

MYTH AND MEANING IN PROPERTIUS 3.15

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PROPERTIUS 3.15 concerns a case of jealousy: Cynthia suspects that the poet has been sleeping with the slave Lycinna.¹ Of the elegy's 46 lines, 14 comprise a frame at beginning and end that establishes a personal context, while the remaining 32 relate how Dirce tormented Antiope and was killed by Antiope's sons. The poem is generally regarded as an imitation of Hellenistic elegy, with the frame serving only as pretext for a display of mythological erudition; as Butler and Barber put it, "the legend is the main thing in a very typical Alexandrian elegy."² Colin Macleod, on the other hand,³ argued that myth and frame are connected: Propertius uses the myth to warn Cynthia that she risks losing his affections if she harasses Lycinna, but withdraws from his threatening stance to renewed claims of devotion. This paper, which reexamines the relationship between myth and frame in 3.15, will propose an interpretation which harmonizes modified forms of these two views.

As in several poems of Book 3, the opening of 3.15 plunges us *in medias res* with a quasi-dramatic monologue shorn of context:⁴

The following are cited by author's name only: the commentaries of W. A. Hertzberg (Halle 1843–45), M. Rothstein (Berlin 1898), H. Butler and E. Barber (Oxford 1933), W. A. Camps (Book 3; Cambridge 1966), and P. Fedeli (Book 3; Bari 1985), D. R. Shackleton Bailey, *Propertiana* (Cambridge 1956), and C. Macleod, "A Use of Myth in Ancient Poetry," *CQ* NS 24 (1974) 82–93 (esp. 92–93). Texts and translations are my own.

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¹There is no need to share the skepticism of Richardson (*Propertius: Elegies I–IV* ed. L. Richardson Jr. [Norman, Oklahoma 1977]), according to whom "we shall do well to think of the poem as a completely independent composition in which neither Propertius nor Cynthia figures"; Cynthia must frequently be understood as addressee, especially in Book 3, where she is rarely mentioned by name.

²Similarly R. Whitaker (*Myth and Personal Experience in Roman Love-Elegy* [Göttingen 1983, *Hypomnemata* 76] 27) dismisses the poem as one "where myth greatly predominates over personal experience" and posits the influence of the Alexandrian "catalogue elegists," while Rothstein calls it "ein Epyllion." According to Fedeli (469), however, Propertius has avoided giving the poem an exclusively Hellenistic character by relating the myth to a personal situation; for a discussion of Fedeli's assumptions about Hellenistic elegy see the concluding paragraph.

³Macleod 92–93.

⁴As Camps puts it, "The occasion . . . is not stated directly . . . , but is allowed to become apparent . . . from the words supposed to be spoken by the poet as his part of a dialogue" (125).

Sic ego non ullos iam norim in amore tumultus
 Nec veniat sine te nox vigilanda mihi:
 Ut mihi praetexti pudor est †velatus⁵ amictus
 Et data libertas noscere amoris iter,
 5 Illa rudes animos per noctes conscia primas
 Imbuit, heu nullis capta Lycinna datis,
 Tertius haud multo minus †est cum ducitur†annus⁶
 Vix memini nobis verba coisse decem:
 Cuncta tuus sepelivit amor, nec femina post te
 10 Ulla dedit collo dulcia vincla meo.

The poet begins with an oath: "So may I not know now any upsets in love, and may there not come a night when I must lie awake without you." He admits that Lycinna was the woman with whom he lost his virginity on the threshold of adulthood, but now some three years have passed in which he cannot recall exchanging ten words with her; his love for Cynthia has buried everything, and no woman after her has put "sweet chains" about his neck. By the end of these first 10 lines we realize that he is defending himself against a charge of either continuing or resuming his relationship with Lycinna.

His defense, however, is hardly forthright. It is worth noting that he nowhere actually denies sleeping with Lycinna, either long ago or recently: he denies exchanging ten words with her, but this denial employs the curiously suggestive verb *coisse* to describe their sparse exchanges, as if to say that any intercourse with her was purely verbal. Nor is this his only evasion: the period of time involved is not "three years" precisely but "hardly much less than three years" (and we have no reason to think that this represents accurately the time elapsed since his relationship with Lycinna; his assumption of the *toga virilis* surely occurred more than three years before the composition of Book 3), his denial is not absolute but represents what he "remembers" (*memini*), and he does not deny contact with Lycinna but says imprecisely that they have exchanged "scarcely ten words" (or perhaps

⁵The transmitted text gives an opposite sense to the one required by the context; among conjectures Fontein's *relevatus* is perhaps the least unlikely.

⁶The line, given thus by the manuscripts, is usually printed with *haud multo minus est* in a parenthesis. But Latin idiom suggests that *haud multo minus* is to be divorced from *est* and construed with *tertius*: cf. Enn. Ann. 154S *septingenti sunt paulo plus aut minus anni*; Vell. 2.82.3 *haud minus pars quarta*; Mart. 6.7.3 *aut minus aut certe non plus tricesima lux est* (for the construction see Leumann-Hofmann-Szantyr, *Lateinische Grammatik* [Munich 1965] 2.110). Since *est cum ducitur annus* is hardly likely to be meant merely as an equivalent of *annus est* (as Rothstein suggested), and *est cum* has the specialized (and here inappropriate) meaning "there are times when," at the very least *est* should be replaced by *et* (for postponed *et* in Propertius see N. M. Butler, "On the Postpositive *et* in Propertius," *AJP* 6 [1885] 349–350) or by *at*, but more extensive corruption may well be involved.

