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CHAPTER 3

Propertius

W. R. Johnson

The Meanings of Cynthia

Inside my carnal youth
My will to Poetry was being shaped
And mapped out were the outlines of my Craft.
(Cavañ)

The moment that Apuleius identified the elegiac poets' objects of desire he gave warrant to their readers to view their love poems as representations of their actual romantic experience, inviting these readers, century after century, to supply (imagine) verisimilar details that the poet's erotic autobiographies had been stingy with. (For a good discussion of Apuleius' "identifications," see Keith 2008, 88.) Thus as Carullus' Lesbia was revealed to have been Clodia in actual life, so Propertius' Cynthia was unmasked and identified as Hostia. In the present as in the past, for some readers who are mostly indifferent to the lives of the poets and primarily concerned with the pleasure of poems themselves (or their rhetorical engines), the actualities thought to be concealed behind these fictive names hold little interest. But for many readers, those enchanted by Dante's Beatrice and Petrarch's Laura, by Shakespeare's Young Gentleman and his Dark Lady, and by Keats' Fanny and Yeats' Maud, fiction and fact are inextricably entwined, and, if fact is removed from them, the love poems seem divested of their life's blood and wither into mere literature.

Today's pendulum has swung away from this seductive prejudice, and the current fashion, with plenty of evidence and commonsense to fuel it, tends to distrust "actuality" and to favor "textuality." The current fashion rightly reminds us that, for the most part,

poetry is made out of words, most especially out of the words (and clichés) that poets borrow from other poets, both living and dead, and that they then transmute into their own unique idiom; it further insists we recognize that, however much a poet may seem to draw on his own experience, the construction of poetry relies primarily on literary conventions and on poetic imagination which combine to transform mere personal experience into something that looks like, reminds us of, realities, but is in fact something richer, stranger and possessed of far greater clarity and order than anything we are often likely to experience in our real lives. (The seminal essay for this perspective is Wyke's; see also Miller 2004, 61–6) Propertius's Cynthia, then, may have been a real woman whom he really loved (and lost, or rejected or was rejected by); or she may be a sort of collage of various women with whom he shared erotic joys and griefs; or she may be a textual contraption, cobbled together from the women that other love poets had loved or invented. Or she may, in fact, be a peculiar amalgam of all these possibilities. But whatever she was when Propertius sat down to write her she is, for her contemporary readers, primarily an imaginative representation of what Propertius thought and felt about the society he lived in, about the nature of the erotic experience as he and his contemporaries conceived of it and experienced it; about what he thought concerning the nature and function of poetry; and, perhaps most crucially, what he thought about the meaning of his role as poet, about his poetic calling.

The source of that calling is mysterious. Using the older, more traditional template, one could imagine that Propertius was essentially a lover, and it was for this reason that he chose (or was compelled) to write love poetry: being a lover and wanting to write, he had to write about what he knew best – until, as we will shortly see, for one reason or another (like falling out of love?), he abandoned love poetry and turned his attention to other topics. More likely is the fact that he grew up towards the end of a sort of revolution in erotic behavior in Rome, a revolution that was reflected in and abetted by the love poetry of several generations of Roman poets in the first century B.C.E. (beginning with Catullus and Calvus and ending with Propertius' literary heir, Ovid). Briefly, that revolution had its origins in a fragmentation of social institutions that took place while its political institutions were being demolished; at the core of the erotic ideology that fueled this revolution was a profound distrust of and an increasing indifference to traditional ideas about sex and marriage and family values that had obtained in Rome for most of its known history. Those ideas centered on the procreation of Roman citizens (and soldiers) and the economic and moral stability of the Roman people. The new, emerging ideology was centered on a promiscuous celibacy that thrived on abundant divorces and prolific adultery and that even had some room for same-sexual dimensions. In short: during this extended era, the patriarchy – as occasionally happens – was experiencing presentiments of cracks in its foundations.

Whatever Propertius' personal erotic code, this revolution and the genre of love elegy that incarnated it in words was a nice fit for a young man from the provinces with a taste for life in the city, one who seems to have liked to amuse himself by irritating the patriarchy and who was possessed of more than a little talent for sarcasm and satire.

Putting aside for a moment the figure of Cynthia, which is primarily compounded of the poet's responses to her incomparable beauty, her amazing vitality, and, above all, her capacity to fascinate and madden her poet by virtue of her limitless variety and the baffling spectrum of her caprices and moods, let us first examine Cynthia as a textual

creature, as a generic construction, as an assemblage of the conventions of love poetry as these offered themselves to Propertius when he undertook to write his love poems. At the outset of the opening poem of Book 2 he categorically states that his poetry, his love poems, his *amores*, utterly depend on the woman (or the idea) he calls Cynthia: *non haec (Calliope, here symbolizing all the Muses, and it is not Apollo himself, not even Apollo, leader of the Muses and the god of Poetry, who have made Propertius a poet: it is his girl alone, who has created his talent (better, genius) for him. It is Cynthia who made a poet out of him. This admission or claim is emphatically repeated in poem 2B, 30, where he specifically refutes the criticisms of old men who appeal to antique codes of behavior (antiqua legibus, 15) to condemn the boisterous partying (convivia, 13) of the poet and his sweetheart (vita, 14). The poet is not ashamed to live faithfully, not with one wife, but with a single friend (amica, 23). Whatever old men and their outmoded laws may say, if what the poet and his girl are doing is criminal, it is a crime of love, hence, no crime at all: hoc si crimen erit, crimen Amoris erit, 24. At this point in his poem, the poet promises to whisk his girl away from censorious Rome to an artificial (yet to him very real) paradise, a dewy cave tucked away in mossy hills, where the Muses are singing the loves of Jupiter (Seneca and Io). (For another version of the poet's poetic hideaway, see 3.3.27–52) And if the Father of gods and men cannot withstand the arrows of Eros, who can? And if that is the case, why should Propertius be singled out for condemnation of a crime that is common to all? (This sly self-defense, everybody's doing it, will be richly elaborated by Ovid in his *Tristia* 2. See Johnson 2009, 137–44.) But lest Cynthia should feel embarrassed to find herself suddenly in the presence of the Virgin Muses, the poet reminds her that at least one of them (Calliope) was once dethroned and became thereby the mother of Orpheus. So, when she feels more at home among the Muses, Cynthia will find herself leading them, and then, with Bacchus among them, Propertius will be crowned with ivy, triumphant among poets, and all because of Cynthia: nam sine te nostrum non valet ingenium, 40. "Without you my talent is worthless."*

The testament to Cynthia's essential role in creating the poet's genius and generating his poems that opens Book 2A is powerfully reprised in the closing poem of Book 2B, where Propertius examines the nature of love poetry and proudly asserts his place among his predecessors in love elegy. (For a succinct explanation of the reasons for dividing Book 2 into Book 2A and 2B, see Heyworth 2007, x–xi, 152, 156–8) He and Cynthia follow in the footsteps of Varro and his Leucada, of Catullus and Lesbia (whom he had made more famous than Homer's Helen), of Calvus and his Quintilia, and, finally, of Gallus and his Lycoris (2B 34.85–92). *Cynthia quin vivet versus laudata Propertii, / haec inter si me ponere Fauna valet, 93–4. "Yes, and praised in my poems, Cynthia too will be criticized, if only Fame permits me to join the ranks of the poets who went before me."* If in these verses the poet seems to slip into the Apulian mode and suggest that the love objects of his predecessors were actualities, the weight of his claim to belong to the sacred band of Roman love poets is unquestionably on the literary meaning of the poems that had served as his primary models for his poems about Cynthia. It is the poets (or better, their poems), not their women (real or imaginary) that matter: whatever their ontological status, factual or fictive, the women exist for the sake of the poetry (though without them, without the themes and language and images they bring with them – to the poet's desk and perhaps to his bed – the poetry would not exist).

Cynthia, then, like her models, is essentially an idea that turns into a poem (or a text, if you like), and it is as an idea, even if she was somehow a woman who turned into an idea, that she attains much of her meaning and not a little of her power to enchant in individual poems.

But Cynthia's links with textuality do not end with her role as heiress of poetic convention and, as such, as begetter of Propertius' poetic genius.

The other erotic heroines of love elegy, whatever other traits they share with Cynthia, seem bereft of an interest in literature and of poetic taste and judgment. But Cynthia is a *docta puella* (2A 11.6), which will in fact be the epitaph for her grave); at 2.13A 11ff. we learn that the poet enjoys lying in the lap of his learned girl, reading her his poems and basking in her praise of them, able to ignore the carping of his detractors as long as she approves of them; (see also 2B 24.21); at 2B 26 25f, we are told that whenever she recites his poems to him she pronounces her hatred of his rich rivals, and he asserts that he finds that no girl feels such reverence for the poetic art as she does; finally, in a witty moment (2B 33.35-8), a very drunk Cynthia, her garlands askew and falling into her wine cup, is not so sozzled that she cannot recite the poet's verses in a slurred voice – and the poet finds her beautiful even, or especially, then.

She is not merely literate, then: she has a special fondness for poetry and (as Luck would have it) a genuine admiration for the poetry of Propertius. This connection with poetry in general and the poet's poetry in particular complicates the varied materials from which Cynthia is constructed. At times, she seems a high-class hooker whereas at others she seems just an ordinary slut, with no thought in her head but where the next john and his cash were coming from. When this latter notion takes possession of his mind, textual Cynthia becomes not just a book but a dirty book, one that has given him a really bad reputation: "People are talking about you, and you are becoming a laughing stock (*fabula*) because you're 'Cynthia' is being read all over the forum," 2B 24.1-2); this unexpected consequence he decides to squirm his way out of by living up to his bad name (*negutiae caput*, 6) and, by becoming thoroughly promiscuous, insuring that he will never again be labeled as the neurotic, obsessive lover of a rotten woman. Here Cynthia is an evil text, but for the most part elsewhere (until the closing poems of Book 3) she is what inspires his writing and what gives it its purpose as well as its glitter and its verve and its sustained force. She is the idea of pure (and impure) passionate eroticism, of the world well lost for love (or lust). And that idea was the core of his poetry, which, so far as one can judge, was what he lived for.

In his Book 1 (the *Monobiblos*), though Propertius devotes some attention to other matters, among them alternate pursuits (which he rejects, firmly and wittily), Cynthia easily dominates the poet and his poems. In Books 2A and 2B, where she is ubiquitous, she gradually takes on what will be her perfected representation. In Book Three, for reasons we will be presently examine, she finds herself competing for the poet's attention with other pressing concerns but still manages to intrude herself into over a third of the poems in his penultimate volume before being cast into outer darkness in its closing poems, 3.24 and 25. (See Keith 2008, 186n6; Johnson 2009, 92) Out of these many and varied pictures of Cynthia, a composite image of her that I form (granting that different readers will form their images of her in different ways) displays a complexity that is rare in the other extant elegists.

She is indeed a textual construct, the product of a powerful generic code, but she is also an impressive incarnation of the erotic fashion of her poet's time – that is to say, she more nearly represents a reality than do the multiple and dim beloveds of Tibullus or Ovid's cardboard Corinna. And more even than Lesbida, she radiates an erotic verisimilitude that invites autobiographical speculations and misreadings. She triumphs as a textual construct *because* of the minute particulars that combine to confirm her as a genuine inhabitant of the poet's imagined erotic paradise (and hell). Propertius could supply both her and his imagined self with the necessary and proper erotic details because he was intrigued by the complexities and ambiguities of the new eroticism that fueled his imagination and gave him a poetic mission that suited his talents and his temperament.

For Propertius (and for us) textual Cynthia means Poetry, Love Poetry, but she also means a free eroticism, a way of expressing one's sexuality that was not prescribed by traditional moralities, a way of renaking one's (male) identity that ran counter to the traditional techniques for the formation of the male identity. (See McDonnell 2006, 165-205) The Propertian lover is not a husband and not a father, nor is he cursed with that patriarchal temper, so revered in the past, one of whose chief obligations is to keep control of one's women (wives, daughters, concubines). Rather, he is – or pretends to be – not the master of his mistress but her slave, and that voluntary (and unreal) slavery allows him to claim that he has liberated himself from the stern voices of the implacable fathers (those old men and their threadbare laws, once the targets of Catullus' scorn, 5.2-3: *rumorigne senum severiorum/omnis unius astringemus assis*, "the gossip of censorious old farts is worth about one red penny." (For Propertius' "slavery" as ironic disguise, see Gold 1993) To what extent Propertius himself believed in and lived the erotic ideology that he represents in his Cynthia poems is as unknowable as it is irrelevant. What matters is that, having committed himself to his imaginative investigation of the new eroticism, Propertius found that the kind of poetry he was writing had become fused with his desire for artistic freedom. His Cynthia meant the wittily writing of texts, and she also meant Sexual Liberation, the Rejection of the Patriarchy, and the poet's claim to Poetic Autonomy.

The Meaning of Maecenas

Caesar plots against India,

Tigres and Euphrates shall, from now on, flow at his bidding;

Tiber shall be full of Roman policemen

(Pound, *Homage to Sextus Propertius*)

Arguably his masterpiece, Ezra Pound's once notorious burlesque re-creation of key passages in Propertius' corpus is distinguished not only by its wit and verve but also by its shrewd insight into the poet's distinctive perspective on his era's politics. The Propertius that most of Pound's contemporaries were in the habit of reading was a fascinating if difficult love poet who happened also to be a loyal court poet: what Pound detected in the poems where others read enthusiastic assent to the Augustan regime was skepticism, irony and disenchantment.

It seems not unlikely that soon after the success of his *Monobiblos*, finding himself inducted into Maecenas' coterie, Propertius would make the acquaintance of Vergil and Horace. What these two poetic stars thought when they first encountered Maecenas' new find is unknowable and hard even to imagine. How Maecenas himself supposed his new comer would fit in to his new surroundings is also difficult to guess at. But he apparently felt that he could persuade the passionate (and eccentric) young poet of love to transform himself into an ardent supporter of the *principes* who would eventually reveal himself as an emperor, the brilliant and lucky politician who relied heavily on Maecenas for advice on various matters and not least for his fertile talents as master of political spin. That Maecenas was not slow in urging Propertius to add ardent civic advocacy to his repertoire of ardent erotic representations is clear from the very first poem in the poet's new volume (2A), which is addressed to his powerful new friend.

quarta, unde mihi totiens scribantur amores, 1: "You ask me why I am constantly busy writing love poems." That was the question that Maecenas posed to his latest "find," a question that perhaps he kept posing and reframing as he offered Propertius suggestions for new topics, for a wider view. Maecenas loved the first volume, but perhaps it was a bit too delicate, a bit soft (*mollis*, 2), not quite manly enough? (This from an amateur of very light verse who preferred delicate garments to his togas!) The poet, as we have seen, answers this question by proudly confessing that it is his girl who had provided him with his genius (not Calliope, the Olympian Muse, or Apollo, the Olympian god of poetry, a deity very dear to the heart and to the iconography of the man who was then fashioning himself as emperor). Having identified Cynthia as the only creator of his poethood, he then launches into an exquisite series of images that evoke her charms and explain the power she has to make a poet of him. This catalogue of her erotic virtues ends with vivid salacity: if, while they are in the midst of rough foreplay, her garment happens to be ripped from her, the sight of her nakedness inspires him to produce a spate of massive *libada*; in short, whatever she does and whatever she says, *maxima de nihilo nascitur historia*, "a superb history is born out of the merest nothing" (13-16).

These raptures are suddenly abandoned for an apology. If the Fates had gifted him with a different sort of talent, one for epic, he would not waste it on old Greek fables (like Hesiod or Homer) or on Greek history or early or fairly recent Roman history: he would devote himself, if he had any epical capacity, to commemorating the wars and the accomplishments of Augustus and, after that, of Maecenas himself (25-6). He then proceeds to sketch some of Augustus' wars and achievements, ending this skimpy catalogue with a renewed promise to include Maecenas in the epic he would like to write but cannot ("You, my muse, would constantly be weaving yourself into Augustus' military campaigns, since you serve faithfully as his chief advisor as to when to make war and when to make peace," *et sumptis et positia pace fidele caput*, 35-6). He then returns to his apology, identifying himself as an epigone of the counter-epical Callimachus, one whose gifts are woefully unsuited to singing the praises of famous soldiers. Instead, he finds his fame in dying for love and in being possessed by love for one woman only. This woman is so pure that she condemns others of her sex who do not share her gift for constancy. And, in fact, she has scorned the *libad* entire because it offends, in Helen, such a poor role model for those who might wish to be a one-man woman (47-50). He then admits that quite possibly his one true love is something of a *femme fatale*, as bewitching as ladies of legend (Phaedra and Circe for instance) who enchant their victims with wicked potions.

(The woman alone has deprived him of his reason, and it is from her house that he expects (and wants) his body to go forth to its pyre (35-6).

Doctors can cure other afflictions, but all medicine is powerless where Real Love is the sickness unto death (57-8). Propertius glories in his incurable illness, and he only asks of Maecenas that, when, at some unspecified date, he chances to drive his fancy chariot past the poet's tomb, he will weep and whisper: *hinc meo fatis duxit puella fatis*, 78: "That cruel girl was the death of this miserable wretch."

In the only other poem in Book 3 (9) that is addressed to Maecenas, the poet offers a similarly disingenuous statement of his desire to satisfy the requests of his friend for epic compositions, one that is constantly undercut by his confessions of epical impotence and his total commitment to self-consuming passions and to poems that commemorate them. (See Johnson 2009, 121-2.) Here, hinting at the modest ambitions of his powerful friend who modestly remains in the spot in which fortune has placed him, he asks why Maecenas keeps trying to make him trust his fragile vessel in the perilous seas of high epic (1-4). (Once again we encounter variations (here rather elaborate) on the "shoemaker stuck to the last" truism (7-20) capped by a single sentence: *natura sequitur semina quisque sua*, "everyone obeys his genetic code.") And that is why, sticking to love poetry in the Callimachean manner (43-46), Propertius will continue to obey his natural bent (thereby winning the adulation of boys and girls in love with love — they worship him as a god), even as he imitates Maecenas, who also lives the life that nature intended him to lead, humbly content to remain as one of the powers hidden beyond the throne, when he could, if he wanted, display his gifts and his authority more ostentatiously, and find his name coupled with Caesar's, especially famed not so much for his bravery as for his field-loyalty (21-34). Still, if Maecenas has a change of heart and decides to take a more decisive and visible role in the history of his times (and the history of Rome), then the poet would be prepared to follow (against the grain) his mentor's lead and devote his genius (*sub tua iussa*, 52, "under your orders") to immortalizing the current military successes of the Augustan regime (including the demise of wicked Antony) in epic verse, 47-60. You start behaving epically, and I'll start writing epic.

So much for Maecenas and his cajoling. But the atmosphere of Book 3 tells another, more complicated story: not just bland, insincere refusals to toe the party line (the droll *recusationes*) but moods tinged with uncertainty and hesitation, these mingled with an increasing insistence on (or anxiety about) his place in the poetic pantheon. The first five poems of Book 3 concern themselves not with Cynthia but with the nature of his career and the quality of his achievement thus far. At 3.1.9-12 he presents himself as a triumphant general, back from the wars of love, laden with Callimachean spoils, accompanied by little cupids, trailed by (vanquished!) poets; and at 35-37 he predicts (not quite accurately) that whatever the envious throngs of his detractors may say (21) future Romans will honor his tomb. In the following poem (3.2) he repeats this prophecy more emphatically. It is still Woman that commands the center of his poetry (Cynthia has here vanished into an indefinite pronoun, 17-8), but the grandeur of his literary survival, which surpasses the pyramids and temples and the Mausoleum (and which may be mocking Horace's similar claim to poetic perpetuity), is what his mindset is currently focused on. In poem 3, he is toying with the idea of writing Roman epic once again, but, taking yet another page from Callimachus, he represents first Apollo and then Calliope as chiding his false ambition and enjoining him to continue writing the love poems he was born to write.

