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PROPERTIUS' PROGRAMMATIC POETRY AND THE UNITY OF THE *MONOBIBLOS*

In one of the strongest programmatic statements about his commitment to love, Propertius writes:

> hic mihi conteritur vitae modus, haec mea fama est,
> hinc cupio nomen carminis ire mei.
> me laudent doctae solum placuisse puellae .... (1.7.9-11)[1]

One indication of the poet's intention is the fact that his first book, traditionally called the *Cynthia Monobiblos,* or A Single Book Devoted to Cynthia, is the earliest extant example in Western literature of a whole book of poetry devoted to one girl alone.[2]

Additional insight into Propertius' motivation for writing love poetry can be gained from examining the poet's autobiographical sketch which concludes Book 1:

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

[1]The text is E. A. Barber's OCT[2] (Oxford 1960). Editions and commentaries consulted include: H. E. Butler and E. A. Barber, *The Elegies of Propertius* (Oxford 1933); W. A. Camps, *Propertius: Elegies: Book I* (Cambridge 1961); P. J. Enk, *Sex. Propertii Elegiarum Liber I* (Leyden 1946); F. A. Paley, *Sex. Aurelii Propertii Carmina* (London 1872); J. P. Postgate, *Select Elegies of Propertius*[2] (London 1897); M. Rothstein, *Die Elegien des Sextus Propertius*[2] (Berlin 1920); M. Schuster, *Propertius* (Leipzig 1958).

[2]On the title *Cynthia Monobiblos,* Enk (above, note 1) 77 cites Prop. 2.24.1, 2 and Mart. 14.189 as evidence that *Cynthia* was the title given to the *Monobiblos,* the Greek term denoting a complete work contained in one roll. (See also Butler and Barber [above, note 1] lxxxiv.) For the dating of Book 1 at ca. 30-28 B.C., see Butler and Barber xxvii, Enk 17, Camps (above, note 1) 7; K. F. Smith, *The Elegies of Albius Tibullus* (repr. Darmstadt 1964 of 1913 edition) 43 dates Tibullus' first book at 27 B.C. Gallus' poetry, except for part of one line, is lost. For a resumé of the data concerning the originality of Roman subjective elegy, see A. A. Day, *Origins of Latin Love Elegy* (Oxford 1938).

The fact that six lines out of ten in his autobiographical poem concern the death of a kinsman in the Perusine War of 41 B.C. indicates the impression made on the poet by this crucial event of his early life. We learn from a later book (4.1.126-130) that not only had a close relative been killed fighting for the losing side but also that his family's farm property was confiscated for distribution to Octavian's discharged veterans of the civil war.

It is thus perhaps not surprising that Propertius disdained the study of law and the traditional training for participation in the government of Augustus which occupied most ambitious young men of his class. Instead he took a more individualistic stance and chose a literary vocation as poet of love immortalizing the name of his mistress Cynthia.[3] Four books of elegies comprise the corpus of his work, the first of which, published in about 28 B.C., is the subject of our discussion.

While recent studies of the complex organization of the *Monobiblos*—thematic connections between adjacent poems as well as the symmetrical arrangement of the first nineteen poems in the book—suggest that as a whole it should be viewed as a kind of stylized, many-sided biography of a love relationship,[4] no critical consensus has resulted concerning the positive value of this structural complexity in assessing the poetry as literature. It is argued on the other hand that such complicated structure must necessarily ruin the effect of spontaneity and subjectivity,[5] or else it must be totally irrelevant to the subject at hand. Even if the poet treated similar thematic material in different poems in different ways and was interested in the effect obtained by sequences of poems which could display either similarity or variety, nevertheless, "common sense" would suggest that he was indifferent to such effects in widely separated poems. Thus, the argument runs, the book should simply be viewed as a collection of poems on related love themes.[6] Finally, the unity of the book as a whole has been questioned. Poems 1-19, which directly concern Cynthia, are generally

[3]4.1.131-142; also 1.6.29-30.

[4]The pioneering work was M. Ites' dissertation, *De Propertii elegiis inter se conexis* (Göttingen 1908), which demonstrated the continuity of themes in the *Monobiblos*. O. Skutsch, "The Structure of the Propertian *Monobiblos*," *CP* 58 (1963) 238-9 suggested a grouping of the poems and the symmetrical arrangement of poems in the book but disdained comment on the thematic significance of the structure. B. Otis, "Propertius' Single Book," *HSCP* 70(1965)1-44, supplemented by E. Courtney, "The Structure of Propertius Book I," *Phoenix* 22 (1968)250-258, demonstrated definitively the thematic correspondence of poems 1-19. Otis does not go so far as to call the *Monobiblos* "stylized biography" nor does he emphasize the continuity of subject-matter nor the cyclical arrangement of material nor does he discuss poems 20-22 in terms of the unity of the book.

[5]Otis (above, note 4)9. On the other hand, J. P. Sullivan, "Propertius: A Preliminary Essay," *Arion* 5(1966)10-11 feels that the lover assumes a role of tortured lover in the *Monobiblos* which interferes with the sophistication and ironic objectivity characteristic of later books in poems not directed to Cynthia.

