

# THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT FOR OBSTRUCTION IN ROMAN LOVE

## ELEGY

by

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(Under the Direction of Charles Platter)

## ABSTRACT

This thesis will examine the presence of erotic obstruction in the poems of the first century B.C. writers of Roman love elegy: Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid. While erotic poetry prior to this time period had long necessitated a sense of obstruction, the deliberate construction of a failed love-affair by the Roman elegists serves to define their particular use of obstruction as a unique discursive strategy. The observation has been made that the time period marking the emergence and disappearance of Roman elegy qualifies it as a discrete, time-bound genre. In light of these time considerations, the obstruction motif in elegy, as a means of articulating a continual sense of failure, is capable of giving involuntary voice to events taking place on the Roman socio-political front, specifically, as this thesis will argue, a perceived loss of autonomy under the changing political structures at the end of the Republic.

INDEX WORDS: Obstruction, Roman love elegy, Tibullus, Propertius, Ovid, Door, *Vir*, *Lena*, Illness, Distance, Unfaithfulness, *Amores* 2.19, *Amores* 3.4

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my husband, David Leonard, without whose unconditional support during my years in graduate school I would never have made it to the completion of this degree. His assiduous dedication in all the facets of his own life has provided a model to me for the last ten years, and, in trying to be more like him, I have accomplished the greatest achievement in my life to date.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

A Roman citizen of equestrian rank occupied an anomalous position in the social and political landscape of the late Republic, the period during which his traditional role underwent a transformation with the arrival of imperial structures and ideology. He was a member of the *Equites*, a once prestigious cavalry division of the Roman army whose membership had originally required the ownership of an *equus*. Preferring private finance to the political life of the Senatorial class, the *Equites* were landholders and businessmen who were often as wealthy as senators.<sup>1</sup> Each class had to meet the minimum property requirement of 400,000 sesterces,<sup>2</sup> so the only factor separating the two elite groups was the attainment of political office.<sup>3</sup> As to the

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<sup>1</sup> While senators were not traditionally involved in commercial ventures, there is legal evidence for their acquisition of wealth via *negotium* (as opposed to the inheritance of a *patrimonium*). Their involvement in overseas trade is attested by the *plebiscitum Claudianum* (219-18 B.C.), which prohibited senators and their sons from owning trade ships of a certain size. The legislation, while it was likely intended to protect the interests of equestrian businessmen from the intrusion of senators, succeeded in placing a legal barrier between these *Equites* and positions in the Senate. For more information, see John H. D'Arms, *Commerce and Social Standing in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 20-47.

<sup>2</sup> Although debate exists over the period in which the 400,000 HS qualification was instituted, Livy implies that it was as early as 214 B.C. (XXIV.2.7). See also T. P. Wiseman, "The Definition of 'Eques Romanus' in the Late Republic and Early Empire," *Historia* 19 (1970): 68.

<sup>3</sup> Sulla mandated that all quaestors (the first political step on the *cursus honorum*) became eligible for membership in the Senate. Prior to this reform, enrollment had required the attainment of a curule magistracy, the aedileship, or



difficulty of ascending to the senatorial class, Cicero, a former equestrian himself, described the *Equites* as *qui summum locum civitatis aut non potuerunt ascendere aut non petiverunt*, “men who either were not able to ascend to the state’s highest position, or did not strive for it.”<sup>4</sup> Aside from minor scuffles over control of the juries in the last century of the Republic, however, these two classes shared common pursuits, often intermarried, and had similar views (especially concerning the grievances of the lower classes, the preservation of order, Cicero’s *concordia ordinum*, and property rights).<sup>5</sup> A Roman *eques* was a member of the traditional landed aristocracy who maintained his wealth through landholdings or business and, if motivated to do so, could elevate his family to the senatorial rank.

The writers of Roman love elegy were predominantly from this class. Although societal norms urged on them a career in business or politics, these writers participated fully in neither realm, electing to live a life of *otium*, or leisure, devoted to the pursuit of literary fame.<sup>6</sup> Composing refined love poetry in a highly personalized manner, they pioneered a genre that codified the conception of romantic love for centuries to come. The fact that their verses contain repeated references to the social and political realities of first century B.C. Rome, however,

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tribunate. The Senate increased under Sulla from 300 to 600 members, rising to 900 under Caesar, and settling back to 600 under Augustus. Source: Appian *B. Civ.* 1.100.

<sup>4</sup> Cic. *Clu.* 150.

<sup>5</sup> P. A. Brunt, “The *Equites* in the Late Republic,” in *The Crisis of the Roman Republic: Studies in Political and Social History*, ed. R. Seager (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 83-4.

<sup>6</sup> Michel Foucault has described this “retreat into the self” as a consequence of the centralized imperialism beginning in the third century B.C., by which representatives of the elite class transformed the real loss of authority into voluntary retirement. See Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self: Vol. 3 of The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1986), 81-96.

reveals the genre as a discrete, time-bound phenomenon.<sup>7</sup> The intention of this introduction is to contextualize their work by addressing the social and political factors affecting Roman equestrians during the period in which they were writing. In view of such factors, this thesis will examine the role of erotic obstruction throughout Roman love elegy as a unique discursive strategy reflecting the elegists' perceptions of freedom under the rule of Augustus.

A brief overview of historical events up to the time of the elegists will illustrate some of the specific developments affecting the position of the Roman equestrian. The Punic Wars brought Rome into contact with her first antagonist outside of Italy.<sup>8</sup> Having for centuries sought to protect her own territory and to dominate the Italian peninsula, Rome discovered in Carthage a different and dangerous threat to her growing power. Following the defeat of Hannibal and the ultimate destruction of Carthage in 146 B.C., the absence of *metus hostilis* (fear of the enemy) left Rome in a position of power heretofore unknown. In order to maintain this power, Rome sent aristocrats, usually praetors, to govern the increasing number of provinces. Along with these governors traveled a *cohors praetoria* made up of personal friends and acquaintances, men who might benefit both politically and financially from their relationship with the governor. Participation in such a tour of duty often provided an opportunity for young equestrians to get their start in politics.

The allure of wealth in the provinces attracted ever-increasing numbers, both from the senatorial and equestrian classes, to seek public magistracies. Laws passed in the early second

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<sup>7</sup> Paul Allen Miller, ed. *Latin Erotic Elegy: An Anthology and Reader* (London: Routledge, 2002), 1.

<sup>8</sup> Though King Pyrrhus of Epirus proved a formidable threat to the Roman army in the early third century, his role was ancillary to the domestic struggle between Rome and Tarentum.

century B.C. point to the increased competition for public offices.<sup>9</sup> When the population of Roman aristocratic males in the first century B.C. is compared to the much smaller number of public offices available to them,<sup>10</sup> such excessive spending<sup>11</sup> may be viewed as a necessary strategy in political campaigning to assure one's ascent to the higher offices. Competition in the early stages of the *cursus honorum* paled in comparison to the fierce struggles for the offices of praetor and the most prized position of consul.<sup>12</sup> The *coup d'état* attempted by Catiline in 63 B.C. resulted from his repeated failure to attain the consulship, and his recruitment of young aristocrats to his cause provides evidence for an undercurrent of frustration provoked by the hereditary nature of the political hierarchy in Rome.

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<sup>9</sup> The *lex Orchia*, passed in 182 B.C. limited the number of dinner guests allowed in a given home. Lintott suggests that this sumptuary law was clearly intended to restrict canvassing for office. Additional laws from this period are cited by Livy: the *lex Villia Annalis*, which regulated the age requirements for the magistracies (Liv. 40.44.1) and a law to limit expenditure on public games in 180 B.C. (Liv. 40.44.10). A. W. Lintott, "Imperial Expansion and Moral Decline in the Roman Empire," *Historia* 31 (1972): 631.

<sup>10</sup> Although the number of quaestors and praetors fluctuated over time, Sulla increased their numbers at twenty and eight respectively, while the number of consuls remained at two.

<sup>11</sup> For example, Caesar borrowed extensively from his wealthy patron, Crassus, during his aedileship to fund theatrical and gladiatorial games, which lasted twenty-two days, a distasteful display that won him censure by the Senate but many votes in later years. Source: Plut. *Vit. Caes.* 11.

<sup>12</sup> For legal and literary evidence of electoral bribery, see Andrew Lintott, "Electoral Bribery in the Roman Republic," *Journal of Roman Studies* 80 (1990): 1-16. In addition to the larger prizes available for praetors and consuls in the governing of provinces, and the competition resulting from Sulla's increase in the number of quaestors to twenty, T. P. Wiseman argues that control of the elections became more difficult after the 70-69 census doubled the number of citizens eligible to vote. "Senators, Commerce and Empire," *Liverpool Classical Monthly* 1 (1976): 22.

Contemporary with these changes on the political front were reforms in the composition of the Roman army. Although the equestrians had originated as an elite cavalry corps of the early army, the required military service by the propertied classes had become increasingly unpopular by the time Marius was appointed commander in the war against Jugurtha in 108 B.C.<sup>13</sup> The peasant class, when faced with lengthy absences from their farms, had also come to view compulsory military service with disdain. Seeing the need for change, Marius undertook a large scale recruitment of the proletariat, the lowest class of Roman citizens, legally exempt from serving in the army and enlisted before only in times of crisis. After Marius, these proletarian armies became commonplace, allowing both aristocrats and smaller landowners to further distance themselves from military service. As a result, Rome's former conscript militia was converted into a standing force of professional warriors who were dependent upon their general for support after military service. And so, Marius had created the vehicle by which later generals would employ private armies to advance their own political aims.

Sulla was the first to lead his army against Rome, in 88 B.C., eventually establishing himself as dictator for an unprecedented three years, proscribing his enemies (mostly prominent

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<sup>13</sup> Richard Alston, "Arms and the Man: Soldiers, Masculinity and Power in Republican and Imperial Rome," in *When Men Were Men : Masculinity, Power and Identity in Classical Antiquity*, ed. Lin Foxhall and John Salmon (London : Routledge, 1998), 210-11. Alston notes that the early Republican role of the army fostered the kind of citizen soldiers who acted collectively to preserve both communal and individual freedoms. As Rome's campaigns became more distant, this mentality was no longer viable, and "the idea that the soldiers were simply citizens under arms with identical political interests to civilians [was] part of the mythic past." Also, politicians were able to assert their status not primarily as military leaders, but like Cicero, through culture, civil politics and wealth. For additional reading on Roman attitudes toward war, see William V. Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome, 327-70 B.C.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 9-53.

*Equites*) and confiscating their estates in order to pay the pensions to his troops.<sup>14</sup> After Sulla voluntarily relinquished the dictatorship in 79 B.C., other ambitious generals advanced their reputations through successful conquests, most notably Pompey in the East and Caesar in Gaul. The formation of the first triumvirate in 59 B.C. allowed these men to support their respective agendas by forcing the Senate to submit to their demands. Faced with threats of violence,<sup>15</sup> the Senate had little choice other than to support these powerful men, but the consequent loss of power of the Senate had repercussions outside the realm of politics. The ascendancy of generals in the first century B.C. effected a permanent disruption of the self-conceived role of the elite Roman male whose career had formerly been defined by the ability to ascend to the Senate, wherein Rome's leading men had previously enjoyed a participatory role in government.

The competing political aims of popular politicians coupled with the changes in the Roman army contributed greatly to the instability that eventually led to the end of the Republic. The two decades between Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon in 49 B.C. and the defeat of Antony at Actium in 31 B.C. saw Rome divided into factions that equally sought a return to the stability of the Republic. The crisis that erupted between the first triumvirs and the more traditional adherents to the *mos maiorum* did not result from revolutionary action but from disputes about

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<sup>14</sup> Such confiscations practiced by later generals may have affected at least three of the Augustan era poets (Tibullus, Propertius and Vergil), whose families, according to the biographical tradition, had been deprived of lands in this manner. For more, see François Hinard, *Les Proscriptions de la Rome Républicaine* (Paris: École Française De Rome, 1985).

<sup>15</sup> In one of the first acts of his consulship, Caesar secured passage of a controversial land act for Pompey's veterans by employing a detachment of soldiers to sweep away the opposition by physical force. Source: Appian *B. Civ.* 2.9-11.

and divergences from traditional legal procedures.<sup>16</sup> These contradictory actions were evidence of the fundamental changes occurring within the fabric of Roman society as Rome was transformed from a powerful city-state ruled by an oligarchy into an empire governed by a monarch. The failure of the Republican constitution precluded any return to the institutions that had governed Rome for four centuries. Yet the Roman conservative ideology was incapable of conceiving a departure from Republican norms as anything other than threatening.<sup>17</sup> And so, the futile clinging to a promise of Republican stability reveals the Romans' inability to comprehend the changes that were happening.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Erich Gruen characterizes the explosion of decrees, proposals, statutes and administrative enactments, from the time of Sulla on, as repeated reinterpretation of the *mos maiorum*. Both sides insisted that their case rested on a strict interpretation of Roman law. *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 507.

<sup>17</sup> Paul Allen Miller, *Subjecting Verses: Latin Love Elegy and the Emergence of the Real* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 25. Miller notes that the traditional categories of commitment to political life and advancement were no longer fully operative as “the verities of republican civic virtue [found] themselves more and more irrelevant in an increasingly administered society.”

<sup>18</sup> In recent years, there has been significant effort to study the literature of this period using Lacanian psychoanalysis. In this view, the Roman inability to explain the changes taking place has been cast in Lacanian terms as a crisis in the Roman Symbolic (the rules and codes that define a society) whereby the changes in the Real (the indefinable indicator of historical change) have caused a rift between the Symbolic and Imaginary (the image of ourselves that we project on the world). Those most affected by the crisis were the senatorial and equestrian elite, whose political and social interactions were undergoing a violent revision. Their self-image as Roman citizens of aristocratic rank (the Imaginary) was discovered to be suddenly at odds with the rules and codes of that rank in society (the Symbolic) as a result of the civil wars, the expansion of Roman rule and the collapse of social order in the first century B.C. (the Real). Miller (2004), 5. Micaela Janan, “*When the Lamp is Shattered*”: *Desire and Narrative in Catullus* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994), 17-20. Although my own heuristic

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the changes taking place at the end of the Republic through the literature that was being written at that time, specifically Roman love elegy. As a genre, it is especially appropriate to this study because of the unique time frame marking the birth and death of the elegists' writings. Lasting only fifty years,<sup>19</sup> elegy inhabits a crucial period in Roman history, bridging the divide between Republic and Empire and giving involuntary voice to the conflicts lying at the heart of the crisis. The study of erotic obstruction and of the failures implied by its repeated use as a motif reveals certain unconscious perceptions of analogous barriers in Rome at the time. The fact that the elegists designed narratives around a continuously obstructed love affair resonates with the professional and personal changes taking place at the time which would have affected men of their status. Before carrying the hypothesis further, I offer a general discussion of the poets and their genre.

In his late first century A.D. *Institutio Oratoria*, Quintilian passed down the canon of Roman elegists with the following entry: *Elegia quoque Graecos provocamus, cuius mihi tersus atque elegans maxime videtur auctor Tibullus. Sunt qui Propertium malint. Ovidius utroque lascivior, sicut durior Gallus*. “We challenge the Greeks in elegy, too, whose originator, Tibullus, seems to me especially refined and elegant. There are those who prefer Propertius. Ovid is more sportive than both of these, as is Gallus stiffer” (10.1.93). While Quintilian does not include Catullus among the writers of Roman elegy, this discussion will begin with him as the primary forerunner of the genre by whose poetry the canonical elegists appear to have been

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model does not rely exclusively on the use of this terminology, I find it helpful and intend to refer to the Lacanian categories of the Symbolic, Imaginary and Real when appropriate to the context of my own study.

<sup>19</sup> Excluding Catullus as the precursor, the period here is assumed to be ca. 50 B.C. when Gallus began writing until ca. 1 A.D. when Ovid published the final edition of the *Amores*.

most directly influenced.<sup>20</sup> Born around 84 B.C. in the provincial town of Verona, Gaius Valerius Catullus grew up in an equestrian family of sufficient prominence to host Caesar during one of the winters of his Gallic campaign. Although he accompanied Gaius Memmius to Bithynia as a member of the *cohors praetoria* around 57 B.C., Catullus had begun writing poetry prior to this excursion, and references in his poems date his writing-life from around 61 to 54 B.C.<sup>21</sup> His arrival in Rome in the late 60's brought him into contact with the most accomplished writers of his time, including Valerius Cato, Licinius Calvus, and Gaius Helvius Cinna. Together these *poetae novi*, or neoterics, rejected the Latin literary tradition as exemplified by Ennius and his imitators and committed themselves to the precepts of brevity, wit, polish and learning that had defined the Alexandrian tradition. This renewed attention to Hellenistic models is in general due to the Hellenization of Rome following second century conquests, but has been more specifically linked to the arrival of the Greek poet Parthenius who was brought to Rome as a prisoner of war from Nicaea and eventually found employment as a teacher and literary collaborator with the writers of Catullus' circle.<sup>22</sup> These men of wealth, leisure and learning were not bound by the literary constraints of the pre-existing Latin tradition, which promoted

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<sup>20</sup> Quintilian includes Catullus among the writers of iambic poetry. See *Inst.* 10.1.96.

<sup>21</sup> Catullus. *The Poems*. Edited with Introduction, Revised Text and Commentary by Kenneth Quinn (London: McMillan and Co., Ltd., 1970), xiv. The absence of references later than 54 B.C. have led to the assumption that he died in this year. See also D.F.S. Thomson, ed., *Catullus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 3-4.

<sup>22</sup> Christopher Francese, *Parthenius of Nicaea and Roman Poetry* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2001), 37, 43, 46. Parthenius provided epitomes, resolved variant mythological traditions and explained the Greek poets to Gallus and Cinna. Although Latin poets had looked to the Hellenistic models for generations, Parthenius helped them with research and reading, and he advised them on stylistic points, which allowed them to emulate their models with a new level of polish.



epic, panegyric and other works composed for public consumption. The personalized verses of Catullus and the neoterics were written for a private circle of the cultured elite and promoted love as the central emotion of life.

Although love itself was not a new theme to poetry, Catullus was the first ancient poet to treat a love affair with one dominant beloved in such depth within a collection of mutually interdependent poems.<sup>23</sup> Catullus dedicated no less than twenty-six poems to his affair with Lesbia, a name widely regarded to be a pseudonym for Clodia Metelli.<sup>24</sup> He sought a relationship with Lesbia that could not be defined in traditional Roman terms, borrowing language from the system of mutual obligation that bound Roman men in friendship, politics and clientage: *fides*, *officium*, *amicitia* and *foedus*, “faith, duty, friendship and agreement.” Miller has referred to this expropriation of words, formerly employed only between men, as “semiotic slippage,” the emergence of an unconscious or “unintended” meaning that serves to undermine the rules of changing Roman society.<sup>25</sup> His employment of political terms in the context of

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<sup>23</sup> R.O.A.M. Lyne, *The Latin Love Poets from Catullus to Horace* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 60.

<sup>24</sup> The *locus classicus* for the possible identification of this woman, as well as other elegiac *dominae*, is in the *Apologia* of Apuleius, 10.3: *Eadem igitur opera accusent C. Catullum, quod Lesbiam pro Clodia nominarit, et Tigidam similiter, quod quae Metella erat Perillam scripserit, et Propertium, qui Cunthiam dicat, Hostiam dissimulet, et Tibullum, quod ei sit Plania in animo, Delia in uersu.* For T.P. Wiseman’s discussion of Clodia as one of the other two sisters of P. Clodius Pulcher, see *Catullan Questions* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1969), 50-60.

<sup>25</sup> Paul Allen Miller, *Lyric Texts and Lyric Consciousness: The Birth of a Genre from Archaic Greece to Augustan Rome* (London: Routledge, 1994), 45. See also Carl A. Rubino, “The Erotic World of Catullus,” *Classical World* 68 (1975): 293, 295. Rubino notes that Catullus’ rejection of the Roman cultural system requires a new discourse that exists apart from the system it rejects. However, because his erotic world is trapped inside the Roman system, he is forced to adopt the cultural forms that he has rejected – *pietas*, *fides*, and *foedus*. Unlike the later elegists who

intimate relations with Lesbia was a revolution in *otium equestre*<sup>26</sup> and reflected the social changes that allowed Catullus and his contemporaries to eschew the political realm altogether, something that would have been impossible only a few decades earlier.<sup>27</sup> However, Catullus was not only removing himself from the circles of business and politics in Rome, he was inverting the power relation between man and woman. In poem 68, considered to be the first true love elegy,<sup>28</sup> he refers to Lesbia as his *domina*<sup>29</sup> and submits himself to loving her. In doing so he sacrifices the pride of place that a male in a heterosexual relationship would have expected at that time.<sup>30</sup> This submission to Lesbia and anguished suffering in the face of her infidelities provides the model for the love elegists who in turn treated the theme in light of continued shifts in their society, which were not to be resolved until the settlement of Rome under Augustus.

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retreated into a literary world of love, Catullus insisted on translating his affair using language of the real world. David Ross offers a detailed analysis of the vocabulary of political alliance. See *Style and Tradition in Catullus* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 80-95.

<sup>26</sup> “Equestrian leisure,” traditionally defined as a disengagement from direct participation in electoral politics, but allowing one to pursue his private legal, business and financial interests. Miller (1994), 133.

<sup>27</sup> This “impossibility” refers to poetic factors that were present for Catullus, et al. David Ross notes three reasons for this revolution in poetic lifestyle: 1) the individual genius of the poets, 2) the rediscovery of Alexandrian poetry, specifically Callimachus, and the poetic principles that were newly relevant and applicable, and 3) the availability of a poetic technique through which they could further develop the Latin language. *Backgrounds to Augustan Poetry: Gallus, Elegy and Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 5.

<sup>28</sup> Miller (2002), 19, 109. Reasons for this designation lie in the poems’ length, complexity of form, and use of mythological exempla. Catullus clearly describes the affair as an adulterous one, while offering a commitment that is not shared by his beloved, both elements which foreshadow later developments in the genre.

<sup>29</sup> The term “domina” traditionally referred to a female head of household and owner of slaves. The term is used by Terence (*Haut.* 301) to refer to Antiphila, the beloved of Clinia.

<sup>30</sup> Lyne, 61.

Quintilian's chronological treatment places Cornelius Gallus first, the elegist whose life remains better known than his poems.<sup>31</sup> The primary source for his life is Suetonius, who included references to Gallus in his biographies of Augustus and Vergil.<sup>32</sup> Born around 70 B.C. in Gallia Narbonensis, he enjoyed a successful military career, eventually fighting against Antony's forces in Egypt, and was appointed as the first *praefectus Aegypti* by Augustus. He later fell into disgrace and committed suicide in 26 B.C. The loss of his four books of elegies, called *Amores*, may be attributed to his excessive political ambition under Augustus.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, they were celebrated by Vergil, Propertius and Ovid, and some of their content is known from Vergil's tenth Eclogue.<sup>34</sup> Evidence of his relationship with Parthenius testifies to the mythological learning that likely characterized his poetry.<sup>35</sup> Gallus composed elegies detailing a

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<sup>31</sup> Prior to 1979, only one line of Gallus' *Amores* survived, preserved by the geographer Vibius Sequester. However, the discovery in that year of an Egyptian papyrus containing a nine-line fragment allowed scholars to confirm previously formed hypotheses on his work. See appendix A for the text of these fragments.