that he "scarcely remembers" exchanging ten words). Moreover, the assertion that no woman *after* Cynthia has enslaved him cannot be reassuring in this context, where the woman at issue is one whom he knew before the affair with Cynthia began. Nor should we miss the apparent signs of discontent with Cynthia, such as the ill-omened, even sinister metaphor in the statement that his love for her has "buried everything," and that troubling sigh *heu* in the description of Lycinna as *nullis capta . . . datis*. For Shackleton Bailey this is only the natural gesture of a man recalling his first love;⁷ but surely it is intended to make an unflattering contrast with Cynthia's own venality. Finally there is the opening asseveration with which Propertius reinforces his upcoming defense. A useful parallel in contemporary poetry for the use of *sic* here is Tibullus 2.5.63–64, where the Sibyl concludes her prophecy by declaring, "It is the truth I sing—so may I feed unscathed / on sacred bay and be forever virgin" (tr. Guy Lee);⁸ that is, may she not enjoy these desirable things if her words are false. Though Propertius does not explicitly say *vera dico* or the like, he appears to have used *sic* in much the same way, asking not to enjoy what the *sic* introduces if he is not telling the truth. But his words can be understood in two different ways, depending on whether we take *sine te* (2) with the entire statement or only with *nox vigilanda*. In the former case, Propertius is saying that he wants to have no amatory *tumultus* and no *noctes vigilandae*—the tokens of a lover's suffering by which he elsewhere identifies his experience⁹—without Cynthia, thus affirming his devotion to her; this is no doubt the surface level of meaning which Cynthia is meant to hear. In the latter case, however, Propertius is saying that he wants no more *tumultus* (such as the present outburst of jealousy?) at all and no more nights waiting in vain¹⁰ for Cynthia, thus expressing a dissatisfaction with her and with the current state of their affair not unlike what we find in many poems of Book 3 that anticipate the rupture; this level of meaning is intended for the readers, and perhaps for the nominal addressee after deeper reflection.

This oath and the oddly worded defense should prepare us for the next peculiarity, when Propertius begins the mythological narrative declaring that "Dirce will be witness":

⁷Shackleton Bailey (186): "I hold . . . that Propertius is not sighing to think how little Lycinna cost him or groaning over Cynthia's rapacity It is hard if a poet be not allowed a sigh at the recollection of his first love." Against the assumption that Lycinna and the liaison with her represent historical realities see J. C. Yardley, "Propertius' Lycinna," *TAPA* 104 (1974) 429–434.

⁸*Vera cano: sic usque sacras innoxia laurus / vescar et aeternum sit mihi virginitas.*

⁹For *tumultus* cf. 3.8.34 *in te pax mihi nulla placet*, for the *nox vigilanda* 3.8.27 *odi [ego] quos numquam pungunt suspiria somnos*.

¹⁰The *tumultus* of 1 and the *nox vigilanda* of 2 may be, like the reference to Lycinna's lack of venality, another hint at what has displeased him in Cynthia.

- Testis erit Dirce tam vero*¹¹*crimine saeva*
Nycteos Antiopen accubuisse Lyco.
*Ah quotiens pulchros vulsit*¹²*regina capillos*
Molliaque immites fixit in ora manus:
 15 *Ah quotiens famulam pensis oneravit iniquis*
Et caput in dura ponere iussit humo:
Saepe illam immundis passa est habitare tenebris,
Vilem ieiunae saepe negavit aquam.
Iuppiter, Antiopae nusquam succurris habenti
 20 *Tot mala? Corruptit dura catena manus:*
Si deus es, tibi turpe tuam servire puellam.
Invocet Antiope quem nisi vincta Iovem?
Sola tamen, quaecumque aderant in corpore vires,
Regales manicas rupit utraque manu:
 25 *Inde Cithaeronis timido pede currit in arces.*
*Nox erat, et sparso triste cubile gelu.*¹³
Saepe vago Asopi sonitu permota fluentis

¹¹Editors vacillate between retaining this and adopting conjectures like Postgate's *sero* or Franz's *vano* (Fedeli, for example, reads *vero* in his Teubner text but *vano* in his commentary); it will be argued below (n. 19) that the poet's deceptive strategy favours the *paradosis*.

¹²Titius' necessary correction of *ussit*.

¹³There are grounds for suspecting some disruption of the text here. *Sparso triste cubile gelu* lacks not only a construction (it is excessively harsh to supply *erat* again from *nox erat* in a different meaning ["It was night, and there was grim bedding in the fallen snow"]) but even plausible sense, since there is nothing to define the relationship between this *cubile* and the fleeing Antiope (Fedeli supplies *erat* and says that "Properzio si serve, come al solito, di uno stile particolarmente ricercato," but it takes more than *erat* to yield a satisfactory meaning). Moreover, the line as transmitted mars the otherwise fluid and elegant narrative by making Antiope run in 25, lie down in 26 (*sparso . . . gelu* presupposes that she rests; Propertius would hardly go to these lengths to suggest lamely that she would have had uncomfortable bedding on the snow had she lain down), run again in 27–28, be rejected by her sons in 29–30, then finally collapse in 31–34. Burman suggested doubtfully that 27–28 belonged after 34, but a better solution is to reverse the order of 27–28 and 29–30, so that the passage runs,

Nox erat, et sparso triste cubile gelu
Et durum Zethum et lacrimis Amphiona mollem
Experta est stabulis mater abacta suis.
Saepe vago Asopi sonitu permota fluentis
Credebat dominae pone venire pedes,
Ac veluti, magnos cum ponunt etc.

Now, instead of interrupting her flight to rest (whether all night or only for a catnap), Antiope goes straight to her sons' cottage, as she does in Hyginus 7 and ps.-Apollodorus too; and the terror of her flight as described in 27–28 is the more poignant in being the result of her sons' rejection. In that rejection she "experiences" Zethus' cruelty and Amphion's sympathy (Markland's *at* is a plausible correction of the second *et* in 29), and her "grim bedding" in the snow, rather than *stabulis . . . suis*, is a direct result of that rejection; she then resumes her flight and finally collapses. The dislocation perhaps arose through the similarity of (*n*)*ox erat et* (26) and *experta est* (30); if the error

- Credebat dominae pone venire pedes:*
Et durum Zethum et lacrimis Amphiona mollem
 30 *Experta est stabulis mater abacta suis.*
Ac veluti, magnos cum ponunt aequora motus,
Eurus ubi adverso desinit ire Noto,¹⁴
†Litore sic tacito†¹⁵sonitus rarescit harenae
Sic cadit inflexo lapsa puella genu.
 35 *Sera, tamen pietas natis et cognitus error.¹⁶*
Digne Iovis natos qui tueare senex,
Tu reddis pueris matrem, puerique trahendam
Vinixerunt Dircen sub trucis ora bovis.

was not purely mechanical, then the *hysteron proteron* (Antiope's bedding in the snow is mentioned before her appeal to her sons) and the *zeugma* (*cubile* and *Zethum* ... *Amphiona* as objects of *experta est*) were perhaps contributing factors.