[6]G. Williams, *Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry* (Oxford 1968)479-480 denies any interpretative value in schematic studies such as Skutsch's and Otis'.

considered a unit and the real subject of the book; 20-22, in which she does not appear, are thought to be a kind of appendix consisting of poems Propertius had on hand, perhaps early "set pieces," which he thought appropriate to include.[7]

My interest in discussing the *Cynthia Monobiblos* is to point out the programmatic nature of the work to show that it is a sophisticated, unified, book-length demonstration of why and in what way Propertius is committed to love and love poetry. By examining four aspects of Propertius' technique in the book, 1) the natural sequence of the poems, 2) the choice and distribution of the addressees, 3) the grouping into four-poem thematic "cycles," and 4) the thematic connections of the final poems with the book as a whole, I hope to demonstrate that in the first nineteen poems of the book the poet is presenting a kind of loose narrative portrayal of the lover's initiation into love and the deepening of his emotional experience set into a context of alternative patterns of success and failure, a combined effect of subjectivity and objectivity, and an examination of the application to Propertius' case of some traditional attitudes towards love. Finally, I aim to show that the final poems 20-22 are not a mere appendix to the collection but rather complement the structure of poems 1-19 and emphasize themes of death and separation in such a way as to complete the poet's proof of the intensity of his emotion and his commitment to the relationship and to serve as the basis of his appeal to his beloved.

Let us begin with a brief resumé of the subject-matter of the *Monobiblos* so we may see the development of a continuing narrative or "story line."[8] The first poem is introductory, revealing in generalized form the unique nature of Propertius' love for Cynthia: he has been in love for an entire year, but he faces, as he says, "adverse gods." Attempts at domination of his girl have led to no success whatsoever, but thoughts of love fill his mind constantly, completely disordering his life.

> et mihi iam toto furor hic non deficit anno,
> cum tamen adversos cogor habere deos. . . .
> hoc, moneo, vitate malum: suo quemque moretur
> cura, neque assueto mutet amore locum. (1.1.7-8, 35-36)

The poem suggests the intensity of a serious relationship but also begs certain questions. Why does the poet insist on "dominating" his girl?

[7]E.g. Camps (above, note 1)8,10-11; Otis (above, note 4)7 refers to the first nineteen poems of Propertius 1 as "the *Monobiblos* in the strict sense."

[8]I am not thinking here of an autobiographical or historical or even chronological account (for which see A. W. Allen, "Sunt qui Propertium Malint," in *Critical Essays in Roman Literature: Elegy and Lyric* [Cambridge, Mass. 1962] 110ff. or J.-P. Boucher, *Études sur Properce* [Paris 1965] 400, 406-7) but rather of a unified, organized presentation of love motifs which gives an impression of progression in the development of attitudes to the love relationship.

Why does he emphasize staying in one place? Why is the poet a failure when obviously his aim is to achieve success? And why does he present himself as such a failure?

Poems 2-5 form a kind of introductory cycle of poems which begin to give answers to these questions and to Propertius' literary and amatory method. (See table.) At the same time one begins to see a dichotomy between the theory of love Propertius expounds to his friends and the love he practices in his direct relationship with Cynthia.[9] We also realize that while the poet poses as a teacher of love—we cite the "I advise" (*moneo*) of poem 1—we see that the instructor in love is speaking from what he learns, before our very eyes, from experience. Poem 2, the first addressed directly to Cynthia in the book, features Propertius' concern for her loyalty to him and uses her attention to her appearance to suggest that she aims to attract other men.[10] But in poem 3, Propertius himself has obviously been out on the town. "Drunk with much wine," as he admits (3.9-11), he drops in on Cynthia in the middle of the night expecting, doubtless guiltily, the tongue-lashing he receives for "spending her night with another," as she puts it (3.35-46). In the next poem, having learned a lesson from poem 3, the poet comments to a friend Bassus on the impossibility of infidelity on his part (4.1-4, 27-28) because of Cynthia's loudly expressed concern about *him* (4.17-27), just the opposite situation from what we see in poem 2. This idea about her difficult nature is expanded but twisted somewhat in poem 5 in advice to another friend, Gallus, to stay away from Cynthia because of her enslaving tendencies (5.1-12, 19-20). In this way the cycle comes full circle. Propertius' implied fear of Cynthia's attractiveness to rivals in 2 finds fruition in his advice to a rival to stay away in 5. In the meantime he has experienced a lesson in loyalty himself at the same time that he offers his readers some insight into his jealous and inconsistent personality.

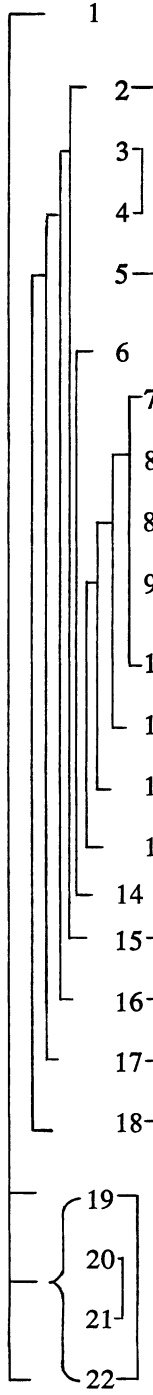
Poem 6 emphasizes the theme of love as a life's career and is addressed to the Tullus of poem 1 where Propertius introduced the subject of his own activities in love during the preceding year. In poem 6 Tullus is about to depart for government service in the East and seems to symbolize traditional Roman attitudes about suitable careers for gentlemen (6.19-22, 31-34). Recalling the lesson of poems 3 and 4, Propertius points out that Cynthia's complaints are too compelling; there is no question of his leaving Rome; love must be his only career:

> non ego sum laudi, non natus idoneus armis:
> hanc me militiam fata subire volunt. (1.6.29-30)

Contrapuntal aspects of the proper expression of love which characterizes this career choice serve as the subject of two following cycles of four

[9]That is, as he practices love in his *literary presentation* of it.
[10]See especially 1.2.23-26 and the remarks of Otis (above, note 4) 15ff.