In poem 4 he seems to have decided to ignore their intervention and to write, at long last, of Augustus' victories. Now, he had in fact attempted to write such a poem before (Book 2A, 10), even addressing Augustus there by name (15). In this earlier poem, he contemplates freedom for his erotic muse and his self-transformation into a great Augustan *vates*: (*belli canam, gnumda scripsit puella mea est*, 8, "I shall sing of wars since I've finished writing up my girl"; but of course he had not – she will continue to figure prominently in the next volume, 2B). For the moment, however, he can offer only ironic metaphors of this poetic conversion and continue to write love poems (see the elaborate *gran vifano* (2.10.19–26). In 3.4, his determination seems more powerful and his assertion of the inevitability of Augustus' triumphs over all Rome's enemies is full-voiced. He prays to Mars and Vesta that he may live to see the day when Augustus rides in the triumphal chariot, with all his humiliated enemies trudging in his wake. But this moment of epical vision dissolves in quiet laughter when Propertius casually lets us know that he was witnessing the spectacle of imperial glory with a companion. Ever the partisan of peace and a enemy of excessive wealth (these values become the ostensible topics of poem 5), leaning on his girlfriend's breast, he explains to her which cities the emperor has captured, and voices another prayer, this time to Venus, begging her to look after her royal kinfolk and preserve the emperor and his progeny forever (19–20). Then, in a striking break in his mood, he remarks that "they" who took the booty are welcome to it (presumably this "they" refers not just to his soldiers but to their commander); for himself he is content to applaud them as they move past him on the Sacred Way (21–2).

In poem 5, once again he distinguishes himself from those who live for profit and those who live for making war (and for making wars out of other wars, 12). After briefly taunting the worshippers of wealth, he voices one of his most famous (and most unparaphrased) statements: *victor cum victo pariter miscetur in unbrhis/ consule cum Mario, capite Jugurtha, sedes*, 15–6), "victor and vanquished are equals when they meet in the underworld; captured Jugurtha, you sit side by side with the consul Marius" (in Charon's boat). As for himself, he rejoices in the fact that from his youth he has danced with the Muses and encircled his brain with lots of wine, and always had a garland of spring roses on his head (21–2). Much later, when he has grown up, he will be ready to study the nature of things, various natural phenomena and questions of what may or may not await us beyond the grave. Possibly he is contemplating converting himself into a Lucretian poet when his libido dwindles (and possibly he is sending up Vergil's famous threat to abandon poetry and give himself over wholly to the study of philosophy). In any case, he closes this poem about the meaning of his life and values with another jab at (greedy) soldiers whom he enjoins to go off to the wars they love so much and bring back the standards of Crassus.

What follows in Book 3 is a varied assortment of topics: Cynthia is still prevalent among them, but he also experiments with new subjects and new perspectives. Nevertheless, aside from an elegy on the emperor's nephew Marcellus, a poem tinged with ironic highlights – for well over half the poem its apparent consolation is undercut with elaborate musings on the fact that death renders the lucky equal with the luckless (3.18.11–30) – the poet shows no further interest in yielding to Maecenas' requests to celebrate the regime (3.9 is a funny, affectionate farewell to his mentor: I'll undertake heroic imaginings once I see you leading the way; see Johnson 2009, 121–2). Still, since

the volume closes, as we've seen, with the poet's ferocious, bitter farewells to his Cynthia, the only begueter of his poetry, the reader is led to expect that if the poet continues writing poetry he may at last find himself wholly at the disposal of Maecenas and the ideology he fosters so faithfully.

And indeed, in the opening poem of Book 4 Propertius represents himself as an ardent, vigorously vocal spokesman for the Roman Way. His genius, forgetful of its initial inspiration, is now devoted to the venerable monuments of the City, to the awesome history they reflect, and, especially, to the shining promise of its future as this is vouched for by its shining present (57–70):

Roma, fave: tibi surgit opus; date candida, cives,
omina; et inceptis dextera carnet avsi!
sacra deosque canam et cognomina prisca locorum:
has meus ad metas sudet oportet equus.

"Rome, look with favor on me – it is for your sake that my present project is undertaken. Citizens, give me good omens, and let the prophetic bird sing me a lucky song! As for me, I shall sing of Roman rituals and Roman gods and of the ancient names of the places. This is the goal that my steed must sweat to reach."

Well and good: he has changed his mind and changed his act. But then, characteristically, the poet interrupts himself with a radical shift of tone and design. From out of nowhere there appears an astrologer who, having established his credentials as a truth-teller at considerable length (75–134), reminds the poet of Apollo's warnings against his plans to abandon love poetry (73) and of the god's crucial role in the poet's choosing to write love poetry at the outset of his career (133–4). In ordering the poet to continue writing love elegy, he insists that he must recognize that he will never escape from the domination of Cynthia (139–46).

Propertius tries to ignore the prophet's efforts to undo his new resolution to write patriotic poetry. He writes about the godling Vertumnus, about a soldier's wife who is anxious about her husband's tour of duty in the East, about the legend of Tarpeia (poems 2, 3, 4). But in poem 5 he indulges himself in a grotesque and funny tirade against a madam whose expertise in running her brothel, expansively documented, calls down on her the poet's vehement curses. This poem acts as a peculiar prelude to the volume's centerpiece, a celebration of Augustus' triumph over Antony and Cleopatra at Actium in which Propertius finally performs all he has been promising and becomes a full-voiced *vates*; a great poet-prophet fully capable of representing this turning point in World History in all its solemn grandeur.

Most readers are satisfied with what appears to be the poem's vatic sincerity, but a few smell a cruel burlesque (see Hutchinson 2006, 152–5; Johnson 1973). In any case, the shaman's picture of what happened in history is followed by two poems (7 and 8) in which Cynthia, first as garrulous ghost and then as a jealous and violent lover, returns to enact the comic heroine of what may well be one of Propertius' masterpieces. These strange, wonderful poems give way to poems 9, 10, 11, on, respectively, Hercules and the Ara Maxima, the origins of the *spolia opima*, and the self-pitying ghost of Cornelia, a sort of anti-Cynthia who incarnates everything that Roman family values and Augustus' reconfigurations of them demanded of a Roman wife. (For Hercules, see

Anderson 1993; for Cornelia, see Johnson 2009) Taken all in all this grab bag of Roman themes and erotic meditations (the soldier's wife, Tarpeia and the Madam join with double Cynthia against long-suffering Cornelia) hardly constitute a volume of what Gertrude Stein christened "patriarchal poetry" (here, in its archetypal Roman avatar). Maecenas kept casting his wide and cunning net, but Propertius eluded it with perseverance and bravado.

The Ironic Erotic

So, she would come, like a fugitive, half-dead, to roll upon the
doormat which I have put for this very purpose outside my door.
So, she would come to Me with eyes absolutely insane, and she
would follow me with those eyes, everywhere, everywhere.

(Laforgue 1998, 251)

Propertius is among the least accessible (and maybe the least popular) of the great Roman poets for a variety of reasons. Chief among these are the textual problems that continue to bedevil him despite the valiant efforts of his editors (where do certain poems begin and end? what to make of what appear to be fragments of poems? what happened to the end of Book 2A and the beginning of Book 2B?). Next comes the poet's fondness for an oblique and jagged language that often complicates his considerable ability to craft a style that suits the normal Latin preference for harsh clarity and stern concision. Finally, there are the difficulties we face when we attempt to close with the wide range of his moods and perspectives: the tone (or tones) of voice that Propertius gives his poet-lover is marked by an unusual degree of ambiguity and irony. The obsessed creature who speaks these poems is a paradigm of erotic madness and un-Roman abjection, and his creator, it would seem, must in some measure accede to or at least sympathize with the erotic ideology that he incarnates. At the same time, Propertius, throughout his corpus (but especially in Books 2A, 2B and 3), and often in the same poem, mixes passionate devotion to erotic freedom with a cooler perspective, one in which the poet-lover, his behavior and his values are viewed with a wry detachment and subjected to a shrewd if friendly analysis of the genre he had inherited from Catullus and Calvus (2B.25.4 and 2B.34.87-90) and, more recently and perhaps more crucially from Gallus (91-92). (He refuses, of course, to mention Tibullus, but he can hardly have been unaware of his originality and of the success of his contemporary rival in erotic poetry.)

Something like a parallel to the Propertian mingling of eros and irony is offered by the much later literary phenomenon called (incongruously for our purposes) "romantic irony," a cogent description of which Anne K. Mellor (1980) provides: "... the authentic romantic ironist is as filled with enthusiasm as with skepticism. He is as much a romantic as an ironist. Having ironically acknowledged the fictiveness of his own patternings of human experience, he romantically engages in the creative process of life by eagerly constructing new forms, new myths. And these new fictions and self-concepts bear within them the seeds of their own destruction" (5). "Romantic" in Mellor's study refers only accidentally to eros (the major figures that concern her most are Byron, Keats, Carlyle, Coleridge, and

Lewis Carroll), but this concept, elaborately developed by German Romantic philosophers, has the merit, for our purposes, of focusing on a particular kind of double vision, one in which "sincerity" and skepticism engage in a peculiar dialectic (that is impervious to synthesis). This blending of anthropomies is characteristic of Propertius' distinctive mode, a fusion that puts him considerably closer to Cole Porter ("Down in the Dumps on the Hightech Floor," for example) than to the pure, Petrarchan norm, which allows for ironies but not for an ironical counter-voice against which the erotic voice must compete.

Propertius' ironic erotic is clearly on view in poems where he treats himself with what amounts to a pitiless and droll self-mockery. In 1.3, when he stumbles "home" to Cynthia after a long night of heavy drinking, his efforts not to wake her up (fearing the scolding he knows he's in for) are undermined by his need to touch her (and perhaps awaken her for sex); this hilarious cartoon is prefaced by an extravagant mythological preface (Cynthia as Anadide, Andromeda as maenad) that heightens the absurdity of the unheroic drunk (no Bacchus or Perseus he) who is about to confront the inevitable tongue-fashing of his mistress, which she promptly administers (34-46). In a similar poem (2B.29), drunk again, the poet-lover, unattended by slaves and torches, is accosted in his midnight revels by a throng of angry cupids, sent by Cynthia to find him, apprehend him, and send him back to her. When he arrives back at Cynthia's at dawn (2.29.23f), his first thought is to see if she is in bed by herself, and, finding that she is, he is enchanted by her loveliness. But once again she wakes, and once again she rails against him, this time accusing him of infidelity even as she protests (perhaps a bit too much) that she has remained true to him (31-8). She then gets into her slippers, and, denying him the chance to kiss her, disappears, leaving him defeated (and hung over). In poems 7 and 8 of Book 4, both dead Cynthia and living Cynthia seize the opportunity to give voice to their manifold displeasure with him, reducing him to a comic figure, whose stumbling and flaws and excesses reveal the fissures in the erotic ideology. (See Lefevre 1966, 32-8 and Hutchinson 2006, 170-2, 189-92)

Finally, in 3.6, Propertius shows his poet-lover quizzing one of Cynthia's slaves about her response to a rumor of his dalliance with another woman. Instead of listening to the slave's answer, he himself imagines her response, puts angry recriminations and protestations of her fidelity to him in her mouth, becoming a sort of ventriloquist Pygmalion and thereby revealing not her failings but his own anxieties and narcissism. In all these poems it is the voice of Cynthia that allows the self-mockery to blossom brightly, and it is her criticisms of her lover that permit us to glimpse the possibility that this poet's versions of Cynthia are more about him than they are about her, and to entertain the notion that the genre of love elegy is a masculine invention whose codes are constructed to express masculine perspectives on "being in love," perspectives which tend to focus on the suffering inflicted upon men by their women and to affirm the exemplary behavior of men in matters erotic (an affirmation, or alibi, which would, of course, help efface what might seem their amatory deficiencies).

2B.19 is informed by a somewhat similar irony. Here, in what may be a rather cruel send-up of Tibullus and his predilection for rural, Propertius imagines that Cynthia is heading off to the countryside where she will find no chance of being seduced by the poet's cunning rivals and where oxen and vinticulture will provide her with harmless contentments. She may even find herself participating in the rural dances of rural maidens that furnish glimpses of naked legs (15-6). This last detail to his vision of her countrified lifestyle leads him to imagine there the presence of peeping toms. He immediately

inserts himself into her vacation, and, fervent city slicker that he is, he promises to join her and himself take up pursuits that are suitable to the rural male, such as hunting with hounds – not after lions, of course, or wild boars: rather, his quarry would be rabbits or birds (19–26). The poem ends with the poet-lover promising to join his mistress shortly because his attempts to imagine her safe from temptation in the countryside cannot dispel his fears that his rivals might not be defeated by her temporary rustication. What plunges the poem into complete bathos (and with it the lover-poet and his genre) are those rabbits and birds: his tiny targets reduce the would-be hunter to a figure of fun, and therewith the lover's anxieties (along with his attempts to invent verisimilar details that can represent his passion) mutate to hilarity.

No less funny are the poet's frequent resorts to hyperbole of various kinds. In a poem that sets up the outlines of a very serious narrative moment, Cynthia's grave illness (2B.28), his efforts to magnify his subject's medical crisis with a plethora of mythological allusions threaten to render him slightly ridiculous. (Quintilian and readers who share his distaste for Propertius perhaps find in this strategy merely another instance of the poet's bad taste). He begins by wondering if his mistress' sickness has been caused by the excessive heat that arrives with the dog days, but he quickly decides that Cynthia has brought her sickness on herself, both because women fail to honor the gods and swear false oaths of fidelity (5–8), and because pretty women tend to boast of their beauty (13–4). Perhaps Cynthia angered Venus by comparing herself with the goddess of love and beauty? Or maybe she said uncomplimentary things about Juno's walk? Or did she mention that she thought Minerva had ugly eyes? (9–12). This skewed allusion to the Judgment of Paris is witty in its own right, but it detracts our attention from the dangers that confront the poet's mistress, functioning as an awkward and irrelevant ornament to a scene which should focus solely on the lover's concern for her. Having suggested that she brought her sickness on herself, he tries to cheer her up by reminding her of the great heroines of poetic myth who survived the perils they encountered and were richly rewarded for their sufferings (Io, Leucothea, Andromeda, Callisto, 15–24). Yet should she chance to die, she will be able to chat with Semele, another victim of her own beauty, and, indeed, finding herself among the great erotic heroines of epic, she will, by their own admission, be supreme (25–30). This pattern of baroque ornamentation and ironic hyperbolic coninnues when Cynthia recovers her health and Propertius, having offered his thanksgivings to Jupiter for her escape from death, uses another generous cluster of legendary beauties to construct his most famous and most beautiful tribute to Cynthia's incomparable loveliness. Dead are Antiope, Tyro, Europa, Pasiphae, and all the celebrated beautiful women of Crete and Greece and Rome, but Cynthia lives: *sunt apud infernos tot milia formosarum/pulchra sit in superis, si licet una locis*, 49–50. As Pound puts it neatly, "There are enough women in hell, / quite enough beautiful women." Let one and only one remain on earth, one who incarnates all of them. That is at once witty, extravagant and – so it seems – heartfelt. And unforgettable.

Conclusion

As a writer and perhaps even as an existing individual Propertius was committed to the erotic ideology that his chosen genre reflected. This genre and its codes promised him a freedom from convention, a freedom that was at once merely personal (he could

become who he chose to be and love whom he chose to love) and also artistic (he could experiment with this newest of literary forms, could shape it as he wished to shape it, even, or especially, when his personal and artistic values ran counter to those of what the age demanded). He could be passionate (or feign passion with pen and ink) and he could be or present himself as being an eloquent (obsessed) spokesman of the new erotics. But he could also (often simultaneously) give rein to his natural skepticism and allow his natural gift for satire to come into vigorous play. He could give genuine voice to the Mad Lover even while he was also a keen observer of the Mad Lover's extravagant ideology and of the genre that defined it and him. At once impassioned and cynical, actor and spectator, Propertius so designs the moods and pictures of erotic experience that he imagines and represents that they take on a unique flavor, one that is ardent, embittered and unsettling; one that disturbs even when it pleases most, and, above all, one that is shot through with a wit as ruthless as it is humane.

FURTHER READING

Among older studies, Lefevre, Hubbard, Commager and Sullivan continue to provide valuable readings of the poems. Gold's Loeb version is provocative and insightful. Among recent books, Keith's study is eminently sound, and Miller's is as rewarding as it is ambitious. Indispensable are the commentaries by Heyworth and Hutchinson.

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CHAPTER 4

Tibullus

Paul Allen Miller

Tibullus possesses the rare honor of being considered the foremost representative of his genre in antiquity and so incoherent by modern scholars that one famously attributed a brain abnormality to him (Wageningen 1913). In recent years, his stock has risen with the publication of several influential articles, chapters, and dissertations (Findeberg 1991, Kennedy 1993, Miller 1999, 2004, and Wray 2003), as well as a new commentary (Malby 2002). Nonetheless, it is striking that scholars, such as Ellen Greene (1998), have felt free to exclude him from book length treatments of elegy. Likewise, although a number of monographs have been devoted to the poetry of Ovid and Propertius, it has been thirty years since one devoted to Tibullus has appeared in English. Clearly, the ancient and modern views of Tibullus diverge.

To get a clearer understanding of why the moderns have failed to see the virtues in Tibullus that ancient readers did, it is worthwhile to compare his fate to that of Propertius and Ovid. In the last twenty years, Propertian textual criticism has generated a great deal of attention. Scholars such as Butrica (1997) and Heyworth (2007a, 2007b), following on the earlier work of Margaret Hubbard (1974), have sought to emend, transpose, and rewrite the text with the express purpose of making Propertius read "more like Ovid." These same critics reject as anachronistic another strand of Propertian criticism that views his text as exemplifying a protomodernist aesthetic of discontinuity and inconcinnity first defined by Pound (cf. Sullivan 1964; Benediktson 1989), arguing instead for a more historically-based concept of elegiac style, which takes Ovid as its model. Even those who argue for a more cautious approach leave Tibullus distinctly on the sidelines in these discussions (Fedeli 1987; Tarrant 2006). Instead, the editors of Propertius often base their textual revisionism on a reading of the relatively few ancient poetic descriptions of Propertius. These passages are by and large isolated, one or two word descriptions that are susceptible to more than one interpretation, but all seem to emphasize the

elegant and pleasing nature of Propertian poetry. Ovid as the elegist whose text is best attested, and therefore least controversial, and whose poetry has the clearest and most linear rhetorical development, thus becomes the model to which the Propertian text is supposed to be adapted.

Tibullus is not a player in this modern game. But this is unfortunate and, I would argue, fundamentally distorts the nature of elegiac verse. Indeed, Quintilian, in his discussion of the matter, is clear: Tibullus is the chief exemplar of the genre, though some prefer Propertius, while Ovid and Gallus are each in their own ways outliers (*Instit.* 10.1.93). Why then has nobody proposed a critical edition of Propertius based on the assumption that, if we only had a proper text, he would surely read more like Tibullus? What has made Tibullus so difficult to assimilate to modern tastes, even those of self-consciously historicizing philologists? And what would elegy look like to us, if the rather than Ovid were the model? An understanding of these issues, will not only help appreciate Tibullus's poetry, but will also help us dispel the notion that a single normative style of Augustan elegy exists and that our texts must be altered to fit that model.

One cause for this discrepancy between ancient and modern views of Tibullan poetry is the latter's deceptive subtlety. His is not a poetry of big ideas and grand statements. It does not propound a thesis or even paint a consistent scene. Instead, as Paul Veyne argues, it often seems to drift from topic to topic: "through the mere associations of ideas and words" (Veyne 1988: 36). It may begin in one place – a farm, a symposium, before a statue of Priapus – but soon we are at a crossroads, on an island, or performing a magical rite. Each step takes place effortlessly, but it can be very difficult to say exactly where we are going or, even, where we have been (Putnam 1973: 6–7, 11–12; Lyne 1980: 181–83).

The speaker does not endow the poem with a single center of meaning but rather proceeds by a series of associations. Transitions are not abrupt and seldom explicitly motivated. Ralph Johnson speaks of the corpus as "a fever's dream," an "achronological, spiritual, autobiographical collection" (1990: 102–03). For scholars expecting linear development, logical transitions, and a clear rhetorical framing, Tibullus can be maddeningly frustrating and even termed a failure (Jacoby 1909–10). And, as in the case of Propertius, when critics have failed to find the forms of poetic development they deem appropriate, they have sometimes resorted to the expedient of proposing transpositions and emendations (cf. Murgatroyd 1991 on 1.1.25–32, and Malby 2002: 27).