¹⁴This, Lachmann's version of the line, can hardly be right, despite its wide acceptance, since the dative of motion (*adverso* ... *ire Noto*) cannot convey the essential idea of opposition; "against" is required, not "toward." His conjecture was based upon the reading of N, *Eurus sub adverso desinit ire Noto*, for which the other manuscripts give *Eurus in adversos desinit ire Notos*. Perhaps Propertius wrote *Eurus ob adversum desinit ire Notum*, using *ob* in its archaic sense "against," attested widely in prefixes (*occurrere*, *obire*, *obvius*, etc.) and occasionally in archaic or archaizing literature (*ThLL* 9.14.24-42); for archaism in this elegy cf. *pone* in 28 (a Virgilian revival; Virgil used *ob* at *Aen.* 1.233 in an apparently archaic sense which neither Servius Danielis nor modern commentators have explicated successfully). Propertius himself perhaps glossed *ob* silently by juxtaposing it to *adversum*, suggesting the synonym *adversus* (which the *ThLL* itself uses to gloss this meaning of *ob*); a later reader subsequently glossed it with *in*, which was adopted by the other manuscripts after *ob* was corrupted to *sub*, which only N retained. There is perhaps an echo of Propertius' line in *Stat. Theb.* 7.561 *obvius adversum Boreae Notus*.

¹⁵Hopelessly corrupt, with no plausible remedy proposed; it seems clear at any rate that Antiope's collapse is likened to the way that winds fall and waves calm in the dying of a storm.

¹⁶This version of the line (usually read as *Sera, tamen pietas: natis est cognitus error*) incorporates Guyet's conjecture *et* for *est* with appropriate repunctuation. *Sera tamen pietas* cannot stand as an independent clause; no other example of the "*sera tamen*" construction requires the reader not merely to repeat but actually to supply a verb (contrast, for example, Virgil *Ecl.* 1.27 *libertas, quae sera tamen respexit inertem*); even if we could supply *erat* or *exstitit* or *venit* or any other verb that editors suggest (Fedeli seems to prefer *venit*, and translates "si manifestó"), the resultant phrase would be meaningless or at least hopelessly weak ("pietas occurred" or "came" or "there was pietas"). Guyet's conjecture requires supplying *cognita est* with *pietas* out of *cognitus est*; the resulting *zeugma* (one "recognizes" one's duty in a different way than one's mistake) is arguably an elegant touch appropriate to this ambitious imitation of Hellenistic poetry (Propertius effectively combines the two senses recorded in the *OLD* s.v. *cognoscere* 8, "To recognize [a person or thing one already knows]" and "to acknowledge, recognize"). A less satisfactory alternative correction is to repunctuate, *Sera, tamen pietas natis: est cognitus error*; this provides a plausible construction for *sera tamen pietas* (the dative *natis* enables one to supply *erat* in a meaningful sense), but *est cognitus error* seems inelegantly abrupt on its own.

Antiope, *cognosce Iovem: tibi gloria Dirce*
 40 *Ducitur in multis mortem habitura locis:*
Prata cruentantur Zethi victorque canebat
Paeana Amphion rupe, Aracynthe, tua.

Whether Dirce is witness to the immediately preceding statement (that Propertius has loved no one since Cynthia) or to the whole context (that he has not slept with Lycinna), her relevance is far from clear, and the apparent lack of logical connection has prompted various solutions, some of which introduce ideas from other parts of the poem, some of which introduce those other parts bodily. Macleod, following Rothstein, saw no difficulty: "As Dirce out of jealousy maltreated her servant Antiope, so Cynthia her servant Lycinna." But not a word is said about mistreatment of Lycinna until line 43.¹⁷ In the Loeb edition Goold deals with the problem by adopting Vulpius' transposition of 43-44 to follow 10, but this makes the myth illustrate the proposition that women cannot moderate their anger (another issue not previously raised in the poem), and the end of the elegy is hopelessly weakened; indeed it actually disappears, since Goold also follows Otto, Postgate, and Richmond in putting 45-46 after 2. The end of the personal frame also disappeared in Luck's 1964 Artemis edition, which followed Fischer and Carutti in putting 45-46, then 43-44, between 10 and 11. One could defend the resulting structure by appeal to Horatian precedent, namely the *Hypermnestra* and *Europa* odes (3.11 and 3.27), both of which relate myths involving famous heroines within a personal frame and fail to return to that frame at the close; but lyric is not elegy, and there are arguably more apposite elegiac parallels for the structure given by the manuscripts here, namely Propertius 3.19, Ovid *Am.* 3.6, and *POxy* 2885 fr. 1.1-20, all of which end sequences of mythological exempla with brief epilogues introduced by "but" (note at 43). Others (Guyet, Broekhuysen, Butler, Havet, Barber) have posited a lacuna after 10 in which Dirce's relevance was presumably clarified;¹⁸ but we have already seen that the poem so far not only challenges the reader right from the start to deduce the dramatic situation but also invites him to consider hidden implications of its language, and conceivably the myth too partakes of this riddling nature. Nor is this the only Latin poem which introduces a myth about a famous heroine in an oblique manner; the Horatian odes just mentioned exemplify the same procedure.

¹⁷And even here it is not certain that harassment has occurred; *parcas vexare* can as easily mean "don't harass" as "stop harassing."

¹⁸Cf. Butler and Barber on 11, "There has been no mention of any maltreatment of Lycinna by Cynthia, and some specific reference to Cynthia's conduct is necessary to complete the introduction. The simplest solution is the assumption of a lacuna after 10."

