

PROPERTIUS'S GALLUS AND THE EROTICS OF INFLUENCE

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Cynthia prima suis miserum me cepit ocellis,
contactum nullis ante cupidinibus.
tum mihi constantis deiecit lumina fastus
et caput impositis pressit Amor pedibus,
donec me docuit castas odisse puellas
improbis, et nullo vivere consilio.
et mihi iam toto furor hic non deficit anno,
cum tamen adversos cogor habere deos. (Propertius 1.1.1–8)

Cynthia first captured wretched me,
touched before by no desire, with her eyes.
Then love struck down my look of constant arrogance,
and trampled my head with his feet,
until the wicked boy taught me to hate
chaste girls and live with no plan.
And now this fury has not faded for a whole year,
even though I am forced to suffer hostile gods.¹

I. INTRODUCTION

Let's start where Propertius does: *Cynthia prima*. The opening words of the opening poem of Propertius's first collection, the *Monobiblos*, make the

1 All translations are my own. For the *Monobiblos*, I follow the text of Barber 1960.

poet's priorities perfectly clear: Cynthia comes first. In place of an invocation of the Muses or the name of a patron, the inaugural words of the poem consist of the proper name Cynthia and the self-reflexive annotation *prima*, which draws attention to the "firstness" of the *incipit*. Love triumphs over decorum. Where convention or propriety might dictate that the poet begin his collection with a flattering reference to his addressee, Tullus, or with a gesture that shares the responsibility and credit for his poems with a Muse or god, Propertius offers only a statement of subjection to his beloved. No apologies or invocations. The book begins where the story it records does, with the moment that Cynthia first gained her hold over the author; it offers itself as a record of a "real" set of events, and the outcome of a particular psychological condition inspired by his relationship with a "real" woman.²

Yet the same gesture that advertises Propertius's singular devotion to Cynthia serves to complicate it. For these inaugural couplets represent an extremely close imitation of an epigram from Meleager's *Garland* (AP 12.101), a collection that enjoyed enormous popularity at Rome in the first century B.C.E. To encounter the opening of the *Monobiblos* together with this intertext is to be struck by the friction between what the speaker of this poem says ("My poetry is an outgrowth of my love for Cynthia") and what he does (cite another poet's work). This friction calls attention to Propertius the author and reveals him peeking out from behind the speaker of the collection. While, as a lover, Propertius may be singularly devoted to a woman, as a poet, his devotion is complicated by his status as a reader of and responder to previous poetry. That Propertius's effort to express his love for Cynthia becomes entangled immediately with the work of a previous poet is not, in itself, surprising. In the words of Harold Bloom (1975.5), it is the predicament of every poet to have "to wrestle with his strong precursors." In the *Monobiblos*, however, the sexual subject matter and the speaker's claims

2 That Propertius's *Monobiblos* is, or seems to be, more "sincere" or "real" than other contemporary poetry is the starting point for many recent treatments of the poet (particularly Wyke 1989 and Sharrock 2000). See also Allen 1950 and Williams 1968.524–77, who considers Propertius at length in his discussion of sincerity. The general trend of scholarship has been to treat the *Monobiblos* as, if not "sincere," at least concerned mainly with the presentation of what it has to say and not particularly interested in creating commentary on the poetic tradition or the craft of poetry (two exceptions to this are Greene 1995 and Zetzel 1996). In this way, Propertius's *Monobiblos* has come to stand in sharp contrast with Ovid's *Amores*, a text with which it has many obvious affinities. Whereas the *Amores* are frequently seen as almost the quintessential "poetry about poetry," the *Monobiblos* is often held up as the quintessence of "poetry not about poetry."

to be completely overcome by his love for a particular *puella* cause this wrestling to take on new and unexpected forms.

This essay considers how Propertius's relationship with a poet of the previous generation, C. Cornelius Gallus, weighs on the *Monobiblos*. In my examination of Propertius's relationship with his predecessor, I build upon Harold Bloom's conception of the workings of tradition, first articulated in his *Anxiety of Influence*.³ Bloom understands poetry as staging a confrontation between itself and its precursors, and he uses Freudian terminology to examine this encounter in terms of an analogy to the relationship between a father and a son. For Bloom, every poet is faced with the difficulties of his own "belatedness," just as for Freud every person is defined by his experience of being a child. I agree with many of Bloom's observations about the importance of literary heritage for a poet's work. But just as all children do not grow up to be anxious, not all poetry responds to influence in the same ways. In the *Monobiblos*, little anxiety is in evidence; nonetheless, Propertius's status as a follower in the footsteps of previous poets impinges profoundly on the ways in which the speaker represents his love for Cynthia—on the collection's erotics.

But my concern in these readings lies not solely in a new understanding of Gallus's influence on the *Monobiblos*. I also suggest a new model for understanding the relationship between the erotics of Propertius's first book and its poetics. Since the work of Maria Wyke in the 1980s, it has become common to understand the *puella* in Roman elegy as an allegorical figure, closely associated with the act of writing poetry.⁴ In the *Monobiblos*, perhaps more than in any other book of Roman elegy, the relationship between the speaker and his beloved is defined in close conjunction with the relationships between the poet and other men.⁵ The readings of this article demonstrate an imbrication of poetic and sexual concerns in the relationships between men in the *Monobiblos* similar to that which has so frequently

3 While Bloom's model of poetic influence is largely out of favor in the academy, Hardie 1993.116–19 and Acosta-Hughes and Stephens 2002 have recently drawn attention to the usefulness of his ideas.

4 Most prominently in Keith 1994 and McNamee 1993.

5 Scholars have recently turned their attention to the importance of homosocial bonds in the poetic world of the *Monobiblos* (P. A. Miller 2003). Oliensis 1997 examines how the heterosexual *amor* between Propertius and Cynthia is balanced by an eroticized *amicitia* between the speaker and the male characters of the collection, particularly Gallus. Recently, Sharrock 2000 has also considered how Propertius's *amici* contribute to the book's construction of realism.

been claimed for the relationship between the poet and his *puella*. Yet in contradistinction to the dominant methods of understanding the metapoetic character of the Cynthia poems, I propose that neither the erotics nor the poetics of the *Monobiblos* be understood simply as standing allegorically for the other, but rather that the text strives to depict the two as inseparable or entangled. To this end, I take a new tack on the knotty problem of the relationship between Cornelius Gallus and the character from the *Monobiblos* named Gallus. I focus on the marked usage of a particular Latin word, *testis*, in two poems: a poem addressed to “Gallus” and the poem with the clearest connection to the historical Cornelius Gallus. The collection’s employment of this polysemous word illuminates the nexus between the terms of Propertius’s intimate dealings with Cynthia and the poetics of influence.

II. UNITY AND DIVISION: THE GALLUSES OF THE *MONOBIBLOS*

The *Monobiblos* is impossible without Gallus. Without the publication some years earlier of Cornelius Gallus’s *Amores*, the *Monobiblos* would certainly never have been written; to call Propertius’s first book the earliest collection of Roman love elegy we have is to acknowledge implicitly the existence of a collection we do not have. C. Cornelius Gallus, whose poems have been lost save for a single line preserved in the manuscript of the geographer Vibius Sequester and the dozen or so mangled lines uncovered on a papyrus scrap in Egypt in the late 1970s, may have left almost as large a mark on Latin literary studies through his absence as he would have left had his works been preserved. As a shadow behind not only Propertius, but also Vergil’s *Eclogues*, where he appears as a character, Gallus demands consideration by all who attempt to situate the poetry of the late republic within the context of literary history.

Whereas we know little about Propertius’s own life, we know a great deal about the life of this Gallus.⁶ Because Gallus is an important figure in the political affairs of the early principate, Suetonius, Plutarch, and Dio Cassius all provide testimony concerning his biography and role as prefect of Egypt under Augustus. We even possess an inscription erected by Gallus in Egypt, a grandiloquent catalogue of the prefect’s achievements that provides evidence not only of the man’s deeds but also, implicitly, of the

6 For an overview of scholarship on the life of C. Cornelius Gallus, see Martirosova 1999, 28–68.

"envious spirit" to which Suetonius ascribes his downfall.⁷ Attempts to draw a connection between Gallus, a poet about whom we read a lot but whose works are largely unknown to us, and Propertius, a poet whose works we possess despite understanding little of the circumstances of their production, have marked the foundation of most reconstructions of the background to the *Monobiblos*.