<sup>32</sup> See Suet. *Aug.* 66.1-2, *Vita Verg.* 19-21.

<sup>33</sup> Although there is no specific evidence for the immediate censorship or burning of Gallus' writings, his loss of favor has been surmised from Vergil's supposed withdrawal of "laudes Galli" at the end of the Georgics, and the discreet tributes paid to Gallus by Propertius and Ovid.

<sup>34</sup> In his commentary on the Eclogues, Servius noted at line 46: *hi autem omnes versus Galli sunt de ipsius translati carminibus*, "however all these verses are translated from the poems of Gallus himself." Still, it is unclear how many lines are meant, and the use of "translati sunt" may be imprecise, referring instead to Vergil's allusion to Gallan themes. Vergil, *Eclogues*, ed. Robert Coleman (Cambridge University Press, 1977), 288.

<sup>35</sup> Parthenius dedicated his *Erotika Pathemata*, a collection of mythological love stories, to Gallus. I offer Francese's translation of the preface: "Parthenius to Cornelius Gallus, Greetings: To you in particular, Cornelius Gallus, I thought it most appropriate to send the collection of disastrous love stories which I have assembled in as very brief a compass as possible. For these stories, as they are found in some of the poets, are not told in a self-standing manner: you will understand most of them from these. It remains for you yourself to put the most

love affair with Lycoris, whose desertion of her lover forces him to seek solace in a bucolic setting. Typical, then, of what came to be known as Roman love elegy, Gallus' poems celebrated the failed love for a faithless *domina* in elegiac meter and in a learned style, which was now common in Roman poetry.

Gallus' role in the Augustan administration makes him an interesting figure in light of his elegiac successors. Although it had become customary among the neoterics to show disdain for service to the state, the combination of political and literary pursuits had been common in the Republic.<sup>36</sup> However, after Gallus, no literary figure of note attempted to combine a political career with literary achievement until the time of Nero.<sup>37</sup> It is not surprising then that the Augustan poets, without exception, shunned political pursuits after they had witnessed the consequences of political ambition for one of their own.

Albius Tibullus was born around 55 B.C. into an equestrian family living in rural Latium. Evidence for his life comes not only from his poems, but from other testimonia,<sup>38</sup> especially the *vita Tibulli* that accompanied the Tibullan manuscript tradition.

*Albius Tibullus, eques Romanus, insignis forma cultuque corporis  
observabilis, ante alios Corvinum Messallam oratorem dilexit, cuius  
etiam contubernalis Aquitanico bello militaribus donis donatus est.  
hic multorum iudicio principem inter elegiographos optinet locum.*

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appropriate ones into hexameters and elegies. Please do not think less of them because they lack that stylistic refinement in which you so excel. I have compiled them simply as a little ancilla, and now perhaps they will serve the same purpose for you as well.” Francese (2001), 207.

<sup>36</sup> Both Catullus and Cinna took part in military expeditions, and Calvus was a well-respected orator.

<sup>37</sup> Miller (2004), 74.

<sup>38</sup> Noteworthy among these are the references in the poems of his contemporaries, Horace and Ovid: Hor. *Serm.*

1.4.105-11, Hor. *Carm.* 1.33.1-4, Hor. *Epist.* 1.4, Ov. *Am.* 1.15.27-8, Ov. *Am.* 3.9, Ov. *Ars Am.* 3.333-4, Ov. *Ars Am.* 3.535-8, Ov. *Rem. Am.* 763-6, Ov. *Trist.* 2.445-68, Ov. *Trist.* 4.10.51-4, and Ov. *Trist.* 5.1.15-20.

*epistolae quoque eius amatoriae, quamquam breves, omnino subtiles sunt. obit adolescens, ut indicat epigramma supra scriptum.*<sup>39</sup>

Albius Tibullus, a Roman knight, outstanding in physical beauty and in the care of his person, esteemed Messalla Corvinus as an orator before all others, and as his companion in the Aquitanian war was presented with military gifts. In the judgment of many, Tibullus obtained the chief position among the elegists. His amatory letters, however brief, are also universally fine. He died a youth, as noted in the epitaph written above.

Despite references in his poems to poverty and the loss of ancestral lands during the civil war,<sup>40</sup> Tibullus possessed the means to write elegies throughout his life. He entered the literary circle of the nobleman Messalla Corvinus, to whom he dedicated a number of his poems. Although Tibullus accompanied Messalla on more than one expedition, his reluctance to do so is confirmed generally throughout his books and specifically in poem 1.3. He advocates instead a *vita iners*, a life of leisure, and the boldness of his declaration constitutes a deliberate affront to the more honorable pursuits of esteem and wealth found in military service and political office. Two books of elegies are attributed to his authorship, one dominated by the character of Delia, the other by Nemesis. The lover's relationships with these women are characterized by alternating moods of desire and regret and by the constant fear of betrayal. He frequently

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<sup>39</sup> *Tibullus: Elegies*, Text, Introduction and Commentary by Robert Maltby (Cambridge: Francis Cairns, 2002), 33, 39. This text of anonymous authorship appears to be a later abridgement of a Suetonian biography. The final line refers to an epitaph, also included in the manuscripts, which is attributed to Domitius Marsus, an Augustan era writer: *te quoque Vergilio comitem non aequa, Tibulle,/ mors iuuenem campos misit ad Elysios,/ ne foret aut elegis molles qui fleret amores/ aut caneret forti regia bella pede*. "You, too, Tibullus, unfair death has sent to the Elysian fields, a young companion for Vergil, so that there would be no one to weep soft elegies and love affairs or to sing of regal battles in epic verse." Text taken from Maltby, 33.

<sup>40</sup> Tib. 1.1.19-22, 41-2. These passages refer generally to the reduced state of his ancestral lands, assumed by some scholars to have been lost during land-confiscations after the battle of Philippi. However, Tibullus does not state this explicitly anywhere. Maltby, 40.

withdraws into a rural dream world, which serves as his refuge both from the disappointments of his unsatisfied love and from the present reality of civil war. The composition of his first book, which he began in or after 31 and published around 26 B.C., neatly encompasses the period containing the Battle of Actium and the settlement of Rome under the newly named Augustus.<sup>41</sup> He was admired by the ancients for the elegance of his verses, and although he does not explicitly claim lineage from Hellenistic poets, he adopted the Callimachean slender style to great effect.

Sextus Propertius was born in Umbria around 49 B.C. to an equestrian family who had lost landholdings to confiscations following the Perusine War in 40 B.C.<sup>42</sup> Aside from the autobiographical references in his elegies, the evidence for his life is limited.<sup>43</sup> The publication of his first book is believed to be in 29 B.C., at which time Propertius attracted the attention of Maecenas and thereafter became a member of his literary circle. His rejection of a military career is evident in poem 1.6 in which he refuses an invitation to join the staff of the proconsul of Asia. He insists that his life's service is one of *militia amoris*, the soldiering of love, yet he acknowledges the objections to his preference for an admittedly disreputable course.

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<sup>41</sup> Conte gives 32 B.C. as the *terminus post quem* for Book I. Gian Biagio Conte, *Latin Literature: A History*, trans. Joseph B. Solodow (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 326. Maltby places the publication of Book I just after September, 27 B.C. Maltby, 40. Putnam hesitates to fix absolute dates but mentions the consulship of Messalla who took over Antony's position after Actium. *Tibullus: A Commentary*, ed. Michael C. J. Putnam (University of Oklahoma Press, 1973), 4.

<sup>42</sup> Prop. 4.1.129-30.

<sup>43</sup> Propertius mentions his homeland and youth in 1.22 and 4.1.121 ff. See also Ov. *Trist.* 4.10.45 f. and 4.10.51 ff. No ancient biography exists for him, although he is mentioned in Donatus' 4<sup>th</sup> century life of Vergil. Pliny mentions one of his descendants, a certain Passennus Paullus, in *Ep.* 9.22.1.

Throughout his four books, Propertius' narrator is consumed by the pursuit of an ideal love with Cynthia, a cultured and elegant woman who repeatedly betrays him. Although the elegies devoted to Cynthia become less frequent as the books progress, she is never entirely absent. Under the patronage of Maecenas, Propertius feels pressured to write state-sanctioned poetry praising Rome and Augustus. As a result, his second book opens with a bold *recusatio*, a refusal to write epic-historical poetry, on the grounds that he is not fitted by nature or by experience to write on these subjects: he proclaims himself as the Roman Callimachus, a claim supported in part by his chosen position as a non-epic poet but especially by the abundance of mythological allusion in his poems. Propertius at last agrees to write on civic themes in his fourth book, which is largely devoted to the treatment of Roman aetiological myths (in the manner of Callimachus' *Aetia*). The last datable reference in his poetry is to 16 B.C., and his death is assumed to have occurred in or soon after that year.<sup>44</sup>

The last of the elegists, Publius Ovidius Naso, was born in 43 B.C. to a prosperous equestrian family living in Sulmo. The primary source for his life comes from his autobiographical exile poetry, specifically *Tristia* 4.10.<sup>45</sup> Intending a career in law, Ovid studied rhetoric in Rome and held minor judicial posts but abandoned his political aspirations in order to write poetry. He earned recognition for his *Amores*, the first edition being published around 20

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<sup>44</sup> Poem 4.11 is a funeral elegium for the sister of P. Cornelius Scipio who died in 16 B.C.

<sup>45</sup> Banished to the Black Sea settlement of Tomi in 8 A.D., Ovid composed the *Tristia* as one of his last works. In five books of fifty poems, Ovid speaks in the first person about his exile, dramatizing his experience by the reappropriation of elegiac language and themes. Although certain facts may have been fictionalized, much of what he says in *Tristia* 4.10 is verified by other sources. Further sources include the manuscripts that provide his full name, and the *Controversiae* of Seneca the Elder, who credits Ovid with a penchant for oratory that aided his poetic oeuvre (*Contr.* 2.2.8). Sara Mack, *Ovid* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 12.

B.C., and was invited into the circle of Messalla. There he developed an acquaintance with Tibullus, whose death he eulogized in *Amores* 3.9; his primary model among the elegists, however, was Propertius. The elusive *domina* of the *Amores* is the beautiful Corinna, whom the elegiac lover pursues in more explicitly adulterous terms than had ever been used before.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, the important difference for Ovid's writing was in its timing. Ovid began composing his verses after the Augustan regime had established itself, and, unlike his predecessors, he was able to enjoy the benefits of empire without witnessing the struggles that had brought it about.<sup>47</sup> He possessed no notions of returning to the traditional Republican state. His elegies are subversive in that they challenge the genre itself by exaggerating its themes with ingenious irreverence. Emphasizing the comedic and satiric possibilities of elegy, Ovid experimented with the conventions employed by his predecessors, casting traditional motifs in terms of real consequences for the formerly generalized elegiac actions. Following Ovid, Roman love elegy finds no successful descendents, both because he had exhausted the genre of its emotive force and because the ruptures in Roman society that had brought about the genre fifty

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<sup>46</sup> Various conclusions have been drawn about the adulterous nature of the affair in light of the Augustan marriage legislation. Wallace-Hadrill sees Ovid's offense not so much as a mockery of the *lex de adulteriis* as a reflection of his total indifference to the conventional sexual order. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, "Propaganda and Dissent? Augustan Moral Legislation and the Love Poets," *Klio* 67 (1985): 183.

<sup>47</sup> Thomas Habinek notes that while the political commitments of Ovid's poetry differ from those of Vergil, Horace and Propertius, his work is no less politically complex. Ovid "raise[s] the stakes on his predecessors, moving outward from the quintessential early Augustan concern with the refoundation of Rome to a late Augustan survey of empire." "Ovid and Empire," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid*, ed. Philip Hardie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 46.



years earlier had been healed. Jerome records Ovid's death in 17 A.D., although 18 A.D. may be more likely.<sup>48</sup>

This next section will offer a summary of Roman love elegy in order to illustrate its uniqueness as a discrete genre of the first century B.C. Elegy had been written in Greek as early as the eighth century B.C., often functioning as a song of mourning but adapted for various personal expressions of mood and thought, and identifiable by its meter, alternating lines of dactylic hexameter and pentameter. Among the first known writers of elegy, Archilochus was a soldier who wrote about the soldier's life, extolling themes of courage and victory in war. Propertius hails the late seventh century Mimnermus as the founder of love elegy, because he wrote about a beloved named Nanno. Although the Roman elegists claim Philetas and Callimachus as their masters and models, no love elegies by these poets have been found. The Alexandrians chose instead to express their personal feelings in epigrams, poems of short length (rarely exceeding ten lines), which, while artistically concise, allowed little narrative development.<sup>49</sup> It was the Roman poets who adopted the elegiac meter as their primary vehicle for love poetry, an apparent attempt to elevate the theme of love from the colloquial nature of the epigram.<sup>50</sup>

Although Callimachus is hailed as the model for its refined style, the subject matter of Augustan elegy is uniquely Roman. The most important unifying theme of Roman love elegy is

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<sup>48</sup> Because events from 17 are recorded in the *Fasti*, 18 may be a more likely year for Ovid's death. Conte, 340.

<sup>49</sup> Greek epigrams were often written in elegiac couplets, though meter was not a defining feature of the epigram. Miller (2002), 2.

<sup>50</sup> Georg Luck, *The Latin Love Elegy* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1969), 21. Catullus wrote many of his Lesbia poems in meter other than elegiac couplets, a primary reason for his assignation as a precursor of the elegists and not an elegist himself.

the love affair, specifically that between a male poet-lover<sup>51</sup> and a beautiful, cultured woman, variously depicted as a Roman matron, a courtesan or a prostitute. The heterosexual nature of the elegiac affair is an important innovation of Roman love elegy, given the predominance of pederastic love poems among the Greek writers.<sup>52</sup> The elegiac lover possesses a number of conventional traits: he is poor; he rejects traditional Roman professions in return for a life of love; and he refuses to write epic poetry. The elegiac *domina* also has her own established traits: she is beautiful, young and educated; she occasionally loves the poet in return but is more often faithless, preferring the gifts of rich lovers; and she has a *vir*, a husband or live-in lover, who must be circumvented.<sup>53</sup> The elegiac relationship is extramarital, and, unlike youthful affairs that may have been acceptable for young equestrians, it is presented by the elegists following Catullus as a life-long bond. In his devoted pursuit of love, the poet-lover adopts a number of unique roles that reflect an underlying opposition to contemporary society. As *miles amoris*, the soldier of love abstains from service in the Roman military. His role as *servus amoris*, or slave of love, inverts the traditional power relation between man and woman as the poet-lover subjects

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<sup>51</sup> To distinguish between the poet and the poet's persona within his poems, the term "poet-lover" will be used throughout this thesis to refer to the latter. The topic of autobiography will be addressed later in this chapter.

<sup>52</sup> The three Marathus poems of Tibullus are an exception to this pattern. Propertius recommends boys to friends in 2.4 but not for himself. Ovid proclaims his aversion to homosexual love in *Ars Amatoria* 2.683-4. Tibullus seems to have wanted to explore love from different aspects, thus explaining his change of mistress and his inclusion of Marathus. Maltby, 45.

<sup>53</sup> Mack, 54.

himself to the will of his *domina*. Finally, the *praeceptor amoris*, or teacher of love, advocates his counter-cultural lifestyle to others.<sup>54</sup>

Another distinguishing feature of Roman love elegy is the strikingly un-Callimachean autobiographical tone adopted by the poet. Each poet appears to relate his personal experience in a love affair with a woman who is not his wife. Much attention has been paid, both in modern and ancient times, to the issue of autobiographical truth that emerges in the poems of the elegists. Though Apuleius in his *Apologia*<sup>55</sup> provided “identifications” for the elegiac *dominae* (except for Corinna), his names cannot be taken as proof that the affairs took place and that each of these poets was merely documenting that affair. As Allen stated in his seminal article on sincerity among the elegists, the reading of elegy requires an understanding of the Roman definition of “sincerity,” which would have been based on rhetorical ability to convince the reader of what he was writing. This would be accomplished by a consistency between the style of the poetry and the emotional condition depicted in the poem, and it has little to do with the actual experience of the poet.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Although this guise is common throughout the poems of Tibullus (1.2, 4, 6, 8, 9) and Ovid (*Am.* 1.4, *Ars Am.* passim), it is found less commonly in Propertius. For evidence of *praecepta* in Propertius, see Arthur Leslie Wheeler, “Propertius as Praeceptor Amoris,” *Classical Philology* 5:1 (1910): 28-40. For more on the role-inversion and moral conversion of the elegists as “counter-cultural,” see Judith Hallett, “The Role of Women in Roman Love Elegy: Counter-Cultural Feminism,” *Arethusa* 6 (1973): 103-23.

<sup>55</sup> See note 24.

<sup>56</sup> Archibald W. Allen, “‘Sincerity’ and the Roman Elegists,” *Classical Philology* 45 (1950): 147, 153. Allen strengthens his argument by the inclusion of the testimonia of ancient poets who insist on a complete distinction between the poet and his poetry (e.g. Catull. 16.5-8). The question to be asked is not “Did the elegists really feel this?” but rather “Is it reasonable that the lover whose character appears in the elegies should speak in this manner?” Paul Veyne describes the Roman elegists as mere stage directors of the emotions they pretend to experience in their

Certain thematic elements conventional throughout Roman elegy offer additional proof that the affair was a poetic fiction. Given the equestrian status of the poet, the poverty of the poet-lover can be taken as a pose adopted for dramatic effect. The *domina*, described conventionally in terms of her appearance, her freedoms and the role of her *vir*, seems to be a generic woman rather than a real-life beloved.<sup>57</sup> Finally, the highly stylized confession of passion, which is accomplished through a fixed system of experiences and scenarios, reveals the writing of elegiac verses to be more a discursive strategy than a verifiable act of courtship.<sup>58</sup> Whatever correspondences can be discovered between the poetry and life in first century B.C. Rome, each element is ultimately included in the poetic discourse in order to serve as a metaphor for the poetic projects and political interests of their authors.<sup>59</sup>

The final element of Roman love elegy to be discussed, the focus of this thesis, is the failure of the love affair itself. As the *pauper poeta* subjects himself to his *domina* and grows to expect the same devotion in return, the impossibility of the elegiac love-affair unfolds. The goals of the affair are the sexual union between the poet-lover and his *domina* and a relationship that will not be subject to the scrutiny of traditional Roman *mores*. What dominates these poems, however, is not the achievement of these goals, but rather the repeated inability of the poet-lover to do so, i.e. to find success in his chosen “occupation.” As each poet documents the stages of the elegiac relationship, from courtship to passion to final estrangement, it becomes

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own name, and he asserts that ancient readers understood this humor. See Paul Veyne, *Roman Erotic Elegy: Love, Poetry and the West*, trans. David Pellauer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 37.

<sup>57</sup> James (2003), 36-7.

<sup>58</sup> Maria Wyke, *The Roman Mistress: Ancient and Modern Representations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 14-5.

<sup>59</sup> Wyke, 45.

evident that the pathway to passion is laden with an unusual profusion of obstacles: her door, her husband (the *vir*), her go-between (the *lena*), episodes of illness, her (or the poet's) physical absence, and her unfaithfulness. In the end, the poet-lover is unsuccessful and resigns himself to being betrayed and alone, sometimes electing to seek other female lovers as consolation.

It must be noted that obstruction in love was not a uniquely Roman concept. Although self-portrayal as the loser in an erotic relationship may be an anomalous position for a well-born Roman male, it was not an innovation of the elegists to conceive of Eros as lack.<sup>60</sup> Historically, the concept of desire had long been associated with failure. Aristophanes' speech in Plato's *Symposium*<sup>61</sup> provides a well-known model for the nature of Eros. Aristophanes suggests that the lover is a remnant, half of a former double-bodied species that was separated by Zeus, who later invented sex as a substitute for reunification. The pursuit of a lover is thus symbolic of the perpetual search for the former "whole" state of being. The impossibility of reunification relegates Eros to the realm of unsatisfiable desire, such that it becomes a dominating force for the human spirit.<sup>62</sup> This definition of Eros helps to explain the necessity of obstruction or failure in elegiac love. The successful union of poet-lover and *domina* would put an end to desire, and its absence would eliminate the basis for the very poetry being written.

Despite a long literary history of obstruction in love, the character of elegiac failure has a particularly Roman flavor. Not only did the Roman love elegists enlist their poet-lovers in the

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<sup>60</sup> Anne Carson, *Eros the Bittersweet: An Essay* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 11. The Greeks invented Eros to express desire for a thing gone, a thing that is lacking. All human desire is poised on an axis of paradox, with absence and presence at its poles. The attainment of the desired object or state of being would eliminate the desire itself.

<sup>61</sup> Pl. *Symp.* 189c-193d.

<sup>62</sup> Janan (1994), 12.

emasculated service of an extramarital relationship, an affront to traditional Roman norms, but they also guaranteed the absolute failure of the relationship by the inclusion of numerous erotic obstructions. An explanation for this phenomenon may lie embedded in the social and political fabric of the times. The elegists showed a reluctance to praise the famous men of the day, the pursuit of historians, writers of epic and state-sanctioned poets like Cicero's Archias. Instead, they extolled the virtues of *amor* and the pursuit of a lover. A possible interpretation of this poetic stance is that the poets saw social and political distinction as impossible goals at this time of civil strife, and chose a poetic persona and the rewards of love as compensation.<sup>63</sup> According to this reading, their failure as lovers would be emblematic of their inability to participate as active, masculine members of Roman society. The political avenues had been polluted by the dictatorships of Sulla and Caesar, and eventually by the totalitarian power of Augustus. The reactionary *mores* of the first century B.C. as championed by Cicero and other adherents to the *mos maiorum* accompanied a radical change in sexual attitudes that resulted from social disruption and the rapid Hellenization of Rome.<sup>64</sup> Roman elegy championed these new attitudes and, through the metaphor of erotic obstruction, expressed concerns for the changes in society that resulted from social and political upheaval.

This thesis sets out to illuminate how the presence of erotic obstruction in Roman love elegy contributes to the meaning of the genre as a response to the social and political changes

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<sup>63</sup> J. P. Sullivan, "The Politics of Elegy," *Arethusa* 5 (1972): 23.

<sup>64</sup> Thomas Habinek, *The Politics of Latin Literature: Writing, Identity, and Empire in Ancient Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 143-4. Habinek argues that the changes in the sex and gender system taking place at this time resulted from Rome's transition from a peasant society to an urban center. Accounts of sexual outrages, such as those of Clodia and Sempronia, were "in part attempts to identify appropriate limits of behavior in an era of radical change."

taking place at the end of the Roman Republic. Elegy emerged as a symptom of the crisis in the self-concept of the elite Roman male,<sup>65</sup> a discursive strategy adopted by a number of equestrian writers to respond to the changing definition of *libertas* under imperial rule. The choice of a genre that departs from the current value system can be viewed as a demonstration of autonomy. Additionally, the theme of failure as articulated by the omnipresence of obstruction can be explained as a symbolic recovery of *libertas*, as the poets demonstrate that it is better to fail as lovers than to succeed by giving in to the precepts of Augustan ideology.