All of these considerations permit the working hypothesis that lines 43–46 belong where the manuscripts give them, that no lacuna is required before 11, and that Propertius, with purposeful obscurity, is propounding a riddle for his *docta puella* to solve; we may then take the poem as it stands and say that Propertius, for some reason not stated explicitly, adduces the myth of Dirce as part of his defense against the charge that he began to answer in the poem's first ten lines. Dirce is "savage over the equally true"¹⁹ charge that Antiope, daughter of Nycteus, had lain with Lycus"; this presupposes the version of the story, to be discussed in more detail later, in which Antiope and Dirce were respectively the first and second wives of Lycus. Thus the triangle of the myth matches exactly the triangle of the personal context: Dirce, current wife of Lycus, was jealous of his past wife Antiope in the same way that Cynthia, present lover of Propertius, is jealous of his past lover Lycinna.²⁰ Despite the disorienting abruptness of Dirce's introduction, we can see that the myth is relevant to the personal context after all, because it concerns a woman angry over the same sort of suspicion implied by 1–10, and a fundamental similarity between myth and personal situation is thereby established. After six lines describing Dirce's abusive conduct (13–18), the symmetry of the two triangles is broken by the introduction of a new character, Antiope's former lover and eventual saviour Jupiter. Propertius taunts him to intervene by observing how the chains are spoiling Antiope's hands, declaring it a disgrace to him, if god he be, that his girlfriend (*puella*) is in bondage, especially when there is no one but Jupiter to assist her (19–22). Yet all alone, according to Propertius, she burst her bonds and fled (23–24). Fedeli says that Propertius, "per conferire una più

¹⁹Correction of *vero* to Franz's *vano* should be resisted. Butler and Barber defended the *paradosis* by arguing, "The cause of her jealousy is *either* the fact that Antiope had been the wife of Lycus, or that (though divorced) she was still Lycus' mistress The first alternative suits the case of Lycinna best. But though *tam vero* can be thus defended, it is somewhat strange." No doubt it is "somewhat strange," but surely the effect is intended. *Vero* is no more peculiar than the manner of Dirce's introduction or the double-edged asseveration at the opening, which shares with it an ironic ambiguity. Camps, in noting on 11–12 that "the accusative-and-infinitive construction in [12] gives the content of the *crimen*; it is not to be construed after *testis erit*," unintentionally reveals another possible ambiguity in reading the couplet so as to make Propertius say that the story of Dirce will bear witness that Antiope had slept with Lycus, that is, that Lycinna had slept with Propertius. If correction is needed, Postgate's *sero* is preferable to *vano*. Shackleton Bailey, who says that *vano* is "probably right," argues against *sero* that "Propertius would mar his parallel by dragging in the irrelevant detail of Lycus' previous marriage to Antiope." Far from being irrelevant, that detail is in fact an essential part of the parallel; another objection to the correction is that sleeping with one's wedded wife is not normally a *crimen*.

²⁰Cf. Shackleton Bailey (186): "The first ten lines establish the triangle Cynthia-Propertius-Lycinna, the following thirty-two superimpose on it, so to speak, the equal triangle Dirce-Lycus-Antiope."

spiccata e vigorosa fisionomia all'eroina," is polemicizing with other versions of the myth in which Jupiter rescues Antiope;²¹ but it is hard to believe that Propertius could even imagine an abused and ill-nourished woman finding the superhuman strength to break her chains, much less introduce this absurdity into a poem as a novelty. Surely, despite the implications of *tamen*, Propertius does indeed conform to other versions, in which the god releases Antiope by causing her chains to undo themselves; pending the final vindication, however, he wants the divine assistance guiding Antiope's destiny to remain covert. Antiope flees to Mt. Cithaeron and seeks refuge with her sons Zethus and Amphion; they do not recognize her, and Zethus cruelly drives her out on the terrified flight in which she collapses like a tempest abating on shore (25–34).²² A recognition is effected by the old herdsman who raised the boys, and they avenge their mother's mistreatment by tying Dirce to a bull (35–38). Now at last Jupiter's previously covert aid is made manifest, as Propertius exultantly tells Antiope, *cognosce Iovem: tibi gloria Dirce/ ducitur in multis mortem habitura locis* (39–40), and Amphion sings a paean of triumph (41–42).

The myth concluded, Propertius resumes the personal frame:

At tu non meritam parcas vexare Lycinnam:
Nescit vestra ruens ira referre pedem.
 45 *Fabula nulla tuas de nobis concitet aures:*
Te solam et lignis funeris ustus amem.

Cynthia must not abuse the undeserving Lycinna, for the intriguing reason that women's anger knows no restraint; there seems to lurk here both the implication that Cynthia is capable of going too far in venting her anger and the concomitant suggestion that she would be well advised not to. Not only that, no rumour about Lycinna and the poet is to stir her ears (or anger, if one accepts Markland's plausible conjecture *iras* for *aures* in 45); that is, she is advised to ignore whatever tales she hears about them. The poet's last words are *te solam et lignis funeris ustus amem*. According to Abel (cited by Fedeli *ad loc.*), *amem* is used here purely for metrical convenience instead of the future *amabo*, and so the poem concludes with what has been called "an unexpectedly intense assertion of the poet's undying love."²³ For Fedeli the line represents a future less vivid condition, "I should love only

²¹In fact the closest thing to "polemic" in the poem seems to be the identification of Antiope's father; in Homer (*Od.* 11.259) he is Asopus, but Eustathius *ad loc.* notes that, like Propertius, οἱ δὲ νεώτεροι Νυκτέως ἱστοροῦσι.

²²For the possibility that the order of lines is disturbed here see above, n. 13.