Tibullus's poems are, in fact, complex tissues of related, interwoven, and sometimes contradictory themes. In poem 1.1, which we shall examine in more depth, the poet begins by contrasting the life of the farmer with that of the soldier. He then switches into praise of his patron Messalla and finishes with an evocation of his life as Delia's *servus amovis*. The entire poem, although possessing no single scene or argument, proceeds in a harmonious fashion, returning to certain key oppositions such as *labor* ("struggle") versus *inertia* ("inactivity"), and *divitiarum* ("riches") versus *paupertatis* ("poverty"). For those expecting Catullus's dramatic sincerity or Ovid's rhetorical brilliance, the Tibullan world of soft-focus irony is disorienting, even alienating. Yet, Ovid labels Tibullus *caelus*, "refined" (*Amores* 1.15.28) and dedicates an entire poem to him on his death (*Amores* 3.9). Horace dedicated two poems to him and terms him a worthy judge of his satires (*Odes* 1.33; *Epistles* 1.4). And, as we have seen, for Quintilian he is clearly the exemplar of the genre, with Propertius a close second. If Tibullus becomes the standard from

which elegy is read, then assumptions about the forms of coherence and organization admissible by the genre become very different. What if Propertius, in fact, does read more like Tibullus?

In what follows I shall first offer a brief overview of what is known about Tibullus and sketch in broad strokes the outline of his oeuvre. I will then offer readings of three poems that I see as particularly revealing of the nature and structure of Tibullus's poetry. The first will be poem 1.1, whose transition from city to country, has always presented problems for Tibullan commentators and whose less than obvious expository order has produced calls for emendation and transposition. Inasmuch as this is the opening poem of Tibullus's first collection, we can also assume that it has a programmatic aspect and is designed to introduce the Tibullan poetic project as a whole. The second will be 1.2. This poem, which is a Tibullan variation on the elegiac *topos* of the *paralausthyron*, begins and ends, as in the previous poem, in two very different places. In this case, however, the setting of the opening itself has been the cause of much debate and seems to defy singular characterization. The indeterminacy of the opening sequence introduces a poem that is structured less around a single discursive focal point – a theme, a speaker, or a setting – than a complex series of related motifs whose associative implications are both multifaceted and nonlinear. The result is a poetic structure that is both deeply coherent and yet defies a simple account. The last poem we will be looking at is poem 2.3. In Tibullus's second book, he has a new mistress whose name, Nemesis, reveals the change in her nature. The goddess Nemesis is the spirit of divine retribution, and Tibullus's *puella* in the second book represents the inverse of everything for which Delia, the mistress of Book 1, stood. Thus poem 2.3 will not only display the structural characteristics we have come to anticipate, as well as the longest sustained mythological exemplum in the Tibullan corpus; it also features an ironic overturning of many of the thematic commonplaces that characterize the poetry of Book 1.

Overview of Life and Works

Tibullus, as we have indicated, does in some ways seem atypical. Where Catullus, Propertius, and Ovid all have explicit programmatic passages in which they pledge loyalty to a Callimachean poetics, Tibullus never directly names a predecessor. Although, as we shall see in 2.3, he is able to indicate his allegiances in subtle ways. His poems are longer on average than those of the other elegists. Where Propertius and Ovid generally have shorter poems that average between thirty and fifty lines, though there can be variation, Tibullus's elegies average between seventy and eighty.

Information on his life is not plentiful. Tibullus was born between 60 and 55 BCE and died in 19 (Putnam 1973: 3). Ancient testimony links him to the area near Pedum in the Alban hills east of Rome (Horace, *Epistles* 1.4.2). He was closely associated with the orator and general, M. Valerius Messalla Corvinus (64 BCE to 8 CE) and accompanied him on his Aquitanian campaign. Messalla was a senator and politician who cultivated the arts. He appears to have served as a patron for Tibullus, as he later did for Ovid. After some hesitation, Messalla supported Augustus in his conflict with Antony but shortly after celebrating his Aquitanian triumph in 27 BCE, he retired from politics. Tibullus's poetry, unlike Propertius's or Ovid's, is free of references to Augustus. From a statement

at 1.1.41-42, we can deduce that Tibullus's family, like many others, suffered a reduction of fortune during the proscriptions carried out by the second triumvirate after the defeat of Caesar's assassins.

Tibullus published his work in two books. The first c. 26 BCE, is largely concerned with Tibullus's love for Delia (1.1.1.2, 1.3, 1.5, 1.6), but also features three pederastic poems (1.4, 1.8, and 1.9) dedicated to Marathus. Tibullus here is following Hellenistic precedent in which love poetry written in elegiac meters was generally homoerotic in nature. Catullus did the same, writing erotic epigrams about his love for Juventius in addition to the Lesbia poems. Neither Propertius nor Ovid includes homoerotic poems in their collections. Tibullus's Book 1 also includes a poem celebrating Messalla's birthday and comparing him to the Egyptian god, Osiris (1.7), as well as a final, more generic poem on love and the virtues of rural simplicity (1.10).

Delia's social status is never directly mentioned, nor are we given any meaningful description of her as a dramatic character. We do know that she demands gifts from Tibullus, and this is often characteristic of *meretrices*. We also know that she is kept under lock and key by her *uir*, a term that can be translated "husband" but possesses a wide semantic range and may refer to any man with whom a woman has a long-term relationship. It would not be uncommon for a *meretrix* to be in such a relationship, and her livelihood would depend on her ability to extract material benefits from her lover or his rivals (Veyne 1988: 1-2; Konstan 1995: 150-58; James 2003: 35-107). A respectable Roman *matrona* would hardly have risked her reputation by having dissolute poets hanging about her door, wheedling and whining to be let in. Yet this is precisely the situation with Delia in poem 1.2, where she is described as locked inside with Tibullus's wealthy rival who, we are told, had won her favor with expensive gifts.

The opposition of the *divites amator* ["rich lover"] to the poor poet is part of the general emphasis on the preference for genteel poverty over acquiring riches through warfare or mercantile adventures announced in the opening lines of poem 1.1. However, given Tibullus's equestrian status, the stance of the poor poet must be regarded as a mere pose. The celebration of the virtues of poverty is, in fact, part of the pastoral genre's praise of country life in general, one recycled throughout much Augustan poetry. By the same token, the preference for amorous *otium* ("leisure") over a socially approved and fiscally remunerative *negotium* ("business") is typical of erotic elegy from its inception.

Tibullus's second book is largely devoted to his affair with the aptly named Nemesis (2.3, 2.4, 2.6). While he portrays his love for Delia as hardly ideal, things deteriorate in Book 2. Nemesis is imagined as a cold and calculating mistress whose sole interest is money. The poet's self-abasement before his beloved becomes complete in Book 2 when he proposes to become a field slave so that he can be close to his mistress when she goes to the country estate of his rich rival. Where Delia represented the fantasized unity of *otium* (leisure) and the fruits of *negotium* (abundance, social recognition), Nemesis stands for their opposite: poverty, labor, and public humiliation. Gone is the idealized country life of Book 1. This field hand gets blisters and a sunburn. In Book 1, Tibullus wishes for a life of rural ease. Here, he embraces mental labor. In Book 1, he dreams of a relation of ideal unity with Messalla, the exemplar of civic virtue (1.5.29-36). Here, he fantasizes about a life of plunder to satisfy Nemesis's desire for luxury goods (2.3.35-58).

The rest of Book 2 is devoted to Tibullus's friends and patrons. Poem 2.1, dedicated to Messalla, recounts the celebration of the Ambarvalia. Poem 2.2 is a short piece on the birthday of Tibullus's friend Cornutus. Poem 2.5 is long narrative elegy celebrating the election of Messalla's son, Messallinus, to the college of the *quindecimviri sacris ritibus*, the keepers of the Sibylline oracles.

Poem 1.1

Poem 1.1 begins as a rural idyll set in the subjunctive mood. It does not indicate a state of affairs, but rather a set of desires. These desires themselves are nothing unusual and constitute a recognized part of the Roman ideological landscape: wishes for a return to country piety, for ease and material prosperity, for social recognition from other elites, and for amorous fulfillment. Yet, while these desires in themselves are familiar, they do not in Tibullus 1.1 seem to emanate from any one recognizable center. Who is this speaker expressing these wishes: a farmer, a soldier, a dissolute lover? All have been possible. Where is he to be located in physical, ideological, or social space? None of these things is made clear, and the initial answers often seem to be contradicted by later developments, as the reader moves through the poem.

At the same time, while familiar values are expressed in the desires articulated by the poem – if often in unconventional collocations – the subject who voices them also adopts positions that would be highly unusual for an elite male to claim as his own. Thus the speaker of the first poem embraces the virtues of country life and simple living in language that often recalls Vergil's in the *Eclogues* and *Georgics*. So far so good. At the same time, he claims *inertia* as one of his primary values: that is, laziness, inactivity, impotence (1.1.5 and 1.1.58). This is far more problematic. Rough rural piety and urban amorous (in)clarity are normally opposed in Roman life. Nor is this the only such contradiction. In one passage later in the poem, the poet speaks in awestruck tones of the vestibule of Messalla's home and how it is lined with trophies of military conquest (1.1.53-54). In the very next, he imagines himself a door slave at the home of his lover (1.1.55-56). The appropriate recognition of elite male values sits cheek by jowl with those of the socially and sexually humiliated. What is, in fact, the world that is wished for here and who are we to imagine wishing for it? The dreamlike quality of Tibullan verse is on display everywhere, and, like dreams, there often seems to be no single center from which meaning emanates, nor are we even necessarily aware of its radical incongruities until we try to subject the text to a rational analysis.

It is easy to see from this brief sketch how Tibullus could prove baffling to critics, and how they might well prefer something that reads more like Ovid. But such a perspective is not only anachronistic, it also fails to appreciate the subtle complexity that characterizes this work. The poem, as we have seen, begins with the poet disclaiming a life of greed and acquisitiveness as well as the toil and danger characteristic of the soldier:

Divites alius fulvo sibi congerat auro
et teneat culti iugera multa soli,
quem labor adidius uicino terreat hoste,
Martia cui somnos classica pulsa figent:

me mea pauperas uita traducit inertī,
 dum meus adsiduo luccat igne focus,
 ipse seram tenens maturo tempore uites
 rusticus et facili grandia poma manu:
 nec Spes destinat sed frugum semper aceros
 praebat et pleno pingua musta lacu.
 (1.1.1-10)

[Let another pile up riches for himself in tawny gold
 and hold many acres of ploughed land
 whom constant struggle strikes with terror
 and whose sleep is roused by Martial trumpet blasts.
 Let my poverty hand me over to a sluggard's life,
 so long as my hearth glows with a constant fire.
 Let me myself sow tender vines at the ripe time, a bumpkin,
 and let me plant grown fruits with an easy hand:
 Nor let Hope desert me, but piles of fruit
 let it ever offer and rich must in a full vat. (All translations are my own)]

The poet seeks not a life of glory or riches. He does not wish to join the plutocracy that made up the Roman elite, here portrayed as soldiers enriched off booty (1.1.1-4). In the forties and thirties BCE when Tibullus came to maturity, such soldiers would have made their fortunes primarily from the spoils of civil conflict. The aspiration to win glory on the battlefield and possess landed wealth as well as a claim to social standing had become increasingly stained with the blood of fellow citizens. But what is the aspiration expressed by this string of subjunctions? Are Roman equestrians, like Tibullus, really to be our sowing their own fields? Are tender elegiac poets really supposed to shed the label of urban elegance (*urbani*) and adopt the role of rude country bumpkins (*rustici*)? The whole thing is ridiculously comic and, at the same time, the incongruity points to a moment of real pathos, a genuine utopian desire for a time before the fall, a Golden Age, when *inertia* ("laziness," "impotence," but also "leisure") could be a form of *virtus* ("manliness," "virtue").

The incongruities continue to multiply as we progress through the poem. The contrast between the ease of country virtue and urban greed and anxiety is both confirmed and inverted at the central turning point of the poem. It is confirmed in the sense that the city remains the site of acquisition and hence of a world fallen from bucolic innocence. But it is inverted in the sense that the very exemplar of Roman aristocratic *virtus*, the poet's patron Messalla, is pictured in a wealthy home overflowing with the spoils of conquest, and the poet's own desire is revealed to lie within the city as well, where he will be a *simitor*. Indeed, the fantasy of rural ease and fulfillment is the corollary of an equal and opposite fantasy of urban self-abasement. The sequence of associations, as presented in the following passage, is revealing: war, wealth, and respectability; social and sexual humiliation; *inertia* and death.

te bellare decet terra, Messalla, marique,
 ut domus hostiles praeferat exutas:
 me reinert uinctum formosae uindla puellae,
 et sedeo duras Ianitor ante fores.

non ego laudari curo, mea Delia: tecum
 dum modo sim, quae so segnis inersque uocer.
 te spectem, suprema mihi cum uenerit hora,
 et tenam mortuus deficiente manu.
 (1.1.53-60)

[It is fitting, Messalla, that you wage war on land and sea,
 so that your house may display enemy spoils:
 The chains of a beautiful girl hold me bound
 and I sit a slave before her hard door.
 I do not care to be praised, my Delia: so long as I am
 with you, I seek to be called sluggish and impotent.
 May I see you, when my final hour has come
 and, dying, may I hold you with a falling hand.]

The *inertia*, which before was contrasted with the greed of the freebooting soldier or landowner, has here become once more a sign of shame, which nonetheless is to be worn as a badge of honor. The humiliation of being chained to his mistress's door as a *simitor* or "door-slave" is preferable to the social position of Messalla, which even so is approved and even exalted. The fantasy of the contented *rusticus* who effortlessly plants fruit trees with his own hands, which dominated the first fifty lines of the poem, has been swept away. If your measure of poetic excellence is the direct expression of a consistent and unified subject position through a clever rhetorical exposition of sustained argument, Tibullus is not your man.

Nonetheless, these poems are far from being incoherent, chaotic, or the clear product of a diseased mind (Wageningen 1913). They are in fact exquisitely wrought aesthetic objects. In its final passages, poem 1.1 returns to all its major themes, even as it inverts them, creating a garland in which each thematic flower is tied to the next. The whole creates a sustained chain of significations, but one that possesses neither a center nor an easily abstractable meaning.

nunc leuis est tractanda uenus, dum frangere postes
 non pudet et rixas inseruisse iuuat.
 hic ego dux milesque bonus: uos, signa tubaque,
 hic procul, cupidis uulnera ferre uis,
 ferre et opes: ego composito securus acro
 dices despiciam despiciamque famem.
 (1.1.73-78)

[Now frivolous love should be pursued while breaking down doors
 causes no shame and it brings joy to have started fights.
 Here I am a good commander and soldier: you, standards and
 trumpets be gone, bear wounds to men who desire,
 And bear riches too: secure with my own pile heaped up,
 I will despise wealth and I will despise hunger.]

The passage begins by invoking the standard elegiac trope of *militia amoris* (see Veitch 1988: 32; Wyke 1989: 36-37; Kennedy 1993: 54-55). The lover, who had portrayed himself as an impotent sluggard, is now breaking down doors and starting fights. He will have the enmity of Messalla, but on the field of love. The life that was rejected before is

embraced, not however beneath the standards of Rome, but those of Venus: "Bear wounds to men who desire!" (76). The formula is richly ambiguous. On the surface, it means let those who want to be soldiers have the wounds they seek. But, of course, no soldier desires to be wounded, except those who march in Cupid's camp (cf. Propertius 2.7; Ovid *Amores* 1.9). The play on *cupidiis* immediately after *ueneris* is not to be missed. Cupidity is the offspring of Love. At the same time the poet disclaims any desire for riches. Yet he too will be safe with his own "pile" and will be able to look down upon both the greed and the poverty of others. The final line gives the illusion of the poem having come to a balance, a Golden Mean between excessive greed and poverty, but it is a mean predicated on excess: the breaking down of doors, fantasies of death in Delia's arms, the embrace of genteel poverty, and the celebration of Messalla's riches.

Poem 1.2

Poem 1.2 is no easier to circumscribe within a unified setting, point of view, or abstractable meaning. Generically, it is most often classified as a paraclausithyron (Punam 1973: 10). On one level, this is certainly correct. Yet it is anything but a straightforward scene made by a locked out lover (*exclusus amator*). The poem opens in *mediis res*. The speaker is calling for more wine (*adde merum*). He wants to drink himself to sleep and forget his pain (*dolores*). He wants those around him not to try to wake him "so long as unhappy love slumbers." In consequence of this opening command and accompanying warning, the speaker appears to many commentators to be in a private or symposiastic setting (Lyne 1980: 180; Bright 1978: 137). It is only in lines 5 and 6 that mention is first made of the beloved's door, and only then is he portrayed as a locked out lover (Murgatroyd 1991: 71; Cairns 1979: 166-67; Punam 1973: 10). In which setting, then, is this scene really taking place: before Delia's door, at a drinking party, or in some fantastical theater of recollection? From a logical point of view, it would seem difficult to reconcile these options. Our speaker must be *some place*. Yet, the true question is not where is he "in reality"; we are not dealing with reality. In fact, this interpretive problem, which has caused critical consternation over the years, begins not with the text of Tibullus but with the assumption that the poem is a mimetic act representing a dramatic scene portrayed from a single point of view. This is our assumption not the poem's. In fact, its hallucinatory quality is part of its appeal (Bright 1978: 140-41).

Let us examine the opening of poem 1.2 in more depth.

Adde merum uinoque nouos compece dolores,
occupet ur fessi lumina uicta sopor,
neu quisquam multo percussum tempora baccho
excitet, infelix dum requiescit amor.
nam posita est nostrae custodia saeua puellae,
clauditur et dura ianua firma sacra.
ianua difficilis domini, te uerberet imber,
te Iouis imperio fulmina missa petant.
ianua, iam parcas uni mihi, uicta querellis,
neu furtim uerso cardine aperta sones.
et mala si qua tibi dixit dementia nostra,

ignoscas: capiti sint precor illa meo.
te meminisse decet, quae plurima noce peregi
supplicis, cum post florida serua daren.
(1.2.1-14)

[Bring unmixed drink and restrain new pains with wine,
So that the sleep of exhaustion might seize our conquered eyes:
Nor let anyone wake a man struck in his temples with much Bacchus,
So long as luckless love lies quietly.
For a savage watch has been placed upon our girl,
And the unyielding door is closed with a hard bar.
Let the rain pelt you, o door of a difficult master,
Let lightning sent by Jupiter's power seek you.
Door, overcome by my complaints alone, swing wide now,
Nor make a sound, when opened stealthily on your turned hinge.
And if in my madness I cursed you, forgive me:
I pray, let those curses fall upon my own head.
You should remember the many things my suppliant voice
Accomplished when I gave floral crowns to your doorposts.]

The passage is very fluid. It moves from demanding more wine, to calling curses upon the door, to addressing wheedling prayers to the same. The ever-shifting tone mirrors the uncertainty of location with which the poem opens. Indeed, all that is stable is the lover's desire and its transgressive nature. This is not a respectable love but a shameful passion for an irregular mistress held captive by her lover or master.

When we reach lines 5 and 6, moreover, it is not only the physical but also the discursive *mise-en-scène* scene that has changed. In opposition to the previous four lines' emphasis on sleep and rest, we have words that indicate firmness, opposition, and other traditional masculine, even military, virtues (*saeua, dura, firma*). These qualities, however, are ironically attributed to the door and then, by implication, to Delia (Punam 1973: ad loc). Not only is there doubt concerning the physical setting of the poem, but also the ideological universe in which the poet operates is shown to be fundamentally unstable. There is, in fact, a kind of double movement that occurs in this and other passages. The trope of *militia amoris*, as we have observed, is common in elegy. In it, virtues attributed to soldiers are transferred to the lovers who represent their ideological antitheses, as we saw at the end of 1.1. The norm within elegiac discourse is, in fact, a simple inversion, so that what is characteristic of the fighter is attributed instead to the lover.

What happens in 1.2, however, is something far more destabilizing. Military virtues such as ferocity, roughness, and stability of purpose are, in a second displacement, removed from the drunken lover posed to make an assault on the door (cf. 1.1.73-74) and transferred to the door itself. What ought to be the stable virtues of Roman military life are displaced from the lover, to whom they should not in fact belong, and transferred from him first to an inanimate object, the *ianua*, and then, by metonymy, to the woman the door stands before, both of whom belong to a *difficilis dominus*. The double displacement is significant and in fact far more destabilizing than a simple inversion: for while we may laugh at an inversion of values, we always recognize that a world on its head can still walk on its feet. The double displacement means that there is no longer a simple binary relationship between the transgressive and the normal; values and

significations have begun to float freely from their established objects. If we add to this ideological double displacement the erasure of a firm placement in physical space, the Tibullan text comes to function less as the expression of a unitary subject and more as a series of interlinked and yet disseminated significations. A floating tumble of words and images displaces any notion of a person behind them.