The *Monobiblos* further proves impossible to read without considering its debt to this historical figure because of this: Propertius includes in fully a quarter of the book's poems an individual named Gallus. However, the Gallus mentioned in Propertius's text is notoriously so inconsistent in characterization that virtually every scholar attempting to address his relationship to the famous Cornelius Gallus is forced to begin by excluding certain poems or passages from consideration. In contradistinction to the other male names of the collection, all of which belong to personalities that are relatively clearly outlined and stable, "Gallus" both appears all through the *Monobiblos*—the name is linked to more poems than any other besides Cynthia—and is, perhaps, the collection's least stable referent. Three poems (5, 10, 13) involve triangular relationships among Propertius, a man named "Gallus," and various women (in 5, Cynthia, and in the later poems, various unnamed *puellae*), and, in all three, the logic of the poems implies that the name "Gallus" belongs to a poet of some sort (Cairns 1983). In addition, there are two other poems linked to a "Gallus." In poem 20, the poet recounts the story of Hylas's death in the context of exhorting "Gallus" not to take his own boy lover for granted. Finally, most unaccountably, in poem 21, a dead yet unburied soldier dubbed "Gallus" instructs an unnamed addressee to relate the story of his death to his sister at home. The discrepancies between these characterizations of Gallus—one moment "about to die from love" of an unnamed woman (*periturus amore*, 13.33), the next on the verge of losing a different lover, this time a boy; one moment a contemporary poet, the next a dead soldier—have resulted in the assertion, made by virtually all critics concerned with Gallus until the late 1990s, that there are two, or sometimes three, characters referred to as Gallus in the *Monobiblos*: one the subject of the first three Gallus poems (and possibly also of 1.20) and another a dead soldier, perhaps a relative of Propertius.⁸

7 "ob ingratum et maliuolum animum domo et prouinciis suis [Augustus] interdixit," Suetonius *Vit. Aug.* 66.2.

8 On the understanding of Gallus in 1.21 as a relation of the poet, see Nicholson 1999.149; also DuQuesnay 1992.

Attempts to determine exactly how many different Galluses are referred to in the collection are guided, I believe, by a misplaced quest for concreteness and factual consistency. I argue here for a different sort of coherence among the poems that feature Gallus, a thematic coherence wherein poems that share the name Gallus raise the same issues, pose similar questions, and employ rhetorics that overlap.⁹ In drawing attention to these thematic convergences, I hope to make a case not only for an underappreciated rhetorical structure that operates throughout the Gallus poems, but also for a new way of understanding the relationship between the character and the historical poet, C. Cornelius Gallus.

Cornelius Gallus has been invoked most famously by David O. Ross as the missing link between the short erotic epigrams of Catullus and the longer poems in the same meter that Propertius assembled in his *Monobiblos*. Ross's *Backgrounds to Augustan Poetry*, published in 1975, revisited a type of inquiry largely abandoned by American philologists in the middle of the twentieth century: the reconstruction of the style and subject matter of an important, but missing, collection of texts. In some respects, Ross's work closely follows that of his forerunners in Gallus scholarship, Skutsch 1906 and Tränkle 1960: it consists largely of speculation, based on close philological examination, as to which elements of later poetry are modeled on Gallan originals. What distinguishes Ross from his

9 My approach is related to, and yet distinct from, the approaches of two of the most recent, and provocative, treatments of Gallus in the *Monobiblos*: Nicholson 1999 and Janan 2001. Both critics craft readings of the *Monobiblos* that center on Gallus as a figure for multiplicity itself. While the two scholars situate their arguments differently—for Janan, within a Lacanian psychoanalytic framework that views Gallus as a dramatization of the incoherence of the subject, and for Nicholson within a semiotic frame wherein the radical breaks between different depictions of Gallus challenge the reader to view the collection as engaged in textual play rather than in mimetic representation—their works are united in arguing for an understanding of Gallus as a deliberately fractured entity that challenges the unity of the collection. For these critics, the *Monobiblos*'s creation of different Galluses, whose severability is undercut by thematic resonances between the poems, is a deliberate, conscious strategy for creating in the mind of an ancient reader a particular effect. While both provide compelling accounts of the operations of the poems, Janan and Nicholson's claims that the incoherence of Gallus represents a deliberate textual design assume an ancient reader who attends to the minutiae of Gallus's characterization with an investigative zeal similar to that found in nineteenth- and twentieth-century classicists. While I agree with Janan and Nicholson that the lack of factual cohesion among the different figures of Gallus makes providing a simple answer to the question of whether Propertius's Gallus is or is not Cornelius Gallus impossible, I do not believe that this means we must understand Gallus primarily as a figure for incoherence and instability.

predecessors is less the boldness of his reconstructions (though they are, at times, extraordinarily bold) than a certain circularity in his reasoning. Ross's *Backgrounds to Augustan Poetry* uses the poetry of Vergil and Propertius to construct an image of Gallus's work, an image that is then called upon to serve in a teleological historical narrative centered on how Vergil, Propertius, and, later, Horace, adapt Gallus in the service of crafting a distinctly Roman body of poetry. Ross thus simultaneously creates an image of Gallus that depends on the reliability of the information later poets provide and also reveals the highly charged nature of Gallus's role in the allusive systems of his successors; he both assumes the truth of poetic representations of Gallus and demonstrates why what is said about him may not be completely accurate.

Ross's work, while frequently praised for its ingenuity, aroused considerable skepticism even at the time it was published. J. E. G. Zetzel (1977.260), who in his review concludes that Ross accepts uncritically too much of the praise rendered Gallus by Vergil and others, stated: "I suspect that Ross would be sorely disappointed if Gallus's poetry should ever be recovered." This supposition was prophetic. Since the publication in 1979 of the "New Gallus," the fragmentary papyrus from Egypt that demonstrated little of the obvious erudition and complexity Ross had posited as Gallus's style, much of Ross's speculation has been rejected. In the years since this papyrus find, critics have turned to *Backgrounds* primarily as an examination of how Gallus figured in the minds of Vergil and Propertius, a topic on which it possesses unquestioned insight. Nonetheless, one of the arguments of *Backgrounds* continues to provoke discussion: Ross's claim that the Gallus mentioned in several poems of the *Monobiblos* ought to be understood as Cornelius Gallus the poet. Ross's forthright rejection of the most common arguments against the association of Cornelius Gallus with the character from the *Monobiblos*—that the age difference between Propertius and his predecessor is too great to allow the younger poet to address Gallus as an equal and that the designation of the character's *imagines* as *priscoe* rules out Cornelius Gallus, who, we know, belonged to the order of the *equites*, as the addressee—represented a turning point in Propertius scholarship. Since all prominent commentaries on Propertius (e.g., Butler and Barber 1933 and Camps 1961), as well as most other scholars who examined the issue (e.g., Hubbard 1974), had concluded that such an identification was extremely unlikely, Ross's re-evaluation of an area of Propertius criticism most had considered settled reignited interest in those places in Propertius where the name Gallus surfaces. Ross's original claim was

largely based on an appeal to “common sense.” Yet, in the years following the publication of *Backgrounds*, his identification of Cornelius Gallus as the Gallus mentioned in Propertius was significantly strengthened by Richard Thomas (1979), Joy King (1980), and Francis Cairns (1983). As these new attempts to prove the identity of the literary character flourished, and began to face resistance from such critics as Paolo Fedeli (1980) and, later, Peter White (1993), Propertius’s Gallus was established as a distinct area of inquiry, perhaps the pre-eminent critical focus of the *Monobiblos*.

Until recently, the critical spotlight remained focused on producing an alignment of or explaining the discrepancies among the bits of “factual” information provided by the speaker concerning “Gallus.” However, two recent works, Nicholson 1999 and Janan 2001, have moved the debate beyond the dichotomized question of whether Propertius’s Gallus is or is not Cornelius Gallus, arguing that the profound inconstancy of the referent “Gallus” within the *Monobiblos* makes providing a simple answer to this question impossible. Clearly, the fact that the name Gallus circulates so freely in the *Monobiblos* makes it necessary to accept that the relationship between the character Gallus and the “real” man is more complicated than Ross and others claimed. Despite this, I argue here for a connection between the man named as Gallus in Propertius’s poetry and the historical figure; however, it is a thematic, as opposed to a descriptive, connection. Moreover, I suggest that approaching Propertius’s Gallus from the vantage point of the historical Gallus allows us to discern a general thematic coherence within the *Monobiblos*, a set of concerns that unite both the notoriously discordant Gallus poems and also, to a lesser extent, many of the rest of the poems of the collection.