The Structure of the *Cynthia Monobiblos*



1 to Tullus: Propertius' year-long devotion and failure in love

2 to Cynthia: on overdressing to attract rivals; Cynthia's natural beauty and talent

3 no-addressee: Propertius, late, finds an open door and a jealous Cynthia

4 to Bassus: Propertius' avowal of constancy to Cynthia alone

5 to Gallus: advice to a rival; love of Cynthia = slavery

6 to Tullus: the career of love/civil service

7 to Ponticus: elegy works better in love than epic; the value of elegy

8A to Cynthia: she is about to leave; Propertius writes Gallan-type elegy to her

8B no-addressee: the elegy (8A) is a success! Propertius has won! Cynthia doesn't leave

9 to Ponticus: elegy works so well the girl must be chosen carefully

10 to Gallus: Propertius gives advice on how to please a girl; Gallus is successful in love

11 to Cynthia: Propertius employs a bit of epic in a poem to Cynthia who has left Rome

12 *no-addressee: the poem (11) is a failure! Propertius is alone

13 to Gallus: the *servitium* of successful love

14 to Tullus: the value of love/wealth

15 to Cynthia: Propertius threatens separation; she is overdressing to attract a "new man"

16 no-addressee: a closed-door complains about the infidelity of its mistress

17 to Cynthia *in absentia*: Propertius' departure and shipwreck

18 to Cynthia *in absentia*: separation prevails; Propertius acknowledges his *servitium*

19 to Cynthia *in absentia*: no time is long enough for love; death separates lovers

20 to Gallus: keep your true love; don't let it be snatched away: Hercules and Hylas

21 *no-addressee: an unburied ghost speaks on the separation of loved ones by death in war

22 to Tullus: Propertius' own experience of separation by death in war

poems each and comprise the central subject-matter of the Cynthia poems. 7-9 take up the topic of elegy as a proper poetic medium for love, with 8A illustrating this argument with an example of "successful" elegy.[11] In 10, Propertius, perhaps heady with his own achievement in 8A, offers more specific suggestions for success in love to the same rival as in poem 5 (10.21-30), but paradoxically, poem 11 offers an example of unsuccessful elegy which reveals the poet's failure to heed his own advice on what to say to please a girl.[12] Practice vies with theory, as in poems 2-5, but once again Propertius reveals his own mistakes amidst the bravado of advising others—again, a distinctly self-revealing approach to love experience.

At this point in the book we note a distinct change of tone. Poem 14 is unique in that it is the only poem in the *Monobiblos* that expounds the positive value of love. Addressed to the Tullus of poems 1 and 6, where Propertius opts for love but appears to admit that Tullus' is the better way of life, 14 allows no such proviso. Coming at the end of the two cycles, 7-9 and 10-13, which offer examples of Propertius' own successful and unsuccessful love-making, as it is expressed by the writing of love poetry, it serves as a strong manifesto for the superior value of love as a way of life both when it "comes easily" (14.10) and when it is "adverse" (14.15). Furthermore, in it Propertius appropriates for love certain prerogatives of the traditionally oriented "good life" of power and wealth:

> nam sive optatam mecum trahit illa quietem,
> seu facili totum ducit amore diem,
> tum mihi Pactoli veniunt sub tecta liquores,
> et legitur Rubris gemma sub aequoribus;
> tum mihi cessuros spondent mea gaudia reges:
> quae maneant, dum me fata perire volent!
> nam quis divitiis adverso gaudet Amore?
> nulla mihi tristi praemia sint Venere! (1.14.9-16)

[11]1.7.15-26, 9.11-14; 8B demonstrates the success of 8A. By "success" I refer to the fact that 8A was written to dissuade Cynthia from leaving Propertius to depart with another lover. 8B demonstrates that the poem achieved this goal—Cynthia did not leave.

[12]1.12 demonstrates the "failure" of 11 to persuade Cynthia to return to Rome from Baiae (cf. 8A, B). I shall say more about these "success" and "failure" poems later. 1.13 shows that Gallus' conquest described in 1.10 is still a success, underlining by contrast Propertius' own failure with Cynthia.

←

*I follow the Oxford text in accepting Bailey's *conscia Roma* (1.12.2) as vocative; I catagorize it as "no-addressee" in the sense of indefinite addressee (see note 18). Similarly the *tu* of 1.21 is too general in spite of the second person singular pronoun to classify it as a specific addressee; it could easily refer to any one person in the world at large (= "Stranger, as you pass by. . . .").

This adversity is the subject of the final cycle of Cynthia poems, 15-18. Poem 15 resembles poem 2 in that Propertius is even more upset about Cynthia's dressing up, as he puts it, "to go to a new man" (15.8). He accuses her directly of "breaking faith" and hints that he himself is "in (some unspecified) danger" (15.3), using mythological heroines from epic and tragedy to illustrate by contrast Cynthia's apparent indifference to the possibility of separation (15.9-24). Poem 16 is quite impersonal. Neither Propertius nor Cynthia appear, although their situation is evoked. A door speaks instead and complains of the dissolute mistress who lives within and locks out a poor love-poet who sits constantly on the threshold composing poems similar to the sample it presents. This sample, even though addressed to the door, is pure complaint and accusation directed at the infidelity of the mistress who will not let him in. These are lovers for whom all lines of communication have broken down, the very impersonality of the poem underlining the degree of their estrangement.[13]