In the following section of the poem, Tibullus shifts to addressing Delia directly, though she is still locked behind the unyielding door:

Tu quoque ne timide custodes, Delia, falle,
audendum est: fortes adiuvat ipse Venus.
Illa fauet seu quis iuuentis noua limina temptat,
seu reserat furo dente puella fores:
illa docet molli furim decerpere lecto,
illa pedem nullo ponere posse sono,
illa uero coram nuntis conferrere loquaces
blandaque compositis abdere uerba notis:
nec docet hoc omnes, sed quos nec inertia tardat
nec uetat obscura surgere nocte timor.

(1.2.15-24)

[You too, Delia, do not deceive the guards timidly;
You must be daring. Venus herself aids the strong.

She shows her favor whether some youth assaults a new threshold

Or a girl unlocks the doors with a fixed key:

She teaches how to creep stealthily from the soft bed,

She teaches how to walk without a sound,

And how to conceal sweet nothings in secret signs.

And she does not teach this to just anyone, but only to those whom
neither laziness slows nor fear forbids to rise in the dark of night.]

The lover here sings the praises of Venus in a bid to persuade his beloved to unlock the door. *Inertia*, which is portrayed as a virtue in 1.1.5, where Tibullus praises the life of the farmer and the lover in contrast to that of the freebooting soldier, here becomes a vice. Superficially, this realigns Tibullus with dominant Roman ideology. But, where in traditional ideology *inertia* is stigmatized because it symbolizes the opposite of the virtues possessed by the ideal Roman farmer-soldier, here it is blamed as the opposite of what the daring lover and beloved must possess in order to deceive Delia's *dominus*.

In the next section, the speaker warns all passersby, who might see him before Delia's door, to be silent lest they come to know that "Venus is born from blood and the foaming sea" (35-42). The castration of Uranus by Saturn forms a vivid threat, even as it implicitly reminds the reader of the lover's own impotence, his "inertia," when faced with Delia's locked door and the *custodes* posted by her *uir*. The question of whether others need fear either his or Venus's vengeance is put to one side, and he reminds us that this entire discourse, which has recently pretended to be directed against the door or the prying eyes of others, is designed to persuade a mistress to yield to his entreaties (James 2003) – a mistress who under all interpretations is not present to hear him. Delia,

in fact, is either locked behind the door or a figment of his wine-sodden imagination. Of course, it is part of Tibullus's dreamlike discourse, with its subtle and oblique transitions and its refusal of a single rhetorical center, to cause us momentarily to forget not only the address to the door and to Delia but also the poem's seemingly sympotic opening.

Thus after an initial profession that Venus helps those who help themselves (23-24), the poet backtracks. If the goddess or Delia fails to deliver, there's always black magic. Lines 45-54 are given over to the topic of witchcraft and the various standard "proofs" of the *magia's* power: the ability to raise the dead, to call down the moon, and to make rivers change course, all of which the speaker claims to have witnessed himself. In lines 55-58, however, we come to the real point. The speaker claims to have obtained a charm of invisibility that would allow him and Delia to remain unseen, even if caught in *grante delicto*. This whole passage has been nothing more than a series of rhetorical amplifications designed to convince the mistress to satisfy his desires.

In lines 57-58, however, the poet suddenly and comically realizes that if he and Delia are invisible, or if Delia believes that they are, then she might also believe that she and his rivals would be as well. The speaker beats a hasty retreat. He warns Delia not to try to use the charm with anyone else. It only works for him:

tu tamen abstineas alius: nam cetera cernit
omnia: de me uno scietur ille nihil.

[Nevertheless, you should keep away from others: for he will perceive
all the rest, about me alone he will sense nothing.]

We watch as the poet tries to cobble together a justification for the absurd position in which he finds himself: a witch's charm can make Delia invisible but only if she is having sex with him. "Why should I believe it?" ("quid credam?") He *knows* the witch can be trusted because she said she would make him fall out of love (59-61)! Of course, that didn't happen. On one level, these lines possess a cinematic quality: we seem to watch the poet tying himself into knots in "real time." On another level, though, it is completely unclear to whom he is supposed to be speaking: his fellow drinkers? Delia? the door? his own fevered imagination? In the next couplet, there follows a narrative of the purification ceremony, which was supposed to release the poet from the bonds of love, and of the reasons for its failure: he secretly prayed not for release but for Delia to require his passion (63-66). She need only open her door and she will prove, once and for all, the witch's power.

The poem's end does nothing to alleviate this artful confusion. In lines 65-74, the poet elaborates a contrast between an unnamed third party (*ille*) and himself (*ipse*):

ferreus ille fuit qui, te cum posset habere,
malent praedas snitius et arma sequi.
ille licet Clitum uicinas agat ante carceras,
ponat et in capro Martia castra solo,
torus et argento contextus, torus et auro,
insidet ceteri conspiciendus equo:
ipse boues mea si tecum modo Delia possim
iungere et in solio pascere monte pecus,
et te dum liceat teneris retinere lacertis,
molles et inacta sit mihi somnus humo.

[That one was made of iron who, when he was able to have you,
like a fool preferred to follow after arms and plunder:
That one can lead before him captured troops of Cilicians
and place his martial camp on foreign soil,
wholly woven out of silver and wholly out of gold
let him sit on a swift horse demanding to be seen;
if only I with you, my Delia, might be able to yoke oxen
and pasture my herd on its accustomed mountain,
and, so long as it would be permitted to hold you in tender arms,
sleep, even on the raw earth, would be soft.]

The last two couplets briefly bring us back to the rural idyll of poem 1. Yet a major question remains: who is *ille*? Three answers appear in the scholarly literature: They are logically mutually exclusive, but on a rhetorical and interpretive level they are not. The first and most common answer is Delia's *coniunx*. He is a wealthy *miles gloriozus* who holds Delia a virtual captive from the Tibullan lover. A second possibility is another rival. We know that the speaker worries about others and apparently has reason to since he hastens to remind Delia that the magic charm he has received from the *saga* will only work for him.

The third possibility is different: for, it has been argued that *ille* is also Tibullus himself. This is less implausible than it sounds. We know from the poet's own story of accompanying Messalla on campaign, recounted in 1.3, that from a dramatic point of view he fits the characterization of *ille* at least as much as Delia's *coniunx* (Putnam 1973; ad loc; Kennedy 1993: 20). *Ille* on this reading would be an alienated vision of the Tibullan poetic self: an aspect of his existence at odds with his erotic and rural ideal. Furthermore, the poet's audience would have been able to savor the additional irony of knowing that Tibullus, the person, as opposed to his poetic persona, was a wealthy equestrian who really had indeed gone on campaign with his patron, Messalla. He was anything but a farmer sowing with his own hand or a *fantior* chained to his mistress's door. Thus, in point of fact, this section functions on three levels simultaneously: 1. It is an attack on the poet's rival for his greed and heartlessness as opposed to the poet's espousal of simple rural virtues (a position hard to square with his being drunk in the city). 2. It serves as a statement of implicit regret for the poet's persona having at one point chosen the lifestyle he now attacks. From this perspective, the entire passage rather than enacting a dramatic scene represents an internal psychic conflict. 3. It opens an ironic metanarrative, as the poet's own lifestyle is seen to undercut the claims of his persona. Yet the narrator of the fictive world also expresses a utopian critique of the poet's actual existence, so that the "real" and fictive each come to counter the claims of the other, while providing no single logical center from which all such claims can be deduced.

Poem 2.3

In poem 2.3, Tibullus's world gets turned upside down. In Book 1 there is a recurring fantasy of rural ease as an antidote to the corruptions of greed, war and the city. Admittedly, that fantasy is often juxtaposed with or undercut by images of amorous desire in an urban setting that border on the masochistic: death, humiliation, and

castration. Nonetheless, the fantasy of rural ease and of a return to simplicity is an important motif in the story of Tibullus and Delia. In Book 2, the dream of the Golden Age has become a nightmare, most clearly symbolized by the name of the poet's new beloved, Nemesis. Where in 1.1 the poet dreams of being a simple farmer whose vats overflow with rich must, in 2.3, driven by jealousy, he will follow his beloved to the country estate of his rival where he will undergo the ultimate in humiliation and become a field slave. Where in 1.1 he will plant fruit trees with an "easy hand," in 2.3 his "soft" hands will be sunburned and blistered from the unaccustomed work:

o ego, cum aspicerem dominam, quam fortiter illic
uersarem ualido pingue bidentis solum
agricolaeque modo currum sectarer aratrum,
dum subigunt sterneris arua serenda boues!
nec quereret quod sol graciles exureret artus,
laceraret et teneras pussula rupta manus.
(2.3.5-10)

[O since I might spy my mistress, how bravely there
would I turn the rich soil with a two-pronged hoe
and follow the curved plough just like a farmer
while sterile steers drive deep the furrows for seeding.
Nor would I complain because the sun burnt my thin limbs
and the broken blister hurt my tender hands.]

Ironically, of course, the newfound realism of the Tibullan countryside does anything but ground it in reality. This new image is every bit as much a fantasy construction as the previous one.

The poet admits as much by directly modulating from the realistic detail of the opening into the longest and most complex mythological exemplum in the Tibullan corpus. Here, Apollo, stricken by love of Admetus, becomes a slave on his farm. To the shame of his divine sister, Diana (aka Delia, cf. Vergil, *Ecl.* 7.29), he teaches the locals how to make cheese, weaves wicker baskets, and is seen carrying lost calves home.

tunc fascella leui dextera est uimne iuncti,
raraque per nexus est uia facta sero.
o quotiens illo uinulum gestante per agros
dicitur occurrentis erubuisse sorori!
o quotiens ausae, caneret dum ualle sub alta,
rumpere mugitu carmina docta boues!
(2.3.15-20)

[Then a basket was woven with a light switch of reed
and a thin path opened through the knots for the whey.
O, how many times, when he was carrying a calf through the fields,
is his sister said to have blushed when she met him!
O, how many times did cattle daro, while he sang deep in a valley,
to interrupt his learned song with their lowing!]

The willing humiliation Apollo suffers for his love of Admetus is called to serve as precedent for Tibullus' imagined abjection. But the passage is multilayered. On one level, the comedy of the cattle's loving interrupting the song of the god underlines the absurdity of the situation in which both the poet and Apollo find themselves. Yet, what is ironic comedy on one level is poetic program on another: for the poetry Apollo sings is no rustic dirge, but learned verse (*carmina docta*). *Doctus* is, of course, a code word for Alexandrian learning, and Tibullus's use here of a specifically Callimachean erotic version of the tale of Apollo's subjection (cf. *Hymn to Apollo*, 47-54), which had been told in a very different manner by Hesiod (*fr.* 54 M-W), shows precisely that. The sophistication of the Tibullan poetic project is announced, even as the poet's abjection and *rusticitas* are proclaimed.

But this is not the whole story. The *rustic wine* of the rustic cheese basket are themselves a further allusion to Apollo's admonition to Callimachus, in the preface to his *Attis*, to avoid the common track and stick to "untraveled paths" (*kedenthos antiphras*), though the course he runs may be "more narrow" (*stenostraton*) (*fr.* 1.28). This famous passage is part of a longer programmatic statement by Callimachus on the virtues of the slender style and the need to avoid the puffed up, the overblown, and the jejune. Thus, on the literal level, the poet seems in this passage to be justifying his own fantasized self-abasement by citing the precedent of Apollo, but on a metapoetic level he is demonstrating exactly the opposite. He concludes this section by noting that Apollo has now become the subject of gossip (*fabula*), but whoever is in love with a girl would rather be the subject of gossip than a god without love.

The next series of couplets plays a kind of figure on the theme of *praeda* or "loot," contrasting the poet with his wealthy rival and his ill-gotten gain. Yet after a series of reflections on the unnatural excesses that the pursuit of wealth has led to among the Roman elite — oversized mansions and gigantic fishponds — the poet stages an abrupt about face. If Nemesis demands luxury, then let the floodgates open!

heu heu diuitibus uideo gaudere puellas:
iam uenant praedae, si Venus optat opes:
ut mea luxuria Nemesis fiat utque per urbem
incedat donis conspicienda meis.
illa gerat uestes tenues, quas femina Coa
textit, auratas dispositaque uias:
ill sicut comites fusc, quos India torret
Solis et admois inficit ignis equis:
ill selectos certant praebere colores
Africa puniceum purpureumque Tyros.
(2.3.49-58)

[Alas, alas, I see girls love riches.
Then let the loot come, if Venus wants wealth,
so my Nemesis may float in luxury, so through the city
she may progress, a sight to see by my largesse.
Let her wear the see-through cloaks a Coan woman
wove and decorated with paths of gold:
Let her companions be dusky, baked brown in India

dyed by the fire of the sun, its horses brought near.
Let them struggle to offer her chosen colors,
Africa its scarlet, Tyre its purple.]

The *rustic wine* of Apollo's cheese basket have become the gilded stripes (*auratae uiae*) of Nemesis's Coan cloak. In this one poem, the poet moves from a newfound realism that repudiates the Golden Age mythology subtending Book One, to a comic mythological excursus that doubles as a metapoetic manifesto, to an indictment of luxury and its corrosive effects on love and the traditional Roman elite, and then to a nullification of that indictment and an embrace of luxury if that is the price of love. It is a bravura performance but hardly a model of self-consistency. Ovid is capable of making these kinds of about-faces between poems within a single collection (*Amores* 1.4 and 2.5, or 2.19 and 3.4), and sometimes between immediately juxtaposed pairs of poems (2.7 and 2.8). But Ovid's individual poems normally present relatively consistent, if often hilariously perverse, arguments that are then ironically contrasted with one another on a larger intertextual level. What makes Tibullus so baffling, so dreamlike, is the way these juxtapositions and ironic overturnings often happen within the text of a single poem, making the identification of a single position — whether physical, ideological, or personal — from which the poetic subject speaks all but impossible.

Conclusion

In the end, Tibullus challenges our very notion of what a poem is. For him, and for the ancients who appreciated him, a poem is neither a single speech act nor the imitation of a single speech act. It is not a logical or rhetorical argument, or the imitation of such. It is rather, to use a metaphor offered earlier, a kind of garland: a series of statements, exclamations, and descriptions, each enchaind with the next, but not emanating from a single center. The identity and interrelation between those utterances is sequential and serial rather than totalizing. The utterances do not presume, in short, the existence of a subjective essence that stands apart from each poem and endows it with meaning in a univocal fashion, but rather they produce a progression of meanings, of emotional colorings, of reflections and ironic undercuttings that come to constitute the text itself. They ask us to believe not that Tibullus should read more the way we prefer to imagine Ovid, but rather they demand that we rethink the status of the speaking subject in Roman erotic elegy and, perhaps, poetry as a whole. They ask us to imagine if Propertius, in fact, should not really read more like Tibullus than we have dared to suppose.

FURTHER READING

The modern study of Tibullus begins with Bright's *Haec mihi fingebam* (1978) and Cairns's *Tibullus: A Hellenistic Poet at Rome* (1979). Each in its own way strives to make the case for Tibullan artistry, Bright through a more traditional close reading of the poems and Cairns through

tracing the Hellenistic origins of the poet's art. Malby's 2002 commentary is the most complete and up to date in English.

Among books not devoted exclusively to Tibullus, Duncan Kennedy's *Arts of Love* (1993) offers provocative readings of the complexity and overdetermination of the Tibullan persona. Paul Veyne's chapter "The Pastoral in City Clothes" in *Roman Erotic Elegy* helps to situate Tibullus' fantasy of rural ease in its larger generic and literary context, allowing us to make connections with Vergil and Gallus (1988). Sharon James's *Learned Girls and Male Persuasion* is fundamental for anyone wishing to understand the role of the *puella* in elegy (2003). She makes a persuasive case that Della should be viewed primarily as a *meretrix*.

My article "The Tibullan Dream Text" (1999) and David Wray's rejoinder (2003) offer an interesting perspective on contemporary postmodern and psychoanalytic readings of the poet. They have been profitably compared recently by Ellen Olenis (2009). There is, of course, a vast bibliography in languages other than English.

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CHAPTER 8

Roman Love Elegy
and the Eros of Empire

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Propertius 4.3 features a dutiful Roman wife, Arechusa, imagining the whereabouts of her husband's campaigns and giving herself lessons in geography, ethnography, and climatology: she learns where the river Araxes flows, how far a Parthian horse can go without water, and which lands freeze with ice and which crumble from the heat and drought (4.3.35–9). Her self-tutorial makes use of a *tabula*, from which she "tries to learn the pictured worlds" (*conor et e tabula pictos ediscere mundos*, 37; Hutchinson 2006). The source and place of the map remain obscure in this elegiac snapshot, but the cartographic imagery underscores a fascination with Rome's imperial reach during the Augustan era – a time when geography increasingly became a political and ideological tool (Nicolet 1991, 9). The first public global map, conceived by Marcus Agrippa and finished by Augustus, was displayed in the *Porticus Vespasiana* in the Campus Martius, probably by 2 BCE. At this date the princeps had very likely completed a version of his *Res Gestae*, the narrative account of his achievements, including his military campaigns and conquests over lands he added to the Roman empire.

Roughly contemporaneous with the period recorded in the *Res Gestae*, Latin love elegy incorporates many of the same references to the *orbis terrarum*, the "inhabited world," some of which Augustus had conquered and some of which he had in fact not. Throughout the canonical elegiac corpus – Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid – one encounters scattered mention of Aquitania (Gaul), Britannia, Hispania, Germania, India, Arabia, the *colonyi Sers* ("Chinese"), Greece, the Propontis and the Black Sea region, among others, and, of course, Parthia and Egypt, the lands that in many ways marked the opposite ends of Augustus's imperial achievements: Egypt as the conquest that inaugurated his regime and transformed a civil into a foreign war; Parthia as the elusive land that continued to resist Roman domination. How would a contemporary audience have experienced these often fleeting, at times developed references? For the elite citizen

male – elegy's notional audience – such geographical names may well have signified as places of past or future military service; for others, perhaps, as tantalizing evocations of an expansive world beyond – sites at the periphery of Rome's reach, defining its role as metropolitan center; for others still, as rhetorical counterpoint to the narrow confines of elegy's private – and solipsistic – emotion.

As a genre that evolves almost simultaneously with the Augustan principate, love elegy has a paradoxical relationship with the regime's public, imperial dimension. Cornelius Gallus, the first Augustan elegist and first prefect of Egypt after it became a Roman province, appears – retrospectively, at least – unusual for writing elegy at the same time that he pursues a political career. We have no way to conclusively judge Gallus's poetry – for we only have ten lines – but the genre he spawned conventionally displays a first person narrator caught in the travails of passion, often defining himself and his verse in opposition to the public realm. Here, the elegiac poet declines – or declares his inability – to celebrate the military achievements of his patron (or of Augustus) and asserts his commitment to his mistress and to a life devoted to art and love (Prop. 2.1; 2.10; 3.9; cf. Prop. 3.1; 3.3; Ov. *Am.* 1.1 for variations). Nonetheless, images of imperial power appear in such “refusal poems,” for the poetry conjures the public, political dimension of the patron's life as a way of articulating elegy's difference. On one level, then, elegy or rather its speakers mobilize a series of binary oppositions between love and war, poetry and politics, elegy and epic, the center at Rome and the periphery of empire. However, just as elegy in fact requires the second term in these pairings as a way of rhetorically defining itself, so does the genre and its celebration of amorous *otium* (“leisure”) depend on the *Pax Augusta* and Rome's Mediterranean empire as – in Marxist terminology – the conditions of its production (Bowditch 2006, 306–25; Keith 2008, 139–65). Roman domination abroad, following the Punic and Macedonian wars, led to the absorption of Greek and Alexandrian culture – including literary conventions that played a part in elegy's development. On a material level, elegy's ambience of luxury and refinement reflects the wealth of foreign goods that streamed into Rome, first as military booty from conquest, and then as commodities in an environment increasingly receptive to trade. The Augustan peace, in turn, led to an increase in *otium*, encouraging elite literary production that included the writing of elegy (Fear 2000, 235).