Two methods will be employed in this thesis to examine the incidence of obstruction and the particular effects of its usage by the Roman elegists. First, a categorical survey will review the impediments to love employed by Catullus, Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid. This section will compare each obstruction with any precedents in Greek and Roman literature and then discuss its unique treatment in the discourses of late Republican elegy. Second, in a selection of poems from Ovid's *Amores*, erotic obstructions will be viewed in the larger context of the poems they inhabit. As last of the elegists, Ovid shaped the themes of elegy into their final form, and his poems contain the completed diction of erotic obstruction. In addition, Ovid's lack of emotional intensity, when compared to Tibullus and Propertius, and his cheerful detachment from the sufferings of love contribute to an overall objectivity that casts the entire genre into relief.

*Amores* 2.19 and 3.4 act as a diptych wherein the signifier of obstruction, the *vir*, is chastised alternately as a lazy guardian of an unwanted girl and an overzealous guardian of an unchaste

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<sup>65</sup> Miller (2004), 26. This crisis marks the emergence of the Real, the effect of historical change on Symbolic and Imaginary categories. Miller notes that this crisis takes place most radically in the erotic, because "it is here that the conjugation of the private fantasmata of our Imaginary self-construction...and the publicly sanctioned realm of Symbolic norms...takes place with the greatest intensity and, hence, with the greatest possibility of conflict." As a result, elegy was able to articulate these changes better than any other genre of the period.

girl: “If you will not guard her, then I won’t want her;” and “If you wouldn’t guard her, she would be chaste by choice.” His rhetorical exercise illustrates the unique role of the obstructing element in elegy, that obstruction is necessary to love, and its imposition makes possible the delights of transgressing it.<sup>66</sup> A reading of these two poems will serve to highlight the necessity of obstruction as a perpetuating and defining feature of Roman love elegy. The Ovidian poet-lover finds himself incapable of pursuing his *domina* in the absence of obstruction, a helplessness that constitutes an analogous relation to the Augustan-era equestrian’s struggle for his lost autonomy.

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<sup>66</sup> Miller (2004), 171.



## CHAPTER 2

### SURVEY OF EROTIC OBSTRUCTION

This chapter will document the omnipresence and variety of erotic obstructions in the poems of Catullus and the Roman elegists: Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid. Because Eros, by nature, implies separation between the desiring subject and the desired object, obstruction in love poetry was by no means invented by these first century B.C. Roman poets. Nevertheless, the emergence of Roman love elegy at this time of crisis in the Roman Republic, along with its conspicuous disappearance after Ovid, forces the reader to acknowledge its potential as an involuntary voice of social and political change. One of the ways in which the genre accomplishes this vocalization is through the staging of the elegiac affair as a failed endeavor. Roman love elegy departs from its erotic predecessors in its lengthy narratives of extramarital love, challenging social norms and traditional Roman *mores*. As a result, we see the poet continuously obstructing this impossible relationship in order to bring about its necessary failure.

As a means of exploring the genre for the incidence of failure, this chapter will comprise a survey of erotic obstructions to the union of the poet-lover and his *domina*. Appearing throughout the corpus of Roman love elegy, as well as in the poems of Catullus, these obstructions are the door, the *vir*, the *lena*, episodes of illness, distance, and the girl's unfaithfulness. Despite a certain degree of overlap between the categories, they will be investigated separately for heuristic reasons. With a view to understanding how the first century B.C. love poets manipulated erotic obstruction to their poetic purposes, each section will present Greek and Roman literary models in order to compare the prior application of each obstruction to

its use by the elegists. This chapter will demonstrate the unique usage of each obstruction in Roman love elegy by showing that the elegists were not merely imitating the precepts of erotic discourse in their construction of an unsuccessful love affair. Instead, they were manipulating the erotic paradox so as to reveal the analogous impossibility of serving Augustus while retaining the *libertas*, which had previously defined an elite Roman male.

### THE DOOR

One of the most vivid images of obstruction painted by the love elegists is the lover's lament outside of the door of his *domina*, traditionally referred to as the paraclausithyron.<sup>67</sup> The elements of the paraclausithyron were standard in Greek literature<sup>68</sup> and can be summarized as follows: the lover wanders the streets in a state of drunkenness, arrives at his mistress's door and begs for admission, threatens her and warns her of the onset of old age, announces that he will die if she does not admit him, hangs his garland on her door and falls asleep on the threshold. Variations on this theme became common in Greek poetry<sup>69</sup> and comedy and accordingly entered Roman literature via the comic vehicle. In Roman love elegy, the paraclausithyron

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<sup>67</sup> The *locus classicus* for the name is Plut. *Amat.* 753b: τίς οὖν ὁ κολύων ἐστὶ κομάζειν ἐπὶ θύρας, ἄδειν τὸ παρακλαυσίθυρον. "Who, then, prevents the reveling before the house, the singing of the complaint before the closed door." Greek text from Frank O. Copley, *Exclusus Amator: A Study in Latin Love Poetry* (APA Monograph Series: 17. Baltimore: J. H. Furst Company, 1956), 2.

<sup>68</sup> In his recent article, "The Early Greek Paraclausithyron and Gnesippus," *Scholia* 10 (2001): 38-53, Michael Cummings presents a fragment Eupolis that suggests the fifth-century poet Gnesippus as the founder of the literary paraclausithyron as a distinct and developed genre. Cummings' analysis of earlier fragments suggests that while poems of Alcaeus, Anacreon and Theognis may have contained paraclausithyric situations, the poets were not necessarily composing complete paraclausithyra.

<sup>69</sup> For examples of Greek paraclausithyra, see Asclep. *AP* 5.145, 5.164, 5.189, 5.161; Callim. *AP* 5.23, 5.103, 12.118; Mel. *AP* 5.191, 12.117, 12.72; Posid. *AP* 5.213; Theoc. 23, 2.

underwent a dramatic transformation, appearing as an omnipresent symbol of the frustration of the poet-lover in his devoted pursuit of a faithless mistress.

Perhaps originating as a literary version of a native street-revel,<sup>70</sup> the *paraclausithyron* can be traced through Greek poetry as it gradually developed from a rowdy, drunken ballad to the sorrow-filled lament of a lover. The door-song appeared in Greek comedy as the stereotypical narrative in which the lover was often admitted to the home of his beloved.<sup>71</sup> The writers of Greek lyric, idyll and epigram treated the lover's lament as one of hope and sorrow, a song imbued with a pathos suited to a lonely lover on his beloved's rain-soaked doorstep. The romantic tone appears in this passage from Callimachus:

ἄκρητος καὶ ἔρως μ' ἠνάγκασαν ὧν ὁ μὲν αὐτῶν  
εἶλκεν, ὁ δ' οὐκ εἶα σώφρονα θυμὸν ἔχειν.  
ἐλθὼν δ' οὐκ ἐβόησα τίς ἢ τίνος, ἀλλ' ἐφίλησα  
τὴν φλιήν· εἰ τοῦτ' ἔστ' ἀδίκημ', ἀδικῶ. (A.P. 12.118)<sup>72</sup>

Wine and love have forced me to it: wine dragged me here;  
Love allows my heart no wisdom.  
And when I came I cried not out my name – not a syllable of it;  
Nay, I kissed the threshold. If this be sin, a sinner am I.

Unlike in the comic version, the mistress does not appear to the Callimachean lover. The *paraclausithyron* has become the song of the *exclusus amator*, the figure that pervades the *paraclausithyra* of Roman writers.

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<sup>70</sup> Copley, 4-5. Copley presumes that the *paraclausithyron* was an outgrowth of the *κῶμος*, a festive revel during a festival or following a symposium, often taking place outside of a brothel into which the men demanded entry, sometimes employing song. According to Copley, this loud and vulgar street-ballad naturally grew into the more polished literary composition known as the *paraclausithyron*.

<sup>71</sup> Arist. *Eccl.* 938-75. The young man, his lust inflamed by wine, pleads at the door of his beloved, and must first contend with an old hag before finding happiness with his girl.

<sup>72</sup> See also A.P. 5.23 (Callimachus to (female) Conopion), A.P. 5.103 (Rufinus to Prodice).

Naturally, because Roman comedy developed directly from Greek New Comedy, Plautus and Terence<sup>73</sup> included such scenes of the locked-out lover in their plays. Plautus introduces a number of Roman elements to the *paraclausithyron* in the *Curculio*. The most important of these elements is the address of the lament to the newly personified door, apparent when Phaedromus begs the doors to open:

*Agite bibite, festivae fores;  
potate, fite mihi volentes propitiae.* (89-90)

Come, festive doors, drink;  
Drink, make yourselves willing, propitious for me.

He later reproaches the doors for betraying him and directs his rage not at the girl, but at the doors. This personification of the door becomes an integral component of the Roman *paraclausithyron* after Plautus and distinguishes the Roman versions from their Greek predecessors.

Thus the *paraclausithyron* comes from Roman comedy into the poetry of Catullus, who makes mention of the lover's lament in two of his poems. In poem 32, not Lesbia but Ipsithilla is the object of the lover's attentions, when he asks that she await him at her home for a midday rendezvous. The lover urges that she not go out nor let another lover bolt the door: *...ne quis liminis obseret tabellam*. "...lest anyone should fasten the bolt of the door."<sup>74</sup> He longs to satisfy his lust, but knows that he still must get past her threshold to be received into her bedroom. Attis, in poem 63, regrets the self-inflicted loss of his manhood and reflects on the days when he was the object of many lovers' attentions:

*mihi ianuae frequentes, mihi limina tepida,  
mihi floridis corollis redimita domus erat,*

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<sup>73</sup> Ter. *Eun.* 771-816. Terence parodies the theme as Thraso attempts to carry off the courtesan, Thais, by force.

<sup>74</sup> Catull. 32.5.

*linquendum ubi esset orto mihi Sole cubiculum. (63.65-7)*

for me was the door thronged, for me the threshold kept warm,  
my house was wreathed with floral garlands,  
when my bed had to be left by me upon the rising of the Sun.

Here, Attis refers to the custom of leaving of garlands at the door of the beloved, and he alludes to the all-night vigil of his lovers when he describes finding his door so occupied at sunrise.<sup>75</sup> These two examples demonstrate how Catullus incorporates pre-existing elements of the lover's lament into his poetry.

Alternatively, poem 67 explores an entirely new type of paraclausithyron, in which a discussion *between* the poet and the door has replaced the lover's lament. Catullus presents the narrator not as *exclusus amator*, but as the interlocutor with the door. In turn, the door is personified as not only having human duties to perform, but also having human feelings of resentment of the dishonor brought upon his house. The poem unravels as a defamatory tale of marital infidelity and cuckoldry. Initially, the door reveals that it has been blamed for some misdeed that the interlocutor seeks to discover:

*ianua, quam Balbo dicunt seruisse benigne,  
olim, cum sedes ipse senex tenuit,  
quamque ferunt rursus voto seruisse maligno,  
postquam es porrecto facta marita sene.  
dic age dum nobis, quare mutata feraris  
in dominum veterem deseruisse fidem. (3-8)*

Door, which they say once served Balbus kindly,  
When the old man himself was living here,  
Which they say now is a slave to malicious desire,  
After you became married when that old man was laid to rest.

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<sup>75</sup> Although this passage describes a lament by other male lovers for Attis, it is not the first paraclausithyron of this kind. See also Asclepiades (ca. 290 B.C.) in *A.P.* 5:145, 167, and Ps.-Theocritus (ca. 300-260 B.C.) 23. Catullus' version of the lover's lament in poem 63 is the only existing Roman paraclausithyron to a boy. Copley (1956), 158-9, n. 27.

Come now, tell me, why you are said to have changed and  
To have forsaken that loyalty you once showed your old master.

The door has been blamed for the many love affairs of the mistress of the house: *ad me omnes clamant: ianua, culpa tua est*. “They all shout to me, ‘Door, it’s your fault!’”<sup>76</sup> The door then proceeds to tell Catullus of the scandals of the house for which his new master has apparently held the door responsible. True to the Plautine inversion of the lover’s lament, it is the door rather than the mistress that admitted the *exclusus amator*. Accordingly, Catullus makes the door a protector of good Roman morality, and by giving it the voice of a strict Roman traditionalist, he succeeds in mocking the critics of his own poetic movement.<sup>77</sup>

It is the Roman love elegists who make the most abundant and creative use of the paraclausithyron motif. The lover’s lament outside the door appears throughout the corpus of elegy as an overarching symbol of the relationship between poet-lover and *domina*. The door has become an inseparable part of the elegiac affair, a necessary obstruction and emblem of the poet-lover’s desire. Tibullus wrote two long paraclausithyra, both of which depart from the tradition of the lover’s lament in their significant length. In poem 1.2, Tibullus composes a number of digressions on the guaranteed success of his proposed affair within this frame. The poet-lover addresses the door and in the first sixteen lines lays out the typical elements of the lament: the drunken lover, the bolted door, the savage guard, the addressing of the door, and the

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<sup>76</sup> Catull. 67.14.

<sup>77</sup> Consider the comments of Cicero, who attacks men like Catullus in this passage from *De Officiis* 1.21.71: *Quibus autem talis nulla sit causa, si despicere se dicant ea quae plerique mirentur, imperia et magistratus, iis non modo non laudi, verum etiam vitio dandum puto*. “Moreover, for those whom there is no good reason to say that they despise things that many men admire, power and office, I think that they must be assigned no praise, but rather fault.”

hanging of garlands. Here, he complains of the guardianship of the door, alternately cursing it and begging it to give in to his words:

*nam posita est nostrae custodia saeva puellae,  
clauditur et dura ianua firma sera.  
ianua difficilis domini, te verberet imber,  
te Iovis imperio fulmina missa petant.  
ianua, iam pateas uni mihi, victa querelis,  
neu furtim verso cardine aperta sones. (5-10)*

For a savage guardian has been placed for my girl,  
And her firm door is closed with a harsh bolt.  
Door of a harsh master, may rain beat against you,  
And may the thunderbolts sent by Jupiter's command assail you.  
Door, may you open now to me alone, conquered by my laments,  
And being opened secretly, make no sound with your turned hinge.

The poet is confident that once admitted, Venus will protect his affair with Delia, but the self-assured speech on the hoped-for success gives way to elegiac frustration. Tibullus returns to the door at the end of the poem, revisiting the locked-out lover who is now a silver-haired old man still trying to get past the door of his beloved – a pathetic image of the elegiac lover, ridiculed for spending his entire life as the *exclusus amator*.

In contrast to his practice in 1.2, Tibullus does not reveal poem 1.5 as a paraclausithyron until the last lines, when the sixty-six line lament on the futility of the poet's love for Delia evolves into one with these words:

*heu canimus frustra, nec verbis victa patescit  
ianua, sed plena est percutienda manu. (67-8)*

Alas, I sing in vain, and the door unconquered by my words  
Opens not, but must be struck by a full hand.

The poet-lover's lament is brought into sharp relief as the reader is shocked into the realization that the entire poem up to that point has been addressed to the door. What had seemed like a wandering fantasy, the private anguish of a poet troubled by dreams of impossible happiness

alternating with thoughts of hatred for those who have brought about his present miserable state, was in truth a speech addressed to the door of his *domina*. Because his mistress has chosen another lover, the poet-lover has no audience for his pathetic message other than the very door that denied him admission. As a result, Tibullus describes a double failure of poetry, initially unable to win the mistress by direct address, and later failing to move even her door.

The *exclusus amator* motif appears frequently in the other poems of Tibullus, an omnipresent signifier of the poet-lover's relationship with Delia, and later, with Nemesis. His programmatic first elegy includes two separate mentions of the locked-out lover. Stating his myriad reasons for not accompanying Messalla to war, the poet-lover explains, *inter alia*, that he is chained to the door of his Delia:

*me retinent vinctum formosae vincla puellae,  
et sedeo duras ianitor ante fores.* (1.1.55-6)

The chains of a lovely girl keep me chained,  
And I sit as a doorkeeper before her unyielding doors.

Later in the poem, he begs Delia to receive his love while they are both still young, urging that love be made...*dum frangere postes / non pudet*. "...while it is not shameful to break down the doors."<sup>78</sup> In poem 2.3, the poet-lover longs for the golden age when lovemaking was unrestrained and uncomplicated by doors and guards: *nullus erat custos, nulla exclusura dolentes ianua*. "There was no guard, no door for shutting out grieving lovers."<sup>79</sup> He then resigns his love for Nemesis, in poem 2.6, his resolve finally worn down by the door that never opened, ashamed at how many times he swore never to return to it: *iuravi quotiens reditum ad limina*

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<sup>78</sup> Tib. 1.1.73-4.

<sup>79</sup> Tib. 2.3.77-8.



*numquam!* “How many times I swore never to return to her threshold!”<sup>80</sup> Thus, the appearance of the door throughout the corpus of Tibullus calls repeated attention to the failure of elegiac love.

In the poems of Propertius, the *paraclausithyron* returns to its roots in the Hellenistic tradition, eschewing the dream-world of Tibullus and focusing again on the door-song itself. Poem 1.16 merges the defamatory song of the Roman tradition, as seen in Catullus 67, with the traditional Hellenistic lover’s lament. It is, however, neither the lover’s address to the door, as in Tibullus, nor the dialogue between the door and an interlocutor, as in Catullus. The door stands alone as the primary figure and defends itself against the charge of failure to protect the household from the moral deterioration of society. Just as Catullus gave his door the power of speech in order to deride society’s disapproval for the sexual *mores* of the first century B.C., Propertius creates similar tension when he situates the lament of the *exclusus amator*, as related by the door, within the frame of the door’s complaint. The door begins:

*Quae fueram magnis olim patefacta triumphis  
ianua Tarpeiae nota pudicitiae;  
cuius inaurati celebrarunt limina currus,  
captorum lacrimis umida supplicibus. (1-4)*

How I was once laid open for great triumphs,  
A door renowned for Tarpeian chastity;  
Whose threshold golden chariots once celebrated,  
Moistened by the suppliant tears of the captured.

The door compares itself to the very gates of Rome, through which triumphing generals would return from their distant conquests. The Tarpeian chastity of which it speaks refers to the earliest

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<sup>80</sup> Tib. 2.6.13.

history of Rome, a period revered by adherents to the *mos maiorum*.<sup>81</sup> However, the term “Tarpeian chastity” could also be intended for ironic purposes (similar to the phrase “Punica fides”), referring to the betrayal of Rome by Tarpeia who opened the gates to the Sabine king, Titus Tatius. In light of this interpretation, the door alludes to its ability to betray the chastity of the household in favor of forbidden love. As a result, the poem takes on a very different meaning, and the door receives the suppliant tears of a lover and celebrates the triumphs of love. Following this introduction, the door offers the lover’s lament, claiming to have been disturbed by its pathetic refrain night after night:

*cur numquam reserata meos admittis amores,  
nescia furtivas reddere mota preces?  
nullane finis erit nostro concessa dolori,  
turpis et in tepido limine somnus erit?  
me mediae noctes, me sidera plena iacentem,  
frigidaque Eoo me dolet aura gelu: (19-24)*

Why do you never admit my love, unlocked,  
Incapable, never moved to deliver my secret prayers?  
Will there be no yielding to my grief,  
And will my sleep be shameful on this warm threshold?  
The midnight hours, the full stars, the cold breezes  
At icy Dawn pity me lying there.

The door aptly describes the psychological and physical suffering of the lover, yet it disdains all of the lover’s words, dismissing them as disagreeable noise: *et matutinis obstrepit alitibus*. “and he drowns out the morning bird-song.”<sup>82</sup> Here, as in Catullus 67, the door has taken on society’s view of the corruption represented by the elegiac relationship, specifically its vehement disdain

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<sup>81</sup> Propertius, *Elegies Book I*, ed. W. A. Camps (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), 82. Camps suggests that this is not the Tarpeia who betrayed Rome, but rather one mentioned by Plutarch who was among the first Vestal Virgins under King Numa.

<sup>82</sup> Prop. 1.16.46.

for the sexually liberated women of first century Rome and the unacceptable behavior of their lovers.<sup>83</sup>

In addition to poem 1.16, Propertius spreads the theme of the lover's vigil at the door throughout his poems. He finds the motif useful in discussing the faithfulness of his mistress, something that could be monitored by watching her door,<sup>84</sup> as well as the devotion of the lover, who will keep vigil at her door even when she is away.<sup>85</sup> In his poems, Propertius comes to equate the word *limen* with *amor*: the threshold is the ultimate symbol of love, for which it is also an indexical sign. In poem 1.13, Gallus, who had previously sought only short-term love with many women, has now fallen in love with his own *domina*. The poet-lover wishes him luck with the words: *non alio limine dignus eras*. "You were worthy of no other threshold."<sup>86</sup> Being in love means being locked out, says the poet-lover as he warns a rival who does not yet know the suffering of the *exclusus amator*: *discere et exclusum quid sit abire domum*. "Learn what it is to depart from the house, locked out."<sup>87</sup> In saying goodbye to Cynthia, Propertius also finds it necessary to bid farewell to her door, which responds with its own tears:

*limina iam nostris valeant lacrimantia verbis,  
nec tamen irata ianua fracta manu. (3.25.9-10)*

May the threshold, tearful on account of my words, be well,  
the door still not broken down by my angry hand.

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<sup>83</sup> Miller (2004), 23. Miller proposes the real-life figures of Clodia and Sempronia, who appeared in the writings of Cicero and Sallust, as literary forerunners for the elegiac *dominae*. These women could not be defined by existing standards of Roman behavior and became scapegoats, rather than symptoms, of the fall of the Republic.

<sup>84</sup> Prop. 2.6.37-8; 2.9.41-44; 2.19.3-6

<sup>85</sup> Prop. 1.8.21-2; 2.25.17-20

<sup>86</sup> Prop. 1.13.34.

<sup>87</sup> Prop. 1.5.20.

Propertius, like Tibullus, employs the door as a symbol of the elegiac relationship, an obstruction whose steadfast vigilance contributes ultimately to the failure of the affair.

After Tibullus and Propertius appropriate the Greek door-song as an expression of the failed elegiac affair, Ovid removes the door's voice from elegiac poetry. In *Amores* 1.6, he departs from his exemplars by addressing the lover's lament to the *ianitor*. The personified, speaking door has been replaced by a human figure, one who can open the door at his own will. The door, heard in Catullus and Propertius as the dissenting voice of old Republican society, is only addressed at the end of the poem in a token gesture, a nod to its former importance:

*vos quoque, crudeles rigido cum limine postes  
duraque conservae ligna, valete, fores.* (73-4)

Farewell to you, too, cruel door-posts with your  
unyielding threshold, harsh wood, slave doors.

In addition to this innovation, Ovid divides the poem into segments of identical length by the insertion of a repeated line: *tempora noctis eunt; excute poste seram*. "the hours of the night go by; take the bolt off the door."<sup>88</sup> Ovid intensifies the futility of the lover's lament, as each repetition represents the lapses of time through the night from darkness to dawn.<sup>89</sup> The finality of elegy, a poetic medium built for failure, unfolds from the dynamic opposition of forces in this poem. Society cannot stop the lover from pursuing his mistress, while the poet-lover, determined in his pursuit, cannot achieve the very union that society forbids.

In *Amores* 3.1, Ovid's discourse between the personified figures of Elegy and Tragedy, the poet-lover considers abandoning his modest elegiac writings in favor of the more majestic

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<sup>88</sup> Ov. *Am.* 1.6.24, 32, 40, 48, 56.