III. GALLUS’S *TESTES* 1: EROTIC TRIANGLES AND THE POETICS OF THE *MONOBIBLOS*

In order to begin our examination of the imbrication of the erotics and poetics in the *Monobiblos*, let’s turn first to 1.10, where the poet recounts observing the character Gallus and an unnamed woman make love (1.10.1–10):

O iucunda quies, primo cum testis amori
affueram vestris conscius in lacrimis!
o noctem meminisse mihi iucunda voluptas,
o quotiens votis illa vocanda meis,

cum te complexa morientem, Galle, puella
 vidimus et longa ducere verba mora!
 quamvis labentis premeret mihi somnus ocellos
 et mediis caelo Luna ruberet equis,
 non tamen a vestro potui secedere lusu:
 tantus in alternis vocibus ardor erat.

O delicious night, when first I was at your side,
 witness to your love, participant in your tears!
 O the delicious pleasure in remembering that night.
 O how often that night will be called on in my prayers,
 when I saw you, Gallus, dying in the arms
 of your beloved and murmuring long-drawn speeches.
 Although sleep pressed down my wilting eyelids,
 and the moon blushed, her horses in mid-sky,
 I was not able to withdraw from your play,
 so great was the passion in your alternating voices.

A literal reading of this poem, a reading that understands it simply as a description of some sort of voyeuristic incident, while sustainable, raises a number of questions, particularly, “How would it come about that Propertius would be witness to his friend as he is having sex?” Some commentators (e.g., Camps 1961) attempt to account for the anomalous nature of the situation described by pointing to Catullus 45, on the love of Septimius and Acme, which, they claim, offers a description of a similar event.¹⁰ But these poems have little in common in terms of either tone or emphasis. While both depict an erotic interaction between a man and a woman, in the Catullus poem, as Gordon Williams (1968.524–25) has observed, the action is presented in such an abstract manner that the position of the narrator is not raised as an issue. On the other hand, in the Propertius text, the location of the speaker as he watches Gallus and his *puella*, as well as its voyeuristic implications, is explicitly thematized, so that 1.10 calls attention to its own failure to accurately specify its context.¹¹ While it is clearly impossible to

10 See the response of Fedeli 1980.252. A comparison of these two poems is also the starting point for Gordon Williams’s discussion of sincerity in *Tradition and Originality* (1968.524–77).

11 This aspect of the poem has made it particularly open to allegorical interpretations, and it has been suggested that 1.10 ought to be understood as a metaphor for Propertius’s experience reading Gallus’s poetry (Sharrock 1990, with further bibliography).

extract from the poem any definitive circumstance for the situation described—and indeed, the raising of this question seems a deliberate act of the text—the first line, at least, offers one possible partial solution. Namely, it seems plausible, as was first suggested by Ellen Oliensis, to read the phrase “*primo cum testis amori affueram*” as capitalizing on the genital second meaning of *testis* as “testicle.”¹² This punning is far from uncommon in Latin poetic texts,¹³ and is especially prominent in Roman comedy, a genre with which elegy has been shown to have many linguistic affinities.¹⁴ The juxtaposition of the words *testis* and *amor* makes this pun readily legible, especially in the context of a poem that involves Gallus, who shares a name with the famous eunuch priests of Cybele.

It can be observed that this second sense of *testis* responds to the difficulties of imagining a context for the situation described in 1.10: it answers the question of how it comes about that the speaker is present to witness these moments of intimacy between Gallus and his *puella*. And absurd as it may seem at first blush, the hint in these opening lines that the speaker may be, in some sense, a talking testicle, is not as far outside the realm of elegiac discourse as it may initially appear. It is generally characteristic of elegy to interrogate the connection between the voice of the poet—the speaker of the majority of poems in all collections of Roman elegy—and the voices of objects. Perhaps owing to its generic roots in Greek epigram, Roman elegy commonly incorporates sepulchral epigrams that pose as speaking tombstones¹⁵ and, slightly less frequently, presents poems in which the speakers seem to be other inanimate entities.¹⁶ The *Monobiblos* alone presents poems voiced by scattered bones (1.21) and by a

12 Oliensis 1997.160. Janan 2001.43 seconds Oliensis’ contention of a sexual pun in these lines.

13 See the *OLD* entry. Among the instances of this punning cited by the *OLD* are Plautus *Curculio* 1.31 and Phaedrus 3.11 (in the context of imagining the court testimony of a eunuch). William Fitzgerald points out to me that play on the two meanings of *testis* also occurs in Martial and cites as examples 2.72 and 7.62. See also Juvenal 6.311.

14 On the frequency of this pun in comedy, see Ernout and Meillet 1985. On the linguistic affinities between comedy and early Roman elegy, see, particularly, Thomas 1979 and Day 1938.85–101.

15 For example, Propertius 2.13.35–36, *Amores* 2.6.61–62. See my discussion of Propertius 1.21 below at footnote 30. For the manipulations of voice in the sepulchral epigrams of archaic and classical Greece, see Svenbro 1993. Goldhill 1994 extends aspects of this analysis to Hellenistic epigrams.

16 For example, a statue of Vertumnus (Propertius 4.2), a statue of Priapus (Tibullus 1.4), or, in the case of the prologue of Ovid’s *Amores*, the voice of the book of poetry itself.

door (1.16), an object to which in Roman culture, as Adams 1982.89 tells us, “the external female pudenda [is often] likened.” And yet, it is hard to reconcile the genital possibilities of *testis* in these opening lines with the second half of the poem, where the speaker, firmly in the guise of poet, provides his comrade with advice on successfully engaging in the practices of a lover. The second portion of the poem, which stands among the earliest examples of the *praeceptor amoris* strain of elegiac discourse that comes to fruition in Ovid’s *Ars*, is often likened to Tibullus 1.4, another poem from the early period of Roman elegy in which the speaker mixes grandiloquent boasts of his own sexual prowess with advice to a man new to the ways of love. And yet, perhaps, the fact that the god Priapus voices the Tibullus poem may hint at some sort of cultural association between male genitals and the *praeceptor amoris* conceit.

If we accept that the opening lines of poem 10 operate in relation to a sexual pun, we must still ponder the relation of this pun to the dynamics of the poem as a whole. For while the sexual undercurrent of the word *testis* is, I believe, allowed to surface in the inaugural moments of the poem, it is sustainable for only so long. It may be possible, perhaps, to understand *vestris conscius in lacrimis* as some sort of obscene pun.¹⁷ But within a few lines, surely, whatever genital valence has come to be discerned in these first few lines is shoved firmly below the surface. This movement from sexual to legal *testis* prefigures the overall movement of the poem from scopophilic reminiscence to gnomic *didaxis*. The transition from the erotic to the dispassionate stands out more clearly if we read this poem alongside another famous poem, to which Ross, Thomas, and others have compared it, Catullus 50:¹⁸

Hesterno, Licini, die otiosi
multum lusimus in meis tabellis,
ut convenerat esse delicatos:
scribens versiculos uterque nostrum
ludebat numero modo hoc modo illoc,
reddens mutua per iocum atque vinum.
atque illinc abii tuo lepore
incensus, Licini, facetiisque,

17 As Oliensis 1997.159 observes: “The tears shed by Gallus and his new girlfriend are an index of pleasure, not grief.”

18 Ross 1975.83–84, Thomas 1979.202–05. Also Benjamin 1965.

ut nec me miserum cibus iuaret
 nec somnus tegeret quiete ocellos,
 sed toto indomitus furore lecto
 versarer, cupiens videre lucem,
 ut tecum loquerer simulque ut essem.
 at defessa labore membra postquam
 semimortua lectulo iacebant,
 hoc, iucunde, tibi poema feci,
 ex quo perspiceres meum dolorem.
 nunc audax cave sis, precesque nostras,
 oramus, cave despuas, ocelle,
 ne poenas Nemesis reposcat a te.
 est vemens dea: laedere hanc caveto.