The spectacle and fact of imperial power permeates the elegiac sensibility in other ways as well. As Gian Biagio Conte has observed, elegy has a tendency to remake the world according to its own coordinates, to perform a kind of “revaluation of values” where traditional Roman virtues – e.g. *gloria*, *patientia* – become recast in the context of elegiac love (1994, 38). Thus, the masculine ethos of imperial conquest appears in the trope of *militia amoris* (“the soldiery of love”), where the diction and images of militarism serve as the vehicle of metaphors – their figurative component – and private passion is the tenor or “signified” to which they refer (Wyke 2002, 34–35; cf. Kennedy in this volume and 1993, 54–58 on the instability of literal and metaphorical fields); the poet-lover styles himself as a soldier who follows in love's camp, or the *castra* of his girl, rather than in the military retinue of his patron and commander (e.g. Tib. 1.1.75; Prop. 1.6.30, 2.7.15; Ov. *Am.* 1.9); or as a captive prisoner, neck bowed in submission to his mistress or to Amor himself (e.g. Prop. 1.1.4; 3.11.1–4; Ov. *Am.* 1.2; 2.17.5–6). The same phenomenon applies – in reverse – to the depiction of the patron's public world. That is, the rhetoric of elegiac gender and erotic desire often shapes the genre's representation of the

public sphere of empire – elegy's vision of imperial expansion and all that follows from such conquests: the ritual celebration of triumph, the material goods of military booty and trade, and Augustus's transformation of the urban environment of Rome itself. This essay examines how elegy incorporates and shapes these varied images and manifestations of imperial power during the Augustan age. Despite the disaffected posture of its male speakers, the elegiac genre in many ways reinforces and legitimizes the cultural identity of its Roman audience as inhabiting the metropolitan center of a far-reaching empire.

Visions of Empire: patrons, travel, and foreign conquest

In the poems of Tibullus, it is the figure of Messalla Corvinus who, as public statesman and Roman general, most evokes the world of imperial conquest. There are no explicit “refusal poems” declining to celebrate his exploits, but Tibullus pointedly contrasts a private, erotic servitude to his patron's pursuit of military honors: “It becomes you to wage war on land and sea, Messalla, so that your house may display enemy spoils: the chains of a beautiful girl hold me bound [*me retinent vinculum formosae vincula puellae*] and I sit, as slave-guardian before her hard doors” (1.1.53–6). The speaker's masochistic fantasy draws on imagery appropriate to his patron's martial sphere, but he prefers a life of rustic poverty with his mistress, Della (1.1; 1.5), viewing the average soldier's experience as violent and motivated by greed (1.1.76–7; 1.10).

Despite such preference, one of the most expansive visions of the Roman Empire at the beginning of the Augustan principate appears in Tibullus 1.7. Combining birthday poem, kletic hymn and victory ode, this unusual elegy honors Messalla's conquest over the Aquitanians and evolves from a brief description of his ritual triumph in 27 BCE into a panoramic sweep of Rome's imperial reach. Rivers, mountains, and cities metonymically evoke the conquered regions, from Transalpine Gaul's Pyrenees and personified *Arae* trembling in defeat (*tremere... rivas*, 4), to the blue, silent waters of *Cydnus* (13) and ancient Cilicia's *Taurus* (a summit of 11,000 feet, modern Bulgar Dağı [16]), to Phoenician *Tyros* (20). The poem's extended hymn-like depression on the Nile and the Egyptian god *Osiris* (23–48), invited to take part in Messalla's birthday festivities, displays respect for Rome's new province – an appeal for tolerance in the aftermath of the civil wars (Konstan 1978, 185). Contrary to his programmatic embrace of the *vita iuvis* (“the inactive life,” 1.1.5, 58) in the first elegy, the speaker ambiguously claims, “Not without me was your honor acquired,” (*Non sine me est tibi parvis honos*, 9), suggesting the poet's actual participation in Messalla's expeditions, or, alternatively, the role that elegiac poetry plays in honoring his exploits. The personification of geographic features, particularly rivers, as “witnesses” to his claim (*testis Arae Rhodanusque celer magnusque Garumna*, / *Carrivitis et fluvii caerulea lympha Icyer*, 11–12) may even refer to the practice of visually depicting conquered territories in ceremonial floats, suggesting the speaker's presence at his patron's triumph. Regardless, the bird's-eye view of Rome's provinces and potential holdings enters elegy here, as elsewhere, in relation to the patron and the elegiac poet's connection to him (cf. Tib. 2.5; Prop. 1.6; 2.10; 3.22, 4.6).

The typical "contrast" between poet-lover and patronal figure does appear in 1.3, where the speaker lies languishing on Phaeacia, imagining both the underworld and a reunion with his mistress Della, since he is unable to continue with Messalla on his journey to the East. The poet's sickness – evocative of elegiac *amor* as a condition – disqualifies him from further participation in military pursuits. But the speaker's prayer to Isis (2.3–32) and initial recourse to Egyptian religion (often cultivated by the elegiac mistress, cf. Prop. 2.28.61; 2.33; Ov. *Am.* 2.13.7–16) inevitably invoke that imperial world beyond Rome and anticipate the vision of Osiris in 1.7, the birthday-victory poem for Messalla. There, the feminine characterization of the Egyptian god in his festive, ritual guise (43–48) – as a lover of song and dance, with Tyrian clothing and *teneros* ... *pedes* ("tender feet," 46) – suggests both the elegiac genre and the gender ambiguity of lover and mistress.

Such coloring of empire's reach and the political-military sphere through the lens of elegiac coordinates occurs frequently in Propertius's poems, and particularly those addressed to his patrons Volcacius Tullus, Maecenas, and implicitly Augustus (1.6; 1.14; 2.1; 2.10; 3.22). Although markedly different from Tibullus 1.7 in tone, Propertius 2.10 presents Augustus's current or intended geographic conquests in rhetorical suggestive of elegiac sexual relations. Considered a variation on the "refusal poem" or *reversatio*, 2.10 promises to celebrate Augustus's battles, "since" – or, on closer examination, "when" – the matter of Propertius's "girl has been written" (*bella canam, quando scripsit puella mea est*, 8). After an exaggerated and portentous twelve lines announcing such intentions, only six lines actually focus on the princeps' putative military accomplishments (2.10.13–18). Given the approximate publication date of Propertius's second book, 26–25 BCE, the description of geographical territories distorts Augustan imperial exploits. The reference to the Euphrates as denying Parthian military activity (or, alternatively, refusing "to protect Parthian horsemen behind his back," *Tam negat ... equitum post terga tuum / Parthorum*, 13–14) and regretting the capture of the Crassi (*Crassos se tenuisse dolet*, 14) misrepresents the actual political situation, for the standards seized in 53 BCE from Crassus and his sons were not returned until 20 BCE. Regardless, the two main verbs here – *dolere* and *negat* – appear elsewhere in Propertius in erotic contexts, with *negare* referring to a mistress refusing to bestow her favors (e.g. 2.14.20; 3.21.7) and *dolere* signifying love's anguish (e.g. 3.8A.10; 3.8A.23). As a result, the lines present the Euphrates as an elegiac belatedly denying congress to the Parthians while making its bed accessible to Augustus. In turn, India had certainly not "surrendered" or "given her neck" to Augustus's triumph (*India quae, Auguste, tuo dat colla triumpho*, 15), despite visits to the princeps from her ambassadors in 25 BCE (Oros. 6.21.19). Nonetheless, here, too, the diction of submission suggests otherwise and evokes the context of elegiac love – the *amator* as enslaved victim (Tib. 1.1.55; 1.2.90; Prop. 1.1.4; 1.13.15; 2.30A.8; 3.15.10; Ov. *Am.* 1.2) or bearing the yoke of animal husbandry (Prop. 2.5.14). In this comic send-up of Augustan imperial ambitions, Propertius recasts the trope of *servitium amoris* ("the slavery of love") and applies it anew to the military, triumphal context from which it partly derives. Finally, the vision of Arabia trembling before Augustus (*et domus intantae te tremi Arabiae*, 16) likely refers to an expedition undertaken by Aelius Gallus. Motivated by the trade in Eastern spices, gems and perfumes (Gruen 1996, 149), this ill-starred incursion into regions south of Egypt culminated in disaster. In Prop. 2.10, however, military aggression rhetorically conceived as sexual assault governs the

personification of Arabia as a fearful virgin (*intantae* ... *Arabiae*) and extends into the following lines with reference to Britain: when the speaker commends Augustus, "if any land withdraws to the edges of the world, soon defeated let it feel your hands [or military might]" (*sentiat illa tuas postmodo capta manus*, 18), the language in fact anticipates threats made to Cynthia in 2.15. There, the speaker assures his mistress that she "will experience his hands, her clothing ripped" (*scissa veste meus expertere manus*) if she stubbornly remains dressed (2.15.17–18).

Although love elegy often inverts the gender norms of Roman society, giving the mistress masculine authority over her feminized – or effeminate – lover (Gold 1993, 75–101; Wyke 2002, 33–34; 166–68), the threats of violence posed by the elegist reassert his virility as "epic masculinity." True, as a displaced assertion of epic militarism that violates elegiac *mollietas* ("softness"), such violence occurs at the semiotic level of generic transgression, suggesting the diminished political space for elite male action under the Augustan principate (Fredrick 1997, 172–193). However, precisely because the epic genre in elegy's discursive system signifies – in other respects – the normative values of the Roman male as citizen-soldier, such violence also points up the artifice of elegy's gender inversions: outside of the elegiac world, the Roman male citizen necessarily has more power and political status than the female. As a result, for all that 2.10 mocks Augustus's unfulfilled imperial plans, the diction of elegiac-epic aggression here aligns the political domination of other lands with the actual Roman gender hierarchy of men over women. In turn, the evocation of gender norms in the context of imperial expansion serves to naturalize Roman hegemonic rule (Bowditch 2003, 163–80). Likewise, in Tibullus 1.7, the "feminine" vision of the Egyptian god Osiris, in his ritual guise, implicitly contrasts with Messalla as conqueror, again reinforcing Roman imperial hegemony as a norm of masculine dominance (Bowditch 2011, 88–121).

A similar dynamic animates the poems addressed to Volcacius Tullus, Propertius's patron in the *Monobiblos*, who appears subsequently in 3.22 towards the end of the third book. Tullus serves as alter-ego and foil, a symbol of public imperial service against which the poet-lover defines his art and lifestyle. In 1.6, for example, Propertius declines to travel abroad with Tullus, whose sea-faring journey to Eastern Lydia and Ionia and active military service in the retinue of his uncle, proconsul of Asia, constitute an individual trajectory and set of values equivalent to the epic genre. Recalling the homosocial fraternity of Catullus 11, where the poet's *comites* ("comrades") are prepared to traverse the globe, the Propertian speaker in 1.6 declares his willingness to "sail the Aegean sea" or "scale Rhiphaean peaks" (2–3) with his friend, were it not for Cynthia's protestations. The elegiac mistress – both metaphor and metonym for the elegiac genre (Wyke 2002, 11–45; Miller 2004, 64) – keeps the speaker from engaging in such epic travel and exploring the imperial periphery. Despite the contrast between the speaker's stasis and the patron's real and imagined travel, the feminine place names of Tullus's geographic destinations – Ionia and Lydia (1.6.31–32) – suggest both women and elegiac pursuits: Lydia elsewhere serves as a courtesan's name (Hor. *Od.* 1.25), while Ionia is described as *molli*, or "soft" and "effeminate," the common descriptor for elegiac poetry. Propertius again inverts the trope of *militia amoris* into *amor imperii* ("love of empire"), rendering Tullus's imperial destinations and military life in erotic, elegiac diction (cf. Prop. 3.22.1–6). However, not all elegiac visions of empire explicitly eroticize foreign lands: the culminating lines of Propertius 4.6, arguably the poet's most imperially "propagandistic" – if

parodic – elegy; feature poets competing at a banquet, at the temple of Palatine Apollo, with encomiastic one-liners on Augustus's foreign conquests (77–84). The anticipated servitude of the Sygambri (*servire Sygambros*, 77) certainly resonates with the trope of *servitium amoris* but falls far short of the eroticized description found in Propertius 4.3. There, Bacra's “perfumed leader, his fine linens snatched away” (*fragrant odorant car-basa linea duci*, 64) – as Archusa imagines her campaigning husband's encounter – recalls the Propertian speaker's erotic battles with his mistress.

Elegiac Luxury

The characterization of the East in the language of elegiac decadence may justify Roman hegemony in the Mediterranean, but it also suggests the *mollis* (“soft”) genre of elegy, with its effeminate speakers and luxurious ambience, as itself an effect of military conquest. Of course, there can be no clear-cut historical or literary genealogy for elegy, given the complex relationship of literary history to the extraliterary (Miller 2004, 15–30). The poet-lover's *mollitia* (“softness”) constitutes as much a rhetorical response to the increasing authoritarianism of Augustus and loss of political power for the aristocratic male (Fear 2000, 234–38; Janan 2001, 7–9; Wyke 2002, 176–77) as a convention rooted in late republican discourses about Rome's encounters with the East. Nonetheless, the depiction of *mollis* Ionia, one of Tullius's destinations in Propertius 1.6, hints at a discourse of moral censure prominent in Roman historians and orators of the first century B.C.E. Sallust (*Cat.* 11–14), Livy (38.27, 39.6), and Cicero (*Mar.* 11) all attributed the vice of luxury and, implicitly, the chaos of the late republic to corruption “imported” into Rome by soldiers during the period of imperial expansion after the Punic wars. Returning from campaigns abroad generals and soldiers alike brought back vast quantities of military spoil – slaves, artwork, religious artifacts, the sheer bulk of precious metal – as well as, the ancients claimed, an inclination to indulgence. Excessive wealth and the hedonistic propensities of the East had led to a softening of the Roman character. The effeminate *amator* – and the paradoxically censorious attitudes he sporadically adopts – partly evolve from these moralizing discourses of the late republic and the historical conditions of a society enriched by military plunder and seduced by Hellenistic refinement (cf. Griffin 1985, 1–31 on elegiac luxury; Johnson 2009, 4–5 on elegy in response to Rome's new horizons).

In the *Ballum Carthinae*, Sallust claims that Sulla “had treated the army he led into Asia with luxury and license (*luxuriose nimisque liberaliter*), practices contrary to ancestral custom (*mos maiorum*), in order to secure its loyalty.” As a result, “a pleasurable, lush environment (*loca amoena, voluptaria*) had easily softened (*molliverunt*) the fierce spirit of the soldiers in leisure” (*Cat.* 11.5–6). Soon, “the army became accustomed to making love, drinking, and admitting (*mirari*) statues, paintings, and engraved vases.” Propertius's third poem to Tullus in the *Monobiblos*, 1.14, reveals the young statesman-soldier still in Rome, but as though “prophetically” affected by his journey to *mollis Ionia* and *Lynxia* (Keith 2008, 145). Exemplifying Sallust's vision, Tullus reclines voluptuously by the Tiber (*abiecitur Tiberina molliter undae*), drinking imported Lesbian wine from an engraved cup – “the work of Mentor” – and admiring (*mirari*) the scene, as swift skiffs

and slow barges alternately pass by (1–4). Along with the actual luxury products of the East, a highly prized foreign wine and silver drinking ware embossed by a famous Greek artist, Tullus displays behavior imported by Romans returning from military service abroad – namely, the indolent pleasure-seeking customs of the Asian provinces.

Propertius does not explicitly engage a discourse of moral censure in 1.14; rather, he contrasts the actual opulence enjoyed by Tullus with the speaker's erotic bliss, for which imperial luxuries and foreign exotica serve as rhetorical trope (Bowditch 2006, 318). A day of languorous passion with his mistress brings the fabled “waters of Pactolus flowing beneath his roof” and causes “pearls to be gathered from the Red Sea” (1.14.10–12). Despite his dependence on the rhetoric of empire, the speaker disdains Tullus's actual wealth, implying that imported riches neither compensate for, nor protect against, the powerful force of *Amor*. Angry Venus crosses “thresholds of Arabian onyx” (19), mounts “couches spread with crimson” (20) and beds made up with “silks of varied textures” (22) – a precious damask or tapestry likely known to Romans only through the caravan trade (Richardson 1977, 185). Should Venus be graciously pleasant, in turn, the lover “will not fear to scorn the gifts of Alcinous” (24). Suggesting the god-given opulence of Alcinous's palace (Hom. *Od.* 7.81–132), the image looks back to the opening vignette of Tullus's villa, whose landscaped orchards feature trees as thickly planted as on the Caucasus (5–6). Here, too, the goods of a far-reaching empire crowd into the city and Propertius's poem. The reference to the trees of an Asian mountain range suggests the public corollary to Tullus's private urban groves: Pompey the Great's portico-garden, part of a manubial complex (established with war-booty) in honor of Venus Victrix after his conclusive victory over Mithridates of Pontus, featured the Asiatic plane-tree, a favorite of Persian kings for its aesthetic and shade-giving properties, and which the general had originally displayed as foreign spoil in his triumph (Kuttner 1999, 345–47; cf. Prop. 2.32.13).

If the speaker in Propertius 1.14 scorns actual wealth as irrelevant to his erotic life, elsewhere in elegy such riches threaten the lover's amatory relationships (Prop. 2.16; Tib. 1.5.60–68; 2.3; 2.4.21–40; Ov. *Am.* 3.8). The gifts of a moneyed rival, the *divis amator*, often compete with the voice of the poet-lover for access to the elegiac mistress. At one level, both the poet's elegiac verse and the luxury goods demanded by the mistress come from abroad and constitute imports – Roman love elegy as a “domesticated” Alexandrian product displays all the Hellenistic refinement of its “origins”. Nonetheless, the mistress prefers the actual gifts of luxury – from an economic perspective she needs them for her trade as a courtesan (cf. Janan 2001, 85–99; James 2003, 35–68). However, in the eyes of her lover she is greedy, a stock motif of New Comedy. Regardless, when the poet-lover engages in a discourse of moral censure, it appears as a distinguishably high-minded reflex stemming from personal motivation. The dramatic context of elegy's love triangle – the poor speaker, his wealthy competitor, and the elegiac courtesan whose favors they seek – ironically encourages and lends a frame to a censorious diatribe against wealth and its imperial sources.

Tibullus's persona in his second book of elegies adopts such postures, even as he declares his own paradoxical desire to win Nemesis, his new mistress, through gifts of foreign luxuries. Book One's contrast between rustic simplicity and the military life of violence and plunder continues into Book Two but with a new, more complex twist (see Miller in this volume). Deploing Nemesis's sojourn in the country with a rival lover, the

speaker of 2.3 eventually curses agriculture as responsible for his mistress's absence, even as he also condemns the contemporary age's drive for riches: the desire for *praeda* ("spoil," "booty") incites warfare, bringing bloodshed (*cruxor*), slaughter (*caedes*) and death (37–38; Malby 2002); *praeda* encourages dangerous sea-voyages, excessive building practices, and limitless acquisition (39–46). However, the moralist's censorious capitulates to elegiac refinement, giving way to an implicit elegiac rivalry and erotic competition, where the speaker himself appears to appropriate – wishfully – the elegiac role of *hines amator*. "Alas, I see that girls rejoice in rich men (*divitibus*). Let spoil (*praedae*) come, if Venus desires wealth (*opes*), so that my Nemesis may flow with luxury (*luxuria*) and parade through the city, conspicuous in my gifts (*donis*)" (49–52).²⁷ Within fifteen lines *praeda* undergoes a semantic metamorphosis, evolving from connotations of bloody conquest into the more neutral *divitiae* and *opes* ("wealth"), followed by the embodiment of such riches as feminine *luxuria* in the context of elegiac gift-giving – *donis*.

Imperial violence here thus enables the imports that fuel conspicuous consumption, whether in the context of extravagant urban construction or of personal finery. Should the *praedator* desire foreign marble – through the bustling city his column is borne by a thousand strong teams of oxen (43–44). Nor does the speaker's humble wish to use inexpensive pottery from Samos or even "Puy local" from Cumae (47–48) have sway with his status-driven mistress. Rather, conquest of foreign countries and markets underwrites the transformation of the Augustan city and caters to Nemesis's penchant for luxury goods displayed against this urban backdrop:

illa gerat vestes tennes quas femina Coa
 rexit, auratas disposuque vias.
 illi sint comites fusi quos India torret
 Solis et admotis inficit ignis equis.
 illi selectos certent praebere colores
 Africa puniceum purpureumque Tyros.
 nota loquor: regnum ipse tenet quem saepe cecigit
 barbara gypsatos ferre catasta pedes.
 (2.3.53–60)

Let Nemesis dress in sheer silks, woven and arrayed with golden threads by a woman of Coa.
 May she have dark-skinned companions, those whom India burns and the sun's fire dyes, its
 chariot drawn near. Let Africa with its crimson and Tyre with purple rival to present rare
 colors to her. I speak of familiar topics: he possesses her, his realm, one whose chalked feet
 often walked the slave's platform.