<sup>89</sup> J. C. Yardley, "The Elegiac Paraclausithyron," *Eranos* 76 (1978): 30.

pursuit of tragedy. In Elegy's address to Tragedy, she simultaneously acknowledges the door as an indispensable symbol of her genre, yet further weakens its elegiac value:

*non ego contulerim sublimia carmina nostris:  
obruit exiguas regia vestra fores.* (39-40)

I would not compare your lofty verses to mine:  
your palace overwhelms my scanty door.

The palace refers, of course, to the scenic backdrop for tragic performances, and through this equation with stage scenery, Elegy relegates the door to a mere property employed in an amatory production.<sup>90</sup> She proceeds to defend her trade to Tragedy in the manner of the poet-lover defending his love-consumed lifestyle to the characters and audience of his poetry. As a result of her speech, Ovid further exposes the door and the *paraclausithyron* as a convention employed in the fictional world of elegy.

The preceding survey of poems demonstrates how the original *paraclausithyra* of the Greek tradition gave way to a Roman treatment that personified the door and eventually incorporated it as an overarching symbol of love itself. No longer dependent on the *paraclausithyron* as a narrative device, the Roman elegists adopted the door as a term equal in meaning to love, which by its very invocation could summarize all the futility and hardship inherent in the elegiac relationship. Its presence throughout the corpus of Roman elegy emphasizes the importance of the impeding element as the driving force behind the poetry. In the end, Ovid reduces the door to a theatrical device, an element in the drama of elegiac discourse representing the necessity of obstruction in maintaining the lover's pursuit.

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<sup>90</sup> Wyke, 127. And, just as the door was an extremely important component of the comic production, it is essential to the playing out of the elegiac drama.

## THE VIR

Second only to the door in its ability to frustrate the attempts of the lover to unite with his *domina* is the rival, referred to most often in Roman love elegy as the *vir* or the *dives amator*. The deliberately ambiguous term *vir* can refer to a husband or to any man who is assumed to have a stable relationship with the girl, through either marriage or some kind of concubinage or paid contract.<sup>91</sup> An aura of mystery surrounds the identification of this man, as the elegists variously identify him with the traditional terms of the Roman marriage: *coniunx*, *sponsus*, and *maritus*. This figure is often a *dives amator*, a wealthy lover who vividly threatens the traditionally poverty-stricken poet-lover's relationship with his mistress. Regardless of general or specific identity, the male rival appears throughout elegy as a formidable obstacle.

In the Greek literary tradition, perhaps no poem is as well known for its depiction of jealousy of a rival as the beginning of Sappho 31:

φαίνεται μοι κῆνος ἴσος θεοῖσιν  
ἔμμεν' ὦνηρ, ὅττις ἐνάντιός τοι  
ἰσδάνει καὶ πλάσιον ἄδυ φωνεί-  
σας ὑπακούει  
καὶ γελαίσας ἰμέροεν. (1-5)

He seems to me as fortunate as the gods, the man  
who sits opposite you and listens nearby to your  
sweet voice and lovely laughter.

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<sup>91</sup> James (2003), 42.

Although the rival figure may be generically characterized as in this passage,<sup>92</sup> his identity becomes more concrete in the comic idiom. Rivalry in love was common in both Greek and Roman comedy and is attested in the plays of Plautus and Terence, who frequently employ a rival, often in the form of a *miles*, or “soldier”, to the lovesick *adulescens*, or “youth.”<sup>93</sup> Just as James identifies the *adulescens* as a literary forerunner of the elegiac lover, so then does the comic *miles* stand as a precursor to the *vir* of elegy.<sup>94</sup> Indeed, it is the soldier figure who often appears in elegy to take the *puella* on journeys to distant lands. His presence underscores the paradoxical position of the anti-military poet-lover.

Horace is credited with bringing into love poetry the *dives amator*,<sup>95</sup> a figure whose name alludes to the contrasting poverty of the poet. The resulting problem, that the *puella* might chose money over true love, becomes the constant worry of the poet-lover: will she accept the material gifts of a wealthy lover, or will she be loyal to her devoted *exclusus amator*, who can immortalize her in his poetry and offer her eternal love and devotion? The latter alternative confirms her as the *docta puella* (learned girl) who appreciates poetry and the arts, while the

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<sup>92</sup> Winkler has recognized the κῆρυξ ὅστις (“that man whosoever”) of Sappho’s poem as a rhetorical cliché, not an actor present in the scene. Readings of the male as a literal presence rather than a figure of speech fail to recognize the strategy of persuasion present in Sappho’s woman-centered consciousness. Accordingly, the poem becomes a modern lyric of totally internal speech. John J. Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 178-9.

<sup>93</sup> The soldier, Thraso, and the youth, Phaedria, both lovers of Thais in Terence’s *Eunuchus*; the soldier, Pyrgopolynices, and the lover, Pleusicles, both lovers of Philocomasium in Plautus’s *Miles Gloriosus*. See also Plautus: *Amph.*, *Asin.*, *Cas.*, *Curc.*, *Merc.*

<sup>94</sup> Sharon L. James, “Introduction: Constructions of Gender and Genre in Roman Comedy and Elegy,” *Helios* 25.1 (1998): 8.

<sup>95</sup> See Hor. *Epod.* 11.11-12; 15.19-20; *Carm.* 4.1.18.

former relegates her to the kind of *avara puella* (greedy girl) whom the poet-lover can never attain because of his poverty.

Catullus' employment of the rival lover is obviously present in his homage to Sappho, poem 51: *Ille mi par esse deo videtur*, "That man seems to me to be equal to a god..."<sup>96</sup>

Although he does not identify this man as a *vir* or a *dives amator*, it is clear from the mention of Lesbia's name in line 7 that this man is a rival. Poem 68, an ode of thanks to a certain Allius<sup>97</sup> who arranged a place for a secluded liaison between the lovers, uses the term *vir* for the other lover of the *domina* twice.<sup>98</sup> Catullus accepts the fact that he must share Lesbia with her *vir*, but he finds every chance to delight in his rival's cuckoldry, as in poem 83:

*Lesbia mi praesente viro mala plurima dicit:  
haec illi fatuo maxima laetitia est.  
mule, nihil sentis. (1-3)*

Lesbia says very many wicked things to me in front of her man:  
This is the greatest joy to that fool.  
You don't know anything, you dolt.

He goes on to explain that if Lesbia did not love Catullus, she would not bother to abuse him in front of her other lovers. Yet this remains a futile attempt on the part of the poet-lover to convince himself of Lesbia's love for him. The nature of Catullus' sole devotion to Lesbia and

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<sup>96</sup> Catull. 51.1.

<sup>97</sup> The name is problematic due to the presence in the manuscripts of a 40-line preface to the poem addressed to a certain Mallius or Manius. Miller (2002), 109-10. See also Wiseman (1969), 22 n. 7 on the identity of this figure.

<sup>98</sup> Line 130, *ut semel es flavo conciliata viro*. "when you were united with your golden husband."; line 146, *ipsius ex ipso dempta viri gremio*. "(gifts) stolen from the very lap of her husband."



the repeated presence of the rival in his poems heighten the pathos of the affair and lead to the particular importance of the male rival in the poems of the elegists.<sup>99</sup>

Tibullus often refers to the *vir/coniunx* of Delia in his poems, as well as the *dives amator* and the temptations of wealth for girls. Describing the nature of their secret affair, he discusses in poem 1.2 the various methods by which Venus helps the lovers to escape the notice of her *vir*:

*illa docet molli furtim decedere lecto,  
illa pedem nullo ponere posse sono,  
illa viro coram nutus conferre loquaces  
blandaque compositis abdere verba notis. (19-22)*

She teaches how to slip secretly from the soft bed,  
She teaches how it is possible to place your foot with no sound,  
She teaches how to engage in expressive nods openly before your man,  
And how to conceal sweet words with pre-arranged signs.

Here, Venus plays the role of *magistra amorum*, teaching the secrets of the successful love affair to those who are brave enough to try. Yet the lessons of Venus will not suffice to circumvent the ever-watchful *vir*. The poet-lover seeks additional support from the *saga*, or witch, whose magical ministry will aid the lovers further. The poet announces that if someone should reveal their affair to the *vir*, ...*nec tamen huic credet coniunx tuus*. "...still your spouse would not

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<sup>99</sup> Rivalry as a driving narrative force in Roman elegy bears comparison with the epic rivalries of the *Iliad*. In their forthcoming essay, Felson and Slatkin explore the "paradigmatic structure of triangulation" inherent in the rivalry between Agamemnon and Achilles, a dynamic that drives the poem's unfolding. Nancy Felson and Laura Slatkin, "Gender and Homeric Epic," in *The Cambridge Companion to Homer*, ed. Robert Fowler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, in press), 93. Just as these heroes struggle to assert their competing claims to Briseis in terms that "outline fundamental tensions at the heart of the social structure depicted in the epic," the elegiac poet-lovers contend with the *vir* (and other obstructions) in a manner that constantly reinforces their self-inflicted alienation from Roman social norms.

believe this.”<sup>100</sup> The witch will provide Delia with a potion and an incantation that will render her *coniunx* unable to perceive the affair. Yet the poet-lover’s plan fails in poem 1.6, when Delia, now skilled in the arts of adultery, uses those very teachings to deceive both her *vir* and the poet-lover. Therefore, the cuckolding of the *vir* more often brings about undesirable results for the poet-lover.

While the *vir/coniunx* can be deceived, the *dives amator* poses an altogether more serious threat. The elegiac lover, or *pauper poeta*, is virtually powerless against the gifts offered to his mistress by a wealthy rival. In poem 1.5, he alludes to this new pain: *haec nocuere mihi: quod adest huic dives amator*. “These things have hurt me: the fact that a rich lover is there for her.”<sup>101</sup> He refers again to the treachery of wealth in poem 1.8, in his counsel to Pholoe: *...et regum magnae despiciantur opes*. “...and let the great wealth of kings be despised.”<sup>102</sup> He again laments the tendency for girls to be attracted to riches: *heu heu, divitibus video gaudere puellas*. “Alas alas, I see that girls rejoice in riches.”<sup>103</sup> Then he reveals the reason for his lament, namely that a *dives amator* has taken his girl, Nemesis, from the city. Hence, while a *vir* or *coniunx* might be cuckolded, the wealthy lover cannot be circumvented without the absolute cooperation and devotion of the girl. It is she who must decide to be the *docta puella* who loves her *pauper poeta* unconditionally, electing immortality in poetry over more immediate material gifts.

In a like manner, Propertius writes of Cynthia’s *vir* and the dangers of a *dives amator*. He devotes the whole of poem 1.5 to advising a rival to beware of the agonies involved in loving Cynthia. The rival is not named as a *vir*, but variously as *invide*, *insane*, *infelix* and *miser*,

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<sup>100</sup> Tib. 1.2.43.

<sup>101</sup> Tib. 1.5.47.

<sup>102</sup> Tib. 1.8.34.

<sup>103</sup> Tib. 2.3.53.

“envious, crazy, unlucky and wretched,”<sup>104</sup> as Propertius depicts an affair with Cynthia as a painful and unrewarding ordeal, although his ulterior motive is to supplant the rival. In poem 1.15, the poet-lover reveals his jealousy of Cynthia’s *novus vir* when he notices that she has dressed herself too well for a visit to him during his illness.<sup>105</sup> In two poems, Propertius contrasts the poet-lover’s devotion to Cynthia with the faithlessness of her *vir*. Although the poet-lover was quick to visit her in her illness, her *vir*, who neglected her, remains in her favor:

*hic etiam petitur, qui te prius ipse reliquit:  
di faciant, isto capta fruire viro!* (2.9.23-4)

Even this man is sought, the very one who left you before:  
As fate would have it, you, captivated, enjoy that man!

In poem 2.21, he scorns the arrogance of Cynthia’s former *pulcher amator* who has now taken a wife and has resorted to boasting of his former affair with Cynthia, while the poet-lover has remained faithful all along. Moreover, he is present to Cynthia now, as his second person address indicates. Finally, in anger at being constantly rejected by Cynthia, he turns away and decides to pursue prostitutes who will never refuse him, the kind of women who never use excuses like *infelix, hodie vir mihi rure venit*. “Bad luck, my man is coming from the countryside, today.”<sup>106</sup>

The wealthy lover also plays a major role in the frustration of the Propertian poet-lover. He devotes poem 2.16 to the theme of the *dives amator*, opening with a characteristic complaint:

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<sup>104</sup> Prop. 1.5.1, 3, 4, 5. For more on the nature of the relationships between the Propertian poet-lover and the other men named in the *Monobiblos*, see Miller (2004), 60-94, wherein he describes Cynthia as “both the point around which the relationships between Propertius and Gallus, Tullus, Ponticus, and Bassus are articulated and that which separates the poet from his friends in their competition for her favors” (67).

<sup>105</sup> Prop. 1.15.8.

<sup>106</sup> Prop. 2.23.20.

*Praetor ab Illyricis venit modo, Cynthia, terris,  
maxima praeda tibi, maxima cura mihi. (1-2)*

A praetor has recently come from the Illyrian lands, my Cynthia,  
The greatest rewards for you, the greatest concern for me.

The poet-lover reacts to this threat with anger and thoughts of violence, wishing that his rival had drowned on the homeward journey or that Venus might cause him to rupture his genitals. He turns his lament to one of general disdain for wealth, condemning the prosperity of Rome and the palace of Augustus:

*atque utinam Romae nemo esset dives, et ipse  
straminea posset dux habitare casa! (19-20)*

And I wish that no one in Rome were rich, and that  
Our very leader was able to live in a straw hut!<sup>107</sup>

Other complaints about the *dives amator* are in poem 2.6, where Propertius compares Cynthia to a number of famous courtesans, including Phryne, who was so wealthy that she offered to rebuild Thebes after it had been destroyed by Alexander. In poem 3.13, he describes the greed for gold that has captured Rome's men and women, and for that reason, he does not blame Cynthia directly for her avarice. Instead, he unleashes his anger on the greedy men and women in Rome who have corrupted Cynthia, assuming that his *docta puella* has become an unwilling subject to the temptations of a wealth-obsessed society.

Echoes of Tibullan and Propertian rivals pervade the poems of Ovid, who approaches the characters of the *vir* and the *dives amator* with exaggerated schemes and characteristic wit. His earliest mention of a rival is in poem 1.4, in which he develops the theme of the *vir* as cuckold by

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<sup>107</sup> This passage is generally accepted as an overt reference to the *casa Romuli*, the modest hut of Rome's first king, Romulus. The hut may have been rebuilt by Augustus, and its location on the Palatine hill adjacent to the *domus Augusti* makes this reference in Propertius all the more vivid.

teaching Corinna how to deceive her husband at a dinner party. Here, Ovid takes over the role of *praeceptor amoris* from Tibullus' Venus of poem 1.2, and develops an elaborate system for flirting with his Corinna right before the eyes of her *vir*:

*cum premet ille torum, vultu comes ipsa modesto  
ibis ut accumbas, clam mihi tange pedem;  
me specta nutusque meos vultumque loquacem:  
excipe furtivas et refer ipsa notas.  
verba superciliis sine voce loquentia dicam;  
verba leges digitis, verba notata mero. (1.4.15-20)*

When he reclines on the couch, you will go to recline as his companion,  
With a modest face, secretly touch my foot;  
Watch me, my nods, my expressive face:  
Receive my furtive messages and return signals yourself.  
I will speak without a voice, talkative words with my eyebrows;  
You will write words with your fingers, words written with wine.

To Tibullus' idea of secret nods and signals, Ovid adds a number of other signs and encourages Corinna to lure her *vir* into a state of drunkenness that will allow the poet-lover to have her for himself. In poem 2.2, Ovid urges Corinna's attendant, who has guarded her too strongly, to aid in the deception, calling his rival a *vir non sapiens*, one who might easily be duped. Also recalling Tibullus are a pair of poems that scold the *vir* alternately for his lack and excess of vigilance.<sup>108</sup> Poem 2.19 calls to mind Tibullus' attack on the *vir* who has not kept sufficient watch on Delia. Ovid's version, however, urges the *vir* to guard Corinna more carefully, as this will serve to inflame the poet-lover's passion for her further. Ovid writes: *quod licet, ingratum est; quod non licet, acrius urit*. "That which is allowed does not please; that which is forbidden inflames me more fiercely."<sup>109</sup> As if to reveal his ploy, Ovid begs for the reverse in poem 3.4, telling the *vir* to relax his guard and trust in the chastity of Corinna. This pair of poems, which

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<sup>108</sup> Invective against the male rival can be found throughout elegy in the forms of verbal abuse and curses: Tib. 1.2, 1.6, 2.3; Prop. 1.5, 2.9, 2.16; Ov. Am. 2.2, 3.8, 2.19, 3.4.

<sup>109</sup> Ov. Am. 2.19.3.

will be the focus of the final chapter of this thesis, articulates the impossible goal of elegy, that the obstacle must be in place, but not so much as to make consummation impossible. This tension constitutes the typical plot line and consequently drives the elegiac message.

Ovid takes up the Propertian lament on the corruption of Rome, now that Corinna looks to a rich lover and demands presents in return for her love. In poem 1.8, an old hag has advised Corinna to seek out the affections of a *dives amator*, flattering her into believing that her beauty deserves gifts in return. In poem 1.10, Ovid unleashes an unrestrained lament on her demands for gifts, which mean nothing more than that his Corinna is selling her body to anyone who will pay. Her actions have affected the poet-lover even more deeply, since Corinna is not only seeking gifts from others, but has resorted to demanding them from him, an unthinkable turn of events. In this way, Ovid constructs the death of the *docta puella* who has been permanently displaced by the *avara puella*.

The elegists emphasize the extramarital nature of the elegiac relationship most clearly through the character of the *vir*. The futility in cultivating such a relationship is made evident by his presence. Roman elegy appropriated the rival lover as a powerful and dangerous threat to the livelihood of the poet-lover, who, by adopting the pursuit of love as his primary occupation, has shunned the more typical pursuits of business and politics in favor of a writer's life. His writings are his currency, the only means by which he can win the affections of his *domina*, and the repeated insertion of the rival, especially the *dives amator*, into that writing becomes emblematic of the impossibility of the relationship.<sup>110</sup> However, the absence of such a rival would nullify the pursuit of the beloved and accordingly deny the poetry its basis for existence.

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<sup>110</sup> The *vir/dives amator* appears in 8 poems of Tibullus, 18 of Propertius and 10 of Ovid.

## THE LENA

The elegiac *domina*'s obligation to her *vir* and the usurpations of a *dives amator* are frustrating to the poet-lover. A more dangerous obstacle is the *lena*, or procuress, the go-between for the girl and her lovers. The *lena* acts as an advisor to the girl, reminding her of the social circumstances and material needs, which prohibit the giving away of love to the *pauper poeta*. She provides "an articulated, calculated *ratio* – a logical system of ethics – that perfectly matches and counters all of elegy's male persuasive tactics aimed at achieving easy access to the *puella*."<sup>111</sup> Elegy's *lena* might be a maid, a nurse, or a retired prostitute who is too old to practice her trade and so profits by giving advice to a younger colleague. In any case, she stands to benefit from the *puella*'s relationships with wealthy men and thus encourages profitable, if not loving, affairs as opposed to an impractical and unprofitable, yet loving, relationship with a poet.

The model for the *lena* of elegy comes directly from Greek New Comedy and Roman comedy. Although appearing in various forms (a maid, an assistant, a free-agent retired-prostitute, or even the girl's mother<sup>112</sup>), the *lena* figure can be found throughout comedy as an advisor capable of persuading the *puella* against the comic *adulescens*. The scene from the *Mostellaria* of Plautus best demonstrates the triangle formed between the three figures: the *lena* (here, a maid and former prostitute), Scapha, tries to convince the courtesan Philematium (whom

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<sup>111</sup> James (2003), 52. James also argues that, based on her promiscuous behavior and the substantial role of the *lena* throughout elegy, the elegiac *domina* is, in fact, a courtesan. The *domina* cannot be a common prostitute, however, as a *meretrix* was obligated to her *leno* (pimp) and was not free to act of her own accord. Likewise, the very presence of the *lena* eliminates the possibility of the *domina* as a respectable, however unfaithful, Roman matron. James rejects the notion that "lena" might refer to a maid or nurse figure.

<sup>112</sup> See Plaut. *Mostell.*, *Truc.*, *Cist.*; and Ter. *Hec.*

the *adulescens*, Philolaches, has recently purchased and freed) to enjoy as many lovers as she can while she still has her youth:

SC. *Tu ecastor erras, quae quidem illum expectes unum atque illi  
morem praecipue sic geras atque alios asperneris.  
matronae, non meretricium est unum inservire amantem.*

PHIOL. *Pro Iuppiter, nam quod malum versatur meae domi illud?  
di deaque me omnes pessumis exemplis interficiant,  
nisi ego illam anum interfecero siti fameque atque algu.*

PHILEM. *Nolo ego mihi male te, Scapha, praecipere.* SC. *Stulta es plane,  
quae illum tibi aeternum putes fore amicum et benevolentem.  
moneo ego te: te ille deseret aetate et satietate.* (188-96)

SC. By Castor, you err, indeed you who hope for that man alone and so especially comply with that man and scorn the others.

PHIOL. By Jupiter, for what is that evil that turns my house? May all the gods and goddesses kill me with the basest punishments if I do not murder that old lady with thirst and hunger and cold!

PHILEM. I do not wish to receive your bad advice, Scapha.

SC. You are clearly foolish, thinking that he will always be there for you as your friend and supporter. I warn you, though: he will leave you in time, once he has satisfied himself.

Plautus lays out the typical arrangement here as the *lena* tries to direct the *puella* towards other lovers. Scapha warns Philematium that, although Philolaches may love her now, he will not always find her attractive. Soon she will grow old, so now is the time to enjoy love and earn money.<sup>113</sup>

The *lena* occupies a place of importance in the elegists, receiving prominent mention in Tibullus (although her speeches are absent) and significant roles in the poems of Propertius and Ovid. Differing from comedy, the *lena* of elegy plays a much more subversive role, not because her advice is any different, but because of the single-mindedness of the elegiac lover. Uniting in love with the *domina* is the *raison d'être* of the poet-lover, and the *lena* provides not only an

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<sup>113</sup> The theme of the *moecha senescens*, or aging courtesan, occurs in Horace as well, who in Ode 1.25 mocks the aging *hetaera* who no longer hears the calls of young lovers at her door. See also Asclepiades A.P. 5.164.



impediment to that union but a counterforce. First, she supports the girl in finding other lovers, which naturally frustrates the poet-lover, but she further desecrates the very idea of love by mandating that the girl charge money for her favors. Consequently, elegy's *lena* becomes a much exaggerated version of the earlier comic figure as a result of the heightened consequence of the successful union.<sup>114</sup>

Tibullus demonstrates the hatred of the elegiac lover for the *lena* in poem 1.5, hurling a violent curse that blames her for the arrival of a *dives amator* and the consequent loss of Delia:

*venit in exitium callida lena meum.  
sanguineas edat illa dapes atque ore cruento  
tristia cum multo pocula felle bibat;  
hanc volitent animae circum sua fata querentes  
semper et e tectis strix violenta canat;  
ipsa fame stimulante furens herbasque sepulcris  
quaerat et a saevis ossa relictas lupis,  
currat et inguinibus nudis ululetque per urbes,  
post agat e triviis aspera turba canum.* (48-56)

A clever procuress has come for my destruction.  
May she dine on bloody banquets and with gore-stained mouth  
Drink cups saddened with much poison;  
May the spirits lamenting their fates fly ever around her  
And may the raging owl screech from the roof-top;  
May she, raging in her famished state, search out plants from a tomb  
And bones left behind by savage wolves,  
May she, naked to the waist, run and wail through the cities,  
And afterwards let a vicious pack of dogs drive her from the crossroads.