By the first line of poem 17, we realize that Propertius has made a big mistake. In spite of his suggestions in poems 4, 6, and 12 that he will never leave her, his affirmation of the value of love in 14, and his charge in 15 that it is Cynthia's disloyalty which threatens to separate them, Propertius himself has left Cynthia and is now supposedly shipwrecked on a deserted island! *Quamvis dura, tamen rara puella fuit* (17.16), he says nostalgically as thoughts of a lonely death without her lead to his prayer for a safe return.[14] In poem 18, Propertius is still away in a lonely Waste Land, able to express his devotion to Cynthia only to the rocks and trees. Propertius searches his soul to discover what he has done wrong. Still lacking complete self-understanding of the lover's servitude, he contents himself with recognition of her hold on him and the plea that he has never intended to hurt her. He will cry out her name in perpetuity. In his concern with rivals in poems 15 and 16 he has managed to exclude himself entirely but in the process has come to realize how essential Cynthia is for him. As in the first cycle of poems, 2-5, where Propertius learns an initial lesson of fidelity through Cynthia's tongue-lashing in 3, so also in the last cycle, 15-18, Propertius learns definitively through the experience of separation the importance of his own constancy regardless of Cynthia's behavior.[15]

The final word to Cynthia comes in poem 19. Thoughts of death invade, and Propertius imagines himself, eternally loyal, waiting in the

[13]See F. Solmsen, "Three Elegies of Propertius," *CP* 57(1962)73-88 and Otis (above, note 4)18ff. for ways in which this "objective" poem fits into the established framework of the *Monobiblos*.

[14]E. W. Leach, "Propertius I. 17: The Experimental Voyage," *YCS* 19(1966) 211ff., discusses the poetic landscape of this poem.

[15]1.18.9-16, 19-22, 31-32 especially underline the poet's own fidelity; *levis* (11) suggests the poet's indulgent estimate of Cynthia.

underworld for Cynthia. But how can he be sure Cynthia will not be drawn away to some new lover still alive? There is only one conclusion:

> quare, dum licet, inter nos laetemur amantes:
> non satis est ullo tempore longus amor. (1.19.25-26)

And so the Cynthia poems end on the note of separation, and we recall the poet's complaint of poem 1. Propertius has indeed failed to dominate his girl, he has not stayed in one place, and he has obviously not achieved his aim in love. In view of this evident lack of success, how is it possible to see Cynthia as the girl of sophistication who will be pleased with this book-long demonstration of theory which fails in practice?

Postponing for the moment discussion of poems 20-22 which do not directly concern Cynthia, we see the picture emerge from 1-19 of a unified, though stylized, narrative which fulfills a dramatic purpose. A cause and effect relationship appears to exist in the poems from beginning to end. What Propertius "learns" in one poem is reflected in what he "teaches" or practices in the next.[16] On the other hand, contrapuntal views of the "ups" and "downs" of love result from a comparison of the "successful" poems of the first half (2-9) with the "unsuccessful" poems of the second half (10-19).[17] Furthermore, we see that these poems concern two differing aspects of love, its theory and practice. This dichotomy we see revealed mainly through Propertius' use not only of poems *to* Cynthia which show the poet's immediate subjective reactions but also in his use of poems *about* her to other addressees which reveal more objectively what Propertius has learned about love. In additon, poems with no specified addressee reveal simply the current state of affairs between the lovers, the result of action taken by Propertius.[18] The

[16]E.g. Propertius' proclaimed fidelity in 4 and his lesson about *servitium* in 5 can be seen to be a result of the experiences related in 2 and 3. Similarly the theme of 6, Propertius' inability to leave Cynthia for public service abroad, can be seen as the result of the "lesson" of 2-5. In this way, each poem from 2-19 can be said to be the result of experiences related, or lessons learned, in an earlier poem.

[17]That is, in poems 2-9, the implication is that Propertius and Cynthia enjoy a "working" love relationship—they are on speaking terms (2, 3), Propertius declares his loyalty to the relationship (4, 6), his "success" spurs him on as teacher and poet of love (7-9); in 10, 13, Gallus' success in love contrasts with the poet's failure (11, 12); in 15-18, progressive estrangement and separation prevails; 14 describes love as the supreme value in adversity as well as in felicity.

[18]The poems to Cynthia are 1.2, 8A, 11, 15, 17, 18,19; to other addressees: 1.1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 13, 14; poems with no specified addressee: 1.3, 8B, 12, 16. (Although "no-addressee" is not precisely an accurate term to denote "no specified addressee," I shall refer thus to poems with an indefinite or generalized addressee for the purpose of brevity.) On the clearly separate nature of 8A and 8B and their correspondence with 11 and 12, see Otis (above, note 4) 28-29. See W. Abel, *Die Anredeformen bei den römischen Elegikern* (Berlin 1930) for an assessment of the role of the addressees and the dialogue effect of individual poems. Otis 24 discusses the dialogue effect of the paired poems at opposite ends of the "Cynthia" group.

various cycles of poems on similar themes, with one exception,[19] contain a constant mixture of these three types of poems so that the reader has continually before his eyes a combination of subjective versus objective views, the theory as opposed to the practice of love. When we realize that Propertius' protestations about his own knowledge of love and prescriptions to others are undermined constantly by his own evident lack of success with Cynthia, even in the early poems 2 and 3, we recognize that this is a selfconscious, ironic approach to love, a many-sided observation of the lover as learner and teacher through experience. At the same time we may admit that while the impression given by the last poems concerning Cynthia may be one of failure and the subject-matter of the final three poems of the book may not concern her, still it is the dialogue effect of the entire work which should be considered when assessing the possible success or failure of Propertius' appeal.