²³The phrase is from J. Warden, *Fallax Opus: Poet and Reader in the Elegies of Propertius* (Toronto 1980, *Phoenix* Supp. 14) 97. For Rothstein (2.110) the poet "versichert am Schlusse noch einmal seine Unschuld und ewige Treue"; for Fedeli (469) "I due distici conclusivi . . . non si limitano a ribadire l'attuale innocenza di Licinna e l'amore di Properzio per Cinzia, proiettato addirittura al di là della vita."

you even if I were to be burned on my funeral pyre,"²⁴ but the aptness of that sentiment to this context would still be in doubt even if it could be shown that *ustus* can stand for *si urar* or *si ustus ero*. Surely the natural meaning of *amem* is "may I love" or "let me love." Far from claiming eternal devotion, Propertius suggests conditional devotion contingent upon the circumstances just outlined: Cynthia should make it possible for him to love her alone forever by ignoring rumours about his conduct with Lycinna and avoiding jealous overreaction to them. Rather than "an unexpectedly intense assertion of . . . undying love," this seems instead a muted admonition not to harass the suspected party, not to go too far in the expression of *ira*, and not to heed potentially damaging rumours, for otherwise it is just possible that Propertius might not love only Cynthia when consumed on his pyre; there is no declaration of fidelity, no real reaffirmation of innocence, whether for Lycinna or for Propertius.²⁵

Macleod is the only scholar who has attempted a detailed interpretation of the relationship between myth and personal frame in Propertius 3.15.²⁶ He observed correctly that the conclusion of the mythological narrative shows that it is intended as a warning and that Dirce's punishment implies some comparable punishment for Cynthia. This, he said, would come from Propertius, who for Macleod corresponds to Jupiter in the narrative; Jupiter aids Antiope openly only after much delay, just as Propertius has hardly spoken to Lycinna in years, and the poet, according to Macleod, "implicitly threatens to recognize his bond with her and reinstate her in his affections" (92). This is undeniably valid, but Macleod went on to argue that Propertius weakens his threat right from the start by introducing it so vaguely, and that there can be no question of his leaving Cynthia, much less punishing her as Dirce was punished: "The warning which the poem was originally designed to embody dissolves into protestations of faithfulness; but the myth has served the poet to express at least a fantasy of abandoning or punishing his beloved and finding another" (93). Macleod's analysis suits his positive interpretation of the poem's conclusion; but the interpretation of the opening and close of the personal frame offered earlier suggests a different view of how the myth creates a transition between them.

Though the poem opens in exculpation, it closes in admonition; its beginning offers excuses that do not quite address the charge, its end offers warnings against the sort of jealousy and suspicion that occasioned it; instead of reasserting his innocence, the poet warns Cynthia not to be con-

²⁴Note also Camps's paraphrase, "though I were ashes, burned on my funeral pyre, I still would love you, you alone."

²⁵As claimed, for example, by Rothstein (above, n. 23). Note the implication in *solam* that Propertius could indeed love another.

²⁶Others, such as Rothstein, have noted that the myth conveys a warning, but none has offered a detailed analysis of how it does this.

cerned about the rumours she hears or to harass Lycinna in reaction to them. The modulation between these two positions, the shift from passive self-defense to active, though gentle, threatening, is embodied in the myth. Far from "veiling" the threat to find another mistress, the myth actually creates that threat and makes possible the understated warning at the close; though it begins as an illustration, its projection of future events serves to admonish Cynthia about what might happen to her if she acts in real life as Dirce does in the myth. The poet's most obvious strategy is to introduce the myth as the story of Dirce and turn it immediately into the story of Antiope: "Dirce will be witness," but Antiope is the "star." Dirce is Antiope's present tormentor as the myth begins, then becomes a menacing though absent figure as the girl flees into the night (Antiope only imagines that she hears her footsteps), and reemerges just in time to ride the bull and perish "in many places"; Propertius shows no further interest in her, and denies her the honour of the eponymous spring created where she died. On Antiope, however, he lavishes all his most loving attention. "Ah, how often," he sighs twice while describing her abuse at Dirce's hands (13, 15), as her "lovely" hair is torn (13), her "soft" face is scratched (14), and she is assigned more than her fair share of work (15) and subjected to discomfort, hunger, and thirst (16-18). For her sake he invites Jupiter to intervene, reminding him of his own personal honour (21), of her utter helplessness (22), and of the damage to her beauty (20). It is her terrified flight (25, 27-28) and lack of proper shelter (26, 29-30) that he describes, her collapse that he ennobles with a simile (31-34); to glorify her, Dirce is strapped to the bull (39-40). In terms of the personal frame, Propertius has turned an elegy that looked as if it would be about Cynthia into one about Lycinna. Now, Propertius' poetry about Cynthia was not only the source of his own fame²⁷ but was supposed to secure immortality for her as well,²⁸ so that Dirce's physical death has as its analogue the symbolic death that Cynthia would endure upon being denied the everlasting life²⁹ which Propertius' poetry was to have won her. The elegy for Dirce/Cynthia that becomes one for Antiope/Lycinna, and the bloody demise with which it concludes, suggest that his poetry could in future serve another mistress.

A second strategy involves the structure of the narrative itself and the poet's selection of details. The previous paragraph argued that the concentration upon Antiope's physical and emotional condition, by expressing sympathy for the Lycinna-figure, serves to reinforce the poet's warning (rather than simply representing a search for psychological depth, as Fedeli

²⁷See for example 2.7.17-18: *hinc etenim tantum meruit mea gloria nomen,/ gloria ad Hibernos lata Borysthenidas.*

²⁸Note how in 2.11, with Propertius no longer celebrating her in his verse, death will take away all her gifts and even her name will be unknown.