At leisure, yesterday, Calvus,
 we fooled around a lot with my notebooks,
 since we'd agreed to be dainty.
 Each of us, writing little poems,
 played now with this meter, now with that,
 exchanging them amid jokes and wine.
 And I left from there so on fire
 with your charm and wit
 that food granted wretched me no pleasure,
 and I could not rest my eyes in sleep.
 But overcome with passion, I tossed and turned
 over the whole bed, desiring to see the sun
 so that I might converse with you again and be together.
 But after my limbs were lying half-dead
 on the bed, worn out from toil,
 I made this poem for you, my delight,
 so you could clearly see my pain.
 Now don't be rash, I beg, and
 spurn my prayers, my dear,
 lest Nemesis make you pay.
 She's a drastic goddess. Don't offend her.

Oliensis points out how this poem serves as important background for the first Gallus poem of the collection, 1.5. In many ways, however, recollections of this Catullus poem float through all three of the poems that feature

Propertius, Gallus, and various *puellae*, 1.5, 1.10, and 1.13. In the case of 1.10 in particular, the most eroticized depiction of the interaction between Propertius's poetic persona and another male poet, similarities abound, from the situational—the *agrupnia* (“sleeplessness”) that Richard F. Thomas analyzes in both poems¹⁹—to the linguistic affinities pointed to in the 1960s by Anna S. Benjamin (e.g., the sexually tinged uses of forms of *ludo* and *semimortua* versus *morientem*). More pronouncedly, both poems situate themselves as recompense for an erotically tinged experience: in Catullus's poem, the experience of writing poetry with his friend, and in Propertius's, the *voluptas* of watching his friend's sexual pleasure. And yet, in many respects, the movements of the poems are inverse. Whereas, in Catullus, the (arguably) innocent activity of composing poetry yields to a description of the poet, wracked by desire, writhing all night long in bed until his half-dead limbs give way from exhaustion, in Propertius, as we have seen, voyeuristic pleasure gives way to relatively dispassionate instruction. It bears remarking that, like our English derivative “member,” *membrum*, too, possesses a second, genital, meaning.²⁰ The *membra* that collapse from exhaustion in Catullus's poem are definitely, from the speaker's point of view, not the preferred sort, but the reader is meant to imagine other possibilities.

The inverse dynamics of these two, so similar, poems correspond to the dramatically different ways in which each text charts the speaker's desire. In the Catullus text, the desire between men is depicted as symmetrical and dyadic: Calvus and Catullus are *reddens mutua* (line 6), and Catullus's prayer at the end that his friend not disturb the symmetry of their relationship is lodged under the sign of that goddess of fair exchange herself, Nemesis. In Propertius, the convergence of poetic production and homoerotically tinged desire is perverted into a scene of voyeurism by the insertion into the scene of Gallus's *puella*. In Propertius's case, the symmetrical relationship at issue is not between the poet and his male peer but between the peer and his female beloved, the pair that participates in the same sort of erotic *lusus* as Catullus and Calvus and that shares the same passionate exchange *in alternis vocibus*. It seems no accident then, that, if we accept that both these poems invoke naughty puns, the pun in Propertius's poem refers to an appendage to the primary sexual interaction.

19 Thomas 1979.201–04. See also Janan 2001.37.

20 See the entry in the *OLD*.

The transformation here from a more “pure” same-sex desire to a more complicated, triangulated relationship between two men and one woman operates well as a synecdoche for the general shift in homosexual tensions between the poetic worlds of Catullus and Propertius. To generalize: in Catullus, homosexual impulses are allowed to surface rather often, most clearly in the Juventius cycle, but also here in 50 and, to the degree that threats of male rape and irrumation can be considered sexual as well as violent, in such invective poems as 16. The operations of same-sex desire in Propertius can be seen as more modern, in that they more consistently conform to the triangular, mediated structure familiar from the work of Eve Sedgwick.²¹ Sedgwick appropriates Rene Girard’s notion of mimetic desire to describe the structure of what she terms “homosocial desire,” by which she means the forces that shape the entire continuum of relationships between men throughout the social, familial, economic, and political realms, as well as in the erotic sphere. In Sedgwick’s influential theorization, many bonds between males are structured through a shared relationship, most often characterized as rivalry, with a female. The woman, therefore, serves both as the cement that bonds the men and as a method for displacement of erotic energy. The triangular structure to which Sedgwick draws attention is often manifested in literature, she claims, through a discourse of symmetry and dissymmetry, wherein certain relationships (both between members of the same sex and also between characters of different sexes) are represented as mirrorings or inversions. Particularly thought-provoking in the context of a discussion of Propertius 1.10, is Sedgwick’s reading of Shakespeare’s Sonnets as enacting a “genital allegory,” wherein the differences in social position between the sexes are addressed through a system of sexual images (1985.28–48). According to Sedgwick, depictions of sexuality, and particularly depictions of genitals themselves, serve as a complicated way for thinking through the specific relations among Shakespeare and his two other main characters, the fair youth and the dark lady. While Sedgwick’s reading focuses on what she sees as a structuring vagina/penis dichotomy, it is tempting to speculate on what she would make of Propertius’s punning here—in a poem that depicts the interaction of three different characters—

21 My description of the differences between the operations of homosexual desire in Catullus and in the *Monobiblos* is meant to paint only in broad strokes. The triangulated structure of Propertius 1.10 has some analogues in Catullus (for instance, in poem 6). Poem 1.20 of Propertius, which depicts a love relationship involving only men, is discussed below.

on the word *testis*. The appearance of *testis* in 1.10 represents the transformation of a relation previously imagined as involving two figures into a relationship involving three. It seems not surprising, therefore, that the word *testis* would be invoked here, for at its root, it seems, *testis* is linked both to the mediation of binary oppositions and also to the idea of a "third." Indeed, the word is etymologically connected to the Latin word for three, *tres*; as Ernout and Meillet 1985 tells us, *testis* is derived from the concept of the third participant in a lawsuit, the person who is neither the plaintiff nor the defendant.²²

As others have noted, a surprising number of the poems in the *Monobiblos*, and particularly the poems involving Gallus, can be seen to operate through some sort of erotic triangle. Oliensis 1997 charts the triadic structure of desire in 1.5, where the poet warns off Gallus from pursuing Cynthia in a manner that brings to the surface the poet's fantasy of "erotically heightened mutuality" (159). King 1980.227–30 also draws attention to the mediation of desire in 1.20. Here, in what is the most straightforwardly homosexual poem of the collection, Propertius tells the story of Hercules and Hylas in order to warn Gallus to be more mindful of his own lover. While King argues persuasively that the poem invites an allegorical reading that acknowledges the possibility that the *puer* whom Gallus is advised not to let slip away is Propertius himself, the sexual relationship between the speaker and the addressee is raised only through allegory and involves the creation of the conceit of a third person, in this case the boy about whom the speaker is giving advice.

IV. GALLUS'S *TESTES* 2: CITATION AND TRIANGULATION IN PROPERTIUS AND VERGIL

It is my contention that this mediation of desire in the *Monobiblos* relates closely to a mediation that can be observed in how Propertius interacts with both the poetry and personage of Cornelius Gallus. Whereas

22 Most treatments of the word agree that the primary meaning of *testis* is "witness" and that its meaning "testicle" represents a later development of uncertain origin. (I am inclined to speculate that the sexual meaning of *testes* arises from a metaphor involving the role of testicles as witnesses to, but not participants in, coitus.) I have found no evidence that the two concepts, witness and testicle, were linked to the same word either because of an ancient custom of holding one's testicles while testifying or needing to be male in order to participate in a lawsuit.

1.10 revises Catullus's poem in depicting a sexual encounter involving not two but three participants, a later poem from the *Monobiblos*, 1.18, links triangulation much more explicitly to Propertius's interactions with the works of his predecessor. Since it seems fitting to consider 1.10's *testis* as one of a set, we will again examine a passage in which this term arises, this time in a context that invokes the historical Gallus rather than Propertius's character.

