (above, note 9) 71. Lyne suggests that in this passage *fixa* is "specially chosen to sound hard and purposeful" (75).

<sup>46</sup> Lyne (above, note 9) 75.

<sup>47</sup> For a complete discussion of the correspondences, see E. Courtney, "The Structure of Propertius Book 1 and Some Textual Consequences," *Phoenix* 22 (1968) 253–54; Otis (above, note 29) 18–22.

<sup>48</sup> Lyne (above, note 9) 62 notes that Propertius often accuses Cynthia of infidelity.

<sup>49</sup> Both Courtney (above, note 47) and Otis (above, note 29) accept that the unnamed woman inside is Cynthia. For promiscuity expressed in terms of the *paraklausithyron*, see also 2. 6. 1–2: *Non ita complebant Ephyraeae Laidos aedis, / ad cuius iacuit Graecia tota fores . . .* On doors in Propertian elegy, see P. Pucci, "Lingering on the Threshold," *Glyph* 3 (1978) 52–73.

Cynthia's speech further recalls the themes and the language usually associated with the Propertian male lover. Cynthia expresses her wish that the male speaker should experience the terrible nights which he causes her to endure: *o utinam talis perducas, improbe, noctes, / me miseram qualis semper habere iubes* (39–40). Cynthia characterizes herself as wretched, echoing words of the poet as elegiac lover—*miserum me* (1. 1. 1). Cynthia's words also recall the lover Propertius' earlier claim: *in me nostra Venus noctes exercet amaras* (1. 1. 33), but now she is the one suffering.

Cynthia goes on to explain her activities during the absence of the speaker, and her language further suggests that she occupies the role of the elegiac lover: *interdum leviter mecum deserta querebar / externo longas saepe in amore moras* (43–44). The verb *querebar* typifies the lament that is elegiac poetry.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, the adverb *leviter*, which modifies her complaining, suggests the technical description of the elegiac genre, which is presided over in Propertian poetry by a *levis Musa* (2. 12. 22).<sup>51</sup> This language recalls the lament typical of the elegiac lover. Rather than expressing a moral reaction to the male speaker's supposed betrayal, Cynthia emphasizes her waiting in a painful emotional cry,<sup>52</sup> a *querella*<sup>53</sup> mirroring the *querella* of the poet in 1. 16. 39.

Reading Cynthia as elegiac lover rather than as realistic woman sheds light upon an interpretive difficulty in this section of the poem. Commentators have been disturbed by Cynthia's description of herself as *lapsam* (45). Hodge and Buttimore, for example, write: "'Lapsam' seems so close in meaning to 'sopor impulit' that it is hard to assign it a clear place in the sequence of events."<sup>54</sup> This adjective is difficult to reconcile with Cynthia's literal posture as she falls asleep, but it is consistent with Cynthia's poetic pose as elegiac lover. For the poet describes the male lover's subjugation to love with this very same adjective—*aut vos, qui sero lapsam revocatis, amici, / quaerite non sani pectoris auxilia* (1. 1. 25–26). In 1. 3, *lapsam* hints that Cynthia too has fallen victim to passion. This echo of the language of 1. 1 suggests on a figurative level that she is in the dramatic position usually occupied by the elegiac lover.

Finally, Cynthia ends her speech with the last words of the poem: *illa fuit lacrimis ultima cura meis* (46). *Cura*, a word used to describe the elegiac beloved, appears in 1. 1 when Propertius warns others not to abandon their lovers but to stay in an accustomed love: *sua quemque*

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Horace, *Ars* 75; Nisbet and Hubbard on *Odes* 2. 13. 17–18; M. L. West, *Studies in Greek Elegy and Iambus* (Berlin 1974) 6–9. For *querellae*, see *Odes* 2. 13. 24–25, 3. 21. 2, Tib. 1. 2. 9, Prop. 1. 7. 8, and C. Saylor, "Querellae: Propertius' Distinctive, Technical Name for his Elegy," *Agon* 1 (1967) 142–49.

<sup>51</sup> See also 2. 34. 31 and Ovid, *Am.* 1. 19: *nec mihi materia est numeris levioribus apta*.

<sup>52</sup> Wlosok (above, note 23) 348–49.

<sup>53</sup> R. Thomas, "Review Article: Turning Back The Clock," *CP* 83 (1988) 68.