(my translation)

Displaying an uncanny parallel to our own contemporary globalized marketplace, where imported goods rely the often exploited lives of their makers, Tibullus's lines here draw attention to the agent – *femina Coa* – and her craft (*rexit*, *disposuit*), the human labor behind the exotic Coan cloth so prized by the Roman elite. Such reification of the human lives of the "colonized other" appears as well in the following image of Nemesis's attendants, presumably slaves, who would be conspicuously displayed to mark her wealth. The verb *inficit*, "dyes," suggests the refined or object-status of these companions, as the metaphor looks back to the Coan cloth and forward to Africa and Tyre, competing with

their regionally specific colors. Moreover, the characterization of India as scorching her people and dying them with fire implicitly points to the climatological justification of Rome's political supremacy as occupying a region poised between extremes. Overall, this image of Nemesis, decked in foreign exotica and parading through the streets, reveals the elegiac mistress as a trope for Roman imperialism and economic exploitation. Africa and Tyre present "gifts" as though they were erotic rivals for Rome's attention, even as Nemesis's new lover constitutes a foreign import himself – a former slave according to the jealous disparagement of the speaker. A similar vision of the mistress appears in Propertius 2.16 and 3.13, elegies showing a clear kinship and possible cross-fertilization with Tibullus 2.3 (and 2.4), which also denounces the mistress's greed. In all these poems, the female gender becomes entwined with a discourse of corruption, as "women progressively more adorned body symbolizes the progressively more degenerate expansion and the ensuing decadence of the body politic."

The elegiac mistress has, in a sense, a paradoxical relationship with the Roman empire. (In the one hand, she is characterized as *dura* ("hard" or "cruel"), an epithet extended to her door (e.g. Tib. 1.1.56; 1.8.76; Prop. 1.16.18; Ov. *Am.* 1.6.28), thus connecting her inaccessibility (Prop. 1.16.30; 2.22.43), often on account of the expensive demands she makes on her lovers (Prop. 2.16; 3.13; Ov. *Am.* 3.8). In this her covetousness resembles the soldier's quest for plunder and the *domina's* character – in contrast to the *maelitia* of her lover – assumes associations of the military life and epic travel. In Propertius 2.16, a *praetor* ("governor") has returned from Illyricum, bringing distress for the speaker but *maxima praeda* ("great spoil") for Cynthia. Decrying Cynthia's infidelity, the poet-lower blames it on *invidia merce* (16), the "shameful war" that she extracts from the *praetor*, a rich rival who, the text implies, has similarly "fleeced" his province. The rhetoric of profit also appears in 3.4, where the speaker apostrophizes Roman soldiers and holds out the prospect of "great pay" (*Magna, viri, merces*, 3) to be had from Augustus's future campaigns in India. In turn, to the disgust and chagrin of the speaker who is left out in the cold with his verse, Ovid's elegiac *puella* embraces a soldier newly enriched from his military exploits abroad and now in possession of a knight's hood (*Am.* 3.8). As in Tibullus and Propertius, foreign *praeda* becomes the courtesan's *merx*, merchandise or "profit," making her a trope for the imperial impulse and aligning her with the soldier she clasps.

On the other hand, it is ironically these very luxury goods from abroad that provide elegy's air of Hellenistic refinement, lending elegance to the mistress and sensuous charm to the *mulier* genre she represents. Criticism has shown the folly of assigning a flesh-and-blood realism to the elegiac beloved, given the numerous ways that the elegists identify their mistresses with the genre and poetics of elegy (cf. Prop. 2.1.2.24A; Ov. *Am.* 3.1; Wyke 2002, 11–45). In Propertius 1.2 this makes for humorous paradox: the speaker chastises Cynthia for her elaborate hairstyle, seductive Coan silks, and perfume from the Orient, viewing such adornments as superfluous to her natural charms; such claims, however, are disingenuous in a poem that employs reworked mythological *exempla* to ornament its thesis (Bowditch 2006, 306). The *pergynia munera* ("foreign gifts," 4) by which Cynthia "sells herself" constitute symbols of elegy's "imported" Alexandrian style even as their very linguistic presence lends an exotic glitter to the text. The jewels and fabrics that the *praetor* brings to Cynthia in 2.16, for example, or those goods that she

demands the speaker himself seek, infuse the poem with color and a sense of spatial expansiveness: clothing from Tyre, dyed a deep purple in the secretions of the shell-fish *maris*, green emeralds or *maragdi* from Scythia; and *ebryolithi*, raven yellow peridot or topaz, from India and Ethiopia. Such objects often underscore their foreign provenance with names that belong to an extensive register of Greek loan-words associated with luxury in Propertius (Malby 1999, 380). As a result, Propertian elegy, more so than Tibullian, transforms and mystifies the processes of Roman imperialism – its military conquest, commercial exploitation, and importation of luxury goods – through the foreign, Greek musicality of its verse (Keith 2008, 156). Indeed, the linguistic fabric of the text appeals aesthetically and sensorially to the reader's pleasure in a way that parallels the mistress's seductive allure for the poet-lover (Bowditch 2006). The Propertian speaker alludes to this metonymic relationship between the "adorned" mistress and the verse she inspires when he asserts that Cynthia's simple movement in sheer Coan silks leads to an entire volume of poems fashioned from such fabric (2.1.5–6) – a statement that suggests a "deluxe" edition of a poetry book (Miller 2004, 142), even as it implicates elegy as a luxury commodity in Roman imperial trade.

Coming after Propertius and Tibullus in the elegiac tradition, Ovid's poems unabashedly celebrate this "global" consumer economy as enabled by foreign conquest. For Ovid, foreign goods serve not merely to adorn but even to replace – literally or metaphorically – the physical attributes of the elegiac mistress. In *Amores* 1.14, for example, after chastising his depilated girlfriend for her use of dangerous hair dyes, the poet-lover points out that the recent triumph over Germany has meant that wigs are easy to come by ("Nunc tibi captivos inter Germania crines/tura triumphae nuncere genis eris," 45–46). Earlier in the poem, he compares his girlfriend's original locks to fine threads of Chinese silk, a luxury good that increasingly made its way to Rome. Ovid's elegiac-didactic poetry, in particular, suggests the favorable conditions to international commerce that came about with the *Pax Augusta*. The *Mediamina Faciei Femininae*, a handbook devoted to cosmetics, openly advertises the advantages of *imperium sine fine* for improving female appearance. As a preamble to his recommendations the speaker draws a series of comparisons to nature's gifts. Just as fleeces are dyed in Tyrian purple and Indian ivory is carved into art, or as marble transforms raw land and gold adorns buildings (7–10), so women should turn themselves out in expensive fabrics, gems from the East, and perfumed hairstyles (18–22), and they should pay particular attention to their faces (52). For a fresh complexion, apply a mixture of Libyan barley (53); ins from Illyria also proves useful as does Attic honey (74, 82) and Libyan salt (94). In addition to the Mediterranean as a market for beauty products, cosmetically-groomed women themselves are compared to luxury items from Tyre or India, pointing up the imported commodity-status of the courtesan as well (cf. Prop. 2.22A, 2.25 43; 2.23.21; Ov. *Arts* 1.56–59; 173–75). Indeed, the analogy between cosmetics and urban transformation (*Metis*. 9–10) signals how Augustus's renovated Rome becomes the hunting grounds for romance in Ovid's *Arts Amatoria* (see Welch in this volume). As the *praecipitor* advises, spectacles such as the emperor's "mock sea-battle," a re-enactment of the battle of Salamis (*Arts* 1.171–76), or the anticipated military triumph of Gaius Caesar (1.177–228) attract massive crowds – and numerous girls – from all over the empire: Rome has, "you might say, whatever the world has ever had" (*haec habet ut alias spectacula in orbe fuit*; 1.56).

Elegy and the Roman Triumph

The persistent and evolving motif of the Roman triumph in the development of love elegy charts the fortunes of the ritual institution during the principate and underscores Said's wacker insight that the "enterprise of empire depends upon the *idea of blessing an empire*..." (1993, 11). The ultimate honor awarded after a successful military campaign, a general's triumphal procession through the streets of Rome repeatedly affirmed the idea of empire for its citizens. With its opulent parade of riches, captive prisoners, exotic trees and animals, plundered art and geographic placards, the Roman military triumph indeed brought the "world" in the city – *orbis in urbe* (*Arts* 1.174) – and put it on display. As a public performance the triumph involved spectators as emotional participants invested in its ritual (Brilliant 1999) and reinforced the distinction between imperial Rome and its conquered "others" (Beard 2007, 107–42). It is this power dynamic of conquest that Roman love elegy often appropriates in its "transvaluation of values" (Conte 1994, 38) making the triumph a powerful metaphor for erotic victory and subjugation. Elegiac lover, his mistress, and Amor himself all – rhetorically speaking – "wear the purple" in the genre's varied permutations of the trope (Prop. 2.14.23–25; 4.8.17–18; Ov. *Am.* 1.2; 1.7.35–40; 2.12), with poet, too, playing the *triumphator*, celebrating his achievements in verse (Prop. 3.1.9–12, 19–20; cf. Ov. *Am.* 1.1.29). However, love elegy also makes many references to the actual ritual of triumphal celebration – both those that historically took place and those anticipated in a pangeyric gesture (Tib. 1.7.5–8; 2.1.33; 2.5.115–20; Prop. 2.1.31–34; 3.4; 3.11.53–54; Ov. *Arts* 1.177–228). As a result, an audience listening to a performance of elegy or reading a collection may well have experienced a degree of slippage between tenor and vehicle: the erotic domain of elegy – the tenor or "signified" of elegy's comparisons in *uilitia amoris* – rhetorically colors these images of Rome's actual triumphs.

The triumph as metaphor does not appear explicitly in Tibullus. Rather, he incorporates brief descriptions of the event itself into poems set in a ritual or festival context (1.7; 2.1; 2.5). Thus, 2.5 honors Messalla's son, M. Valerius Messalla Messalinus, on the occasion of his induction into the priesthood that oversaw the care and interpretation of the Sibylline books. As a kletic hymn, the poem invites Apollo, "bound with triumphal laurel" (*ipse triumphali detinctus tempora lauro*, 5) to be present at Messalinus's inauguration and to bless and instruct him in the art of prophecy. At the poem's end, the speaker anticipates lauding Messalinus's triumph, when "he himself, wearing laurel, will carry the spoils of war—conquered towns—before his own chariot ..." (115–117). Such confidence in the imperial future follows on the poem's middle section which, with possible allusion to *Aeneid* 1, 6 and 8, narrates the Sibyl's prophecy to Aeneas about the future site of Rome, "whose name is fated to rule lands wherever Circe beholds her fields from the sky; where dawn becomes visible and where the Ocean's river washes the Sun's parting horses in its flowing streams" (57–60). Despite the absence of any explicitly erotic theme, such imperial prophecy works in conjunction with the poem's triumphal imagery to recall the two preceding poems, 2.3 and 2.4, where goods from the far reaches of empire provide access to Delia in the triangular drama of elegiac love. In essence, Messalinus's future victories will further confirm the Sibyl's imperial vision, continuing to enable the stream of imports that lend Mistress Elegy her allure.

The interpenetration of the domains of *eros* and military *imperium* becomes more pronounced in Propertius's deployment of the triumph motif, particularly in relation to the

victory at Actium. In contrast to Tibullus' oblique allusion in the phrase *nona triumphos* ("fresh triumphs," 1.7.5), referring to Messalla's celebration of his Aquitanian victory following quickly on the heels of Octavian's triple triumph of 29 BCE, Propertius weaves specific details of the unpredecented three day event into his poetry. The programmatic 2.1, a *rezavatio* or "generic disavowal" (Davis 1991, 11:28–30) that includes elements of the repudiated genre, renounces epic subjects but notably catalogues "Caesar's wars" (25) to date: Mutina, Philippi, Naulochus, Perga, and Actium, a list of the prominent civil conflicts that the poet would celebrate, were it not that – in Ezra Pound's notable imitation – his "ventricles do not palpitate to Caesarian/ore rotundas." All the same, after recounting the wounds of Roman national identity (cf. *enumerat miles vulnera*, 2.1.44), the speaker rounds off his inventory by evoking the triumphal display of "Egypt" and the Nile, drawn captive through the city; the necks of kings in gilded chains; and the prows of ships that fought at Actium coursing down the *Via Sacra*" (31–34).

Coming after explicit allusions to civil conflict, the inclusion of such triumphal imagery has multiple effects: it underscores the recasting of the civil wars as the victory over a foreign country; it linguistically enacts the visual pomp and seduction of Roman imperial power, and it demonstrates elegy's trope of conquest deployed in a military, rather than erotic, context. Again, readers of elegy are invited to bring their associations of private elegiac *eros* into the public imperial realm: Tibullus's poet-lover, chained before his girl's door (*me retinent vinculum formosae trivula puellae*, 1.1.55), or Propertius's vision of Gallus, languishing, his own neck bound (*viti ego te toto vinculum languescere collo*, 1.3.15), or the Propertian speaker himself bowed beneath the foot of Amor (*et caput impositis pressit Amor pedibus*, 1.1.4); all encourage the reader to perceive Augustan triumph through an erotic lens, aligning sexual and military power, even as the shameful images of manhood underscore triumphal masculinity by contrast (cf. Kennedy 1993, 34–39; Wyke 2002, 177). A similar juxtaposition governs Propertius 3.11, where the speaker appeals to mythological and historical *exempla* of powerful women to rationalize his own enslavement to his mistress (1–2; cf. Prop. 2.16 where the speaker also analogizes his condition to Marc Antony's *infamis amor*, "shameful passion"). The catalogue includes Medea, Penhesilea, Omphale, Semiramis, the legendary ruler of Babylon, and Cleopatra. As myth turns to history, however, the foreign queen's threat to Roman manhood and national identity displays elegy's gender inversion as dangerous in the public, political sphere. The subsequent details of Cleopatra's flight to the streams of the timid Nile and the chains her hands then received (51–52) pointedly cast this Egyptian menace in the captive role. When the speaker then remarks that he saw her wounded "arms bitten by the sacred snakes" (*brachia ... sacris admorosa colubris*, 53), the allusion to her effigy carried in Octavian's triple triumph recalls the similar image of Cynthia's "injured arms" (*brachia laesa*, 2.15.20), should she provoke her lover's wrath. The echo of this private, erotic violence in the snake-bite of Cleopatra's arms betrays the artifice of the poem's premise – the elegiac lover's servitude. As a result, masculine dominance in the private domain again aligns with Roman imperial power over her provinces, showing gender as "doing the work of empire" (cf. Ramsby and Severy-Hoven 2007: 47 on the visual arts of the Augustan era).

When we turn to Ovid's use of the triumph motif, his elegy typically displays the poet-lover playing multiple roles – prisoner, *triumphator*, and audience to the grand public event. The opening sequence of *Amores* I has the speaker as the victim not of a particular girl but of Cupid himself, who by stealing a foot interferes with the poet's plans to write

the hexameter (1.1). Complaining that the love god already possesses a "great and excessively powerful domain" *magna ... nimis inane potentia regna*, 1.1.13), the speaker challenges his "jurisdiction over poetry" as well (*Quis tibi ... dedit hoc in carmina iuris?*, 5). In this witty variation on the Callimachean *rezavatio*, Cupid substitutes for Apollo and, by shooting the poet with an arrow, provides him with matter for his elegiac meter. The rhetoric of imperial expansion, with Cupid wounding the poet and extending his sovereignty over verse, thematically anticipates the next poem (Habinek 2002, 47). Here, the love-god "drives the heart he occupies" (*possessa ferus pectora veritat Amoris*, 1.2.8) until the speaker throws up his hands in surrender – "I am your latest spoil, (Cupid)" (19)—and becomes a willing victim for the god's imagined triumph. All love's enemies – including *Mens Bona* and *Pudicitia* ("Good sense" and "Chastity") – will follow forlornly as captives in the procession, creating an "absurdist version of republican tradition" (see Leach in this volume). Ovid depicts the scene with elaborate detail – the cheering crowd, golden chariot, bound prisoners – all from the first-person perspective of the conquered lover. Despite the elegiac conceit, scholars remark the power of the metaphor and its implications for imperial Rome. Mary Beard reads the poem as the *lowest* expression we have to an account of the victim's experience, but ultimately views it as a projection of the victor – a "quintessentially Roman fantasy" (2007, 113–14). The next appearance of the triumph in Ovid's collection, *Amores* 1.7, supports this analysis. Here, the speaker admits and rues a violent attack on his mistress – tearing her hair, cutting her cheeks, acting the brute—and sardonically imagines himself a *triumphator*, driving his mistress as wounded and disheveled captive before him (1.7.35–40). For all that the speaker rhetorically exaggerates as a strategy to trivialize the event, his violence-induced vision of male power correlates with the idea of Roman imperial hegemony – here implicit in the triumphal figure (Greene 1998, 85).

Nonetheless, at one level the scenario of *Am.* 1.7 should not be viewed as belying the elegiac conceit of the lover as passive, feminized victim in 1.2. Rather, as previously remarked, such passivity metaphorically expresses the status of the aristocratic male in the increasingly autocratic environment of the principate. Thus, the poet-lover's assault on and subsequent fantasy of a "triumph" over his mistress in 1.7 may well articulate, however perversely, the increasingly circumscribed arena for a citizen's freedom of expression (Ramsby and Severy-Hoven 2007, 67). How far, then, should one take the analogy between Cupid and his kinsman Augustus at the end of 1.2 (Beard 2007, 113), where the speaker appeals for clemency to the love god on the model of the princeps? Ovid's witty deflation of Augustan military pomp certainly amuses and should not be read in the outdated terms of "anti-Augustan" sentiment, but his poetry all the same has political implications (cf. Habinek 2002, 46–47). Indeed, after 19 BCE the triumph itself, the consummate form of politico-military "speech" in ancient Rome, became restricted to members of Augustus's own family. Such restriction was thus in place at the time that Ovid published the first two books of the *Ars Amatoria*, circa 2–1 BCE, containing the paterfamilias description of the triumph to be celebrated by Gaius Caesar. Augustus's grandson (and adopted son and heir), for his predicted victory over the Parthians (Ov. *Ars* 1.177–228). The anticipated event never took place, but the lines – with their emphasis on monarchical succession – remained in the *Ars*, with ironic implications given Ovid's exile in 8 CE. The poet himself notoriously ascribes his banishment to the Black Sea both to a mysterious *error* and to the *Ars* (*Trist.* 2.207), the later censorship of which from

public libraries recalls the opening poems of the *Amores* (published in a 2nd edition around the time of the *Ars*) and the retrospectively ominous query posed to Cupid, "Who gave this jurisdiction over poetry to you, boy?"

The Ovidian *praeceptor* introduces Gaius Caesar's triumph in the *Ars* as a promising site to find a girl. In Propertius 3.4, a model for Ovid's passage, the lover similarly observes the ritual from the sidelines, wrapped in his girl's embrace, a witness to the grand event rather than a participant. Indeed, the erosion of republican *libertas* and the narrowing of venues for political speech and action appear in these triumphal scenes as well, displacing the aristocratic citizen male from the center to the periphery. At another level, the lover who views these triumphal floats, "reading" the placards depicting far-away places, serves as a trope for elegy's readers. From that same peripheral perspective, filtered through the lover's gaze – a distorted prism of elegiac conventions – the audience of elegy also beholds the triumph, its opulence, and the counteracts from which the city's wealth derives. In this way, elegy invites its audience – whether readers or attendants at a *recitatio* – to contemplate "the idea of empire," attracting and seducing them through the rhetoric of luxury and reinforcing their sense of Rome as the metropolitan center and Augustus as its unrivalled imperial source.