²⁹3.2.26: *ingenio stat sine morte decus.*

suggested). In addition, Propertius has limited his narrative to those portions which are directly relevant to the warning he seeks to convey, namely Dirce's persecution of Antiope and the death of Dirce, and accordingly he begins not at the beginning but at the point where the story corresponds exactly to the conditions of the personal frame, with a woman enraged over the suspicion that her partner has resumed contact with a past love. The progress of the narrative into subsequent events then represents a sort of projection of future events in the personal context. The jealous woman in the myth actively persecutes her supposed rival and then is destroyed through the workings of her victim's former lover; a comparable fate is implied for Cynthia if she acts upon her jealousy and emulates Dirce by harassing Lycinna. The close of the personal frame, with its injunction *parcas vexare Lycinnam*, clarifies the point by taking us back to the precise point at which the mythological narrative began, Dirce's persecution of Antiope.³⁰ Propertius also effects a change in his own identification within the correspondence of myth and frame. As the myth is introduced he seems to be the innocent Lycus, who slept with Antiope when she was his wife but has since abstained; but at the point at which Dirce is destroyed he is clearly Jupiter, Antiope's former lover and father of her children, who after apparent long neglect (but only apparent: he effects the undoing of her bonds) comes at last to rescue his *puella*. The myth that begins harmlessly with Propertius as the blameless Lycus and Cynthia as the suspicious Dirce becomes a prophetic warning with Propertius as the guilty³¹ and dangerously vengeful Jupiter, and Cynthia as the bloodied and dismembered Dirce; her repellent death chillingly sets the stage for the poet's delicate warning.

Given that Propertius expresses such sympathy for Antiope/Lycinna throughout the poem, it is worth raising a question which seems to have gone unasked: within the fiction of the poem, are we to regard Cynthia's suspicions as justified and suppose that Propertius has in fact resumed his liaison with Lycinna? Arguably, the defensive strategy is slippery enough to invite suspicion, though perhaps not certainty. Propertius begins with an ambiguous oath; his initial exculpation amounts to an evasion; his mythological *exemplum* turns out to be a warning; and he ends with a delicate admonition against further inquiry rather than an affirmation of innocence. This is perhaps not the defense of an innocent man but the evasion of a guilty one anxious to impose a ban on further inquiry while avoiding out-

³⁰ According to Fedeli (469) the *exemplum* "fa capire che Cinzia non si è limitata a scenate di gelosia, ma ha inferito sulla schiava," but we are no more invited to apply that detail to the personal situation than assume that Cynthia is starving Lycinna or making her sleep on the ground.

³¹ Of course in all versions of the myth Jupiter has impregnated Antiope at some point, but Propertius here seems still to be following the version in which Dirce's jealous suspicions arise from the pregnancy of Lycus' former wife.

right falsehood. The doubts raised here perhaps occurred to a much earlier reader, Ovid, who made a comparable situation the basis for a pair of poems in the *Amores* (2.7 and 8). The first is a denial, far more absolute and categorical than anything in Propertius 3.15, of the charge that he has slept with Corinna's maid Cypassis; but in the second Ovid turns on Cypassis, asking how Corinna ever found out, and threatens to incriminate her if she does not sleep with him again. Much in the *Amores* develops ideas or situations either expressed or implicit in Propertius, and it may be that Ovid here, offering a reading of 3.15 through characteristically worldly and sophisticated eyes, consciously resolves the ambiguity that I find in Propertius.

It was observed earlier that 3.15 has been called a "typical" Hellenistic erotic elegy on the grounds that its personal frame serves merely as a pretext for a mythological narrative; Macleod, however, made a good case, which this paper has elaborated and modified, for some integration of myth and frame. We perhaps do an injustice to Hellenistic elegists if we assume that such linkage must be a Roman innovation. Recently discovered fragments of Hellenistic erotic elegy, especially *POxy* 2885 fr. 1.1–20, show that Hellenistic elegy could include "subjective" and "personal" elements and could in fact use myth for erotic persuasion within a personal frame;³² thus it seems conceivable that the use of myth for a warning in Propertius 3.15 was anticipated by such Hellenistic precedents as the episode of the *Leontion* in which Hermesianax told how Aphrodite turned Arsinoe to stone for refusing the love of Arceophon—a myth obviously suited to a warning (*Ant. Lib. Met.* 39).

One feature of 3.15 often cited as Hellenistic is its use of a unique version of the myth it relates. Perhaps, as others have suggested, Propertius borrowed it from a lost Hellenistic source; but it seems equally possible that he created it himself, and did so less to polemicize with other poets than to suit its personal context and its intended function within that context.

³²*POxy* 2885 fr. 1.1–20 ended with the frustrated poet saying, "Why am I relating these myths? You are fired by wicked Eros, who has set you smouldering and will make you still more worthy of reproach," implying an apotroptic function for the mythological exempla within an at least nominally personal context: *χλαινὴν*<ι> δ' ἔπ' Ἐρῶτος ἀτασθαλίου, ὃς σε δὴ τι κατασφύξας θήσει [ἐλ]εγχετέρη[ν] (19–20). For the possible personal application of myth in *POxy* 3723 see *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* 54 (London 1987) 58–64 and P. J. Parsons, "Eine neugefundene griechische Liebeselegie," *MH* 45 (1988) 65–74. In *POxy* 2884 the poet spoke of enduring "grievous shame" because of the addressee's steadfastness (*λυγρὸν ἐγὼν ὑποδύομαι αἰσχ[ος] ... σὴν διὰ καμμονίην*, 13–14); it is not clear whether that addressee is the boy who may be involved in 15, but a warning was certainly expressed (*ἵχουρε μετὰ πραπίδεσσι βαλεσ[ε]*; the last word was probably the infinitive *βαλέσθαι* and the general sense something like, "I advise you to ponder this in your heart"). For the personal frames of Hellenistic erotic elegy see F. Cairns, *Tibullus: A Hellenistic Poet at Rome* (Cambridge 1979) 214–230.