In many respects, 1.18 stands alone in the Propertian *corpus*. While many of the poems from Propertius's first book take pains to cite multiple models and to unite in single compositions elements of disparate genres, 1.18 marks itself as belonging to the tradition of bucolic poetry exemplified by Theocritus and Vergil's *Eclogues*. Both the setting of Propertius's poem—in a *vacuum nemus* (2) characterized by *teneras umbras* (21)—and its concern with lost and unfulfilled love bear a clear relationship to the *topoi* of bucolic, especially Vergilian bucolic. David O. Ross has already shown not only specific parallels in Theocritus and the *Eclogues* for the questions Propertius asks of his absent mistress,²³ but also how the beech tree of line 20 is “beyond all others, the tree of the *Eclogues*” (1975.72). As a corrective to previous readings of 1.18 that stressed its relationship to works of Callimachus (e.g., Cairns 1969), Ross 1975.73 convincingly demonstrates that “Propertius wrote [1.18] not simply as an exercise in translating Callimachus' objective treatment into a subjective elegiac form, but because a nearer, Roman precedent called for his attention”: Vergil's *Eclogues*.

This shift in generic register in 1.18 is emphasized in the first lines, which take pains to highlight the dramatic movement in locale from the cityscapes of elegy to the idealized bucolic *locus amoenus*: “Here surely are places deserted and voiceless for the complaining man” (“Haec certe deserta loca et taciturna querenti”), the poet explains in the first line, continuing: “Here can I bring forth my secret sorrows with impunity” (“hic licet occultos proferre impune dolores,” 3). But while Propertius 1.18 as a whole recalls the genre of pastoral, in line 19, where *testes* appear, the focus shifts, and one particular intertext comes into play (1.18.19–22):

vos eritis testes, si quos habet arbor amores,
 fagus et Arcadio pinus amica deo.
 a quotiens teneras resonant mea verba sub umbras,
 scribitur et vestris Cynthia corticibus!

23 Ross 1975.71: “Lines 5–6 [of 1.18], which introduce [the poet's] questions, have a close enough parallel in Theocritus to make the suggestion of pastoral seem intentional.”

You will be my witnesses, if a tree has any *amores*,
 beech tree and pine, beloved of Pan.
 Ah, how often my words echo under your delicate shade,
 and "Cynthia" is written on your bark!

The poet's decision to carve the name of his beloved in the bark of a tree has a long set of poetic precedents, and as long ago as the 1960s, Francis Cairns argued that this moment represents a reference to the Acontius and Cydippe episode from Callimachus's *Aetia*.²⁴ Yet, in his particular framing of this episode, Propertius makes clear that he has in mind not so much Callimachus as Vergil's depiction of Gallus in *Eclogue* 10. The tenth *Eclogue*, we may recall, tells the story, closely modeled on Theocritus 1, of Gallus—universally identified with Cornelius Gallus—cast in the role of an Arcadian shepherd as he dies of heartbreak over his unrequited love for a woman named Lycoris. As the poem progresses, the shepherd is visited by three gods, Apollo, Silvanus, and Pan, who attempt to console him and to whom he gives the thirty-line response that comprises what is generally labeled "Gallus's lament." Midway through his lament, the shepherd announces his intention to carve his *amores* on the bark of trees, in a passage to which Propertius alludes in his own poem (Vergil *Ecl.* 10.52–54):

certum est in silvis inter spelaea ferarum
 malle pati tenerisque meos incidere amores
 arboribus: crescent illae, crescetis, amores.

I am resolved: I'll suffer in the woods among the haunts
 of beasts and carve my *amores* into tender trees.
 As they grow, you will grow, my loves.

Propertius footnotes this particular instance of tree carving in his own description by wondering aloud, in his own apostrophe to plant life, "if a tree has any *amores*" (19).

Yet this appearance of *testes* marks not simply a shift from general to specific intertextual reminiscence, but also a significant turning point in

24 Cairns 1969. Zetzel 1996.80–81 provides an overview of the literary history of tree-carving episodes in classical and Hellenistic Greek sources, drawing attention to the damage done by stripping bark. He concludes that "the pastoral landscape was filled with dead trees" (81).

the internal logic of the poem. As is made clear from the poem's opening lines, the very rationale for the poet's move to the woods is their silence; they provide a safe place for him to voice his complaints about his mistress. "Surely these places are deserted and voiceless" ("haec certe deserta loca et taciturna"), he says in line 1, and, presumably, the lament that characterizes lines 5 through 18 is predicated on the fact that rocks, being silent, are able to keep a secret ("si modo sola queant saxa tenere fidem," 4). But things change in the middle of the poem, where the speaker's concern transforms from safely expressing his sorrows to effectively proclaiming his love, and, at line 17, the poet wonders whether the cause of Cynthia's anger has been his own reticence: "Or is it because a changed complexion is too subtle a sign and no *fides* proclaims itself from my mouth?" ("an quia parva damus mutato signa colore, / et non ulla meo clamat in ore fides?" 17–18). In an effort to rebut the charge of not being vocal enough, the speaker recasts his surroundings as abounding in sound. When Propertius proposes to the foliage that it bear witness to his ardor, he endows it with a voice: suddenly in line 21, the words of the poet are able to echo beneath their canopy ("a quotiens teneras resonant mea verba sub umbras"). This shift from maintaining silence to reproducing sound is highlighted in the poem's last two lines, "Whatever you are, let the woods echo 'Cynthia' for me, and the deserted rocks not lack your name" ("sed qualiscumque es resonent mihi 'Cynthia' silvae, / nec deserta tuo nomine saxa vacent," 31–32), which themselves neatly echo and reverse the opening couplet.

This thematization of nature's voice and words stands out even more distinctly when contrasted with its precursor: the tenth *Eclogue*. Let's examine a passage near the beginning of that poem (Vergil *Ecl.* 10.8 & 13–16):

non canimus surdis, respondent omnia silvae . . .
illum etiam lauri, etiam flevere myricae,
pinifer illum etiam sola sub rupe iacentem
Maenalus et gelidi fleverunt saxa Lycaei.
Stant et oves circum.

I sing not to the deaf; the woods answer all . . .
The laurels wept over [Gallus]. The tamarisks, too,
and even the pine-bearing Mt. Maenalus, as he lay beneath
the lonely crag. And, too, the rocks of chilly Lycaeus.
And the sheep stand around him.

Vergil's account of the death of Gallus engages strikingly in the conceit of bucolic poetry to which has been attached the fetching label, "the pathetic fallacy." When Vergil says in line 8, "I sing not to the deaf; the woods answer all," he has in mind not so much verbal echoes as the emotional displays he goes on to describe: the rocks weep, as do the tamarisks and laurels, while the sheep simply stand there. Propertius's twist on this common conceit of bucolic poetry involves having nature mimic not emotions but words, and in this he manages to transform his *Eclogue*-like poem into a exploration not simply of his love for Cynthia but also of textuality and literary influence.

In Propertius's poem, as indeed in Vergil's before it, the act of carving on tree trunks is marked as a form of textual production. When Vergil has Gallus say *crescent illae, crescetis, amores*, he is, of course, not referring simply to "loves" themselves, but also to Cornelius Gallus's collection of poetry of the same name. Likewise, the word with which Propertius's woods resound in lines 31–32 is meant to be both the name of a woman and a title for the *Monobiblos* itself, which, according to the conventions of Augustan poetry, would have been referred to by its *incipit*, *Cynthia*. We can remember here, too, the fact that the word *liber*, which we translate "book," can also refer to tree bark, from which, supposedly, the first books were made.²⁵ In this regard, the ability of the woods to echo seems to refer not simply to the reverberation of sound, but also to a certain sort of textual reproduction, which preserves through the creation of copies.²⁶

In the context of the metapoetic concerns of this poem, we can begin to discern a way in which the identification of the trees as *testes* operates. In this text, *testis* is defined in close relation to the ideas of *fides* and, to a certain extent, exposure. Propertius's recasting of the natural world as one that produces speech occurs as a response to the question: "Does no *fides* shout out from my mouth?" ("et non ulla meo clamat in ore fides?" 18) and the description of the trees as *testes* here connects closely to this preceding line, with which it shares a legal register.²⁷ But the relation in this poem between *testes* and *fides* is by no means simple. On the one hand, in

25 On this pun in Ovid's story of Daphne and Apollo from the *Metamorphoses*, see Farrell 1999.133–34.

26 Ellen Oliensis points out to me that Propertius here reveals an aspect of the poetics of the *Eclogues* themselves, and draws attention to two lines from the opening poem: "tu, Tityre, lentus in umbra / formosam resonare doces Amaryllida silvas" (1.4–5).