Let us examine more thoroughly the theory and practice of love as revealed through the structure of the *Monobiblos*. First, poems 1 and 22 to his friend Tullus frame the book as a whole with the introductory poem featuring Propertius' year-long fascination and frustration with Cynthia and 22, cited at the beginning of the paper, serving a complementary autobiographical purpose by telling of certain aspects of his early life. Similarly poems 6 and 14, also to Tullus, serve to frame the central groups of "career of love" poems, 7-9 and 10-13. Tullus, it appears from poems 6 and 14, is a Roman civil-service official, representative of traditional, "establishment" views, service to the state, interest in the acquisition of personal wealth. Therefore, Propertius' stance in the poems addressed to him tends to emphasize by contrast his own choice of a different way of life, his refusal to submit to traditional values, and his own preference for a career devoted entirely to love.[20] As we have seen, these definitive and programmatic poems are situated prominently in the book, beginning and ending it and outlining its mid-section. By the position alone of these poems, Propertius gives an impression of sincerity of intent regarding his commitment to Cynthia.[21]

Poem 19, the final poem to Cynthia, can also be said to serve as a thematic frame for the Cynthia poems, 1-19. As we have seen, the first poem alludes to the unsatisfactory nature of the relationship up to the present; poem 19 pleads earnestly with Cynthia for the lovers to love immediately while they can.

The remaining Cynthia poems can be seen to fall easily into four groups of four poems each with groups in opposite ends of the book correspond-

[19]In 15-18, three poems (15, 17, 18) are addressed to Cynthia and 16 has no addressee.

[20]Abel (above, note 18) 52ff.

[21]See also J. Fontenrose, "Propertius and the Roman Career," *CPCP* 13.2(1949) 371-388.

ing thematically, but presenting contrapuntal views.[22] 2-5 correspond in parallel order with 15-18, both cycles taking up the issue of rivalry and fidelity in love. In poem 2, the poet suggests tactfully that Cynthia's beauty and talent is sufficient for one lover alone—she should not appeal to more by overdressing; in 15, overdressing and spending too much time on her hair are precisely the issues on which Propertius chastises her at length accusing her directly of "perjury" and "infidelity." Poem 3 is Cynthia's "open door" poem where she berates Propertius for spending her night with another woman;[23] in poem 16, though neither Cynthia nor Propertius is mentioned by name, the mistress' door is shut tight and the excluded lover bemoans her infidelity to a sympathetic ally, the also-complaining "closed door." In poem 4, the poet renounces once and for all any interest in other girls besides Cynthia; in poem 17, by contrast, Propertius is "shipwrecked," at least spiritually, because he has renounced this fidelity and left his girl. Similarly, just as poem 5 features advice to a rival on the servitude which love of Cynthia entails, poem 18 represents the culmination of Propertius' own acceptance of this servitude. Likewise, poems 8A and 8B and 11 and 12 provide examples of the poet's successful and unsuccessful love poetry; 7 and 9 present advice to an unsuccessful lover, the epic poet Ponticus, while 10 and 13 provide warning to Propertius' successful rival Gallus. Far from being indifferent to the effect of widely separated poems displaying similarity and variety, the poet appears in these contrapuntal poems not only to suggest the ups and downs of love but mainly to provide a close look at Propertius himself as he first learns the lessons of love through success and failure and later begins to appreciate their full import.[24] Surely this can imply not only a literary purpose but also a psychological one as he attempts to please his "girl of taste" by impressing her (and his readers) with his self-knowledge and sincere intent.

The use of addressees other than Cynthia to fulfill an important programmatic role, the exposition of Propertius' "doctrinal" attitudes on love, as well as to suggest his increasing commitment to love, reveals

[22]Cf. Otis (above, note 4). I have not suggested necessarily the same correspondences.

[23]That 1.3 is a kind of reverse-paraclausithyron can be seen from the fact that the door was open for the poet who had been "out on the town" (9-14) and from the reference to *alterius clausis . . . foribus* (36) which contrast with her own.

[24]Otis (above, note 4) while emphasizing the "contrapuntal irony" with which Propertius played with the conventional motifs of Gallan elegy to work out his major theme, the *servitium amoris,* and to expose the pretenses of both lovers, entirely rejects the idea of any temporal or thematic progression; on p. 30 he states, "Each scene or mood, each aspect of Propertius' *amour,* is but one element in a quite static whole, an ensemble of detemporalized motifs and episodes." I agree in large part with Otis' discussion of Propertius' use of literary commonplaces in his dialogue with Cynthia but feel that, in addition, in the continuity of poems a dramatic progression of thought takes place which is enhanced in depth by the considerations proposed by Otis.

stylistically a remarkable efficiency and classical economy of means. Each addressee, in all the poems in which he appears, stands for a particular traditional attitude about love which Propertius opposes.[25] Tullus, the addressee of the framing poems, seems on the broadest level to represent time-honored Roman values and to serve as contrast with Propertius' own nonconforming way of life. Gallus, the addressee of 5, 10, 13, and 20, represents another view unacceptable to the poet, a non-serious attitude about devotion to one girl, not to mention his position as rival for Cynthia's hand. Ponticus, the epic poet of 7 and 9, similarly represents traditional values—this time in respect to epic (or "morose": 9.13) poetry which Propertius "proves" in poem 11 to be ineffective in love. Only one poem, 4, is addressed to Bassus who urges the poet to seek out other girls. After poem 3, this is a closed issue, and Bassus never appears again. Thus Propertius, through the use of addressees other than Cynthia, indicates on a programmatic level his opposition to every important traditional attitude that relates to love. His way is a new way, love and devotion to one girl alone his way of life, for which the proper expression is love elegy, Propertius' poetic medium. This insistence to other men on the kind of love imposed by Cynthia in fully half of the poems in the book complements the appealing effect of the contrapuntal poems discussed earlier by indicating the pervasiveness of the application of Propertius' new doctrine.