Apart from the eccentricities of Nicolaus of Damascus and John Malalas, two principal versions of the Dirce-Antiope story are known, and the Propertian account contains elements of both.³³ One is attested in Hyginus *Fab.* 7 and in the First and Second Vatican Mythographers,³⁴ the other in ps.-Apollodorus 3.5.5 and Hyginus *Fab.* 8, which attributes it to Euripides' *Antiope*. Propertius introduces the myth in a way which presupposes the former. Antiope, wife of Lycus, has been deceitfully seduced by Epaphus; Lycus dismisses her and marries Dirce, then commands his slaves to mistreat his former wife, presumably to allay Dirce's jealous suspicions³⁵ (in Propertius, of course, Dirce undertakes the mistreatment personally); this is the point at which Propertius begins his narration. In Hyginus 7 and MV 2.92 (but not in MV 1.96, perhaps because of an oversight or a textual corruption, since Zethus and Amphion are generally accepted as the children of Zeus) Antiope is impregnated by Jupiter after the divorce;³⁶ thus her pregnancy would look all the more suspicious in Dirce's eyes. Antiope escapes her bonds *Iovis voluntate* (thus all three accounts, probably alluding to what ps.-Apollod. 3.5.5 expresses with τῶν δεσμῶν αὐτομάτως λυθέντων) and flees to Cithaeron, a journey which marks the "suture" where Propertius has joined parts of the two versions together, for in this first version Antiope is pregnant when she flees and gives birth on the mountain,³⁷ but Propertius has shifted now to the Euripidean account, in which the sons are already grown when she escapes. In this second version they are conceived when Antiope is impregnated by Jupiter while still a young woman in her father's house. She flees to Sicyon and marries its ruler Epopeus, while her

³³Hertzberg alone among commentators noted that Propertius' unique account is the result of conflating the two prevailing versions, but he offered no systematic demonstration. Butler and Barber say that Propertius' version largely follows Hyginus 7; Fedeli calls it "substantially analogous" to Hyginus 8.

³⁴*Mythographi Vaticani I et II*, ed. P. Kulcsár (Turnholt 1987; *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* 91c), hereafter cited (with classicized orthography) as MV.

³⁵Hyg. 7: *Antiope ... ab Epapho per dolum est stuprata, itaque a Lyco viro suo eiecta est ... At Lycus Dircen in matrimonium duxit, cui suspicio incidit virum suum clam cum Antiope concubuisse, itaque imperavit famulis ut eam in tenebris vinctam clauderent*; MV 1.96 *Antiope ... ab Epapho per dolum est stuprata, quae ob id a viro Lyco est vi eiecta. Qua pulsa Dircen duxit uxorem imperavitque famulis ut Antiope vinctam in tenebris clauderent*; MV 2.92 *Lyci uxor Antiope ... ab Epapho ... per dolum stuprata a viro Lyco est eiecta ... Lycus autem iratus Dircen duxit uxorem, cui cum suspicio incidisset virum suum Lycum cum Antiope prius amata concubuisse, imperavit famulis ut pelicem vinctam in tenebris clauderent*. Both Hyginus (with *itaque*) and MV 2.92 (with *cum*) appear to create a causal link between Dirce's suspicions and Lycus' persecution of Antiope.

³⁶Hyg. 7: *hanc viduam Iuppiter compressit*; MV 2.92 *quam pulsam Iuppiter in satyrum vel, ut alii dicunt, in taurum versus compressit et gravidam fecit*.

³⁷Neither Hyg. 7 nor MV 1.96 nor MV 2.92 accounts for Antiope's whereabouts during the years between her sons' birth and Dirce's death.

dying father Nycteus instructs his brother Lycus to punish her irregular pregnancy and flight. Lycus duly goes to Sicyon, kills Epopeus, and brings Antiope home; the sons are born on the way and exposed, then Dirce takes on the task of tormenting Antiope,³⁸ not out of jealousy but in fulfillment of Nycteus' death-bed wish. Antiope flees after what would seem to be a fairly extended period of abuse, but finds her sons ready to assist her.³⁹ Propertius' unique version of the myth draws upon both preexisting versions: from the account represented by Hyginus 7 and the Vatican Mythographers come Lycus' successive marriages to Antiope and Dirce and jealous suspicion as the motive for Antiope's abuse, from the Euripidean account of Hyginus 8 and pseudo-Apollodorus come sons mature enough to avenge Antiope and Dirce as the tormentor. It also offers an innovation in making Antiope the slave of Dirce; in fact the whole has been carefully crafted to suit exactly a personal situation in which a jealous woman, suspicious that her slave has resumed her liaison with the man who is now her own lover, is warned not to harass that slave, and will not have to wait some sixteen years or more for punishment if she does harass her.

The narrative style is another arguably Hellenistic feature of 3.15.⁴⁰ La Penna's judgment, that the narration is "almost totally free of preciousities," is eccentric;⁴¹ everyone else has remarked upon the author's frequent emotional interventions, especially the apostrophes. Fedeli attributes them to an enhanced interest in psychology, while others assume that Propertius introduced them simply to ape Hellenistic style.⁴² It may be worth suggesting that Propertius (and perhaps his Greek forebears as well) could

³⁸Hyg. 8: *Antiopa Dircae uxori Lyci data erat in cruciatum*; ps-Apollod. 3.5.5: Ἀντιόπην δὲ ἡκίετο Λύκος καθεΐρας καὶ ἡ τοῦτου γυνὴ Δίρκη.

³⁹The scholia to Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 4.1090 offer a variation of this: Zethus and Amphion are born and exposed before Lycus wages war on Sicyon; the captive Antiope is handed over to Dirce but escapes, then for some unspecified reason is consigned to her own sons on her recapture (ληφθεῖσα πάλιν τοῖς ἐαντῆς πασιὶν ἐκδίδεται), after which the herdsman who raised them secures the recognition and their revenge follows.

⁴⁰Rothstein, for example, declared that "Die Erzählung ist ganz in alexandrinischen Stil gehalten." One Hellenistic (or at least Greek) feature not previously noted is the tendency to allow the sense to flow on from line to line rather than treating the couplet as a more or less self-contained unit; note, for example, the way in which Antiope's *dura catena* in 20 is taken up by *servire* in 21, or the way in which *invocet* . . . *quem nisi* . . . *Iovem* in 22 is answered by *sola tamen* in 23.

⁴¹A. La Penna, *L'Integrazione difficile: Un profilo di Propertio* (Turin 1977) 80: "libera quasi del tutto da preziosismi."