27 Cairns 1969 produces a reading of 1.18 as a "defense speech" demonstrating "legal form." His analysis is built around a close examination of lines 17–20.

their role as *testes*, the trees serve as a testament to trustworthiness. And yet it seems from reading the poem in its entirety that to proclaim faith is to break faith, to reveal those things that ought to be kept silent. All of the apostrophic questions of this poem have been produced in the hope that nature can keep silent and thereby preserve *fides* (*tenere fidem*, 4). That this ambivalence towards revelation is inscribed in a scene of textual production seems not at all accidental, especially in elegy, which so often interrogates its status as simultaneously public and private.²⁸ And yet poetic production in this poem is always also imitation—both in the sense that Propertius self-consciously draws attention to the fact that he is reproducing a passage from the *Eclogues*, and in the sense that once nature is given the ability to speak, what it says is revealed to be an echo. When the speaker exclaims at line 21: “quotiens teneras resonant mea verba sub umbras,” it is not only a lament but a comment on the act of poetic copying: “How often,” indeed, “are my words repeated beneath the tender shades!”

With this understanding of 1.18 in mind, we can discern that the use of *testis* in the opening line of 1.10 raises many of the same issues, even while it refracts them in a different way. Let’s examine the image of Propertius as *testis* in light of lines 13 and 14 of that poem, which serve as a hinge between the first, more sexual half of the poem and the second, more didactic portion: “Not only have I learned to keep your sorrows secret, but there’s something even greater than *fides* in me, friend” (“non solum vestros didici reticere dolores, / est quiddam in nobis maius, amice, fide”). In the middle of such an explicit poem, the poet’s claim that he is holding something back is puzzling. Nonetheless, we can point to one effect of these

28 Discussions of the circulation and consumption of Roman poetic texts have become something of a trend in Latin studies over the past few years: examples of different types of treatments include Oliensis 1995 and large portions of Habinek 1998. The bibliography on these issues in Latin elegy in particular is meager, most likely because the texts themselves make such contradictory claims concerning their own intended audience. We might think briefly of Ovid’s *Amores*, the preface of which makes clear that a wide circulation of the book is imagined. And yet, in *Amores* 3.1, where the poet recounts his meeting with the personified spirits of the genres of tragedy and elegy, the speech of Elegy demonstrates that, at least in some senses, the distinction between the two modes of composition is a function of the fact that elegy has as its intended audience a specific, if not historically real, *puella* (“quin ego me memini, dum custos saevus abiret, / ancillae miseram delituisse sinu. / quid, cum me munus natali mittis, at illa / rumpit et adposita barbara mergit aqua,” 55–58). This paradoxical dynamic—this splitting of the audience between the real and the imagined—forms, I believe, a significant attribute of poetic representations of the essential character of elegy as a genre.

lines: whereas the *testes* in 1.18 are addressed in terms of their ability to reproduce words, the *testis* here is defined by his reticence. And what specifically is it that Propertius is not saying? When we remember that *dolores* can refer to verbal accounts of sorrow as well as physical pain, one possibility emerges: what this *testis* does not recount, despite revealing quite a lot of other information, are those words upon which Propertius's description of the evening so notably focuses. What the speaker of 1.10 shares with us, more than anything else about the experience of watching Gallus and his *puella*, is that he "saw" them speaking ("vidimus et longa ducere verba mora," 6) and that he was unable to withdraw from watching them because of the "passion in their words" ("tantus in alternis vocibus ardor erat," 10). This gesture of alluding to, but failing to reproduce, Gallus's speech is perhaps not an entirely surprising aspect of the poet's relationship to a man to whom he later conspicuously says, in poem 13, "at non ipse tuas imitabor, perfide, voces" ("But I'll not imitate your words, treacherous man," 1.13.3).²⁹ By addressing Gallus as *perfade*, the implication seems to be that Propertius, in not imitating Gallus's speech, is preserving *fides* in a way his friend has not. And indeed, in this respect, Propertius keeps his word. For it is a notable aspect of all those poems addressed to Gallus, all those poems that seem to depict Gallus as a poet (although not, of course, of 1.21),³⁰ that despite discussing Gallus's *vox* numerous times, the man's speech, like the speech of all the other writers addressed by the author, is never reproduced. This is particularly remarkable in a collection such as the *Monobiblos*, which

29 I plan to examine in future work how the *Monobiblos* often links allusion to a failure to reproduce direct speech.

30 Poem 21 lies outside of the immediate scope of this article. One of the aspects of previous scholarship that I want to resist is the belief that an interpretation of Gallus in the *Monobiblos* can only be sustainable if it accounts for every mention of the name. Yet while no interpretation can fully integrate the enigmatic and textually fraught penultimate poem of the collection, it can be seen to resonate in some respects with earlier poems that feature Gallus. Nicholson 1999.150–51 has already observed that line 3 ("quid nostro gemitu turgentia lumina torques?" "Why do you turn your tearful eyes from my groans?"), picks up the image of Propertius himself in poem 10, unable to turn his eyes away from Gallus dying, metaphorically, in the arms of his *puella*. Additionally, like so many of the poems that invoke the name Gallus, poem 21 involves a triangulated relationship between two men and one woman, in this case, the dying Gallus (or, perhaps, the recently deceased Gallus, depending on how one understands the poem), an unnamed soldier, and Gallus's sister. Occurring in the closing moments of a collection that has so scrupulously refused to reproduce the words of either Cornelius Gallus or his eponymous character, it is not surprising that poem 21 would suggest that Gallus's words are, in some sense, the speech of the dead. Nicholson 1999 provides a good treatment of the difficulties of this poem.

delights in ventriloquism: whether it be the famous reproduction of Cynthia's speech in 1.3 or of the door of 1.16.³¹ And here, in essence, lies the difference between the trees of 1.18, Propertius's *testes*, who are figured as endowed with the ability to echo and preserve, and Propertius himself as *testis* in 1.10, who proclaims faith by keeping mum.

In both 1.10 and 1.18, therefore, the word *testis* is used in the context of describing and exploring a triangulated relationship. This triangulation in 1.10 is more obvious and consists of the poet, the character Gallus, and an unnamed woman. In 1.18 the triangle most evident involves the poet, his absent beloved, Cynthia, and the trees that witness and, having been endowed with a voice, can preserve and transmit his words. In this regard, I would suggest that the trees here stand in for the reader himself. It is the reader of the collection who is, in many senses, the true addressee of poem 18, which, by stressing its remote setting, exploits the fact that, unlike most poems of the *Monobiblos*, it has no named human recipient. Like these trees, the reader has, in the closing lines of the first poem of the collection, been advised to pay close attention and invoked as a possible conduit for the preservation of the poet's words (1.1.37–38):

quod si quis monitis tardas adverterit auris,
heu referet quanto verba dolore mea!

If anyone pays slow heed to this warning,
woe, with how much sorrow he will later echo my words.

The reader, therefore, is placed in 1.18 in much the same position that Propertius has depicted himself as occupying in 1.10: a witness to a poet's love of his *puella*. Yet whereas Propertius's own *fides* has kept him from telling of Gallus's *dolores*, the reader is expected to experience no similar compunction.

But comparing these two poems can also allow us to perceive other sorts of mediation and triangulation at work in 1.18: the speaker's love of Cynthia is expressed only through the author's adaptation of a scene originally found in the work of another poet. The speaker's intention to inscribe

31 On Propertius 1.3 as presenting an image of the elegiac *puella* as a speaking object, see Sharrock 1991.

the name “Cynthia” here is footnoted, through its Vergilian intertext, as an imitation of a previous episode of tree carving. While it is perhaps possible that *Eclogue* 10’s description of Gallus’s inscriptional endeavor is modeled on some lost Gallan original, its most recent instantiation would have been its appearance in the *Eclogues*. Propertius here has probably chosen to present his interactions with Gallus—like his interactions with Cynthia—as enabled, in a sense, by a third element, in this case an image culled from the work of an intermediary poet, Vergil. In 1.18, even Propertius’s relation to Gallus’s *Amores* is triangulated through a Vergilian source.