An additional technique employed by the poet to explore in some depth his own situation and the problems involved in love is the arrangement of poems by cycles. This pattern of four poem units, with one poem addressed to Cynthia, two to other addressees, and one "objective," no-addressee poem simply revealing the poet's present situation, prevails in the first three cycles of the book, poems 2-5, 7-9, 10-13. In each cycle the theory of love as espoused to other addressees is confirmed or denied through practice in the poem to Cynthia, while the result of the action taken by Propertius is verified in the generalized no-addressee poem.

We can take as an example poems 7-9. In poem 7 to Ponticus, Propertius suggests that, in love, elegy is the only appealing poetic technique. This theory is put to practice in 8A where Propertius writes a model elegy to Cynthia on the occasion of her plan to leave Rome with another man. By "model" I mean that Propertius employs motifs in the poem, especially his concern for his girl's tender feet in the cold northern snows, which emphatically evoke his only literary predecessor in elegy, the poet Cornelius Gallus, insofar as we know something about Gallan motifs from references in Vergil's Tenth Eclogue.[26] The no-addressee poem 8B

[25]Otis (above, note 4) 30 suggests that the addressees prove Propertius' "essential rightness as both man and poet."

[26]For full discussion of Vergil's use of Gallan motifs see J.-P. Boucher, *Caius Cornelius Gallus* (Paris 1966). Also, for Gallan motifs in *Ecl.* 10, M.C.J. Putnam, *Virgil's Pastoral Art* (Princeton 1970) 342ff.

affirms that the elegiac treatment of 8A is a success—Cynthia stays with Propertius—while 9, again to Ponticus, reinforces the point:

> plus in amore valet Mimnermi versus Homero:
> carmina mansuetus lenia quaerit Amor.
> i quaeso et tristis istos compone libellos,
> et cane quod quaevis nosse puella velit! (1.9.11-14)

Contrapuntally, in the cycle of poems 10-13, Propertius, apparently flushed with his success of 8A, gives his rival Gallus advice on how to keep his girl by watching his words, avoiding fault-finding, and emphasizing humility and subjection to love:

> tu cave ne tristi cupias pugnare puellae,
> neve superba loqui, neve tacere, diu; . . . .
> irritata venit, quando contemnitur illa,
> nec meminit iustas ponere laesa minas;
> at quo sis humilis magis et subiectus amori,
> hoc magis effectu saepe fruare bono. (1.10.21-22, 25-28)

Having just given this advice in poem 10, Propertius, in poem 11 to Cynthia, has reason once again, as in 8A, to write a poem on the occasion of her departure from Rome. This time she has already left to spend a vacation at Baiae, a name symbolic of sexual licence in the ancient world. Propertius cannot resist voicing his constant fears for Cynthia's chastity, implying he should be there to chaperone, and even incorporating a line from Homer to bolster his argument that Cynthia must return: *tu mihi sola domus, tu, Cynthia, sola parentes* (11.23), evoking Andromache's plea to Hector in *Iliad* 6.429. Whether it is because of the resort to Homer, which we recall Propertius has expressly advised against in 9, or too insistent finding fault, as warned against in 10, poem 11 is too "morose," as Propertius himself admits,

> ignosces igitur, si quid tibi triste libelli
> attulerint nostri: culpa timoris erit. (1.11.19-20)

Poem 12 reveals that Cynthia has not returned. The poet is disconsolate: *Cynthia prima fuit, Cynthia finis erit* (12.20). Poem 13 to Gallus reinforces the point. If he falls for such a girl as Cynthia, he will receive once and for all his just punishment for loving and leaving many girls. He will know what it means to want one alone.[27]

The final cycle of Cynthia poems reveals a different pattern. Here, the poem directly to Cynthia is offset by one no-addressee poem and two

[27]The cycle 2-5 was discussed earlier in the paper to bring out the way Propertius learns through experience in the course of the cycle. We can also note as shown on the Table that the first and fourth poems in each cycle have a special cause-effect relationship or similarity in subject-matter, as do the second and third poems.

poems to Cynthia *in absentia.* We recall that in poem 15 Propertius has thrown to the winds his own advice about finding fault with Cynthia. He devotes 42 lines to accusing her of perjury and perfidy when she doesn't come immediately when summoned, even employing 16 lines of examples from epic and tragedy of heroines who bewailed the loss of their lovers, as Cynthia apparently does not—a tactic hardly appropriate for a lover who aims truly to tell his beloved what she wants to hear, as advised in 9.14. The impersonal "closed door" poem, 16, effectively underlines the lack of communication between the lovers which was the result of 15 and marks a climax in the relationship. Propertius, angered by her independent attitude, leaves, and in the two remaining poems to Cynthia *in absentia,* Propertius' own loneliness is emphasized as he speaks first to the wind and sea and then to the trees and rocks of the forest revealing her "rarity" and his determination to write and speak her name forever. The direct address of Cynthia, especially *in absentia,* by its very contrast with the address to other men typical of the other cycles and with his earlier muddled direct contact with Cynthia, marks Propertius' added intensity and seriousness about the affair and a change in direction from the detached and objective to the personal and immediate. Unlike poem 14 where the poet's strongest expression of his love for Cynthia is to be found in his address to the third-party Tullus, in 18 he expresses his true feelings to Cynthia directly. In addition, as in the successful 8A, the poet not only abandons his spirit of open complaint against Cynthia's light-hearted mores but employs once again distinctly elegiac themes used by Cornelius Gallus as major motifs of the poem—such ideas as writing the name of the beloved in the bark of trees and calling her name forever to the rocks of the wilderness.[28]

Thus the poet shows through the cyclical arrangement of poems that he has learned through bitter experience the validity of the theoretical