The violence and hatred present in this curse point to the magnitude of the conflict between the lover and the *lena*. He wants her to go mad, haunted by the spirits of the lovers she has thwarted, a creature of Hecate racked by the despair that she has kindled in others.<sup>115</sup> In a later poem,

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<sup>114</sup> James (2003), 53.

<sup>115</sup> *Tibullus: A Commentary*, ed. Michael C. J. Putnam (University of Oklahoma Press, 1973), 105-6. This curse depicts the transformation of the *lena* into a witch, a figure to whom the poet-lover often attributes blame for his failed love. The witch's magic becomes a popular scapegoat in elegy, as the poet-lover is convinced that nothing

Tibullus blames the *lena* for all of his failures with Nemesis. He insists that the *lena* is the cause of all his sorrow (*lena nocet nobis, ipsa puella bona est*. “That procuress harms us; the girl herself is good.”<sup>116</sup>), because she was the one who kept them apart and allowed other (paying) lovers to be with Nemesis. This poem also closes with a curse, a feature that becomes common in Propertius and Ovid, as well.

Propertius devotes an entire poem to the subject of the *lena*, Acanthis,<sup>117</sup> opening with a description of her powers, specifically that she could have corrupted two of the most virtuous figures in all of history, Hippolytus and Penelope:

*docta uel Hippolytum Veneri mollire negantem,  
concordique toro pessima semper auis,  
Penelopen quoque neglecto rumore mariti  
nubere lasciuo cogeret Antinoo.* (4.5.5-8)

She even knew how to bend the refusing Hippolytus to Venus,  
And to the agreeing couch, always the basest omen,  
Penelope, too, she might have compelled to marry the lusty Antinous  
With the rumor of her husband having been denied.

Attributing such powers of persuasion to Acanthis, Propertius adds those of witchcraft (lines 9-18), as if to reinforce his belief in Cynthia’s chastity, since no one other than a witch could have driven her into another man’s bed. Next comes the *lena*’s speech, which occupies the greater part of the poem, a usurpation of the eroto-didactic speech previously delivered by the poet-

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other than a witch’s spell could turn away his beloved. For other references to witches in elegy, see Tib. 1.2.44, Prop. 3.24.10, Ov. *Am.* 3.7.29.

<sup>116</sup> Tib. 2.6.44.

<sup>117</sup> Ancient prostitutes often received the names of plants or animals. Acanthis, meaning “prickly, thorny,” describes her malevolent power and malicious nature and recalls the speech of Astaphium (Plaut. *Truc.* 227-8), who likens prostitutes to thorny bushes that pluck money from men. James (2003), 274, n. 110.

lover.<sup>118</sup> Wielding her great power over the allegedly pure *puella*, Acanthis promotes behavior that is utterly in opposition to the interests of the poet-lover. Most of her advice centers on the fine gifts and money that can be gained from lovers; appealing to the *puella*'s desire for fine possessions, the *lena* details a list of handsome merchandise to be had for one low price: the girl's chastity. Acanthis then proceeds to advise the *puella* on the methods of attracting and keeping the lovers who will purchase these items, but, to the poet, her cruelest words are those that mock the value of poetry:

*uersibus auditis quid nisi uerba feres?  
'quid iuuat ornato procedere, uita, capillo  
et tenuis Coa ueste mouere sinus?'*  
*qui uersus, Coae dederit nec munera uestis,  
istius tibi sit surda sine arte lyra.* (54-8)

What do you carry away from the verses you've heard other than words?  
"What does it help to go about, my love, with your hair done up  
And to move your slender waist in a Coan dress?"  
Whoever gives you verses and not gifts of silk from Cos,  
May his artless lyre sound dull to you.

To the poet-lover, this is the ultimate blow, because he has repeatedly promised her immortality in his verse and hopes that this is enough to win her affections. However, the girl has been receiving contrary advice from the *lena*, as in this mockery of the poet-lover's verse, in which Propertius cleverly weaves in a couplet from one of his earlier poems to Cynthia,<sup>119</sup> chosen in part because of its disdain for the same Coan silk praised at the beginning of the *lena*'s speech. Acanthis concludes with the admonition of old age and the effects of wrinkles on the girl's

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<sup>118</sup> K. Sara Myers, "The Poet and the Procureess: The *Lena* in Latin Love Elegy," *Journal of Roman Studies* 86 (1996): 1-2. Myers notes how the *lena* appropriates the narrative voice as the primary speaker in the poem, but especially in her imitation of didactic speech. In this way, the elegists (especially Propertius and Ovid) expose many of the tensions and contradictions of the elegiac code.

<sup>119</sup> Prop. 1.2.1-2.

beauty. The underlying meaning is that her youth is the time to earn the money that will finance her old age, during which time no lover will want her. Acanthis, now old and wrinkled, speaks from experience just as Scapha advised Philematium. Propertius concludes the poem with a curse in which he wishes suffering upon the *lena* and desires curses to be hurled at her tomb by angry lovers.

Following the Propertian model, Ovid also wrote a *lena* poem (1.8), noteworthy as the longest of his elegies and for the unusually passive role of the poet-lover, who listens to the *lena* from a concealed location.<sup>120</sup> Like poem 1.5 of Propertius, Ovid's poem begins with a description of the influence of the *lena*, again revealed to be exceedingly persuasive and empowered by the magical arts of witchcraft. Dipsas,<sup>121</sup> as her name is given, possesses an additional strength in the rhetoric and eloquence of her speech: *nec tamen eloquio lingua nocente caret*. "Nor in fact was her speech free from harmful eloquence."<sup>122</sup> To Dipsas, then, Ovid attributes the rhetorical powers that normally characterize the speech of the poet-lover, not unlike the earlier attribution of speeches to the door, who insults and mocks the feeble intentions of the poet-lover.

Departing from Propertius, whose Acanthis appealed to the material desires of the girl, Ovid allows Dipsas to flatter the girl's beauty and suggest that she deserves possessions that might match her loveliness: *tam felix esses quam formosissima vellem*. "I would wish that you were as fortunate as you are so very pretty."<sup>123</sup> Dipsas does not hide the reasons for her flattery,

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<sup>120</sup> James (2003), 59.

<sup>121</sup> The name refers to a small snake of the same name, whose bite inflicted thirst on its victim. The name is thus a reference to the *lena*'s noxious nature and her thirst for alcohol. Myers, 7.

<sup>122</sup> Ov. Am. 1.8.20.

<sup>123</sup> Ov. Am. 1.8.27.

explaining in the next line that she too would benefit from the *puella*'s gain. The fact that the girl blushes in response to the *lena*'s advice suggests that she might actually be as chaste as the poet-lover would like to think, and that it is only due to the persuasive counsel of the *lena* that the girl chooses to have many lovers. Remarking on the girl's modesty, Dipsas encourages her to maintain the appearance of chastity: *si simules, prodest; verus obesse solet*. "If you pretend to be modest, it will benefit you; actual modesty usually gets in the way (of profit)."<sup>124</sup>

Dipsas proceeds to lay out the reasons for earning money now, as beauty is fleeting. She encourages many lovers, all of whom must be charged for the privilege of coming into her bedroom. She delivers a similar proscription against poets who, she says, should receive nothing in return for their verses: *ecce, quid iste tuus praeter nova carmina vates/donat?* "Look, what does that poet of yours offer besides new poems?"<sup>125</sup> In addition to pointing out the worthlessness of poetry, she mocks the talents of poets altogether by claiming that it takes even greater talent to give real gifts:

*qui dabit, ille tibi magno sit maior Homero;  
crede mihi, res est ingeniosa dare.* (61-2)

Whoever will give, let that man be greater to you than great Homer;  
Trust me, giving is a thing that requires real talent.

Dipsas then discloses the secrets of the trade: how to develop profitable relationships, cultivate jealousy between lovers, weep on command, master the art of lies and deception, enlist maids and attendants to offer gift suggestions to the lover while others (nurses, sisters and mothers) help to mine the wealthy lover of even more profit. In summary, the *puella* must earn her living, as much as she can while she is young, and she must not waste time on poets who cannot pay.

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<sup>124</sup> Ov. Am. 1.8.36.

<sup>125</sup> Ov. Am. 1.8.57.

The *lena* essentially preaches that “sexual fidelity to a single man is not only a pointless waste of time and resources but even...a form of negligence, of personal and professional irresponsibility.”<sup>126</sup> The shocked poet-lover emerges from the shadows<sup>127</sup> to attack Dipsas and invokes the now standard elegiac curse, that she suffer a long and difficult old age.

The *lena* of comedy created interference between the *adulescens* and his beloved, but in elegy her presence is much stronger, as she comes to threaten both the sexual and the literary power of the poet-lover. She compromises his *virtus* by taking away not only his sexual potency but his artistic talent, a means of economic stability. The poet-lover’s concerns over this impotence reflect analogous anxieties over the social status of the elegist as a non-political man in Roman society.<sup>128</sup> The *lena*’s advice confirms the *puella*’s occupation as something closer to courtesan or prostitute, a further sign of the futility of the poet-lover’s pursuit of a pure relationship with her. The presence of the *lena* in these poems provides a powerful obstacle to the success of the poet-lover, and yet both the prominence of their speeches and their convincing rhetoric, as constructed by the elegists, reinforce the repeated theme of the failure and futility of the elegiac relationship. As each lover condemns the *lena* through a curse, he seeks to reassert his dominance by gaining a moral high ground. Yet the speeches of poet-lover and *lena* in these poems only strengthen the parallels between narrator and procuress, further revealing the contradictions of the elegiac pose.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> James (2003), 64.

<sup>127</sup> Myers, 4. Ovid’s staging of this scene vividly recalls the same scenario from the *Mostellaria*, an assertion by Ovid of the dramatic origins of this particular motif.

<sup>128</sup> Myers, 10.

<sup>129</sup> Myers, 12.

## ILLNESS

An innovative motif in Roman love elegy is illness, either of the poet-lover or his *domina*. In either case, a serious illness implies the separation of the lovers. Tibullus and Propertius both use the illness of the poet-lover as an opportunity to display the *domina*'s love, or lack thereof, for him. In each case, she has either neglected to visit the sick poet-lover, or she has arrived belatedly at his bedside, dressed in full hair and make-up as if she is merely stopping by on the way to a more pressing social engagement. In poem 1.3, Tibullus describes the illness of the poet-lover in his characteristic fantasy style: he has been left behind on the island called Phaeacia after falling ill on an eastern campaign with his patron, Messalla. Delirious from his apparently serious illness, he bewails his misfortune at being abandoned, facing a lonely death so far from those he loves. His recollection of Delia and the sadness of their parting leads to an invocation to Isis who might heal him in return for Delia's devotion to her shrines. Nevertheless, he resigns himself to death and begins to imagine how Delia will live after he is gone, exhorting her to practice chastity. Tibullus' use of the Homeric name for the island brings to mind the homecoming of Odysseus, whose famously loyal wife had practiced chastity during his twenty year absence.<sup>130</sup> The entire poem, however, seems to represent not the presence of Delia in the poet-lover's life, but her absence. Whether he is sick or not, dying on a remote island or only imagining that he is in order to explain why Delia is not there with him, the prevailing image is of the poet-lover alone, sick and dying, believing in vain that his absent *domina* cares for him and will be loyal to him after his death.

Propertius treats this same theme in poem 1.15 with realistic anger and resentment at Cynthia's obvious neglect of the sickly poet-lover. Feeling hurt and betrayed, he opens the poem with these words:

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<sup>130</sup> Putnam (1973), 75.

*Saepe ego multa tuae levitatis dura timebam,  
hac tamen excepta, Cynthia, perfidia.  
aspice me quanto rapiat fortuna periclo!  
tu tamen in nostro lenta timore venis; (1-4)*

I have often feared the manifold harshness of your fickleness,  
Yet with the exception of this treachery, Cynthia.  
Look at me, in what great danger Fortune has snatched me!  
Still you have not hurried to me in my fearful state.

Less naïve than the Tibullan poet-lover, Propertius' sick lover sees through the excuses and acknowledges her unsuitable appearance. Not giving her a chance to explain herself, he commences with a list of mythological exempla, women celebrated for displays of sadness following the loss of their lovers. He asks why Cynthia, too, would not want to be immortalized for her selfless devotion to him. In both the Tibullan and Propertian examples, the sick poet-lover cries a pitiful lament, assuming both the *domina*'s single-minded concern for his safety as well as her promised chastity until the time when he returns to good health. However, this image of the *domina* attending his sick-bed is at odds with the character of one who locks her door, seeks paying lovers and readily accepts the advice of a persuasive *lena*; yet the poet-lover persists in believing that she can be devoted to him.

All of the elegiac *dominae* experience some kind of illness during which the poet-lover shows great concern and following which he expects to have exclusive rights to her. Both Tibullus and Propertius exploit her illness as an opportunity for the poet-lover to show his unlimited devotion to her, usually in contrast with neglect from her other lovers. In poem 1.5, Delia has chosen to favor a *dives amator* following her recovery from an illness that the poet-lover claims to have had a hand in curing. Although he alone has prayed to the gods and performed the holy rites for her, she has disregarded his love and has departed to be with another man. Propertius, too, in poem 2.28, finds Cynthia ill and offers a passionate entreaty to the gods



to spare her, adding that, if she cannot be saved, he should be allowed to die as well. The idea of a *quid pro quo* is present here, as in Tibullus, when the poet-lover demands ten nights with Cynthia as soon as she is well.<sup>131</sup>

It is typical of Ovid, who had received these practiced themes from Tibullus and Propertius, not to be content to treat the illness of the *domina* in the same fashion. Instead of describing the pity of the poet-lover for his generically-sick *domina*, he reveals the exact nature of Corinna's illness and, as a result, exposes an ugly reality of the elegiac affair itself. Two of Ovid's most controversial poems are *Amores* 2.13 and 2.14, which form a diptych and deal with the extraordinary subject of abortion.<sup>132</sup> In 2.13 Corinna is sick from an abortion she has undergone without the consent of the poet-lover.

*Dum labefactat onus gravidi temeraria ventris,  
in dubio vitae lassa Corinna iacet.* (1-2)

While she recklessly destroys the burden of her swollen belly,  
Corinna lies wearied, in doubt of her life.

The poet-lover is angry at her for having attempted such a dangerous procedure without his blessing (*clam me*, "in secret from me," line 3), but his anger yields to fear, and he completes the

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<sup>131</sup> Because Cynthia must spend ten nights in vigil at the goddess' shrine in fulfillment of her vow, Propertius demands the same number of nights in return for their forced separation during that vigil.

<sup>132</sup> References to abortion date back to the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Hippocratic Corpus, which contains references to drugs, substances and techniques allegedly capable of procuring abortion. A detailed account of an abortion procedure can be found in the *Gynaecology* of Soranus (ca. 120 A.D.), as well as references in the writings of Galen (ca. 200 A.D.). Both of these later writers were concerned with facts and ethics of abortion, and their writings attest to growing anti-abortion attitudes in the early empire. Konstantinos Kapparis, *Abortion in the Ancient World* (London: Duckworth, 2002), 2. For other literary references to abortion, see Eur. *Andr.* 157-8, 355-60; Cic. *Clu.* 32; Ov. *Her.* 11.37-42; Sen. *Helv.* 16,3; Juv. 6.592-601; Chariton, *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, 2.8.6-2.9.6.

introduction of the poem with a doubtful reflection on the paternity of the child: *sed tamen aut ex me conceperat – aut ego credo*. “But still she conceived it from me – or so I think.”<sup>133</sup> In the elegiac fashion, the poet-lover proceeds to offer a prayer to Isis and Ilithyia, goddesses associated with fertility and childbearing, begging them to show mercy toward his ailing girl, and to aid him by aiding her:

*huc adhibe vultus et in una parce duobus:  
nam vitam dominae tu dabis, illa mihi. (15-6)*

Bend your visage here, and in sparing one, spare two!  
For you will give life to her and she to me.

He completes the prayer section of the poem by presenting himself as the sole advocate for the girl and by pledging offerings of incense on their altars as well as a votive tablet that would read, *servata Naso Corinna!* “Ovid dedicates this in return for Corinna’s safety!”<sup>134</sup> He concludes the poem with an address to the ailing Corinna, advising her tentatively:

*Si tamen in tanto fas est monuisse timore,  
hac tibi sit pugna dimicuisse satis! (27-8)*

If it is yet right to have warned amidst such great fear,  
Let it be enough to have fought in this battle!

His words warn her not to attempt the procedure again and convey the bold announcement that the *domina* of Roman elegy can become pregnant and have an abortion.<sup>135</sup> His revelation serves

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<sup>133</sup> Ov. Am. 2.13.5.

<sup>134</sup> Ov. Am. 2.13.25.

<sup>135</sup> Ovid’s revelation can also be viewed against the backdrop of contemporary Augustan legislation *against* adultery and *in favor of* child bearing. Not only does the elegiac relationship violate the *lex Julia de adulteriis coercendis*, which made adultery a crime, but the aborting of a child rejects the child-bearing incentives of the *lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus*.

to highlight the potential consequence of the sexual union as an obstruction to the relationship itself, a symbol of the necessary failure of the elegiac pursuit.

Poem 2.14 follows with abortion still on the mind of the poet-lover, but in the sequel he constructs a diatribe against abortion and voices his general anger toward the practice. A reader of elegy might expect the poet-lover to support easy access to abortion as it would ensure the continued sexual availability of his *domina*. This, however, is not the case in poem 2.14. Employing impassioned rhetorical skill<sup>136</sup> and military metaphor throughout,<sup>137</sup> the poet-lover denounces the practice of abortion altogether. In the opening lines, he asks why girls should be exempt from warfare when they prove that they can make war on their own bodies through abortion:

*Quid iuvat immunes belli cessare puellas,  
nec fera peltatas agmina velle sequi,  
si sine Marte suis patiuntur vulnera telis,  
et caecas armant in sua fata manus?* (1-4)

What good does it do to keep girls from the throes of war,  
To wish them not to go armed like Amazons after the fierce ranks,  
If wounds are laid open without Mars by means of their own weapons,  
And they arm their blind hands against their own fate?

He calls the woman who first attempted abortion “worthy to die” (*digna perire*<sup>138</sup>) for having introduced the foul procedure.<sup>139</sup> In line 8, the poet-lover offers what he considers to be a

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<sup>136</sup> Cf. Lysias delivered a famous forensic speech in an abortion trial of the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Although this speech exists only in fragments (Lysias fr. 19-24), it was available to students of Attic oratory. Kapparis, 2, 185-93.

<sup>137</sup> Because the final line of *Amores* 2.13 contains military imagery (*pugna dimicuisse*), it has been suggested that the final couplet of 2.13 actually belongs to poem 2.14, or that it is at least intended to foreshadow the military language of the next poem. For more information on this discussion, see McKeown (1998), 291-2.

<sup>138</sup> *Ov. Am.* 2.14.6.

woman's reason for avoiding pregnancy: *scilicet ut careat rugarum crimine venter*. "Perhaps it was so that her belly might lack the blemish of stretch-marks."<sup>140</sup> From this point the poet-lover enters into a brief digression on important historical figures and the consequences if their mothers had chosen to abort them. Essentially, he asserts that Rome and the Caesars would never have existed:

*si Venus Aenean gravida temerasset in alvo,  
Caesaribus tellus orba futura fuit.* (17-8)

If the pregnant Venus had defiled Aeneas in her womb,  
The world would have been bereft of the Caesars.

In a direct address to Corinna, he asks where she would be if her own mother had made the same decision, and then likens Corinna to the savage child-murdering mothers Medea and Procne and wonders what man had driven her to the same distress. An unashamed insensitivity underlies these remarks from the poet-lover who aims to enjoy a sexual relationship with Corinna but will not consider the consequences for her.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> This thematic sentiment, known as the *πρῶτος εὐρετής* (the "first inventor"), appears elsewhere in the *Amores* and is intended to bring suffering upon the generic historical figure.

<sup>140</sup> Ov. *Am.* 2.14.8. Kapparis notes that, although Athenian women were aware of the effects of childbirth on their appearance, there is no evidence in Greek literature from the classical period that suggests that abortion took place for aesthetic reasons. However, in the imperial period, both Greek and Roman sources attest to the practice (Sen. *Helv.* 16, 3; Gellius *NA* 12, 1, 8; Sor. I 60), something that may be attributed to the increased freedom of movement and purpose among upper-class Roman women. See also Theoc. *Id.* 27, 30. Kapparis, 117-8.

<sup>141</sup> For a reading of this attitude as the Ovidian suggestion that sexual violence and the exploitation of women are paradigmatic of a corrupt social and political system, see Ellen Greene, *The Erotics of Domination: Male Desire and the Mistress in Latin Love Poetry* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 93-104. Ovid presents amatory arrangements as transactions that consolidate masculine authority and privilege and reinforce the

Through these poems relating Corinna's abortion, Ovid announces to his audience not only that elegiac sex does exist, but it can result in poetic pregnancy. But Ovid has done more than reveal this as a practical outcome of his affair with Corinna. As James has suggested, Ovid raises the possibility that the poetic illnesses of Delia and Cynthia should be revisited and viewed as pregnancy-related.<sup>142</sup> This concrete explanation for the illness of Corinna forces the reader to reexamine Tibullus 1.5 and Propertius 2.28 and to ask from what actual condition Delia and Cynthia might have been suffering. Whether they were pregnant or underwent abortions cannot be proven, nor does it need to be. Nevertheless, Ovid has revealed that elegiac sex can actually fulfill its biological function and result in pregnancy, whereas his elegiac predecessors had skillfully glossed over this ugly consequence.<sup>143</sup> In so doing, Ovid continues his practice of exhausting the conventional situations of the elegiac relationship in a manner that forcefully exposes the fragile stance of the poet-lover.

In Tibullus 1.5, Propertius 2.28 and Ovid 2.13, each girl is suffering (or was suffering, in the case of Delia) from an illness. Tibullus states that the girl was ill but was rescued by the poet-lover's prayers:

*ille ego, cum tristi morbo defessa iaceres,  
te dicor votis eripuisse meis. (1.5.9-10)*

I am the one who is said to have rescued you with my prayers,  
When you were lying weary in your sad illness.

Likewise, the Propertian poet-lover prays to Jupiter to take pity on his girl's illness:

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integration of male sexual and social dominance. In endorsing an approach to love that is based on duplicity and conquest, Ovid exposes what he considers to be the harsh realities behind the elegiac mask.

<sup>142</sup> James (2003), 176.

<sup>143</sup> James (2003), 181.

*Iuppiter, affectae tandem miserere puellae:  
tam formosa tuum mortua crimen erit. (2.28.1-2)*

Oh Jupiter, take pity at last on a sick girl:  
Such a beautiful girl's death will be your fault.