FURTHER READING

This essay aims to give a general introduction to the relationship between Roman love elegy and the imperial context in which it is embedded. The focus has been on three different spheres of imagery – the evocation of imperial geography, luxury, goods, and the military triumph. For an overview of imperial expansion during the Augustan principate, see Gruen (1996); on geography as a political concept in the early empire, see Nicolet (1991); the essays collected in Champion (2004) provide varied perspectives on Roman imperialism. Dalby (2000) offers a comprehensive inventory of the foreign luxuries available as commodities from particular regions, particularly between 50 BCE and 150 CE; "Augustan Poetry and the Life of Luxury," in Griffin (1985), argues for a close relationship between the leisured environment of the Roman elite and the material ambience of Augustan literature. Beard (2007) is the most recent examination of the Roman triumph and its sources; Galinsky (1969) provides an overview of the triumph motif in elegy. For interpretive approaches to elegy that see it as implicated in Rome's imperial project, see Habinek (2002); Bowditch (2006); and Keith (2008). The work of Said (1993) is seminal for understanding the relationship between culture and imperialism.

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CHAPTER 12

Love's Tropes and Figures

Duncan F. Kennedy

Propertius opens his collection with the dramatic statement that Cynthia “captured” or “hunted” him down (*cepit*, 1.1.1) with her eyes. He claims that this “madness” (*furor*, 1.1.7) has not abated for a year, and he appeals to his friends to “seek out remedies for his mad heart” (“*gaetiae non sani pectoris auxilia*”, 1.1.26); “bravely” he says “shall I suffer iron and cruel flames” (“*fortiter et ferrum saevos patiemur et ignis*”, 1.1.27), his language hovering between suggestions of cauterization of wounds and the torture applied to slaves, “if only I were to have the freedom to utter what my anger wills” (“*sit modo libertas quae velit ira loqui*”, 1.1.28). Such tropes, particularly the so-called “warfare of love” (*militia amoris*) and “slavery of love” (*servitium amoris*), have been the focus of considerable attention on the part of scholars of Roman elegy, and have served to organize much of their thinking on social, political and gender issues associated with elegy, as many items in the suggestions for further reading at the end of this chapter explore. This focus is symptomatic of something distinctive about Roman elegy, but it should make us pause for thought. The metaphorical traffic, after all, can go both ways. If love can be described in terms applicable to war, then war can no less be eroticized. Camilla in Virgil’s *Aeneid* provides a striking instance. In the action that leads up to her death, Virgil focuses in on her *desire* for the spoils of battle as she targets the lavish costume of the Trojan priest Chloereus (*Aen.* 11.778–82; all translations in this chapter are my own):

hunc [sc. Chloereus] virgo, sive ut templis praefigeret arma
Troia, captivo sive ut se ferret in auro
venatrix, unum ex omni certamine pugnae
caeca sequeretur totumque incauta per agmen
femineo praedae et spoliatorum ardebat amor.

Chloereus alone in all the contest of the battle the maiden was blindly pursuing, either that she might hang Trojan weapons on the gates of temples or haunt herself in captured gold when she went hunting, and recklessly through the whole of the armed ranks was burning with a woman's love of booty and spoils.

Camilla's "love" of booty is characterized by "burning" (*ardens*, 782), and a "blindness" (cf. *caeca*, 781) marks the "pursuit" (cf. *sequens*, 781) of the object of her desire. This equation of love and war is no less an insistent feature of the *Aeneid* than it is of elegy. As Ellen Olfenstis has so piquantly put it (1997, 308): "Marital and marital wounds are consanguineous throughout the epic. This convergence is most fully realized in the ghostly 'penetration' of the only female fighter of the epic; the spear that pierces Camilla's nipple and drinks her blood ("sub essetram donec perlatu papillam / haesi virgineumque albe bibit acta cruorem," *Aen.* 11.803-4) figures a grotesquely accelerated sexual maturation, from virgin to bride to nursing mother." But on the whole, critics of epic are not so ready to organize their thoughts around a "trope" of *amor militaris* or see it as generically crucial in the way that critics of elegy fixate on *militia amoris* and *servitium amoris*.

Love and war, love and slavery are not identical, but in presenting them in shared terms, we are invited to view aggression, domination and submission as aspects of the dynamics of erotic as much as of martial activity, and vice versa, the loss of freedom to say what you want is the mark of the lover no less than of the captive and the slave. In this chapter, I shall examine this figurative interplay with the help of Ovid, not only a bravura manipulator of these tropes, but also one of the most acute observers of their discursive deployment. First, a caveat. In his erudite work, he sets himself up as the *praecipitor Amoris* (*Ar.* 1.12), the teacher of Love (Cupid, the embodiment of desire), and we would do well to pay attention to his self-appointed title: *praecipere*, to teach, is a compound of *capere*, to capture: the *praecipitor Amoris* thus sets himself up to precept the effect that love can have on the lover, as in Propertius 1.1. Such victims are described as "taken in" (*de-cipere*, another compound based on *capere*) when he comes to "cure" them in the *Remedia amoris* (41-2):

ad mea, *decepti* iuvenes, *praecipua* venite,
quos suus ex omni parte felicit amor.
come to my *praecipis*, *deceived* youths, whose passion has failed them in every respect.

The play on "decepti" and "praecipua" could be a sly acknowledgement on Ovid's part that it is through his teaching, as much as through the actions of *amor*, as he suggests in 42, they have been disappointed (*felicit*). It is left unclear whether the circle formed by *praecipere/capere/decipere* is a virtuous or a vicious one; but clear that for Ovid, the relationship of teacher and pupil comes no less within the ambit of love's figures and tropes than that between lover and beloved, in particular in the fact that you forfeit the freedom you fancy you have to say just what you want.

In telling his male student where to find girls, the *praecipitor* suggests that "you should particularly do your *hunting* in the amphitheatres; these places are more fertile for your desire" ("sed tu praecipue curvis *venare* theatris; / haec loca sunt voto fertilia tuo," *Ar.*

1.89-90). Ovid has asked us to think about the lover's desire (*venare*, *Ar.* 1.90) and the writing prompts an important reflection on what motivates behaviour there (*Ar.* 1.91-2):

illic iuvenes quod ames, quod ludere possis,
quodque semel tangas, quodque tenere velis.

The amphitheatre offers a broad range of possibilities for the male lover to satisfy his desire, which is presented as a complex phenomenon: "there," he says, "you will find what you may love, what you may play with, both what you may touch once, and what you may wish to keep." He may not simply be looking for love (*quod ames*), but for play (*quod ludere possis*), for something one-off (*quod ... semel tangas*) or for something he may want to hang on to ("quod ... tenere velis"). The neuter *quod* may humorously refer to the female of the species, but its range of reference could suggest that, whilst she is its focus, the *object* of the lover's desire is structured by a sense of possibilities - love and sex, yes, but also the potentiality for "play" suggested by the verb *ludere*, and the shifting temporal range within which desire may look to achieve satisfaction.

The passage that follows draws on a complex interplay of similarities and differences to explore this phenomenon. Ovid offers a cheery aetiological story of how the theatre took on this role through the rape of the Sabine women orchestrated by Romulus (*Ar.* 1.101-34), remarking that it was "from that time-honoured custom that theatres remain to this day places of *ambush* for the good-looking" ("scilicet ex illo sollempni more theatra / nunc day places of *ambush* for the good-looking," *Ar.* 1.133-4). He presents the Rome of the distant past as a relatively unsophisticated place: the theatre of those days was an impromptu construction of earth and grass (107) not the elaborate modern equivalent of marble with canvases awnings to keep off the sun (103). But although the differences between the ancient Roman male and his modern equivalent are there for all to see (the straggling hair shaded by a wreath of whatever leaves were to hand [108], the artless applause [113]), the similarities are no less apparent. The Roman male turns around to eye up the female talent sitting behind him in the upper tiers of the theatre and pick out the one he wants (109-110) just as, we learn from the elegies of Ovid (*Am.* 2.7.3-4) and Propertius (4.8.77), his modern counterpart does. When Romulus gives the signal, the behaviour of these men and the reaction of the Sabine women are explored in a couple of similes (115-19):

protinus exiliunt animam clamore fatentes
virginibus cupidas intinctaque manus.
ur fugiunt aquilas, timidissima turba, columbae
urque fugit visos agna novella lapros,
sic illic timore viros sine lege ruentes ...

Straightaway they jump up, and, disclosing their intentions with a shout, lay their tussling hands on the maidens. As doves, that most timid throng, fly from eagles, and as the young lamb flies from the wolves it has seen, so they were in terror at the men indiscriminately rushing upon them ...

By contrast with Ovid's advice to today's would-be lover to pick out the girl to whom he can deliver the chat-up line "you alone are pleasing to me" ("elice cui dicas 'tu mihi sola places'", *Ar.* 1.42), these early Roman men simply announce themselves with a shout

and impose their desire in an act whose wording suggests they also claim legal possession (*capidas incitant* ... *manus*, 116). The juxtaposition within the similes of doves and eagles, lambs and wolves emphasizes the discrepancies in strength and resolve, and the response of the Sabine women is highlighted in the repetition of words of flight (*figunt*, 117; *figit*, 118) and fear (*timidissima*, 117; *timere*, 119). The behaviour of their modern counterpart has earlier been explored in a parallel pair of animal similes (*Ars* 1.93-8):

ut redit ique frequens longum formica per agmen,
granitero solitum cum vehi ore cibum,
aut ut apes saltusque suos et Olenia nactae
pasqua per flores et thyma summa volant,
sic ruit ad celebres cultissima femina ludos;
copia iudicium saepe morata meum est.

As the ant in numbers comes and goes in its long marching-line, when it carries its accustomed food in its grain-bearing mouth, or as the bees, when they have taken possession of their own glades and fragrant pastures, hover around the flowers and the tops of the thyme, so rushes the most chic woman to the crowded games; their number has often delayed my choice.

In contrast to the Sabine women, strangers and guests at the games whose response to the violence offered them had been terrified and fragmented (121-4), she is on home territory, ready and fully able to take what she wants, and well organized with it: the ant has its marching-line (a nice glance at the *militia amoris* trope) and habitually carries off what it wants, and the bees in the glades and pastures that they have made their own have an elevated vantage-point from which they can look down and survey what they are going to take, like the women in the upper tiers of the theatre. If there is anyone who does the rushing (*ruit*, 97; cf. *ruentis*, 119), it is now the woman rather than the man, who is rendered almost stationary by the sheer numbers he is confronted with (Ovid remarks that their forces [*capta*, another instance of the *militia amoris* trope; cf. *OLD s.v.* §3] have often stymied his decision, 98). From being *timidissima*, very frightened (117), woman is now *cultrissima*, very sophisticated (97).

Watch what Ovid is doing here. The similes draw formal attention to the interplay of similarity and difference they develop, and they do so in a synchronic way, abstracting that interplay from immediate circumstance, and appealing in a generalizing way to "natural" kinds; arguably, there is a rhetorical emphasis on likenesses within the interplay, as the term "simile" suggests. However, the narrative of the assault on the Sabine women also involves a play of similarity and difference, except that here the basis for the perception of similarities and differences is diachronic: proto-Roman men and women are both like and unlike their modern counterparts, and to different degrees. This issue of temporality is important in understanding figural language, and we shall return to it shortly. But for the moment, let us note how Ovid suggests the violence associated with desire has been subjected to a measure of control – the *ars* of the *Ars amatoria* – that civilizes sexual relations (turning soldiers of love into civilians [*civis*], perhaps), whilst not removing the power dynamic that the tropes suggest remains a vital aspect of them. Modern women have learnt techniques to manage both the aggression shown to them and the fear that marked the behaviour of their earlier

counterparts. They too are now desiring subjects, rushing to the amphitheatre, there to find what they may love, what they can play with, what they may touch but once and what they may wish to hang on to.

Desire is expressed not just in physical terms as love-making, but with the complex of behaviour Ovid associates with the verb *ludere*, and the dynamics of desire are worked out over time. In *Amores* 1.5, the lover's memorable sexual encounter with Corinna includes an episode of violence that seems, in the description of the excited lover at any rate, collusive, and is presented in language that suggests the capture of a city under siege (*Am.* 1.5.13-16):

deripui tunicam; nec multum rara nocebat,
pugnabat tunica sed tamen illa regi,
cumque ita pugnaret tanquam quae vincere nollet,
victa est non aegre prodicione sua.

I ripped off her tunic; thin as it was, it wasn't much in the way, but she nonetheless was fighting to be covered by it, and since she was fighting in such a way as to suggest one unwilling to be victor, she was overcome with no difficulty by her own betrayal.

When is fighting just "fighting"? When is the verb *pugnare* just, dismissively, a "figure of speech"? Corinna's "surrender" to her lover's "advances" seems not unwilling; her "self-betrayal" does not seem to cause her any pain or distress (*non aegre*, 16). Perhaps she is the sophisticated modern woman Ovid delineated in the *Ars amatoria*. But how do you tell? You only have the lover's *word* for it: *vix*, the noun commonly used in elegy of the exercise of physical (and usually masculine) strength to achieve sexual satisfaction (and sometimes translated as "rape"), happens also to be the second person singular of the verb (*vula, velle, volui*) used to signify sexual willingness. Ovid offers a subversive commentary on this in the *Ars amatoria* by a subtle conjugation of the verb (*Ars* 1.663-6):

quis sapiens blandis non miscet oscula verbis?
illa licet non det, non data sume tamen.
pugnabit primo fortassis, et "inprobe" dicet;
pugnando vinci se tamen illa *vult*.

Who with any sense would not mix kisses with alluring words? Though she may not give them, take the kisses not given anyway. Perhaps she will fight back at first, and call you "wicked"; in fighting nonetheless she'll be *willing* herself overcome.

How far should the lover go in overcoming his girl's "reluctance", her "fighting back"? (Ovid at first urges restraint (*Ars* 1.667-8):

tantum, ne noceant tenentis male rapta labellis,
neve quae possit dura fuisse, cave.

Only let not the kisses, crudely snatched, hurt her tender lips, and take care that she cannot complain that they were hard.

However, the object of the exercise is to get what you want, and this is not the moment for faint-heartedness dressed up as a sense of propriety (*Ars* 1.669-74):

oscula qui sumpsit, si non et cetera sumit,
 haec quoque, quae data sunt, perdere dignus erit.
 quantum defluat pleno post oscula voro?
 et mihi, rusticias, non pudor ille fuit.
 vim licet appelles: grata est *vis* ista puellis;
 quod iuvat, invitae saepe dedisse *vulnere*.

Whoever has taken kisses, if he has not taken the rest as well, he'll deserve to lose also what's been given. After kisses, how far short are you from getting all you want? Ouch, that's gawkiness, not a sense of shame. Call it "violence" if you wish, but that act of *will* is pleasing to girls; often unwilling they are *willing* to have granted what's pleasing.

Words can hurt too. The self-consoling lover may represent to himself his failure to get what he wants (note the recurrence from *Arv* 1.90 of that word for desire, *vorum*, in 671) as *pudor*, "a sense of shame" (672), but Ovid has a less comfortable word with which to describe it, *rusticitas*, "gawkiness" (a wounding counterbalance to the description of pain (*et vulnere*). Both *pudor* and *rusticitas* can be imagined as enclosed within quotation marks to suggest the different perspectives they offer. And so with *vis*: it depends what you call it. To retain the word play, I have translated *vis* on its second occurrence in 673 as "an act of will" to suggest the force of erotic desire. The issue of definition is part of the dynamic of sexual interaction for everyone involved: how do you characterize desire? But there is a temporal aspect to this dynamic in the question of definition as well, as Ovid suggests in his use of the perfect infinitive after the verb "to be willing": what they are unwilling (sc. to grant, *dare*), they are willing to *have granted* (*dedisse*). *quod iuvat* ("what's pleasing", 674) is ambiguous in its reference: "pleasing" to him, to her, to both? Ovid's compressed wording points to the complicated character of the human will, never more so than in sexual desire, as he goes on to argue (*Arv* 1.675-8):

quaecumque est Venenis subita violata rapina,
 gaudet, et improbitas muneris instar habet.
 at quae, cum posset cogi, non tacta recessit,
 ut simulat vulnere gaudia, tristis erit.

Any girl who has been overpowered by the shock and awe of passion delights in it, and the "wickedness" comes to look like a service rendered; but the girl who, when she could be compelled, escaped untouched, though she may look like she's happy, will be sad.

For a modern culture schooled to think that in matters of sex "no" means "no", the notion that *vis* could suggest that "you are willing" after all (when you have had a moment to realize it) can come as a rude shock. Ovid has presented the girl as greeting the aggressive advances of the lover with the vocative *improbe* (665) and this characterization of the lover's behaviour is maintained in the noun *improbitas* (676), which I have translated within quotation marks to indicate that it can represent not necessarily Ovid's perspective but contain the traces of the girl's use of the vocative, her troping at that earlier moment of the lover's behaviour. In the wake of the action, one trope is succeeded by another: that erstwhile "wickedness" is now not simply a "service

rendered" but "like a service rendered" ("muneris instar", 676): this judgement has superseded the other – but is it too marked by provisionality, the possibility that it will be superseded in turn? What you call it (whatever "it" is), and what you think it *is* (and will you change your mind?) make words important weapons in the battle of the sexes; *vis* ("violence"/"rape", as "you will") can be symbolic as well as physical.

This temporal aspect of erotic tropes reflects their citational and situational quality, and for Ovid renders attempts to make a particular trope definitive, to fully comprehend a situation and to make it stick, always open to qualification and revision, as the following couplet dramatizes. For the girl who emerges from such an encounter untouched, though she presents a look (*simularet vulnere*, 678) of happiness, that does not encompass her complete feelings on the matter – if you trust Ovid (but are we being taken in? Should we take his word for it?). The verb *simulare* is often translated as "pretend", which suggests a stark contrast between appearance and reality (she pretends to be happy but in truth she is sad). However, the wording of the couplet can be analysed and translated in such a way as to suggest something altogether more conflicted. *simulare* is associated with the adjective *similis* ("like"). Although she seeks to make "like" the same time?) and the adjective *similis* ("like"). Although she seeks to make "like" she is happy, to make happiness "present" (to herself, perhaps, as well as to the world), another troping of her situation, as sad, is making its presence uncomfortably felt. Which will prevail? That depends, and will continue to depend, on what she thinks she wanted, and her mind is not yet made up on this, and may never be. Whenever the question of what she wanted comes back to her, the issue of presence and absence will continue to pull her this way and that. Socrates, in dialogue with Agathon in Plato's *Symposium* (200c), asserts that desire in every case is desire for something that is inaccessible and absent, and modern psychoanalytical discourses would have us believe that desire and language are inextricably intertwined. Ovid has more to say on this.

Just a few lines earlier in *Arv amatoria* 1, Ovid has raised the question of chat-up lines his pupil is to use as the drinking-party ends and the guests are dispersing. "Let not your eloquence be subject to any rules of mine," he suggests; "only bring it about that you desire, and of your own accord you will be fluent" (*Arv* 1.609-10):

non tua sub nostras veniat facundia leges;
 fac tamen cupias, sponte disertus eris.

Ovid plays on *facundia*, "verbal fluency", and *fac*...*cupias*, "bring it about that", "make that you desire". If the desire is there, words will come with no problem. He goes on to explain the significance of his use of *fac* and its connection with fluency (*Arv* 1.611-12):

est tibi agendus amans imitandaque vulnere verbis;
 haec tibi quaeratur qualibet arte fides.

You must play the role of the lover and imitate the wounds in your words; let this credibility be sought by you by whatever means you please.

To be seen as the lover – to win credibility as such – you must play the role (*agere*, cf. *OLD* s.v. §25) of the lover as if on the stage, with your script, as it were, love's figures

and tropes: pronouncing yourself "wounded" by love is as good a place to start as any (it can "play" on her sympathies). To take on the identity of lover, you must become, yes, a facsimile, and make yourself the same (cf. *idem*, the source of the term "identity") as a lover: Ovid's term for this is *simulator*, the noun from the verb *simulare*, "one who is like", "one who summons up the presence of", the role he is playing. The aim is to create an effect of *fides*, trust or credibility: in the eyes of the object of your desire, the simulation must be convincing.

There are dangers in this. You yourself are not immune from the persuasiveness of your role-playing, and you may end up convincing not only the world but yourself that you are what you say you are (*Apr* 1.615-16):

saepe tamen vere coepti simulator amare;
saepe, quod incipiens finxerat esse, fuit.

Often he who simulates begins to love in truth; often he has become what at the outset he had fashioned himself to be.