<sup>54</sup> Hodge and Buttimore (above, note 9) 97. See also Camps (above, note 21) on 1. 3. 45; Lyne (above, note 9) 65.

*moretur / cura* . . . (1. 1. 35–36). Cynthia, who has expressed her concern that the male speaker has spent the evening with another woman, uses language which reflects Propertius' warning about unfaithfulness.<sup>55</sup> However, in this context the roles are reversed. Cynthia uses the very word which often describes the lover Propertius' passion for her (1. 15. 31, 3. 17. 4). Now, the behavior of the male speaker seems to have become the source of *cura*, and Cynthia appears in the role previously occupied by the lover Propertius.

Commentators have labelled Cynthia's speech angry and abusive. Lyne writes of a reality which includes Cynthia's "fearsome and well-documented temper,"<sup>56</sup> while Stahl suggests that Cynthia lets loose "the full power of her wrath."<sup>57</sup> Robert Maltby adds that, as the poem progresses, "it is not Cynthia's beauty but her wrath which now has mythological proportions."<sup>58</sup> However, the generic conventions suggest not simply an expression of anger, but also an expression of love.<sup>59</sup> To the extent that Cynthia's words mirror those of the Propertian lover, she may be seen not simply as an enraged, "petulant" and "shrewish,"<sup>60</sup> or "hot-tempered"<sup>61</sup> woman but also as a loving mistress.

Read as an expression of love, Cynthia's speech contradicts the male speaker's fearful expectations that his awakened mistress would savagely scold him as she had in the past: *non tamen ausus eram dominae turbare quietem, / expertae metuens iurgia saevitiae* (17–18). The description of her savagery as *expertae* (18) suggests that what is to come is familiar. However, the Argus simile which heralds the second portrait of the awakened mistress suggests that what follows is novel: The speaker is likened to Argus transfixed by the unknown horns of Io—*sed sic intentis haerebam fixus ocellis, / Argus ut ignotis cornibus Inachidos* (19–20). This simile equates Cynthia with the horned Io who causes such astonishment, and the fact that the speaker places a garland upon Cynthia's forehead—*tuis*

<sup>55</sup> D. R. Shackleton Bailey, *Propertiana* (Cambridge 1956) 14, writes the following on these lines: "BB. rightly give *cura* its ordinary meaning 'anxious thought,' *illa* referring not to *Sopor* in 45 but to *moras* in 44."

<sup>56</sup> Lyne (above, note 1) 99–100.

<sup>57</sup> Stahl (above, note 2) 75.

<sup>58</sup> Maltby (above, note 9) 65.

<sup>59</sup> Hodge and Buttmore (above, note 9) 96 note that "hostility is only one element in Cynthia's response." They state (98): "her anger and self-pity come from love." Harmon (above, note 9) 161 ff. reassesses the nature of Cynthia's speech and categorizes it as the lamentation of a "conventional heroine." Thus she, in appearing to share Propertius' heroic fantasies in the opening lines, is "a woman of kindred nature to his own" (165). Cairns (above, note 13) recognizes that Cynthia speaks of herself in the generic terms of an excluded lover, and concludes (336) that "her application to herself of topoi associated with the *exclusus amator* forms within her speech a wry parallel to the unsuccessful *komos* which she imagines Propertius to have conducted earlier that night." This phenomenon, as Cairns sees it, is part of the question of admission/exclusion, and, although he suggests that the "persona of 1. 1 lurks very near the surface" (350), it is in the character of Propertius, not in the character of Cynthia.

<sup>60</sup> Hodge and Buttmore (above, note 9) 87.

<sup>61</sup> Curran (above, note 3) 200.



language of Cynthia's second portrait in l. 3, suggesting that she too has submitted to passion. Thus the final portrait of Cynthia presents her as the lover's ideal mistress—the one sought after in l. 1.

In conclusion, it is difficult to make a clear-cut distinction between an initial, idealized portrait of Cynthia and a later, realistic one. In the first half of the poem, elements of dramatic realism encroach upon the mythological, and the poet's construction of Cynthia's portrait owes as much to realism as to idealizing. In the second half, Cynthia uses language typical of the elegiac lover. These generic conventions cast her in the role of a loving mistress rather than simply that of an angry woman. As such she would seem to be Propertius the lover's ideal mistress. In the end then, the Cynthia of the second portrait is no less idealized than that of the first.

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