Hence all three poet-lovers have a sick girl and have taken it upon themselves to cure her illness by making vows and offerings to the gods. *Amores* 2.13 is the only one of these three poems to explain the exact cause of the girl's illness, i.e. her recovery from an abortion. Tibullus does not offer any cause, and Propertius offers the playfully elegiac suggestion that it was Cynthia's beauty that brought the envy of Venus upon her, which manifested itself in the form of some serious illness.<sup>144</sup> According to Ovid, it was Corinna's own vanity that brought about her illness, because had she not wished to avoid unsightly stretch-marks, she would not have had the abortion.

The three poems also share the idea of a reward to be granted to the poet-lover for his service to the girl. The poet-lover has not gone through the trouble of praying for his girl's recovery out of unconditional love and devotion. Rather, he expects something in return, specifically the right to make love with the girl as soon as she is well. This is notable in Tibullus in his lament at the end of the poem when another man, not the poet-lover, has received this privilege: *Omnia persolvi: fruitur nunc alter amore*. "I have rendered all that was due: now another man enjoys her love."<sup>145</sup> The Tibullan language contains a financial metaphor, which renders the exchange as an unmistakable *quid pro quo*. Propertius employed specific language in his poem to ensure that his girl will fulfill her obligation to the poet-lover, telling her exactly

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<sup>144</sup> Prop. 2.28.11-12. In the same poem, Propertius offers a number of mythological exempla (Io, Ino, Andromeda, Callisto, and Semele), women who suffered punishments brought upon them by jealous goddesses. Cf. Psyche in Apuleius.

<sup>145</sup> Tib. 1.5.17.

how many nights she owes to him for the inconvenience of not being available to him during her illness (*votivas noctes, et mihi solve decem!* “And give ten hoped for nights to me!”<sup>146</sup>). Ovid’s expectation of reward for the poet-lover does not exist in the poem itself, but it is inherent in the placement of poems 2.13 and 2.14 between two poems about lovemaking. Poem 2.12 celebrates the poet-lover’s triumph at having received Corinna in his bed despite the dangers of being caught by her husband/guardian. Indeed, given the immediate proximity of 2.13, her pregnancy seems to be the direct result of the encounter celebrated in 2.12. Poem 2.15 follows in stark contrast to the abortion diatribe with a light-hearted story about a ring the poet-lover has given to his girl. The poet fantasizes that he might become the ring and obtain secret access to the girl’s private chambers, with specific mention of accompanying her in the bath and seeing her naked.<sup>147</sup> And so, although 2.13 does not include an outright expectation of sexual rewards for the poet-lover’s trouble, the placement of 2.12 and 2.15 makes it clear that Corinna’s abortion was merely an inconvenient interruption to their affair and should be forgotten so that they might continue with their lovemaking as before.

Ovid has unveiled an unattractive side of Roman love elegy. The girl can become pregnant and must deal with the real-life situation by either having the baby or seeking an abortion. That the latter was the obvious choice for Corinna serves to remind the reader of the nature of the elegiac relationship. When Ovid inserts real stresses into the fictive world of elegy,

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<sup>146</sup> Prop. 2.28.62. Although the manuscript tradition has “et mihi,” Camps suggests “ei mihi” (“woe is me”) in order to justify the translation of “votivas noctes” as more appropriately “nights promised to the goddess.” Camps (1966), 194. I have elected to read “et mihi” as it supports the *quid pro quo* sentiment expressed in the other illness poems.

<sup>147</sup> McKeown recognizes the link between this elegy and Plato’s story of Gyges’ ring (*Rep.* 359Cff.) but favors the strong epigrammatic tradition of transformation stories as a more likely influence for Ovid 2.15. McKeown (1998), 317.

he reveals that it cannot withstand such realities.<sup>148</sup> Again, Corinna is neither Ovid's wife nor his loyal girlfriend. She has at least one man (likely more if she is a courtesan) to whom she is obligated sexually, a situation that a pregnancy would immeasurably complicate. Ovid's allusion to the dubious paternity of the child acknowledges further complications. As a courtesan, she could not afford to be pregnant, as it would interfere with her career, and as a wife, she should not be pregnant with another man's child, so Corinna had no choice but to have the abortion. For these reasons, the pregnancy of an elegiac *domina* becomes yet another symbol of the futility of the poet-lover's pursuit, and the necessity of the abortion, along with its dangers and lengthy recovery period, is an obstruction brought about by the very act of elegiac love.

### DISTANCE

A recurring motif in elegy is that of the physical distance between the poet-lover and his *domina*, usually formulated as a propempticon, or bon-voyage poem. Similar to the paraclausithyron in constructing a physical barrier between the lovers – in this case, miles of land or ocean, the propempticon, too, offers a persuasive lament aimed at reuniting the poet-lover with his *domina*. However, it implies graver consequences for the elegiac relationship, as its

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<sup>148</sup> Although the elegists excel at blurring the boundary between reality and fiction, it is Ovid who most often transgresses the boundary in order to highlight elegy's fictive nature. Trevor Fear views this balance between reality and fiction as a "metafictional conflict between the erotic aspirations of the internal narrator and the poetic ambitions of the external poet." In the case of the abortion poems, Ovid comments on the problematics of success within the poetry and the effect it would have on the production of poetry. Corinna's pregnancy is a signifier of erotic success and ultimately of poetic failure. Trevor Fear, "The Poet as Pimp: Elegiac Seduction in the Time of Augustus," *Arethusa* 33.2 (2000): 230. Concerning reality, Veyne describes elegy as "a form of poetry that claims to refer to reality only to open a barely perceptible crack between itself and that reality; a fiction that, instead of being coherent with itself and thus competing with civility, denies itself." Veyne (1988), 2.



failure leads to a distance between the lovers that poetry cannot overcome. Regardless of its success, the door-song at least has the guarantee of being heard by someone, whether the *domina*, the *ianitor*, or the door itself. Once the girl has embarked on her voyage, poetry has no way of reaching her, and the poet-lover, powerless in her absence, can only hope for her return.

The elegists inherited the propempticon from Greek poetry, which had long employed the lament as a traditional topos. Its characteristics included sending off a traveler, lamentation at the departure, and hope that the trip will not be dangerous. Early Greek poetry contains a number of ideas that later became commonplace in the independent propemptica of the Hellenistic period.<sup>149</sup> Theocritus' seventh idyll contains the earliest complete example: Lycidas seeks fair sailing for Ageanax:

Ἀγεάνακτι πλόον διζημένῳ εἰς Μιτυλήναν  
ῥρια πάντα γένοιτο, καὶ εὖπλοος ὄρμον ἴκοιτο. (61-2)

May all things be seasonable for Ageanax seeking voyage  
To Mitylene, and may he arrive well at his haven.

Although Callimachus is assumed to have had a powerful influence over the evolution of the propempticon, only the opening lines of such a poem by him are extant:

Ἄ ναῦς, ἃ τὸ μόνον φέγγος ἐμὶν τὸ γλυκὺ τᾶς ζόας  
ἄρπαξας, ποτί τε Ζανὸς ἱκνεῦμαι λιμενοσκόπῳ.<sup>150</sup>

Ship, you who have taken away the only joy dear to me,  
Watching the harbor, I pray to Zeus.

Distance appears as an obstruction to love in Roman comedy, whenever the *puella* accompanies a soldier on his travels, attending him as a paid escort for the duration of the trip.

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<sup>149</sup> See Hom. *Od.* 5.203ff., Hipponax *frag.* 115 West, Sappho *fragg.* 5.1f., 94.7f., Theogn. 691f., Aristoph. *Eq.* 498ff., Eur. *Hel.* 1451ff.

<sup>150</sup> Call. *frag.* 400. Greek text from McKeown (1998), 255.

The threat of such a journey appears in several plays of Plautus<sup>151</sup> and at least one of Terence. In the *Hecyra*, the courtesan Philotis has recently returned from a journey with a soldier, and she complains of her miserable experience, although there is an understanding that, as a courtesan, she was paid for her time of service. This arrangement anticipates the elegiac propempticon, the farewell to the *domina* who has agreed to accompany a *dives amator* on his journey.

While not present in the poems of Catullus, a propempticon is found in the fragments of fellow neoteric Helvius Cinna, who wrote of Pollio's 56 B.C. voyage.<sup>152</sup> His work is thought to be modeled on the lost propempticon of Parthenius of Nicaea.<sup>153</sup> Horace composed a propempticon to Vergil on the occasion of his voyage to Greece, wishing him a safe journey and marveling at the bravery of mankind who first dared to face the dangers of the ocean.<sup>154</sup> The immediate precursor for the elegiac propempticon appeared in a lost elegy of Gallus, who lamented his desertion by Lycoris. Although the poem is not extant, evidence for it lies in Vergil's tenth Eclogue. Vergil delivers Gallus' words:

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<sup>151</sup> See *Bacch.*, *Miles*, *Epidicus*, *Truculentus*.

<sup>152</sup> Fourth century grammarian Charisius preserved a four line fragment of Cinna bearing the title "propempticon Pollionis," assumed to be Asinius Pollio who carried news from Rome to Cilicia in early 56 B.C. (Cic. *Ad Fam.* 1.6.1), although there is some debate over this identification. Edward Courtney, *The Fragmentary Latin Poets* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 214-6.

<sup>153</sup> Francese, 12. The only surviving word of Parthenius' propempticon is Κώρυκος, "Corycus," a Cilician town. Stephanus of Byzantium preserved the fragment as well as the title of Parthenius' poem, "Προπεμπτικόν," in his sixth century geographical dictionary. Scholars have used this as evidence of the relation between his work and the *propempticon Pollionis* of Cinna. Parthenius of Nicaea, *The Poetical Fragments and the Ἐρωτικά Παθήματα*, Edited with Introduction and Commentaries by J. L. Lightfoot (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 114-5, 169-70. T.P. Wiseman, *Cinna the Poet and Other Roman Essays* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1974), 48.

<sup>154</sup> Hor. *Carm.* 1.3.

*tu procul a patria (nec sit mihi credere tantum)  
alpines, a! dura, nives et frigora Rheni  
me sine sola vides. a, te ne frigora laedant!  
a, tibi ne teneras glacies secet aspera plantas!* (46-9)

You, far from your fatherland (would that I did not believe such a thing)  
Ah! heartless and alone, you look upon the alpine snows and  
Frozen regions of the Rhine, without me. Ah! May the cold not harm you!  
Ah! May the harsh ice not cut your tender feet!

Gallus has not been able to keep Lycoris from taking the journey, and he sings both the characteristic lament at her distance and his hopes that the journey will not be harmful to her.

The fact that she has accompanied another man on this journey is disclosed by Apollo:

*“Galle, quid insanis?” inquit. “tua cura Lycoris  
perque nives alium perque horrida castra secuta est.”* (22-3)

“What insanity is this, Gallus?” he said. “Your dear Lycoris  
Has followed another man through snows and horrid camps.”

This Vergilian adaptation incorporates the characteristic features of the elegiac propempticon. For the elegists, the bon-voyage became an intensely persuasive lament, aimed at convincing the *domina* of the dangers of a journey abroad and the poet-lover’s insistent concern for her safety. The destination often appears cold and unfriendly, an uncomfortable place unsuited for the tender feet of a lovely girl. The *horrida castra* of the Gallan lament allude to the vigorous elegiac disdain for military service and profit-minded travel.<sup>155</sup> To the spirit of the poet-lover who prefers a life of leisure and love in Rome, or at least near Rome, the profiteering so rampant in the first century B.C. is anathema, and the prospect of the *domina* being lost during such an exploit is an unthinkable tragedy.

In Tibullus, no formal propempticon is found, but a few references are made to the distance separating the poet-lover and Delia/Nemesis. Poem 1.3 presents a version of a propempticon in reverse, as it was the poet-lover who had to leave to accompany Messalla on a

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<sup>155</sup> James (2003), 142.

campaign to the East. Unhappy to have embarked on a military expedition, he falls ill on the journey and recalls that it was Delia who prayed for safe travel:

...*tamen est deterrita numquam,  
quin fleret nostras respiceretque vias.* (13-4)

...Still she was never discouraged,  
And she even wept and took anxious concern for my journey.

The Tibullan fantasy world appears in full force as he imagines Delia attending all the shrines in Rome, seeking favorable omens for his journey. The poet-lover dreams of their reunion as a happy one, since Delia will have remained chaste until his return. In poem 2.3, it is Nemesis who has gone away, and he voices his profound displeasure that she has taken up residence in the countryside: *Rura meam, Cornute, tenent villaeque puellam.* “The countryside and its villas have taken hold of my girl, Cornutus.”<sup>156</sup> As the poem develops the *dives amator* motif, it becomes clear that she has chosen to attend another man at his luxurious country estate. In each case, the desire for wealth has led to the separation of the lovers, leaving the poet-lover in a position where his poetry has lost its potency.

The true propempticon fascinates Propertius, who treats the theme thoroughly, exercising all his persuasive tactics to express the ultimate devotion of the poet-lover. In poem 1.8, he not only delivers the speech against the dangers of sea travel and the unworthiness of her rival, promising her the benefits of his own eternal devotion, but ultimately celebrates the success of his speech when he reveals that she has chosen to stay. It is in Propertius that the propempticon and the notion of distance become linked with the poetic art, which can keep the girl from leaving, but has no effect on her once she is gone. The poet-lover begins his lament in a state of angered disbelief that Cynthia would prefer the frozen regions of Illyria to his loving companionship:

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<sup>156</sup> Tib. 2.3.1.

*Tune igitur demens, nec te mea cura moratur?  
an tibi sum gelida vilior Illyria? (1-2)*

Are you indeed mad, does my love not delay you?  
Or do I seem more vile to you than cold Illyria?

He ultimately wishes her a safe voyage and affirms the strength of his devotion, promising that he will keep watch at her door and ask at every port until she returns:

*nam me non ullae poterunt corrumpere, de te  
quin ego, vita, tuo limine vera querar;  
nec me deficiet nautas rogitare citatos. (21-3)*

For no women will be able to tempt me away from you,  
But, my life, I will recite my true lament at your door;  
And I will not be deterred from asking the hurried sailors.

He concedes that she must go and consoles himself with a promised vigil at her door while she is away. Yet, he reveals in the following lines that his propempticon has been a success: *Hic erit! hic iurata manet! rumpantur iniqui!* “She will be here! She has sworn to stay here! Let my enemies be destroyed!”<sup>157</sup> The poet-lover celebrates his success in this rare elegiac victory. The girl has chosen poetry over wealth:

*quamvis magna daret, quamvis maiora daturus,  
non tamen illa meos fugit avara sinus.  
hanc ego non auro, non Indis flectere conchis,  
sed potui blandi carminis obsequio. (37-40)*

Although he has given her great things, and was about to offer even greater,  
Still that greedy girl did not run from my embrace.  
I was not able to turn her with gold or Indian shell,  
But with the praises of my sweet song.

Here, Cynthia appears as a *docta puella*, obediently choosing poetry over money, although her decision to remain is acknowledged as an exception, as evidenced by the jubilant, almost

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<sup>157</sup> Prop. 1.8.27.

disbelieving tone of the poet-lover. Propertius makes it clear that money has the power to lure girls away, and that poetry, powerful in her presence, would have been futile in her absence.

Like Tibullus, Propertius makes use of the theme of the poet-lover leaving Cynthia, similarly called into military service against his will. In poem 1.6, he has declined military service, his duty as a Roman male citizen, in favor of staying in Rome to be with Cynthia. Poem 1.17 depicts the poet-lover on a ship, having left Rome against his will, storm-tossed and praying for his life. He compares the waves crashing against the ship to Cynthia's scolding words, although he prefers the moods of his mistress to the dangers of the sea. Once again, the moods of a mistress can be assuaged by sweet poetry, but, in her absence, he cannot but suffer the effects of her curse.

In Ovid, the propempticon becomes a vehicle for exercising his customary wit, manipulating the motif and inserting playful references to his predecessors. In *Amores* 2.11, he opens with lines reminiscent of the introduction to Catullus 64:<sup>158</sup>

*Prima malas docuit mirantibus aequoris undis  
Peliaco pinus vertice caesa vias. (1-2)*

Pine cut from Pelion's peak first taught  
Evil journeys to the wondering waves of the sea.

Although Catullus was celebrating the union of Peleus and Thetis, a meeting made possible by the invention of the ship, Ovid employs the same theme to frame his curse on ship-builders, an

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<sup>158</sup> See Catull. 64.1-2: *Peliaco quondam prognatae vertice pinus/ dicuntur liquidas Neptuni nasse per undas*. "Pines once born on the Pelian summit are said to have traversed through the clear waves of Neptune." These lines were originally inspired by Euripides' *Medea* (1ff.), a version of which Ennius also wrote (quoted in *Rhet. Her.* 2.34).

element he found in Propertius 1.17.<sup>159</sup> Following his model, Ovid blames the first ship for his troubles with Corinna:

*o utinam, ne quis remo freta longa moveret,  
Argo funestas pressa bibisset aquas!* (5-6)

Oh, would that the Argo, having sunk, had swallowed the deadly waters,  
In order that no one had moved the vast waters with his oar!

Still, it seems that the Argo is not as responsible for Corinna's departure as Medea's elopement with Jason, and Ovid deliberately presents a flawed argument.<sup>160</sup> His propempticon ignores the real reasons for her journey and directs the blame at the *πρῶτος εὐρετής*.<sup>161</sup> Conspicuously absent from Ovid's propempticon is the *dives amator* whom Corinna accompanied on this trip. The poet-lover dwells only on the journey away and the return passage, hoping for safety in each direction. Yet, following the imagined reunion of poet-lover and *domina* on the beach, Ovid reveals the happy meeting as nothing more than fantasy:

*omnia pro veris credam, sint ficta licebit:  
cur ego non votis blandiar ipse meis?* (53-4)

Though these things be false, let me believe them all true:  
Why should I not indulge my fantasy?

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<sup>159</sup> Prop. 1.17.13-4: *a pereat, quicumque ratis et vela paravit/primus et invito gurgite fecit iter!* "Ah let him perish, whoever readied ships and sails, and first made a journey on the unwilling sea!" Passages like this one refer to the Golden Age, the time when the moral superiority of men was uncorrupted by trade and warfare. See also Tibullus 1.3.35-48, 1.10.1f., and 2.3.73f. The earliest accounts of this theme go back to Hesiod *Op.* 109-201. In Latin, it became a favorite of Lucretius (5.925f.) and the Augustan poets: Verg. *Ecl.* 4, *Georg.* 1.125f., 2.536f.; Hor. *Epod.* 16; Ov. *Am.* 3.8.35f., *Met.* 1.89f., 15.96f. Maltby, 194.

<sup>160</sup> McKeown (1998), 225. McKeown notes that Ovid's rich complexity of literary allusion here may have been further enhanced by the existence of his own *Medea*.

<sup>161</sup> See note 139.

This reunion with Corinna, which Ovid reveals as a false hope, recalls the fantasy reunion in Tibullus 1.3. Ovid connects the two poems in his closing line, which recalls the closing line of the Tibullus poem. Ovid writes:

*haec mihi quam primum caelo nitidissimus alto  
Lucifer admisso tempora portet equo. (55-6)*

May Lucifer, brightest in high heaven, bring these times to me  
As soon as possible, on his free-reined horse.

Tibullus similarly invoked the aid of Lucifer in bringing about his reunion with Delia:

*hoc precor, hunc illum nobis Aurora nitentem  
Luciferum roseis candida portet equis. (1.3.93-4)*

I pray this, may Aurora, gleaming on her rosy horses,  
Bring this very shining day to me.

Although Ovid omitted the *dives amator* from his poem, the presence of the rival is implied by the admitted fantasy of the reunion. No such meeting could take place on the beach, because Corinna would not disembark from the ship alone, but with her wealthy travel companion. Likewise impossible would be such a reunion between the Tibullan poet-lover and Delia, who would not have remained chaste in his absence. Ovid thus sheds light on the aspects of failure that surround the propempticon motif. The song itself will likely fail, and any thoughts of happy reunion after the voyage are but a fantasy.

Ovid frequently employed curses to express the anger of the poet-lover at the distance of his *domina*. In poem 2.16, he curses the men who built the roads that made journeys over land possible.<sup>162</sup> The poet-lover is in his native Sulmo, but his girl is not there. He laments the distance (*separor a domina cur ego saepe mea?* “Why am I so often separated from my

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<sup>162</sup> Ov. Am. 2.16.15-6: *solliciti iaceant terraque premantur iniqua, / in longas orbem qui secuere vias*; “May the men who cut the earth into long roads lie restless and be pressed by hostile earth.”



*domina?*”<sup>163</sup>) and wishes that lovers would accompany each other on all journeys, the same wish found in Propertius 2.26. In poem 3.6, the poet-lover begs a river to slacken its current and allow a lover to hurry home to his girl. Addressing the body of water in a manner similar to the *exclusus amator*’s address of the door, he appeals to the sympathies of the river by explaining that rivers too fall in love (*te quoque credibile est aliqua caluisse puella*. “It is believable that some girl has inflamed you, too.”<sup>164</sup>) and are therefore obligated to help young lovers. However, the river does not respond (much like the door), and the lover proceeds to hurl insults and concludes with a hateful curse:

*at tibi pro meritis opto, non candide torrens,  
sint rapidi soles siccaque semper hiems.* (105-6)

But I hope that there may be fierce suns and  
Winter always dry, as you deserve, you muddy torrent.

This curse on the riverbank vividly demonstrates the futility of elegiac poetry in the face of obstacles. The poet-lover cannot overcome the river, even with curses, yet he employs all his rhetorical skills to bring about his impossible request. His ingenuity is commendable, but ultimately ineffective, and as a result, the failure of the poem to persuade becomes a metaphor for the failure of elegiac poetry altogether.

Thus we see how the theme of distance in Roman elegy develops from the earlier propemptica of Greek poetry. However, in elegy it becomes not a simple prayer for safe travel, but in truth a lament imbued with a self-awareness of the impotence of poetry to persuade the absent beloved. Here again the elegists demonstrate the failure of their chosen profession to

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<sup>163</sup> Ov. *Am.* 2.16.42.

<sup>164</sup> Ov. *Am.* 3.6.83. Ovid has used this argument before in poem 1.11.11, addressing Corinna’s maid, Nape: *credibile est et te sensisse Cupidinis arcus*. “Isn’t it true that you have felt the sting of Cupid’s arrow?”

bring about the happy union of lover and beloved. The poet-lover recognizes the type of man his mistress desires but refuses to play that role. It is thus implied that, were the poet-lover to leave behind his life of leisure in poetry, he could become wealthy as a military man and consequently win the affections of his *domina*. He could not, however, accomplish this conversion without abandoning his identity and success as a poet. And so, while the elegies themselves succeed as poems within the genre, they have failed as speech-acts within the poems.

### UNFAITHFULNESS

Without reference to any one *vir* or *dives amator*, the elegiac *domina* is constantly characterized as faithless, and her fickle practices form an intangible barrier between her and the poet-lover. The repeated complaints concerning her *levitas* and *perfidia* (“fickleness” and “faithlessness”) become an expression of the poet-lover’s despair and self-pity. Frequently he attacks his *domina* as *levis* or *perfida* intending to appeal to her feelings of guilt, and he often follows such accusations with detailed accounts of his own devotion and suffering. Interestingly, the poet-lover charges his *domina* with infidelity, but rarely reproaches her for it, instead redirecting any blame for her actions either to the *lena* or to the fallen morality of Rome. These poems consist of self-pitying laments on the faithless behavior of the *domina* coupled with violent attacks on the purported causes for her misbehavior.