⁴²For a particularly clear statement of this position see G. Williams, *Figures of Thought in Roman Poetry* (New Haven 1980) 69: "In this poem the poet is concerned to give artistic treatment to the legend: so it is told in significant detail, in the best Hellenistic style, with lively entrances by the poet into his own story, as if the events were happening at the very moment when he recounts them. These details are clearly significant only for the story and not for the context."

use them expressively rather than gratuitously; in particular, he seems to deploy them here in order to emphasize details of the narrative that are important for the correspondence between myth and frame and for the message which the myth is intended to convey when interpreted in the light of that frame. The repeated *ah quotiens*, for example, vividly expresses the poet's sympathy for Antiope and, by implication, Lycinna. The frequent apostrophes of Jupiter, as Propertius in effect urges himself to come to Lycinna's aid, confirm his allegiance to the slave and his concern for her welfare. The address to Antiope at the moment of her vindication gives special emphasis to the act of Jupiter-Propertius coming to her rescue and destroying Dirce-Cynthia for her sake. Even the old herdsman who facilitates the denouement by reuniting mother and sons is dignified with an apostrophe, while Dirce herself, whose story this was supposed to be, is symbolically consigned to neglect and oblivion by being denied similar attention. All these touches contribute to the threat that the myth conveys. It might be argued that the final apostrophe of Mt. Aracynthus is only an elegant flourish that rounds off the narrative; it may indeed be only that, but it is worth remembering that the joyous celebration in song by the field soaked with Dirce's blood is quite pertinent to Propertius' threat to celebrate Lycinna rather than Cynthia in his own song.

Propertius 3.15 has often been compared to 1.20, the only other Propertian elegy which contains an extended mythological narrative, but their differences, and the reasons for those differences, have not always been appreciated. Fedeli (469–470) says that both poems reveal an affiliation with Alexandrian elegy by their inclusion of an extended narrative, but adds that Propertius has avoided giving them the exclusive character of mythological narrative by placing the myth within a frame which refers to a personal situation, and has further increased their similarity by having both contain a warning.⁴³ He defines the difference between the two elegies (in substantial agreement with La Penna)⁴⁴ in terms of their degree of Alexandrianism: 1.20, where the narrative aspect dominates, is supposed to represent the more straightforward application of Hellenistic technique and style, while 3.15 marks a decisive step beyond this "excessively scholastic" approach and shows the poet's search for psychological depth in the way that the

⁴³Fedeli (469): "In entrambi i casi lo sviluppo della parte mitica significa aderenza all'elegia alessandrina: e tuttavia Properzio ha evitato che le due elegie avessero l'esclusivo carattere di narrazione mitologica, perchè nella parte introduttiva compare un riferimento alla situazione attuale . . . che verrà ripreso nella conclusione di entrambi i carmi. L'analogia con 1,20 è rafforzata dal fatto che agli ammonimenti rivolti a Gallo perchè non trascuri il suo amasio corrisponde il monito a Cinzia perchè cessi di maltrattare Licinna. In entrambi i casi, dunque, l'autore muove dalla situazione del destinatario, per chiarirla poi con un esempio mitico e per concludere con un monito al destinatario."

⁴⁴See La Penna (above, n. 41) 80.

details of the narrative are related to Antiope's state of mind; he further suggests that the differences between the two might derive in part from the poet's different sources, epic for the Hylas story, tragedy for Antiope. Because of the near-total loss of Hellenistic elegy, and above all the lack of context for nearly all the fragments of mythological elegy (*POxy* 2885 fr. 1.1–20 is the outstanding exception), we shall probably never be able to attain certainty about most aspects of Hellenistic elegy and its Roman imitations, but it can be argued that Fedeli and La Penna have mistaken the relationship of these two poems to each other and to Hellenistic elegy, and that it is 3.15, not 1.20, which is the truer reflection of Alexandrian erotic elegy. The Hylas elegy is devoid of what could be called "subjective" or "personal" elements. The story merely illustrates the commonplace that *saepe imprudenti fortuna occurrit amanti* (3); it is not related to the poet's own concerns, nor is it meant seriously to influence Gallus' behaviour in his or in Propertius' own interest or even to present any kind of real "warning." However Alexandrian its narrative style, the myth is told purely for its own sake, and the nominally "personal" frame is only a peg on which to hang it; the use of myth here is exactly comparable to what one finds in Theocritus 11 and 13, where the stories of Polyphemus and Hylas respectively illustrate in straightforward fashion a maxim enunciated at the start that is only superficially relevant to the concerns of the addressee Nicias. The Antiope elegy, on the other hand, is thoroughly "subjective." The myth illustrates no maxim (nor is any enunciated); it is intended to influence Cynthia in the poet's own interest, it expresses a genuine warning, and its subtle application of the myth consciously challenges the reader. Fedeli suggested that the personal frames of 1.20 and 3.15 helped avoid an "exclusive character" of mythological narration, as though such frames were inconsistent with the "adherence to Alexandrian elegy" apparent in their narratives; but since *POxy* 2885 fr. 1.1–20 appears to confirm Cairns's hypothesis about such personal frames being a normal feature of Hellenistic erotic elegy, their presence here can represent no diminution of Alexandrianism. The same fragment also shows that at least one Hellenistic elegist applied a series of short mythological exempla in an apparently direct manner to influence a woman's conduct in his own "subjective" and personal interest; if an elegist working in the "Hesiodic" tradition of catalogue elegy could do so, then perhaps so could an elegist working in the "Pindaric" tradition of applying a single myth at length in a subtle and even challenging manner (indeed it is possible that Horace's *Hypermnestra* and *Europa* odes, the closest analogies to 3.15, may themselves be imitations of Hellenistic elegy).⁴⁵ Arguably, then, 3.15 does represent a step forward for Propertius with re-

⁴⁵Kießling-Heinze on *Odes* 3.11 (Berlin⁹ 1958) note the resemblance of both odes to Propertius 1.20 and 3.15 and to Theocritus 11 and 13.

spect to 1.20, not away from imitation of Alexandrian elegy but toward it. To return to the contrasting views of Butler-Barber and Macleod presented in the opening paragraph of this paper, it may be suggested that 3.15 is indeed a Roman imitation of a "typical" Hellenistic elegy, typical, however, not for its indifference to connections between the myth and the personal frame which surrounds it, but precisely for the care with which it deploys its "Hellenistic" features in order to enhance those connections.

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