[28] 1.18.1-4, 19-22, 27-32. The *topoi* of the secret complaints to empty nature, writing on the bark of trees, etc. are commonplaces of Hellenistic poetry (see editors *ad loc.* and F. Cairns, "Propertius I.18 and Callimachus, Acontius and Cydippe," *CR* 19 [1969] 131-134.) In addition, these details as employed in 1.18 evoke the setting and situation of the lament of the prototype elegist Cornelius Gallus as portrayed in Vergil's *Eclogue* 10, said by Servius to reflect Gallus' own love elegy and emphasizing the poet's inability to escape from his love and elegy into the world of pastoral. (See Putnam [above, note 26] 343-4, 371ff. for the underlying conflict between pastoral and elegy as genres in *Ecl.* 10.) The writing of the beloved's name in the bark of trees and calling her name forever to the rocks of the wilderness is indicative of the growing power of his love, a clearly elegiac, as opposed to pastoral, idea (see Putnam 373). Propertius in 1.18, by contrast with Gallus in *Ecl.* 10, is "alone" and uses the device of pastoral solitude to relieve his feelings *impune.* Situated in *deserta loca* where *queant saxa tenere fidem,* Propertius explores the causes of his separation from Cynthia and concludes his soul-searching with a protestation of *fides* in 11.19-22, 31-32 analogous to Gallus' *amor omnia vincit* in *Ecl.* 10. By intentionally evoking Gallus' decision for love in *Ecl.* 10 (or the Gallan original) Propertius employs a contemporary literary allusion to underline his own similar commitment to love and elegy.

principles he expounded earlier. Poems 7-9 show Propertius' early success in love and why it was a success. Conversely, 10-13 show the failure of love if the principles are incorrectly applied. Propertius *must* practice what he preaches in love. 15-18 repeat the lessons of 2-5 on fidelity. Propertius seems to learn only through bitter experience the second time round.

Two themes especially are repeated and interwoven in the four cycles: fidelity in 2-5 and 15-18 and the proper expression of love in 7-9 and 10-13. Each is treated positively through Propertius' success and negatively by picturing his failure. Having experienced both success and failure and in the end opting for the successful method, Propertius is proving to Cynthia that he has indeed learned what the love experience really involves, subjection to the beloved, and that he has accepted this commitment. He also has learned and now knows what a girl really wants to hear: fidelity, constancy, acceptance of what she is, and most of all, that she is wanted in love, as Propertius finally tells her in the last lines of 19:

> quare, dum licet, inter nos laetemur amantes;
> non satis est ullo tempore longus amor. (1.19.25-26)

This brings us to the question of the unity of the *Monobiblos* and how the whole book can be viewed as concerning Cynthia. In poems 20-22 she does not appear, and the poems are considered generally to be an addition to the book perhaps of early poems Propertius thought fit to include.[29] 20 concerns the mythological tale of Hercules' loss of his beloved Hylas, 21 is written in the manner of a grave-epitaph in which an unburied corpse begs a passerby to report his death to his family, 22 is the short autobiographical epigram emphasizing Propertius' birthplace near Perugia, scene of the deaths of members of his family in the war between Lucius Antonius and Octavian.

Let us note, however, that a certain continuity of theme ties these poems to the Cynthia cycles. Poem 19, we recall, features Propertius' imaginative reconstruction of his existence after death. He employs the mythological example of Protesilaus, whose wife's fidelity after his death at Troy was legendary, to reaffirm his own perpetual fidelity but at the same time to express his realization that he cannot be absolutely sure of Cynthia's continued loyalty. His conclusion is that death can mean final separation of lovers so that immediate enjoyment of love is a necessity. Poem 20 deals with this same theme but in a different framework. Propertius gives a final piece of advice to Gallus, the inconstant lover and rival of 5, 10, and 13, not to let his true love get away as did the hero Hercules who let his beloved Hylas be snatched away by nymphs. In 21, the ghost of a dead soldier addresses the nameless passerby to report his death and unburied bones to his family. Here, separation from one's

[29]See e.g. L. Alfonsi, *L'elegia di Properzio* (Milan 1945).

loved ones is the result of war, a state of affairs which we saw played a prominent role in Propertius' own youth and family life as presented in the autobiographical 22. Thus, the final four poems of the book all concern a single theme, death and final separation.

Furthermore, we can see additional unity with the Cynthia poems in that the addressees of these final poems are the same as those seen earlier and seem to perform complementary roles. Gallus, the inconstant lover and rival of earlier poems, is advised to stick to one love—his own. Tullus, the addressee of 1, 6, and 14, where life styles are contrasted, is treated to an autobiographical sketch of Propertius' early life before his love for Cynthia. Finally, if 19 can be considered a unit with 20-22 because of the similarity of subject-matter, we see that we have the familiar components of a 4-poem cycle—one poem addressed to Cynthia, two to other addressees, and one "unnamed-addressee" poem outlining the "reality" of the situation.

But we may still ask what this final cycle has to do with Propertius' own love experience. Poem 19, of all the poems to Cynthia and especially after the harrowing experience of separation in poems 17 and 18, affirms Propertius' consuming desire for her and uses mythological authority to pledge his loyalty, augmenting in a very personal way his declarations to Tullus in 1, 6, and 14 that love is his way of life. Poem 20 to Gallus, as all the other poems to addressees other than Cynthia, serves to establish a principle in love—here, that one must not let one's love escape, the conclusion Propertius has himself reached in 19. In poem 21, the poet anchors the thesis of the book—the value of love—in real life by telling of the separation from his loved ones suffered by one soldier who died alone in the war—a theme which evokes poems 17 and 19 where Propertius imagines himself alone in death, separated from Cynthia. Poem 22 is addressed to Tullus to whom Propertius has previously directed his most programmatic statements—his announcement of a new way of life, love, in 1, his refusal to share Tullus' civil career abroad in 6, his most intense statement of the value of love in 14. On the surface, the poem is a simple 10-line summarizing description of the poet's birthplace. In reality, as we saw earlier, six of the ten lines, the entire central part of the poem, emphasize his native city's proximity to the same events described in 21, as though that incident in the Roman civil war had been the central event in his early life. By concluding his presentation of his love for Cynthia with two poems, 21 and 22, firmly anchored in a reality Propertius obviously abhors, the poet seems to underline the point that not for him will be a life of war or service promised to the Roman state which could mean separation forever from what he holds dearest.[30]

[30]That is, the value of love and the price the lover must pay (*servitium, fides*) is an obvious feature of the "fictionalized" poems 1-20. By inference poems 21 and 22 suggest the price the poet does not want to pay in reality, the risk of losing the love experience entirely.