Callimachus set an early precedent for the faithless lover in his erotic epigram on the false love of Kallignotos for Ionis:

ὦμοσε Καλλίγνωτος Ἰωνίδι, μήποτε κείνης  
ἔξειν μήτε φίλον κρέσσονα μήτε φίλην.  
ᾧμοσεν· ἀλλὰ λέγουσιν ἀληθέα, τοὺς ἐν ἔρωτι  
ὄρκους μὴ δύνειν οὔατ’ ἐς ἀθανάτων.  
νῦν δ’ ὁ μὲν ἀρσενικῷ θέρεται πυρί. (A.P. 5.6.1-5)

Kallignotos swore to Ionis that he would never  
Hold any woman or man dearer than her.

So he swore; but they say truly that oaths spoken in love  
Are unable to reach the immortals' ears.  
And now he burns for a man.

This episode refers to a male lover who has abandoned his female lover in favor of another man, a type of love that has a place in Roman elegy, though it differs from the usual formation of male-female elegiac love.

Catullus sets the precedent for elegiac unfaithfulness, describing in hyperbolic terms his Lesbia's embrace of a multitude of men: ...*quos simul complexa tenet trecentos*. "...whom she embracing holds, three hundred at a time."<sup>165</sup> He reacts with slanderous attacks on her allegedly promiscuous behavior in poem 58, describing her as nothing more than a street-corner prostitute:

*illa Lesbia, quam Catullus unam  
plus quam se atque suos amavit omnes,  
nunc in quadruviis et angiportis  
glubit magnanimis Remi nepotes. (2-5)*

That Lesbia, whom alone Catullus loved  
More than his own self and all his relations,  
Now peels the great-souled grandsons of Remus  
On the street-corners and in the narrow alleyways.

Catullus eventually gives up believing the promises of a woman in poem 70, pronouncing that the words of a woman to her lover...*in vento et rapida scribere oportet aqua*. "...it is proper to write on the wind or on flowing water."<sup>166</sup> He employs the term *levis* in poem 72, a favorite of the elegists, after he realizes that she has been unfaithful to him: *multo mei tamen es vilior et*

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<sup>165</sup> Catull. 11.18. Note that this poem is not in elegiac meter, but in hendecasyllabic.

<sup>166</sup> Catull. 70.4. Catullus echoes Sophocles (frag. 74N): ὅρκον δ' ἐγὼ γυναικὸς εἰς ὕδωρ γράφω. "I write the oath of a woman on water." The sentiment and image were no doubt proverbial. Sophocles text from Quinn, 399. Vergil later applied the motif to Dido (*Aen.* 4.569-70): *varium et mutabile semper/ femina*. "Woman is always a varied and changeable thing."

*levior*. “Nevertheless, you are much cheaper and more trivial to me.”<sup>167</sup> Still, his desire for the *domina* is not lessened by her behavior, and the elegiac poet-lover lives in a tortured love-hate relationship, incapable of abandoning his pursuit of her affections.

Tibullus adopts the language of infidelity in his lecture to Pholoe in poem 1.8. Concerned over her devotion to young Marathus, he directs her to be loving and to despise riches offered by old men in favor of the loving embrace of a young lover. In an imagined speech by Marathus, he laments her deceit:

*vel cum promittit, subito sed perfida fallit,  
est mihi nox multis evigilanda malis.* (63-4)

Or when she has promised, suddenly the traitor deceives me,  
And I must spend the night wide awake because of these many evils.

Tibullus hints earlier in the poem that the key to faithfulness lies in the rejection of wealth and the temptations of a *dives amator*:

*carior est auro iuvenis, cui levia fulgent  
ora nec amplexus aspera barba terit.  
huic tu candentes umero suppone lacertos,  
et regum magnae despiciantur opes.* (31-4)

Dearer than gold is a young lover, whose smooth face shines  
And a harsh beard does not rub against your embrace.  
Put your shining arms around his neck,  
And let the great wealth of kings be despised.

Tibullus finds an excuse for a woman’s faithlessness, in this instance the temptations of a *dives amator*. He attempts to convince Pholoe to scorn wealth by praising the attractiveness of young Marathus. Her infidelity is thus inextricably linked to the avarice practiced so widely in Rome.

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<sup>167</sup> Catull. 72.6.

Propertius attacks the *levitas*<sup>168</sup> and *perfidia*<sup>169</sup> of Cynthia frequently and angrily, although he offers a number of excuses for her behavior. He also blames the greed of Rome and the bad habits of other girls, including Catullus' famous infidel:

*o nimium nostro felicem tempore Romam,  
si contra mores una puella facit!  
haec eadem ante illam iam impune et Lesbia fecit:  
quae sequitur, certe est invidiosa minus.* (2.32.43-6)

Oh Rome, too prosperous in our time,  
If even one girl goes against custom!  
Lesbia already did these same things with impunity before my girl:  
She who imitates is certainly less hateful.

Elsewhere, Propertius writes of Baiae as the cause of divorces and urges that Cynthia return home before she becomes subject to its evil influence.<sup>170</sup> The poet-lover must find excuses for his mistress or else admit that she does not love him and that their earlier time together has meant nothing. As in the case of the paraclausithyron, in which the door takes the blame for locking him out, so the poet-lover attributes her unfaithfulness to other factors. The poet-lover uses the *puella*'s infidelity as an opportunity to launch a tirade against the fallen morality of Rome. However, the conditions that brought about Cynthia's *perfidia* are the same ones that inspire to elegiac poetry and provide it with its materia. As a result, her persistent unfaithfulness reveals itself as the indispensable tension underlying the elegiac paradox.

Ovid employs all the methods of suffering explored by his elegiac predecessors to describe the plight of the poet-lover, giving the pathos of his affliction its most powerful

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<sup>168</sup> See her *levitas* in 1.15, 2.16; Cynthia as *levis* in 1.18, 2.5, 2.24.

<sup>169</sup> See her *perfidia* in 1.15; Cynthia as *perfida* in 1.11, 2.5, 2.9, 2.18.

<sup>170</sup> Prop. 1.11.

expression. Echoing the words of Catullus, the poet-lover discovers that Corinna's promises cannot be trusted either:

*verba puellarum, foliis leviora caducis,  
irrita, qua visum est, ventus et unda ferunt.* (2.16.45-6)

The words of girls, lighter than the fallen leaves,  
Worthless, are carried away, wherever it seems, on wind and wave.

Another reference to Catullus comes in poem 3.11, in which the poet-lover describes the shame of being constantly rejected and lied to. Yet he admits that love and hate are struggling in his own heart, and it is her beauty that draws him back again and again:

*nequitiam fugio, fugientem forma reducit;  
aversor morum crimina, corpus amo.  
sic ego nec sine te nec tecum vivere possum.* (37-9)

I run from your wickedness, but your beauty leads me back;  
I turn away from the crimes of your character, but I love your body.  
Thus I am neither able to live with you nor without you.

Ovid places the blame not on Rome or on an evil *lena*, but on his own poetry, which has made Corinna famous. In poem 3.12, he fears that she has been unfaithful and that his own verses are to blame.

*et merito: quid enim formae praeconia feci?  
vendibilis culpa facta puella mea est.  
me lenone placet, duce me perductus amator,  
ianua per nostras est adaperta manus.* (9-12)

And deservedly so: for why did I make advertisements of her beauty?  
My girl has been put up for sale, and I'm to blame.  
With me as pimp, she pleases, with me leading, the lover was led in,  
The door was opened by my own hand.

Not only must the poet-lover suffer from the unfaithfulness of his mistress, but he accepts the responsibility for making her attractive to other lovers. Ovid's wit is at work again in this passage, when he discredits the suffering of the elegiac lover by placing the blame for all of the

*domina*'s infidelities on the very poetry that was written to keep her faithful.<sup>171</sup> His praises of her charm and beauty have not only failed in winning her affections, but they have also attracted other, wealthier lovers. Continuing in this vein, Ovid, in his role as *praeceptor amoris*, takes up the language of the *lena* and teaches Corinna the importance of pretending to be chaste, although she is not. The poet-lover has given up hope of her faithfulness to him and decides that if he is to have her at all, he must accept that she has other lovers.

*nec te nostra iubet fieri censura pudicam  
sed tamen ut temptes dissimulare rogat.* (3.14.3-4)

My moralizing does not demand that you be chaste,  
But still it asks that you try to hide what you've done.

This "solution" to the suffering of the elegiac lover falls appropriately in the penultimate poem of Ovid's *Amores*, immediately prior to his final farewell to Elegy. The erotic concession acts as his literary valediction: when the poet-lover consents to allow her liaisons with other men, he has admitted to the failure of his poetry to keep her from doing so, and thus constructs the death of the elegiac pursuit.

Of the six obstructions discussed, the *domina*'s unfaithfulness overlaps categories more than any other. Hyper-present and emblematic of the lover's inability to succeed at his chosen profession, it becomes the preeminent metaphor for the displaced identity of the equestrian male. In order to perpetuate the possibility of happiness with his beloved, the poet-lover in Roman

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<sup>171</sup> This "revelation" by Ovid presents a paradox at the heart of elegy: the conflict between the erotic aspirations of the internal narrator and the literary ambitions of the external poet. The greater the success of the external poet in "prostituting" his poetry, the less chance the internal poet-lover has of success within the text. Fear (2000), 230, 232. To state the paradox another way, the greater the success of the external poet, the less chance he has of discarding the *domina* and moving on to other pursuits. Hence, poetic success and erotic suffering act as interdependent counterforces, which perpetuate the production of elegiac poetry.

elegy assigns the blame for her unfaithfulness to many influences, but rarely faults the girl herself. When Ovid draws the conclusion that her lovers have been attracted by his own verses, the ultimate responsibility for her unfaithfulness is discovered to lie with the poet-lover. His verses had been intended to win her love, but instead they advertised her beauty to rival lovers. Elegy is revealed to be the harbinger of its own destruction, a force that undermines itself and thus guarantees failure. As a genre that constitutes itself in this way, elegy dramatizes the real-life circumstances of the elite Roman male whose actions have ceased to have authority in the changing power structures of late Republican Rome.



## CHAPTER 3

### *AMORES* 2.19 AND 3.4

The way Ovid positions himself differently from his elegiac predecessors provides insight into the genre of Roman elegy and the role of obstruction within it. Ovid's treatment of elegiac themes creates a meta-discourse within elegy that is informed by his retrospective assessment of the genre. His position as the last of the elegists, the particular time frame of his poetic career and his parodic approach to the writing of elegy all contribute to his unique ability to reveal some of the particular pressures that influenced the composition of elegy. The turbulent decades preceding Ovid's writing career had given rise to a crisis among elite Roman men, as the Republican definitions of individual *dignitas* and political ambition were no longer valid. While men of equestrian and senatorial rank experienced fundamental changes in the definition of authority in Rome, the elegists articulated an analogous shift in power through submission to their respective *dominae*. The elegiac poet-lover constantly faces obstructions to successful union with his beloved, yet obstruction comes to be viewed as a necessity in the affair, the force without which the poetry could not exist. Of all the Roman elegists, Ovid most clearly voices this elegiac paradox, that the poet must sacrifice success in love for poetic composition, and the paradox comes to resonate with the restricted role of the equestrian male in the changing political climate of late Republican Rome.

With the Ovidian retrospective in mind, I will now examine the elegiac paradox as it plays out in two competing discourses from Ovid's *Amores*. While poems 2.19 and 3.4 feature only one obstruction, the *vir*, my analysis will consider it as representing all the six obstructions.

Because the *vir* in Ovid's two poems has the power to control the door, the *lena*, the girl's illness and her unfaithfulness, he becomes the quintessential symbol of all erotic obstruction. As the Ovidian poet-lover seeks the delicate balance between easy and difficult access to his beloved, he finds himself struggling not to become the *vir*. The poet-lover does not desire the rights of a *vir*, because such rights would extinguish his passion and destroy his inspiration for poetry. This aversion to "*vir* status" by the poet-lover is an analogue of the Roman male's submission to Augustan precepts at the cost of his *libertas*.<sup>172</sup> Consequently, I will argue that Ovid's treatment of the *vir* in these two poems is emblematic of the role of obstruction in Roman elegy, and that *Amores* 2.19 and 3.4 thus stand as exemplars of the entire genre in their vivid presentation of the elegiac paradox.

Ovid identifies his predecessors, Gallus, Tibullus and Propertius, in *Tristia* 4.10,<sup>173</sup> and the influence of his elegiac models is evident in the *Amores*. Writing after the themes of elegy had been exhaustively explored by at least three proficient writers, Ovid depicts his poet-lover as a pastiche of previous elegiac lovers. His contribution to elegy might have been thematic expansion, just as Tibullus had done when he dedicated poems in Messalla's honor and Propertius when he devoted his fourth book to civic topics. Yet Ovid did not seek to introduce such material. Instead, he further exploited the existing themes of elegy by mining them for

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<sup>172</sup> Note Propertius' use of this idea in 2.7, lines 9-14, where the poet-lover momentarily adopts the title "maritus," only to relinquish it at the prospect of fathering sons who would serve in Rome's army.

<sup>173</sup> Ov. *Trist.* 4.10.51-4: *Vergilium vidi tantum: nec avara Tibullo / tempus amicitiae fata dedere meae. / successor fuit hic tibi, Galle, Propertius illi; / quartus ab his serie temporis ipse fui.* "I only saw Vergil, nor did the greedy fates give time for my friendship with Tibullus. This poet was your successor, Gallus, as Propertius was to him. I myself was the fourth in sequence of time from these."

comic elements. Thus Ovid mocks the behavior of previous elegiac lovers by refusing to take elegy seriously and by inviting the reader to see the comic side of stock elegiac situations.<sup>174</sup>

Inquiries into the subject of “sincerity” in Ovid’s elegies often begin with the identification of the *domina* of the *Amores*. By contrast with Propertius, whose programmatic first elegy begins with the word “Cynthia,” introducing the woman who has tortured the poet-lover with her fickle affections for the past year, Ovid begins his elegiac opus without a *domina*. His poet-lover has not yet fallen in love, and the first five poems of book one are occupied with the gradual construction of the Ovidian elegiac relationship: first, the poet is turned away from his epic intentions; next, he submits to love’s suffering and enlists in Cupid’s army; then, he reveals the object of his love to be a woman who has a *vir*; and finally, he celebrates their sexual union. The artificial tenor of these introductory poems leads the reader to see the poet-lover as a detached persona, not truly in love and insincere in his professed suffering. Although Apuleius codified the accepted identities for Lesbia, Delia and Cynthia (Clodia, Plania and Hostia, respectively), early imperial sources do not offer a real identity to the mistress of the *Amores*.<sup>175</sup> Of all the elegiac mistresses, she has excited the least amount of research and curiosity. Further contributing to the artificiality of Ovid’s elegy is the fact that the poet-lover writes his elegiacs only because he was forced to abandon epic by the thieving Cupid.<sup>176</sup> His very choice of a genre

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<sup>174</sup> John A. Barsby, ed., *Ovid’s Amores: Book One* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 17.

<sup>175</sup> This thesis rejects any authentic identification of Delia/Nemesis, Cynthia and Corinna as historical individuals, given the generalized and imprecise depictions of the women throughout the poems.

<sup>176</sup> Ov. Am. 1.1.1-4: *Arma gravi numero violentaque bella parabam / edere, materia conveniente modis. / par erat inferior versus—risisse Cupido / dicitur atque unum surripuisse pedem*. “I was preparing to publish fierce battles and arms in heavy supply, subject matter suited to the meter. The lower line was equal in length – but Cupid is said to have laughed and snatched away one foot.” Consider also how Ovid stages his choice of genre in *Amores* 3.1

becomes a parody of the anguish and suffering of his predecessors, whose voluntary subjection to elegy allowed them to pursue their respective mistresses.

In his vibrant burlesque of elegy, Ovid developed the conventional themes with outrageously grotesque consequences. The Propertian tirade against Cynthia's use of hair dyes becomes in Ovid a hideously comic story in which Corinna's hair has fallen out as a result of the same practice.<sup>177</sup> Similarly, Ovid exposes the fact that the sought-after sexual encounter with the *domina* can result in her pregnancy and consequently endanger the girl's life when she pursues an abortion.<sup>178</sup> Ovid's fascination with these extreme scenarios escalates in *Amores* 2.19, where the poet-lover answers the question "what would happen if there were no obstruction?" The poet-lover finds that access to his *domina* is *too* easy, that her *vir* has not been watching over her closely enough, and he vehemently begs the negligent *vir* to guard her more strictly. The poem's answer reverses the logic of the lover's pursuit as defined in Tibullus and Propertius and problematizes the nature of obstruction as perceived by the earlier elegists. Ovid's revelation marks a pivotal moment in the genre: while the goal of Roman love elegy formerly had been to bring together the poet-lover and his *domina*, *Amores* 2.19 proves that this goal is now subordinate to the challenge of pursuit.<sup>179</sup> In poem 2.19, Ovid becomes the first elegist to admit his conscious understanding and acceptance of the elegiac paradox.

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where the poet-lover is the passive recipient of the dictates of Elegy and Tragedy, and in 3.15, the final poem of the *Amores*, he voluntarily relinquishes Elegy.

<sup>177</sup> See Prop. 1.2, 2.18c, Ov. *Am.* 1.14.

<sup>178</sup> See Chapter 2 of this thesis for the discussion of *Amores* 2.13 and 14.

<sup>179</sup> Donald Lateiner, "Ovid's Homage to Callimachus and Alexandrian Poetic Theory (*Am.* 2.19)," *Hermes* 106 (1978): 188-93. Lateiner examines this "challenge of pursuit" in terms of Callimachean aesthetics, and he studies the placement of 2.19 at the conclusion of Book 2 as explicitly programmatic. He examines the language of the

Treated by itself, *Amores* 2.19 seems to follow Ovid's pattern of exploring and exposing the heretofore unexamined consequences of the elegiac affair. However, the contrary argument in poem 3.4 necessitates that the poems be taken as a diptych, competing discourses fashioned by Ovid in order to reveal the fundamental paradox of elegy. *Amores* 3.4 appears to be a rhetorical rebuttal of the sentiments expressed in 2.19. The careless *vir* of 2.19 has apparently heeded the advice of the poet-lover and now guards his girl much too carefully. To counter these efforts, the poet-lover offers advice quite different from that proposed in the earlier poem. He asks the *vir* to relax his guard, warning that the increased security measures will only inflame adulterous tendencies in the girl.

Poem 2.19 opens with this exhortation by the poet-lover:<sup>180</sup>

*Si tibi non opus est servata, stulte, puella,  
 at mihi fac serves, quo magis ipse velim.  
 quod licet, ingratum est; quod non licet, acrius urit:  
 ferreus est, si quis quod sinit alter amat.  
 speremus pariter, pariter metuamus amantes,  
 et faciat voto rara repulsa locum. (1-6)*

If there is no need for you to guard your girl, you fool,  
 Then guard her for me, so that I will want her all the more!  
 A thing allowed is displeasing; that which is not permitted inflames more fiercely.  
 Anyone who loves what another allows is hard-hearted.  
 Let us lovers hope and fear equally,  
 And may the occasional rejection make room for a prayer.

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poem and identifies numerous instances of Callimachean language, which suggest that the poem is more about poetic theory than it appears on the surface. Just as Callimachus would not drink from a common spring, Ovid professes that lovers do not want women who are easily available. Callimachus wanted to be judged by the quality of his work, not its quantity. Likewise, Ovid exhorts that lovers be judged by their skill in pursuit, not their number of amatory conquests. Lateiner suggests that the placement of this poem at the end of *Amores* book two defines Ovid, and not Propertius, as "Callimachus Romanus."

<sup>180</sup> See appendices B and C for full text and translation of *Amores* 2.19 and 3.4.

The complaint contains the general observation that difficulty in love makes the pursuit worthwhile. The poet-lover says that Corinna understood this idiosyncrasy and deceived him accordingly (9-18). Now he advises his new mistress to do the same (19-26). Citing the affairs of Jupiter with Danae and Io as examples, he asserts that the difficulty in uniting with them incited the god's passion (27-30). Hence, the *vir* should encourage the competition of rival lovers by taking better precautions and heightening his own suspicions (37-52). In conclusion, the poet-lover threatens to renounce his love for the girl if the husband will not make access to her more difficult (53-60).

Poem 3.4 offers an epilogue to 2.19, appearing to explain the poet-lover's indignation at the husband's excessive response to the demands made in the earlier poem. The conflicting invocation begins:

*Dure vir, imposito tenerae custode puellae  
nil agis: ingenio est quaeque tuenda suo.  
si qua metu dempto casta est, ea denique casta est;  
quae, quia non liceat, non facit, illa facit.  
ut iam servaris bene corpus, adultera mens est  
nec custodiri, ne velit, ulla potest;  
nec corpus servare potes, licet omnia claudas:  
omnibus oclclulis intus adulter erit.  
cui peccare licet, peccat minus: ipsa potestas  
semina nequitiae languidiora facit.  
desine, crede mihi, vitia irritare vetando;  
obsequio vinces aptius illa tuo. (1-12)*

Cruel man, you accomplish nothing with a guard placed on a tender girl,  
Each must be watched over by her own temperament.  
If any girl is pure in the absence of fear, then she is pure indeed;  
A girl who doesn't do it because it isn't allowed, does it.  
Though the body may be guarded well, the mind remains adulterous;  
No girl can be guarded if she does not wish it.  
Although you can lock everything out, you cannot guard the body;  
With all things outside, the adulterer will be within.  
She sins less, for whom it is permitted to sin;  
Power itself renders the seeds of deceit more sluggish.  
Trust me, stop stirring up her vices by forbidding them;

You will better control them with your leniency.

In this poem, the poet-lover argues that it is the imposition of barriers that makes his mistress want to engage in adultery. What follows is a simile in which he compares the striving of a race-horse against taut reins to the yearning of a wife to escape the confines of her own house (13-18). Again, employing Danae as a model, this time for the opposite purpose, he argues that locking the heroine in a tower did not prevent her from becoming pregnant by Jupiter (21-22). Rivals will flock to the doorstep of any husband who is overprotective of his own wife (25-28). The only girl who can be trusted not to cheat is one who is endowed with the trust of her husband (29-36). Even the twin founders of Rome were born out of wedlock to the vestal virgin, Ilia (37-40). And, finally, why fight off these rivals when they will bring your wife gifts, which you can enjoy in your own home (45-49)?

Throughout both poems, Ovid clearly demonstrates his rhetorical skill, forcefully arguing contradictory directives to the *vir*. The two poems are *suasoriae*,<sup>181</sup> persuasive arguments of the type Ovid would have practiced during his rhetorical training at Rome. Although his study of rhetoric is not unusual, as it was a basic part of Roman boy's schooling, Ovid's excellence in rhetoric is attested by both Seneca the Elder and Quintilian.<sup>182</sup> In fact, 2.19 and 3.4 are not the only pair in the *Amores*, which present adjacent, opposing dialogues.<sup>183</sup> Among these many

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<sup>181</sup> *Suasoriae* are rhetorical exercises framed as advice given at a public meeting, the themes being taken from actual historical situations or legendary events. For examples of extant *suasoriae*, see Seneca the Elder, *Suas.* 1-7.