V. THE MILANION *EXEMPLUM* AND GALLUS’S *AMORES*

With these readings of 1.10 and 1.18 in mind, let’s turn to that portion of the *Monobiblos* where scholars generally turn when seeking Cornelius Gallus, the so-called “Milanion *exemplum*.” I contend that many of the same thematic issues raised later in the collection—issues of imitation, of speech versus silence, and, most prominently, of triangulation and mediation—also surface in this mysterious and critic-vexing moment from the opening lines of the first poem (1.1.9–18):

Milanion nullos fugiendo, Tulle, labores
 saevitiam durae contudit Iasidos.
 nam modo Partheniis amens errabat in antris,
 ibat et hirsutas ille videre feras;
 ille etiam Hylaei percussus vulnere rami
 saucius Arcadiis rupibus ingemuit.
 ergo velocem potuit domuisse puellam:
 tantum in amore preces et benefacta valent.
 in me tardus Amor non ullas cogitat artis,
 nec meminit notas, ut prius, ire vias.

Milanion, by fleeing no labors, Tullus,
 conquered the savageness of hard Atalanta.
 For once he was wandering madly in the caves of
 Mount Parthenius, and he went to see the bristling beasts.
 He also was wounded by Hylaeus’s club,
 and, injured, he cried out on the cliffs of Arcadia.
 Therefore, he was able to subdue the swift maiden.
 So strong are good deeds and prayers in love.

For me slow love contrives no arts,
nor is he mindful to go known ways as before.

As has often befuddled critics, after a few lines outlining the fact that Propertius is in love with a woman named Cynthia, the first poem of the book turns from discussion of the woman herself to an extended account of some relatively obscure mythological figures. The story here, how a certain Milanion succeeds in wooing his *puella* through good deeds and supplication, is difficult on a first reading even to recognize as a variant of the myth of Atalanta. In the more familiar story, the maiden is defeated in a foot race by a man variously identified as Milanion, Hippomenes, or Meleager.³² Here, however, Milanion woos and eventually wins Atalanta after saving her from rape at the hands of a centaur named Hylaeus. Not only is there an oddness in retelling this obscure and contested myth in the inaugural moments of this poem, but the rationale for any inclusion of this story is difficult to discern immediately. The poet seems at first to be suggesting the story of Milanion as a hopeful parallel to his own situation: the hero, in love with a seemingly implacable woman, eventually wears down her resistance through continued entreaty and good works.³³ And yet, on closer examination, this reading of the passage does not hold. For in the lines immediately following the Milanion *exemplum*, Propertius acknowledges that his situation is not like Milanion's at all; in his case, "Slow love contrives no arts / nor is he mindful to go known ways," 17–18. Additionally, as any reader of the remainder of the *Monobiblos* will know, Propertius's *preces* are only occasionally successful, and in no way can he be said ever to have completely "domesticated" Cynthia with either words or *benefacta*.

Fundamental to an understanding of this passage is the assertion of David O. Ross that Propertius closely models this section of his inaugural

32 For the array of stories involving the wooing of Atalanta, see Rosen and Farrell 1986.248–49. Two distinct female figures with the name Atalanta exist in the ancient tradition, a virginal huntress living in Arcadia won, most often, by Milanion, and the more famous swift-footed Boeotian maiden, undone by the scheme of the golden apples by a man generally named Hippomenes. Yet often the two women were confused and the stories conflated; for instance, Milanion is named as the suitor of the Boeotian Atalanta by Apollodorus (3.9.2). Propertius here, too, indicates the confusion between the two stories by describing his Atalanta as "swift" (*velocem*, 15), an epithet clearly more appropriate to the Boeotian figure. On Atalanta, see also Ross 1975.62.

33 This is, in short, the interpretation of Ross 1975.

poem on a now lost account of the Milanion myth by Cornelius Gallus.³⁴ Ross's reasoning has been deemed shaky, most prominently by J. E. G. Zetzel (1977).³⁵ Yet in the years since his book was reviewed, Ralph Rosen and Joseph Farrell (1986) have significantly strengthened Ross's contention that Propertius's account of Milanion is based on Gallus's work.³⁶ Adding to the evidence for a Gallan intertext here is another programmatic allusion in the first poem. 1.1 self-consciously invokes a poem from Meleager in its first lines.³⁷ Following closely after another allusion to a body of work, Hellenistic

34 Ross's argument is twofold. On the one hand, he draws attention to the tone of Propertius's language, particularly what he describes as "archaisms" (e.g., the construction of the gerund with a direct object in line 9 and the use of *videre* as an infinitive of purpose in line 12). Drawing on the work of Tränkle 1960, Ross deduces that the archaic elements of the author's diction ought to be attributed to the imitation of some other text. Additionally, Ross points to similarities between Propertius's telling of the Milanion tale and Vergil's depiction of Gallus himself in the tenth *Eclogue*, as well as Ovid's combination of elements of both texts in his account of Milanion at *Ars Amatoria* 2.185–96, in order to suggest that both draw on the same original, most certainly Gallan. In Ross's analysis (1975.91), the conclusion is "unavoidable" that "Gallus had used the Milanion-Atalanta story as an *exemplum* for the power of the *obsequium amoris* . . . undoubtedly applying it to his own amatory situation in a specific elegy."

35 Especially problematic for Zetzel is Ross's understanding of the implications of the Milanion episode in Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* (see above, note 34.)

36 While concerned primarily with the literary precedents for Vergil's treatment of Gallus in the tenth *Eclogue*, Rosen and Farrell substantially augment Ross's original claims concerning the Milanion *exemplum* in the *Monobiblos*. The authors point to a confluence of reminiscences of Callimachus's hymn *In Dianam* in the treatments of Milanion in all three poets: Vergil, Propertius, and Ovid. Since the allusions to Callimachus's poem are not all directly based on Callimachus's treatment of Atalanta, and, indeed, since Milanion does not figure at all in Callimachus's work, Rosen and Farrell conclude that it must have been Gallus who originally drew on the Hellenistic source and that these elements must have become part of the tradition of describing Milanion through imitation of Gallus. While neither Ross's nor Rosen and Farrell's arguments are airtight, the supposition that Propertius's account of Milanion is modeled on a passage from Gallus is persuasive. As Ross notes, the language of the passage is unusually difficult, even for Propertius, and the discontinuity in style between the opening lines and the Milanion *exemplum* is most easily accounted for by understanding the Milanion passage to be modeled on other work. Since Milanion himself does not appear in Callimachus, and there is no other strong candidate for the work on which this passage is modeled, the supposition that this passage is fashioned after a Gallan episode is easy to accept. Even Zetzel concludes that, although Ross's analysis is profoundly flawed, a Gallan original for this passage is likely (1977.253).

37 As I outlined above, the opening couplet of the *Monobiblos* has long been recognized as an extremely close adaptation of a Greek epigram of Meleager (Gow-Page CIII = *AP* 12.101): "τόν με Πόθοις ἄτρωτον ὑπὸ στέρνοισι Μυῖσκοις / ὅμμασι τοξεύσας τοῦτ' ἐβόησεν ἔπος· / τὸν θρασύν εἶλον ἐγὼ· τὸ δ' ἐπ' ὀφρύσι κείνῳ φρύαγμα / σκηπτροφόρου σοφίας

epigram, that serves as an important backdrop to the *Monobiblos*'s poetic project, it seems quite likely that we are not mistaken in discerning an allusion to the other significant precedent for Propertius's work.

Despite all the critical inquiry into the question of whether this passage alludes to a Gallan original, little attention has been paid to the nature of the allusion itself or to the fact that, as an *exemplum*, the Milanion episode is quite oddly constructed.³⁸ A brief paraphrase of what is recounted in these lines may be a helpful way to proceed. The poet begins the story with the general statement "Milanion, by fleeing no labors, Tullus, conquered the savageness of hard Atalanta," 9–10. Having defined his focus as Milanion's *labores*, the poet cryptically recounts the hero's battle with the centaur Hylaeus, who tried to rape his beloved, the virginal Arcadian huntress Atalanta. Following these lines, a couplet is devoted to Milanion's wounds and to his cries. The episode ends with the poet's claim that it is through these actions that Milanion succeeds in wooing his *puella*: "Therefore, he was able to subdue the swift maiden. So strong are good deeds and prayers in love," 15–16.