Thus we see that structurally the final cycle of death and separation poems in fact serves a functional role in the book. The cycles of poems 2-5, 7-9, 10-13, 15-18 provide intellectual self-analysis of the poet's decison to sacrifice all for love. 19-22 provide a serious rationale for this decision based on the poet's real experience. The poet's early life in 22, supplemented by the remembrance of the dead and permanently separated in 21, provides the explanation for Propertius' advice to Gallus in 20 to save his own way of life, his love, as Propertius has himself decided in 19, before it is too late.

Propertius' rejection of the traditional values of Roman society demonstrated thus in the *Monobiblos* is surely a serious personal statement. We have too much evidence from antiquity that normally in Roman life duty to god and country held precedence over the importance of the individual. We can cite Aeneas' rejection of Dido in Vergil's *Aeneid* as representative of this traditional view.[31] Propertius denies this principle in essence, and by the structural device of framing his book by a single poem at the beginning introducing the difficulty of his experience with Cynthia and a cycle of four poems at the end emphasizing the separation by death which must be avoided, he underlines conclusively the importance of love at any cost.

This brings us to the consideration of our original question. How does this careful organization, analysis, self-revelation, and rationalization fulfill Propertius' stated aim of pleasing a sophisticated girl who must be told, as the poet admits, what she wants to hear? Has the careful arrangement of poems, as some critics claim, indeed jettisoned spontaneity and subjectivity for literary effect? Or, does the *Monobiblos* maintain the impression of the complexity of intense love?

To the implied criticisms of Propertius' style and content mentioned at the beginning of our discussion, I should like to counter with the following proposals. Granted that Propertius' first book is an intricately organized artificial construct, the very complexity of the arrangement of poems suggests the nature of love itself. By revealing through the structure of the book his own recurrent resistance to the exigencies of love (as, for example, in poems 2-3, 11-12, and 15-16), the dichotomy between the theory and practice of love (as in the contrast between poems *to* Cynthia and those *about* her), and the alternation of success and failure, and by placing his most urgent statements about love in the climactic last sections of the book, Propertius underlines the gradual development of his commitment to Cynthia and the increasing seriousness of his attitudes. When the very structure of the book permits the analysis of the nature of the affair in the most realistic and rational possible way and the final climax shows this love to be a matter of life or death, we feel the message is not only sincere but based on an intellectual

[31]Cicero *De Officiis* 3 can be taken as a handbook for these values.

appraisal which we may assume might be appealing to a girl "of sophisticated taste."

To belittle the literary relevance of Propertius' schematic arrangement is to disregard the importance Propertius puts on elevating the genre of elegy to the lofty position traditionally enjoyed by epic. Whereas epic resolutely resisted the expression of personal attitudes but employed careful architectonic form for purposes of dramatic unity and aesthetics,[32] Propertius unifies his poetry not only through the force of his own personality but also through the organization of subject-matter based on the schematic arrangement of the poems. By appropriating epic values for elegy, even in a matter of formal technique, Propertius also implies the superior value of love itself, as expressed by elegy, over traditional ways of life represented by epic.[33] Thus the very intricacy of arrangement, so slighted by some critics, seems calculated by the poet, once again, to achieve the purpose stated—to enhance his appeal to Cynthia and to underline his commitment to love.

Then, too, we can note the effect of the underlying dialogue with Cynthia seen in the *Monobiblos*. Only half of the poems are addressed to her, but no matter to whom the poems are directed, the subject is ultimately Cynthia—even the final poems 20-22. In the progression of poems from the very beginning of the book to the very end, we see Propertius rising to the challenge of poem 1, trying to tame a girl by deeds done well and by words well said. Each poem, whether *to* Cynthia or *about* her, contributes some idea to this end, telling her what she wants to hear—her appeal to the poet (in 2, 3, and 4), the poet's growing devotion (4, 5, and 6), his dedication to love as a way of life (6, 7), his recognition of the importance of love poetry aimed at pleasing the girl (7-9), his knowledge of how to please her (10-12), his devotion to one alone implied in 13, his recognition of love as life's supreme value (14), the price he must pay, absolute subjection and fidelity in love (15-18), and finally the recognition that love is a vital matter to be preserved at all cost (19, 20, and 21). By the end of the *Monobiblos,* we can at least admit that the poet has made a supreme effort to convince Cynthia and the reader to take his love seriously.

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[32]As early as Homer, "ring-composition" served as an important structural device for the organization of the narrative. For the elaborate structure which characterizes Latin epic form see B. Otis, *Virgil: A Study in Civilized Poetry* (Oxford 1963). For ring-composition in individual poems in Propertius, see my dissertation, *Studies in Verbal Repetition in the Monobiblos of Propertius* (Colorado 1969, Ann Arbor Microfilms).

[33]See e.g. 1.7.1-6, 13-14, 15-24, and 1.9.11-14 as indicative of the poet's feeling about the superiority of the elegiac genre.