The would-be lover may find himself internalizing the trope and so come to embody the thing he has been imitating – a sense of difference is abolished, and the trope becomes his identity. The "wounds" imitated in words may no longer be part of an *Illusion* and begin to hurt, as they so visibly hurt the suffering lover in the elegies of Propertius and Tibullus. Ovid warns the lover not to fall victim to self-deception, the capacity of the action enacted by *ludere* to rebound on one's self. The girl may see through the play-acting, but Ovid counsels *collation*, exhorting her play along with it (*Apr* 1.617-18):

quo magis, o, faciles imitantibus esse, puellae:
ficti amor verius, qui modo falsus erat.

All the more then, girls, be amenable to those playing the role: that passion will become true, which lately was assumed.

In a further twist on *fac-* words, girls are asked to play their part in this in turn by making themselves willing partners (*faciles*, 617) to those whom they have recognized to be "representing themselves" (*imitantibus*, 617) as the wounded lover; in the passage of time, the *simulator* may come to internalize those tropes, and the passion which had started out as an imposture will come to attract (though for how long Ovid does not of course specify) the description "true". *falsus* (618) itself is of wavering identity. It may be an adjective ("false"), say from the indignant perspective of the girl who has just detected the imposture, but could be, say from the amenable perspective of the girl who has now decided she wants to play along in an imposture of her own, the perfect passive participle of the verb *fallere* ("impersonated"). For Ovid, identities in love are, from every perspective, *assumed*.

This is, emphatically, not to deny that there are phenomena we readily and rightly call *love*, *war*, *slavery*, and so on, but it does suggest that what these phenomena are, their definition (the boundaries, *finis*, that mark one off from another), is not necessarily either synchronically clear or diachronically final. When is fighting just "fighting"? When does *nis* mean *rape*? When does your professed *amor* become *verus*? Ovid's exposition of

the slipperiness of language touches on the theoretical challenges associated with figurative language, and specifically the issue of metaphor. In a profoundly influential discussion, Aristotle defines metaphor as "the application of a name belonging to something else" (*Poetics* 1457b6-7), thus implying that every thing in nature has its proper "name", the term he regularly uses is *onoma*, and that metaphor is an infingement of this rule, since the "name" of one "thing" is "carried across" (the sense implied by the Greek term *metaphora*) to another. Referred to elegy, the Aristotelian view would have it that *love* is one such thing, *war* another, and that the name of one is carried over to the other.

Since Aristotle's day, Western intellectual traditions have engaged in a continuing dialogue based on the possibility of drawing a distinction between literal and figurative uses of language, though to divergent philosophical ends, and with different valuations of the figurative. At one end of the spectrum, chronologically and philosophically, lies Aristotle himself, who asserts that a capacity for metaphorical expression is the most important manifestation of linguistic mastery, and is a mark of innate genius which cannot be learnt from others, since making good metaphors implies the capacity to see resemblances (*Poetics* 1459a5-8). However, he symptomatically discusses metaphor in the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric* (rather than, say, in the *Metaphysics*), indicating that metaphor is a matter for the poet or rhetorician rather than the philosopher who is concerned with what things are, ontologically, and that he sees metaphor as an added extra or adornment to "literal" uses of language rather than as fundamental to the functioning of language.

Others view the metaphorical as basic to language – there are no original literal terms, it is suggested, but an on-going process of metaphorization as language gets used, with things habitually described in terms of each other. At the other end of this spectrum, then, lie the recent exponents of the so-called cognitive theory of metaphor, (George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. They regard metaphors not as "turns" of phrase (which could imply that there is somehow a more basic or literal way of saying what you want) but as the way we habitually use language, and so at the very heart of how we think and try to understand our world and our experience, not simply in everyday philosophical but, albeit heavily encumbered and hardly recognizable, in the most rarefied philosophical thinking. In *Metaphors We Live By* (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) and *Philosophy in the Flesh* (Lakoff and Johnson 1999), the authors see abstract thought as inseparable from bodily experience – movement, orientation, temperature and so on. Thus *happiness is up* ("on a high"), *sadness is down* ("depressed"), *affection is warmth* ("an old flame"). *Purposes are destinations*, so love is a journey (even when it has "gone off the rails"), and so is composing an essay ("still some way to go"), whilst love and writing come together whenever there is a fantastic climax (see Kennedy 1993, 59-60). Metaphorical thought itself is not exempt from this, for *similarity is closeness*, whether it be "two peas in a pod" or (if you like your language to emphasize the erotic in the metaphorical) "spoons in a drawer".

In his searching examination of this dialogue about figurative language, Jacques Derrida suggests that neither a theory of language that seeks to make concepts stable (and so treats metaphor as an aberrant feature), nor one which seeks to represent language as restlessly mobile provides the answer, but rather sets up a debate in which you can position yourself differently. If you want to criticize Aristotle, it is easy to make the point that his terminology of metaphor is itself analyzable as metaphorical: a frequent term Aristotle uses of "literal" language is *oktaios*, suggesting that the term is "at home",

whilst his definition of metaphor, cited above, as the application of "a name belonging to something else" involves the importation of a word that is "foreign" (*allogenein*). However, as Derrida emphasizes, chaos does not follow from this, for within the system Aristotle elaborates, "metaphor" is never simply a metaphor, but rather it acts within his discussions as a concept, its meaning "captured" (as the derivation of *concept* from *capere* can suggest) and stabilized (the force of the *con-* prefix, as in *comprehended*, fully grasped); that is the effect of the larger system that Aristotle has constituted in his works, and so *positioned* himself on questions of ontology, presence, meaning etc.

To overlook this process of stabilization is to ignore the role of system in meaning, as words do not simply exist in isolation and gain their meaning purely by reference to 'things' in the world, but they generate meaning out of their interaction with – their similarities to and differences from – other words. Thus Aristotle's concept of metaphor is sustained within a system that sets it in specific relationships with a host of terms – mimesis, logos, nature and so on – that in their interaction produce the distinctively Aristotelian, ontologically orientated, world-view (Derrida 1983, 232). Change those relationships, and you change what you think metaphor is, and you change your world-view as well.

So, metaphor is an inalienable part (to give a twist on Aristotle's imagery) of philosophical thinking, however much for their own argumentative ends some philosophical systems such as Aristotle's seek to see it as "foreign" to it, and others such as Lakoff and Johnson's seek to place it center-stage. It is the interplay of "stability" and "movement" within and across "boundaries" that sustains the debate, and nobody – not Aristotle, not Derrida himself – stands in a privileged position outside this. Of course, we never cease seeking to define, but to define is to set the boundaries of a "term" (itself associated with the Latin *terminus*, a boundary-stone), to ordain what lies "inside" and what "outside" – and that can change with the passage of time as the immigrant term settles and becomes "naturalized", or the boundaries themselves are altered over time and circumstance. A discourse geared to ontology seeks to bracket off this temporal aspect, to attribute meaning to a word *as if* it stood outside time and usage and might not change, as if its meaning could be fully present to the user and will always be the *same*. In resistance to this, Derrida offers his (in)famous neologism *différance*, as a reminder of the role of difference and time in constituting meaning and of the way that difference renders full meaning provisional and deferred, never fully present to us in the way we crave. All of which contributes to a sense that desire, the interplay of absence and presence, plays a role in language no less than love.

When the Romans came to render the Greek *metaphora*, they came up with *translatio*, likewise "a carrying across". This acts as a reminder that the processes of metaphorization and translation are envisaged in similar terms and thus well worth bringing together for comparison. You might like to think of metaphor as a carrying across within a language, translation as a carrying across between languages, and the processes attract similar terminology in their discussion: can there be a "literal" translation any more than a "literal" use of a word? As we turn Greek and Latin texts into English, we soon become aware that the words we are translating do not present themselves as one-for-one substitutions, but need to be accommodated to a host of cultural, historical and ideological negotiations. Recall the issue of the translation of *vis*: are we to render it as "force"? As "rape"? Which version makes that term "present" to us? Do we want to domesticate it or naturalize it so that it accords with our assumptions and beliefs? Or re-present it in

an erotic or unexpected ways that shock us out of our received ways of thinking? The question of our desire and its satisfaction is already at play in that question. Do we need to translate anew when the system of assumptions and beliefs to which we previously accommodated it have shifted? Are our acts of translation provisional, awaiting substitution in time? Translation, particularly in the case of classical texts, should make us acutely aware not only of the similarities but of differences associated with the passage of time.

Historically, elegy, whether lamenting the dead or appealing to the beloved, presents itself as a discourse of desire, having as its central preoccupation the attempt through language to turn absence into presence. And this brings us back to Ovid. In the opening poems of Book 1 of the *Amores*, the protagonist receives a rapid education in love's figures and tropes, as Ovid conceives of them within his system of thought and world-view. At the very start of the opening poem, he portrays himself as *determined* to be an epic poet – that is he has laid down the boundaries within which he intends to operate and intends to stick with them (*Am.* 1.1.1–2):

arma gravi numero violentaque bella paraban
cedere, materia conveniente modis.

I was preparing to put forth in solemn rhythm weapons and violent wars, with my subject-matter corresponding to my metre.

This staunchly-held view has some Aristotelian characteristics: "weapons" and "violent wars" are the proper names for things, these things have a genre proper to them, epic, and that genre has a metre proper to it, the hexameter; the echo in *arma* of the very opening words of the *Aeneid* (*arma virumque cano*, "arms and the man I sing") clinches that. Here's a stable system of meaning fully in place, and the poet knows where he stands. However, "Cupid is said to have laughed and to have snatched away one foot" ("risse Cupido/dictur argue unum surripuisse pedem", *Am.* 1.1.3–4), at one and the same time tripping the poet up and suggesting the transformation of the intended hexameters of epic (twelve metrical feet over two lines) into the elegiac couplets (eleven metrical feet over two lines) in which this poem is being written, thus transforming epic into the genre elegy; was at such pains to *differentiate* itself from, as Propertius 2.1 demonstrates. Our would-be epic poet has his first lesson: the word *pes* is not the "name" of just one "thing". And while we are on the subject of (not just) body parts, *arma* does, of course, signify "weapons", but can also signify the male genitalia (cf. Adams 1982, 224–5), as when the exiled Ovid claims in his own defence to Augustus in the *Tristia* that "none other than the author, blessed as he was, of that *Aeneid* of yours changed arms and the man into 'Carthaginian romps'" in introducing Aeneas into the bed of Ido, so turning epic into elegy ("et tamen ille tuae felix Aeneidos auctor/consult in Iyriis arma virumque toros", *Tr.* 2.533–4; for *conferre* in this sense cf. *OLD* s.v. §7). *Arma* is thus as much "at home" in elegy as it is in epic.

At this stage, our poet still has a leg to stand on, and expresses his outrage: "savagely child, who gave you this jurisdiction over poetry?" ("quis tibi, saepe puer, dedit hoc in carmina iuris?", *Am.* 1.1.5). The gods, he argues, each have their own things: Minerva her weapons, Venus her torches, each their own domain over which they "rule" (cf. *regnum*, *Am.* 1.1.9), Ceres the fields, Diana the woods; each their own immediately identifiable attributes, Phoebus his lyre, Mars his spear. Who would regard it as right

(*quis prober* ... *Am.* 1.1.9) if they were to swap these around? In the word *prober*, we might just detect something like the rebuke of the girl (*improbe dicitur*, *Ars* 1.665) who thinks her lover's behaviour has exceeded the "proper" bounds and there are those loud enough to think that Cupid's subsequent response to the poet's rebuke – springing his bow and firing his arrow (*Am.* 1.1.21–4) – is expressed in terms that can also serve to signify rather luridly an act of sexual *vis* inflicted on the poet (cf. Kennedy 1993, 62). He has protested that Cupid has "great, indeed too powerful kingdoms" ("sunt illa magna, puer, nimirumque potentia regna", *Am.* 1.1.13). The term *ambitione* in the following line conjures up an image of the god "moving around" (cf. *ambire*), suggesting an aggrandizing tendency to march into the territories of others as he looks toward yet another conquest, bringing yet more within his ambit (*Am.* 1.1.14–15):

cur opus affectas ambitione novum?
an, quod ubique, tuum est?

Why in your ambition do you set your sights on a fresh affair? Is that which is everywhere yours?

There is a play here on the common use of the verb *affectare*, "to seek to gain control of fresh territory" (cf. *OLD affecto* s.v. §3), but with an unexpected object, *opus*, a term of bewildering applicability that can suggest "task" but also "literary work" (*OLD* s.v. §9) and even "a sexual act" (*OLD* s.v. §1d). There is even the suggestion in *Am.* 1.1.15 that Cupid's ambitions may be the world-wide empire, "without limits of space and time": the "empire without end" promised by Jupiter to the Romans in Virgil *Aeneid* 1.278–9 ("his [sc. Romani] nec metus terminum nec tempora pono; imperium sine fine dedi") Could it be that desire renders permeable the boundaries, temporal as well as spatial, of everything you might mention – a kind of Derridean *différance avant la lettre*? Having raised that intriguing possibility, we will have to postpone indefinitely (as *Am.* 1.1.15 itself does) a definitive answer to that one. In the meantime, lesson two: no matter how *determined* you are to be something (like an epic poet, or a lover), to lay down the boundaries within which you intend to operate and stick to them, and to set the limits that you want to define your self, it remains the case that the language you use, and the response to it, can always transgress those boundaries, sometimes to your acute discomfort. The most you can do is to be a *simulator*, to seek to evoke through your words presence and identity, and hope that the world plays along.

Like the girl in *Ars* 1.676, who comes around to seeing her lover's "wickedness" as "like a service rendered", our poetic victim of *vis* soon begins to realize the benefits of Cupid's interference. Although he begins the second poem of *Amoris* 1 with a doggedly ontological question prompted by a restlessness that prevents him from going to sleep ("What shall I say this is [*esse quid hoc dicam*], that my blankets appear so hard to me, and my bedclothes don't stay put on my couch ...", *Am.* 1.2.1–2), he quickly "yields" to love (*cedimus ...? cedamus*, *Am.* 1.2.9–10), not in the sense of engaging in or describing physical sex (for any sniff of that we will have to wait for *Am.* 1.5), nor by expressing desire for a particular beloved, but by producing a torrent of figurative language (*Am.* 1.2.11–18), culminating in a florid elaboration of that aspect of the *militia amoris* trope so favoured by the elegiac poets, the triumph ceremony

Am. 1.2.19–52), piling up ever more recherché similarities and troping for the sheer *pu* of it, as he will over and over again in the poems to come (e.g. *Am.* 1.9 and 2.12). The lover-poet here evokes Catullus, who had already played with the association of sleeplessness with desire – the desire to create, expressed in terms of a longing for the presence once more of his friend and fellow-poet, Licinius Calvus after they had spent the previous day composing verses (50.7–13):

arque illic abii tuo lepore
incensus, Licini, facetisque,
ut nec me miserum elius iuaret
nec somnus tegeret quiete ocellis,
sed toto indomitus furore lecto
versarer, cupiens videre lucem,
ut tecum loquerer simulque ut essem.

And I went away from there inflamed by your cleverness and humour, so that neither food gave pleasure, wretched me, nor sleep covered my eyes with rest, but out of control with madness I turned all over the bed, desirous of seeing the light, so that I could talk with you and be in your presence.

Through the earlier use of the verb *lassimus* (50.2), the act of composing has been equated with the dynamics of sexual dalliance (*ludere*), and Catullus has departed manifesting the symptoms of passion, heat (*incensus* 8), frenzy (*furore*, 11), and the desire for the presence of the beloved (*cupiens .../... simul ... ut essem*, 12–13); *me miserum* (9), though formally the object of the verb *inverat*, mimics the ejaculation of the wretched lover as he recognises he has fallen victim to desire (as in *Ov.* *Am.* 1.1.25, *me miserum*; cf. Prop. 1.1.1, "Cynthia prima suis *miserum me cepit ocellis*"). "Cynthia first with her eyes captured me, poor wretch"). The physical *turning* in bed (*toto ... lecto/versarer*, 11–12), a symptom shared by the poet in *Am.* 1.2.4 (*lassaque versati corporis ossa dolent*), and the weary bones of my tossing body are full of pain"), alludes to the image Greek uses for the "turn" of speech a figure effects, *τροπή* (cf. *LST* s.v. §1.b.3), just as *figura* in Latin alludes to the "posture" of the body, not least, as Ovid elsewhere attests, when it is having sex (*Ars* 3.771–2):

nota sibi sit quaeque; modos a corpore certos
sumit: non omnes una figura decet.

Let each woman get to know herself; adopt particular postures taking account of your body: one position does not suit all.

As Roy Gibson notes in his commentary on this couplet (2003, 391), "*modus* and *figura* are common Latin terms for *tropoi/schemata synonimata*", that is, the positions of intercourse, or, as the Greek term would have it, of "being together" (*syn-ousia*). But the traffic of signification goes both ways, for the "being together" of two bodies in sexual intercourse tropes the "figures" of language which marry two concepts. Herein lies the attraction for the elegist, at once lover and poet, whose desire is expressed *simultaneously* in the domains of the sexual and the linguistic – his language aspires to be equally "at home" in both.

However, the calm, stable, quasi-ontological language of "being together" embraces only one aspect of sexual intercourse/figural language, failing to capture its agitated motions as two "struggle" to become one. Propertius, asked how it is that he writes love poems so often ("quaevis, unde mihi totiens scribantur amores", 2.1.1), responds that the girl herself creates his inspiration ("ingenium nobis ipsa puella facit", 2.1.4). But whilst she is thus marked as the object of both physical and linguistic desire, it is what he does with her that differentiates the elegist (2.1.43-6):

navia de venis, de tauris narrat arator,
enumerat miles vulnere, pastor ovis;
nos contra angusto verramus proelia lecto:
qua poete quisque, in ea conterat arte diem.

The sailor tells stories about the winds, the ploughman about oxen, the soldier counts his wounds, the shepherd his sheep; I on the other hand *verramus* in a narrow bed (?recount) "battles": let each person spend his time in the skill he practises best.

Telling stories and counting up (43-4) are two forms of discursive activity with which the elegist contrasts his own (*nos contra* ..., 45). But how *do* you construe line 45? Is *nos* to be taken as singular or plural? Is the bed "narrow" (*angusto*) because he's alone in it ... or not alone in it ... or because it's a Callimachean bed, as befits a poet? Is *verramus* physical (cf. *OLD* s.v. §4b: "turn (one's limbs) this way and that (as a sign of restlessness, etc.)") or rhetorical (cf. *OLD* s.v. §7: "vary the expression of an idea")? Transitive, governing *proelia*, or intransitive? Unless we give up the struggle, as many have, and change *verramus* to *verramus* we need to supply a main verb unexpressed in this line. You may well agree with Propertius when he says the skill the elegist practices best is troping; but you could go mad, quite, quite mad trying to translate the way he says it. Line 45 is quintessential elegy and pure Propertius: *as* indeterminant in its meanings, *as* impossible to understand, *as* infuriatingly difficult to read, *as* enthralling *as* ... the girl who has robbed you of your freedom to say what you mean! Elegy's concern is not only with the language of love but with the love of language and (*me miserum!*) the desire for expression that entails.

FURTHER READING

This chapter inevitably reflects some of my earlier thoughts on this topic: in Chapter 3 of Kenneth 1993, 46-63, though the eagle-eyed will home in on many differences that the passage of time has introduced. The tropes of *militia amoris* and *servitium amoris* have long attracted the most attention: for collections of material and discussion of the former see Murgatroyd 1975 and Calk 1997, and of the latter see Copley 1947, Lyne 1979, Murgatroyd 1981, McCarthy 1998, and Fitzgerald 2000, 72-7. These tropes are implicated in the issue of violence in elegy: for recent discussions with an emphasis on gender relations see in particular Fredrick 1997, Greene 1999, and James 2003, 184-97. For Derrida's critique of Aristotle's theory of metaphor in his essay "White Mythology", see Derrida 1983, 207-71 with the analysis of Kennedy 2010. The emblematic theory of metaphor associated with the work of Lakoff and Johnson 1980 and 1999 is examined with particular reference to the language of love and the emotions in Kovacs 1988 and 2000. For the continuities between ancient and modern in treatments of desire and language, see

Janin 1994, esp. 1-36. Pichon 1902, 75-303 remains an invaluable dictionary of the erotic phraseology of the Roman elegists (in a curious link between the amatory tropes of elegy and the psychoanalytical discourse of desire, my own copy once belonged to Ernest Freud, grandson of Sigmund, and the child who prompted the latter's reflections on the interplay of presence and absence in the *jeu/d'a* game). Adams 1982 demonstrates how many words in common Latin usage have sexual associations, and is a mine of stimulating and provocative information for the student of Roman elegy.

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