Several elements of this episode suggest its relation to the Gallus poems. The story Propertius tells here sets up a situation between two males, Milanion and Hylaeus, which is mirrored in many ways by the relationship

ἡνίδε ποσσὶ πατῶ. / τῷ δ' ὕσον ἀμπνεύσας τόδ' ἔφην· ' φίλε κοῦρε, τί θαμβεῖς; / καὺτὸν ἄπ' Οὐλύμπου Ζῆνα καθεῖλεν Ἔρως. '" ("Myiskos, when he shot me, as yet unwounded by desire, under the breast / with his eyes, shouted these words: / 'I have caught the proud one. See, I trample with my feet that arrogance of / princely wisdom on his brow.' / To which I replied, catching my breath: 'Dear boy, why do you wonder? / Love dragged even Zeus himself down from Mt. Olympus.'") Given the popularity of the *Garland* in Rome during the first century B.C.E., Propertius's utilization of Meleager here would likely have seemed to his readers as prominent as—if not more pronounced than—the much-discussed allusion to Gallus's *Amores* that follows in lines 9–16. Propertius transforms Meleager's text in ways that relate closely to what I examine below concerning the Milanion *exemplum*. Immediately obvious is the shift in emphasis implied in the difference between Meleager's opening τὸν με and Propertius's *Cynthia prima*. Additionally, Propertius rewrites a text that stresses dialogue and verbal exchange into one that seems markedly silent. In the Propertius, which lacks any account of either the poet's or Cynthia's speech, the image of the poet being captured by his beloved's eyes (line 1) becomes all the more striking. Further, while Meleager is allowed the opportunity to catch his breath and to respond to the boast of Myiskos, Propertius's text breaks off and its speaker is never afforded the opportunity to address Cynthia directly until the opening moments of the next poem, 1.2.

38 The difficulties of this passage, both syntactic and logical, are well summarized in a recent article by J. Booth (2001), who argues for emending *non modo* in line 11.

in the later poems between Propertius himself, as a character in the text, and the man named Gallus. Both Milanion and Hylaeus (as well as Propertius and Gallus in poem 5), wrangle over the love of a woman, either Atalanta or Cynthia. Additionally, in both cases, the lover is physically vulnerable; while Milanion is injured by Hylaeus's club, Propertius in the same poem, in a passage that has long been recognized as an invocation of medical imagery (Shackleton Bailey 1956.6), likens his love to some sort of physical malady ("amici, / quaerite non sani pectoris auxilia," 1.25–26).

This passage seems related to the Gallus poems in its more subtle thematic aspects also. The first seven lines of the eight-line episode suggest a clear message: the beloved is won through good deeds. Milanion overcomes the hard Atalanta with his *labores*: battling Hylaeus and receiving a wound. Yet in the final moments of the episode (line 16), a new term is introduced: the character's prayers. The reader of this line is left with a hard choice: either the prayers are a new element, almost an afterthought, appended to Propertius's account in the final moments, or else she has to understand retrospectively that these words, now characterized as *preces*, are what were earlier referred to as the groaning of the wounded hero (despite the explanatory efforts of Commager 1974.26, an awkward assumption). What would Milanion have said here? And if the prayers were such a prominent part of Milanion's effort to win over his beloved, how come they are entirely absent from the narrative portion of the *exemplum*? This has bothered generations of critics. Housman famously emended the text, printing *fides* instead of *preces*.³⁹ More often critics such as Francis Cairns (1974.95) have attempted to resolve this problem by pointing to other accounts of this version of the myth of Atalanta, particularly Ovid's in the *Ars Amatoria*, in order to conclude that, since Milanion's pleas are prominent in other accounts, Propertius was able to "assume his audience's understanding of [them]." As filtered through Ross, this line of argument seems to imply, too, that Gallus's use of Milanion would also have emphasized, and may have even quoted, this persuasive speech. But understanding how speech figured in other poets' works really seems to do more to magnify the oddness of Propertius's structuring of this episode than it does to diminish it. Propertius's allusion here both calls attention to what it lacks—

39 Housman 1888.23–24: "Prayers! Where has he said a word about prayers? . . . The *ergo* of 15, the *tantum* of 16 pointedly invite attention to what has preceded, and there has preceded not a word, not a hint of *preces*."

any account of Milanion's persuasive speech—and serves to refer the reader to an account of these words in the previous work.

This allusion works to draw attention to the differences between the poet's current project and the poetry of earlier authors as well as to inscribe issues of poetic rivalry. And it seems not a coincidence that this recollection of Gallus provokes one of the few seemingly programmatic statements of this opening poem: "For me slow love contrives no arts, nor is he mindful to go known ways as before" ("in me tardus Amor non ullas cogitat artes, / nec meminit notas, ut prius, ire vias," 18–19). Citation of a traditional topic, framed to refer the reader to Gallus's own text and draw attention to the differences between what Propertius chooses to relate and what we can only learn by turning to previous work, is followed by a gesture of disavowal and a claim of originality: "My poetry does not remember."⁴⁰ We may recall here how often statements about memory serve to footnote issues of allusion itself. If, as Gian Biagio Conte and John Miller claim, the word *memor* and its cognates frequently serve to alert the reader to the existence of parallel moments in different texts, then a pointed statement about lack of memory can also easily be read as a metapoetic declaration.⁴¹ As such, it is particularly appropriate to Propertius's work, which marks itself so persistently as arising out of the particular conditions of the poet's love affair with Cynthia and makes no specific claims to suggest that it is inspired by other poetry.

In this particular position, following on the heels of an extended allusion, this resonance of *memor* seems deliberate: what Propertius intends to produce is quite different from the work of Cornelius Gallus and allows no place for citation of his predecessor's work. Yet, on a literal level, this claim by the poet is *prima facie* false; Propertius has, in fact, just shown that he does indeed remember Gallus. Even if we read this gesture as more broadly programmatic and applying simply to the rest of the collection ("From now on, I'm going to be doing something different. You may have caught me in an allusion, but it will be my last"), the very metaphor that Propertius chooses to convey this message undercuts the idea that Propertius's

40 This sentiment is concordant in many ways with Zetzel's reading of this passage as a "parody of mythological elegy . . . made explicit by the next lines: such deeds as Milanion's are no longer any use: Love has forgotten his old tricks and tracks" (1996.88). Zetzel's use of the word "parody," however, does not seem to me to capture accurately the tone of this passage.

41 Conte 1986.57–69 and J. F. Miller 1993. See also Hinds 1998.4.

Amor does not remember. Love here, which fails “to go known ways,” recalls the image, just a few lines earlier, of Milanion himself lost and wandering madly through the Arcadian mountains. This gesture of alluding to—but failing to reproduce—Milanion’s speech is strikingly similar to the pattern we have seen in other moments involving both Gallus and other poet-characters in the *Monobiblos*. Particularly in light of the more superficial correspondences between the situation described in this episode and the other poems involving Gallus, this similarity seems pronounced. A set of thematic elements binds this prominently placed episode in this highly programmatic poem to the poems that follow.

VI. GALLUS AND THE WORK OF CRITICISM

This analysis of thematic connections between the Milanion *exemplum* and the triangulated poetics of the *Monobiblos* is not meant to serve as a backhanded argument for the identification of Propertius’s character Gallus as, simply, the historical Cornelius Gallus. But just because we cannot firmly identify the *Monobiblos*’s Gallus does not mean that we gain no traction from reading him at times against the background of the historical figure. My readings of 1.10, 1.18, and the beginning of 1.1 have outlined overlapping rhetorical structures that operate on three different levels: in 1.10, we have seen how triangulation and mediation figure in the erotic episodes of the collection. In 1.18, we have seen how this mediation surfaces in Propertius’s self-presentation as a poet and in his commentary on creating in the wake of poetic tradition. The Milanion episode demonstrates how aspects of this self-presentation relate to what Propertius does, to his employment of allusion. On the one hand, I hope this article serves as a testament to the rewards of moving beyond an examination of the coherence, or lack of coherence, of the factual information conveyed by the poet about his character Gallus. In this regard, I have shown how attention to the thematics of Propertius’s poetry can uncover new types of coherence among the figures of Gallus. But I have also made a case for an imbrication of a different sort: an entanglement of the poet’s interactions with previous poetry—what he says about and how he treats the works of Vergil and Gallus—and the speaker’s erotic concerns. The problematics of Propertius’s engagements with the works of other authors lie near the heart of how the speaker of the collection interacts with the other characters; the erotics of Propertius’s love elegy are, at least in some senses, an erotics of influence.

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