<sup>182</sup> See Sen. *Controv.* 2.2.8-12.; Quint. *Inst.* 4.1.77; 5.10.40-1; 8.3.47; 8.5.6; 9.2.64; 9.3.70; 10.1.88; 12.10.75.

<sup>183</sup> Other pairs in the *Amores* include 1.11-12; 1.4 and 2.5; 2.2-3; 2.7-8 (discussed above); 2.11-12; 2.13-14.

McKeown notes that the use of diptychs to display a dramatic sequence or variations on a theme can be traced to Hellenistic collections of epigrams (A.P. 5.136-7, 151-2, 172-3, 12.82-3). Catullus likewise adopted the practice (2-

pairings is the diptych in book two (2.7-8), wherein the poet-lover denies an affair with Corinna's maid and in the very next poem admits to the relationship. His self-defense in poem 2.7 is successful in convincing Corinna of his innocence, but his admission of the affair in 2.8 reveals his rhetoric in the previous poem as a pose. Ovid excels in the creation of different personae for his poet-lover, a type of role playing encouraged by his rhetorical training. His adoption of a pose and the subsequent removal of the mask has the effect of revealing the entire discourse as a masquerade.<sup>184</sup> And so, throughout the *Amores*, Ovid's protean poet-lover exposes his own "consistent inconsistency"<sup>185</sup> as a kind of poetic device.

Ovid's employment of the competing *suasoriae* reveals the power of the poet-lover to manipulate obstacles in the affair. Ovid allows his poet-lover, alternately indignant at easy and difficult access to his mistress, to control the presence or absence of the obstruction and face the consequences of its removal. In the absence of the *vir*, he discovers that his desire wanes, so that the *vir*'s unconcern (*licere, sinere, pati*)<sup>186</sup> becomes the new obstacle. The absence of a real erotic obstruction thus necessitates the insertion of a new one, as the poet-lover's message makes clear in 2.19. Yet, his own words foreshadow the outcome: *ei mihi, ne monitis torquear ipse meis!* / "Woe to me lest I be tortured by my own admonitions!"<sup>187</sup> In 3.4, he finds that his advice has been taken quite seriously by the *vir*, who now applies assiduous vigilance to the conduct of

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3, 5 and 7, 37 and 39, 70 and 72, 107 and 109). Propertius, too, made use of diptychs (1.7 and 9, 3.4-5). McKeown (1989), 309.

<sup>184</sup> John T. Davis, *Fictus Adulter: Poet as Actor in the Amores* (Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben, 1989), 101.

<sup>185</sup> M. L. Stapleton, *Harmful Eloquence: Ovid's Amores from Antiquity to Shakespeare* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996), 29.

<sup>186</sup> 2.19 lines: 3, 4, 31, 51.

<sup>187</sup> Ov. *Am.* 2.19.34.



the girl. As a result, the poet-lover finds himself trapped in an inescapable adulterous triangle, preferring to be neither the *inclusus* nor *exclusus amator*.<sup>188</sup>

Through the conflicting directives to the *vir*, Ovid is able to expose the paradox on which his genre is poised, that obstruction is a liminal concept whose complete absence or presence brings about the destruction of the elegiac pursuit. The contradictory demands placed on the *vir* make him the indispensable third position in the triangle.<sup>189</sup> His presence as a boundary to be transgressed allows for the successful composition of elegy. His absence, and the consequent “success” of the lover, would bring about the end of desire and the termination of the poetry. This contradictory relationship serves to emphasize that elegy is a genre dependent on dramatic failure, as the poet-lover’s achievement of love (his attainment of the status of *vir*) results in an abhorrent negation of the elegiac self, whose persona depends on repeated transgression of the obstructing element, but never on permanent triumph. It is the vivid conveyance of this paradox that makes *Amores* 2.19 and 3.4 programmatic statements about the genre as a whole and the role of obstruction in particular.

In order to extend the message of the Ovidian diptych to the theme of obstruction as a whole, it will be useful to see how the poet-lover weaves a number of these impediments into the

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<sup>188</sup> Miller (2004), 172. Miller asserts that the relation between *amator* and *vir* is an arbitrary one: the only way for the poet-lover to advance his claims on Corinna (or the girl of poems 2.19 and 3.4) is to assume the position of the *vir*. Miller further extends this theory to encompass the nature of *virtus* (manhood), which Ovid deconstructs throughout the *Amores*, “revealing it to be a ramshackle piece of ideological bricolage, founded on difference and deployed as a tool of domination.” By this reasoning, the *vir* of the *Amores* becomes analogous to *virtus*, a component of the displaced autonomy of the Roman male. The *virtus* cannot be fully regained without assuming a role that is diametrically opposed to the self.

<sup>189</sup> Miller (2004), 171.

narratives of poems 2.19 and 3.4. Together, the *vir*, the door, the *lena*, the girl's illness and her unfaithfulness stand as interdependent signifiers of failure. Ovid arranges them in a hierarchy by placing them under the voluntary control of the *vir*, holding him responsible for locking the door (2.19.21, 38-9; 3.4.7), pimping the girl (2.19.57; 3.4.45-8),<sup>190</sup> encouraging her feigned headaches (2.19.11), and permitting her myriad adulteries (2.19.51; 3.4.5, 8, 25-8, 37, 45). The poet-lover's consistent failure as a result of these obstructions permeates the whole of the *Amores*, but their necessity makes possible the boundless joy of victory in love, as expressed in these lines from poem 2.12:

*Ite triumphales circum mea tempora laurus:  
vicimus; in nostro est ecce Corinna sinu,  
quam vir, quam custos, quam ianua firma (tot hostes!)  
servabant, ne qua posset ab arte capi. (1-4)*

Grant me the laurel of triumph around my brow:  
I have conquered! See, in my lap lies Corinna,  
Whom her husband, her guardian, her strong door (so many enemies!)  
Were protecting, so that she couldn't be captured by any skill.

The achievement of this euphoric moment is the reason that the poet-lover allows himself to suffer. To the Ovidian lover, the obstacles are challenges to be faced, victories in the making. For this reason, the poet-lover beseeches the vigilance of the *vir* in 2.19. Elegiac pursuit

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<sup>190</sup> Many scholars see the references to *lenocinium* (a husband's pandering of his wife) in these poems as direct references (and affronts) to the *lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis*, Augustus' law of 18 B.C. against adultery. According to one provision of the law, a husband who profited from or countenanced his wife's adulterous behavior without divorcing her was guilty of *lenocinium* and could lose some or all of his property. In view of such references, the Ovidian poet-lover further reinforces the necessity of obstruction: as adulterer, he is in favor of a law against adultery. See Davis, 45-9. For an in depth study of this legislation, see David Cohen, "The Augustan Law on Adultery: The Social and Cultural Context," in *The Family in Italy from Antiquity to the Present*, ed. D. Kertzer and R.P. Saller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 109-26.

becomes meaningless without obstruction, the absence of which simultaneously removes the means for both pathetic frustration and ecstatic jubilation.

The earlier elegists had composed many of their verses by the time Augustus celebrated his triple triumph at Rome and accepted the powers that would become standard for his successors. Propertius became recognized for his *Monobiblos* and was welcomed into Maecenas' circle around 29 B.C., Tibullus had published his first book by 27 B.C., and Gallus' poetic output was necessarily ended by his suicide in 26 B.C. Ovid's composition of elegy could not have begun much earlier than 25 B.C. when he was only eighteen years of age. As a result, his elegiac compositions were not affected by the same political ruptures that had influenced the earlier, programmatic works of his predecessors.

The paradoxical motivations of elegy, perceptible in the poems of Tibullus and Propertius, were a literary echo of the contrary needs and desires of the Roman elite during the turbulent decade following the murder of Caesar. A return to Republican stability was promised by Octavian, yet, all the while an understanding was brewing that the governing principles of the past four centuries were no longer valid in the changing culture of Rome. The impossible goal of the elegiac lover emerged in the 40's as a suitable reflection of the opposing forces at play in Rome. However, once the Senate hailed Augustus as the ruler of Rome in 27 B.C., the contrary intentions that had divided the Republic began to be resolved under imperial rule. It is *after* this resolution that Ovid began writing.

For Ovid, elegiac introspection and the necessity of *fides* were outdated topoi. Erotic life was no longer needed as the moral refuge that Tibullus had so passionately constructed. In the wake of the Augustan settlement, the elegiac paradox no longer made sense. And so, Ovid not only exposes this paradox as ridiculous in the *Amores*, but in poems like the pair discussed above

he accomplishes a *reductio ad absurdum* for elegy as a whole. It is unsurprising that the poem immediately following 2.19 depicts the poet-lover as he considers applying his talents to tragedy, with his work in elegy apparently completed.<sup>191</sup> Poems 2.19 and 3.4 sustain a dynamic inversion of the formerly static oppositions in elegy. By depicting the violent fluctuations in the power structure of elegy, Ovid shows the hierarchy of poet-lover and obstruction to be arbitrary and changeable, and although the poet can manipulate the hierarchy, its presence is essential to poetic inspiration.<sup>192</sup>

### CONCLUSION

The neoteric poets pioneered the emancipation of the poet from the traditional roles and responsibilities assigned to elite Roman men. While literary production in leisure time had been an accepted practice for men of the equestrian and senatorial classes for centuries, the adoption of a life of leisure constituted an affront to Republican *mores*. Concurrent with the neoteric renewal of Hellenistic literary precepts was the disruption of Republican institutions. The expansion of Rome's physical boundaries served simultaneously as a benefit to her cultural institutions and a detriment to her conservative political structure. The natural result was that Roman poets adapted this sophisticated Hellenistic style as a mechanism for exploring the political and social dissonances of their time.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Of course, Ovid never abandoned the elegiac meter, in which he composed most of his poetry, with the exception of his lost play, the *Medea*, and the *Metamorphoses*.

<sup>192</sup> Miller (2004), 183. For Miller, Ovid delights in inverting the fundamental oppositions of transgression and law, especially in *Amores* 2.19 and 3.4. To that effect, the Ovidian *amator* reflects of the Augustan order it seeks to transgress, and the act of transgression supports the maintenance of that order.

<sup>193</sup> David Fredrick, "Reading Broken Skin: Violence in Roman Elegy," in *Roman Sexualities*, ed. Judith Hallett and Marilyn Skinner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 179.

The innovations of the neoteric poets evolved into Roman love elegy, with its narratives that preached voluntary failure as lovers to ensure success as poets. Although the Roman elegists had adopted the refined style and life of leisure from poets like Catullus, the influences at work on them were decidedly different. Being men of equestrian rank, they suffered losses of family land and political power as a result of civil wars and dictatorships. The elegiac poet-lover escapes into an erotic world that refuses to countenance even the slightest participation in military campaigns and political maneuvering. In light of these facts, elegy is a metaphorical political discourse, as Wyke characterizes it, that seeks “to portray the male narrator as alienated from positions of power and to differentiate him from other, socially responsible male types.”<sup>194</sup> As the elegists compromise their masculinity in this way, they appear to be responding to the tighter restrictions on freedom of action in the public sphere, recognizing the grave risks for even the smallest players in the political game.<sup>195</sup> This loss of political autonomy manifested itself in elegy through the voicing of a sense of inferiority and powerlessness, specifically illustrated through the language of obstruction.

This thesis has attempted to demonstrate that Roman love elegy, which flourished during a particularly turbulent period of political and social change in Roman history, was a genre uniquely capable of vocalizing the crisis in the elite male citizen at this time. As radical shifts took place in the traditional power structures of the Roman state, men of the equestrian and senatorial classes experienced a palpable loss of political autonomy. Ultimately, the rule of Rome came to rest on the authority of Augustus and his imperial successors, and the men of the

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<sup>194</sup> Wyke, 42-3.

<sup>195</sup> Marilyn Skinner, “*Ego Mulier*: The Construction of Male Sexuality in Catullus,” in *Roman Sexualities*, ed. Judith Hallett and Marilyn Skinner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 141-2.

upper classes eventually settled into redefined roles in the new political sphere. Being members of the equestrian class, the elegists were well situated as first-hand perceivers of this shift in the self-concept of the Roman male. Their composition of elegy could not escape the influence of this experience, which emerges in their verses through a variety of poetic themes and devices unique to Roman elegy. First, the adoption of an emasculated and servile persona becomes a powerful method for voicing their perceived subjection to increased political controls. Second, the inability of the elegiac poet-lover to achieve the desired union with his *domina* is dramatized by the insertion of numerous insuperable obstacles. It is this hyper-presence of erotic obstruction that so vividly imbues Roman love elegy with its particular inclination to failure. The elegists base their poetry on this failure in order to ensure continued material for poetic production, a theme that comes to define the elegiac paradox: the dependence of poetic success on erotic failure. Hence, the late Republican emergence of Roman elegy, a genre poised on this paradoxical need for obstruction, powerfully articulates the crisis in the masculine self-concept, as the elegists recognized their own loss of autonomy and accomplished an unconscious vocalization of that loss through their failed erotic personae.

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## APPENDIX A

### GALLUS FRAGMENTS

One line fragment as preserved in Vibius Sequester:

*uno tellures dividit amne duas*

Qasr Ibrîm fragment discovered in 1979:<sup>196</sup>

*tristia nequit[ia....]a, Lycori, tua.*

*fata mihi, Caesar, tum erunt mea dulcia quom tu  
maxima Romanae pars eris historiae,  
postque tuum reditum multorum templa deorum  
fixa legam spolieis deivitiara tueis.*

*].....tandem fecerunt c[ar]mina Musae  
quae possem domina deicere digna mea  
].atur idem tibi, non ego, Visce,  
].....l . Kato, iudice te vereor.*

Sorrows caused by your infidelity Lycoris...

Caesar, the fates to me will be kind when you will be the crowning glory of Roman history, after your return I shall read the temples of many gods decorated more richly with your spoils.

Finally, the Muses have made songs that I can call worthy of my mistress...the same thing for you, I do not fear even if you, Viscus, [or] you, Cato, are the judge.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> These fragments were originally published in Anderson, R. D., P. J. Parsons, and R. G. M. Nisbet. "Elegiacs by Gallus from Qasr Ibrîm," *Journal of Roman Studies* 69 (1979): 125-55.

<sup>197</sup> Both text and translation taken from Miller (2004), 75-6.

## APPENDIX B

### AMORES 2.19

*Si tibi non opus est servata, stulte, puella,  
at mihi fac serves, quo magis ipse velim.  
quod licet, ingratum est; quod non licet, acrius urit.  
ferreus est, si quis, quod sinit alter amat.  
speremus pariter, pariter metuamus amantes, 5  
et faciat voto rara repulsa locum.  
quo mihi fortunam, quae numquam fallere curet?  
nil ego quod nullo tempore laedat amo.  
viderat hoc in me vitium versuta Corinna,  
quaque capi possem callida norat opem. 10  
a, quotiens sani capitis mentita dolores  
cunctantem tardo iussit abire pede!  
a, quotiens finxit culpam, quantumque licebat  
insonti, speciem praebuit esse nocens!  
sic ubi vexarat tepidosque refoverat ignes, 15  
rursus erat votis comis et apta meis.  
quas mihi blanditias, quam dulcia verba parabat!  
oscula, di magni, qualia quotque dabat!  
tu quoque, quae nostros rapuisti nuper ocellos,  
saepe time insidias, saepe rogata nega, 20  
et sine me ante tuos proiectum in limine postes  
longa pruinosa frigora nocte pati.  
sic mihi durat amor longosque adolescit in annos:  
hoc iuvat, haec animi sunt alimenta mei.  
pinguis amor nimiumque patens in taedia nobis 25  
vertitur et, stomacho dulcis ut esca, nocet.  
si numquam Danaen habuisset aenea turris,  
non esset Danae de Iove facta parens;  
dum servat Iuno mutatam cornibus Io,  
facta est quam fuerat, gratior illa Iovi. 30  
quod licet et facile est quisquis cupit, arbore frondes  
carpat et e magno flumine potet aquam.  
si qua volet regnare diu, deludat amantem.  
(ei mihi, ne monitis torquear ipse meis!)  
quidlibet eveniat, nocet indulgentia nobis: 35  
quod sequitur, fugio; quod fugit, ipse sequor.  
at tu, formosae nimium secure puellae,  
incipi iam prima claudere nocte forem;  
incipi, quis totiens furtim tua limina pulset,  
quaerere, quid latrent nocte silente canes, 40  
quas ferat et referat sollers ancilla tabellas,  
cur totiens vacuo secubet ipsa toro.*

*mordeat ista tuas aliquando cura medullas,  
 daque locum nostris materiamque dolis.*  
*ille potest vacuo furari litore harenas,* 45  
*uxorem stulti si quis amare potest.*  
*iamque ego praemoneo: nisi tu servare puellam  
 incipis, incipiet desinere esse mea.*  
*multa diuque tuli; speravi saepe futurum,*  
*cum bene servasses, ut bene verba darem.* 50  
*lentus es et pateris nulli patienda marito;  
 at mihi concessi finis amoris erit.*  
*scilicet infelix numquam prohibebor adire?  
 nox mihi sub nullo vindice semper erit?*  
*nil metuum? per nulla traham suspiria somnos?* 55  
*nil facies, cur te iure perisse velim?*  
*quid mihi cum facili, quid cum lenone marito?*  
*corrumpit vitio gaudia nostra suo.*  
*quin alium, quem tanta iuvat patientia, quaeris?*  
*me tibi rivalem si iuvat esse, veta.* 60

If there is no need that your girl be guarded for you, foolish man,  
 then guard her for me, something I'd enjoy all the more!  
 A thing allowed is displeasing; that which is not permitted inflames more fiercely.  
 Anyone who loves what another allows is hard-hearted.  
 Let us lovers hope and fear equally, 5  
 And may the occasional rejection make room for a prayer.  
 Why should I want a fortune that never cares to deceive me?  
 I love nothing that never hurts!  
 Corinna shrewdly perceived this vice in me,  
 How I was able to be caught, the clever girl knew her power. 10  
 Ah, how often she feigned pains in her sound head,  
 And ordered me lingering to depart with slow foot.  
 Ah, how many times she pretended blame, as much as fitted her innocence,  
 Yet guilty she seemed to be!  
 Thus when she had stirred up and reheated the tepid flames, 15  
 Again she was my companion, suited to my vows.  
 What flatteries she offered, how sweet her words,  
 And, great gods!, what kisses and how many she gave!  
 You, too, who recently captured my eyes,  
 Fear treachery often, often refuse the things I ask; 20  
 And allow me to endure the cold frosts, as I lay prostrate on the threshold  
 Before your doors through the long night.  
 Thus love lasts for me and burns in the long years;  
 This is what pleases me; these things are nourishment for my soul.  
 Love, easy and too open to me in leisure, disturbs and harms me, 25  
 Like sweet food to the stomach.  
 If the bronze tower had never held Danae,

She'd never have been made a parent by Jupiter;  
 As long as Juno guarded Io, changed by horns,  
 That maiden became more pleasing to Jupiter than she had been before. 30  
 What is permitted and easily obtained, any man desires,  
 Let him pluck leaves from a tree and drink water from a great river.  
 If a woman wishes a lengthy rule, let her deceive a lover.  
 Woe to me, lest I be tortured by my own admonitions.  
 Whatever happens, free license harms me; 35  
 What pursues, I flee; What flees, I myself pursue.  
 But you, too careless for your lovely girl,  
 Begin now to lock your door when night falls.  
 Begin to inquire who knocks secretly so many times on your door,  
 Why the hounds bark in the quiet night, 40  
 What tablets the clever slave-girl takes away and brings back,  
 Why she sleeps apart so often in an empty bed.  
 Let that concern gnaw at your bones, now and again,  
 And give a place and an opportunity for my grief.  
 Whoever can love the wife of a fool is a man 45  
 Who can steal sands from the empty seashore.  
 And now I give this warning: If you do not begin to guard your girl,  
 She begins to cease being mine.  
 I have long borne these many things; I have often hoped for a time  
 When you would have guarded her well, that I might deceive you well. 50  
 You are complaisant and endure things that mustn't be suffered by a husband;  
 But there will be an end to this yielded love.  
 Am I never to be kept, unhappy, from entering?  
 Will night always be without a defender from me?  
 Shall I fear nothing? Shall I spend my sleep without sighs? 55  
 Will you do nothing to make me wish you rightly dead?  
 What good is there for me in an easy, pimping husband?  
 He destroys our joy with his own depravity.  
 Nay, do you seek another whom such patience pleases?  
 If you want there to be a rival, then forbid it. 60

## APPENDIX C

### AMORES 3.4

*Dure vir, imposito tenerae custode puellae  
nil agis: ingenio est quaeque tuenda suo.  
si qua metu dempto casta est, ea denique casta est;  
quae, quia non liceat, non facit, illa facit.  
ut iam servaris bene corpus, adultera mens est 5  
nec custodiri, ne velit, ulla potest;  
nec corpus servare potes, licet omnia claudas:  
omnibus oclclulis intus adulter erit.  
cui peccare licet, peccat minus: ipsa potestas  
semina nequitiae languidiora facit. 10  
desine, crede mihi, vitia inritare vetando;  
obsequio vinces aptius illa tuo.  
vidi ego nuper equum contra sua vincla tenacem  
ore reluctanti fulminis ire modo;  
constitit, ut primum concessas sensit habenas 15  
frenaque in effusa laxa iacere iuba.  
nitimur in vetitum semper cupimusque negata:  
sic interdictis imminet aeger aquis.  
centum fronte oculos, centum cervice gerebat  
Argus, et hos unus saepe fefellit Amor; 20  
in thalamum Danae ferro saxoque perennem  
quae fuerat virgo tradita, mater erat;  
Penelope mansit, quamvis custode carebat,  
inter tot iuvenes intemerata procos.  
quicquid servatur, cupimus magis, ipsaque furem 25  
cura vocat; pauci, quod sinit alter, amant.  
nec facie placet illa sua, sed amore mariti:  
nescioquid, quod te ceperit, esse putant.  
non proba fit, quam vir servat, sed adultera cara:  
ipse timor pretium corpore maius habet. 30  
indignere licet, iuvat inconcessa voluptas:  
sola placet, 'timeo' dicere si qua potest.  
nec tamen ingenuam ius est servare puellam;  
hic metus externae corpora gentis agat.  
scilicet ut possit custos 'ego' dicere 'feci', 35  
in laudem servi casta sit illa tui?  
rusticus est nimium, quem laedit adultera coniunx,  
et notos mores non satis Urbis habet,  
in qua Martigenae non sunt sine crimine nati  
Romulus Iliades Iliadesque Remus. 40  
quo tibi formosam, si non nisi casta placebat?  
non possunt ullis ista coire modis.*



*si sapis, indulge dominae vultusque severos  
 exue nec rigidi iura tuere viri  
 et cole quos dederit (multos dabit) uxor amicos: 45  
 gratia sic minimo magna labore venit;  
 sic poteris iuvenum convivia semper inire  
 et, quae non dederis, multa videre domi.*

Cruel man, you accomplish nothing with a guard placed before a tender girl,  
 Who must be watched over by her own temperament.  
 If any girl is pure with fear removed, then she is pure indeed;  
 She who doesn't do it because it isn't allowed, she does it.  
 Though the body may be protected well, the mind remains adulterous; 5  
 No girl can be guarded if she does not wish.  
 Although you can lock everything out, you cannot even guard the body;  
 With all things outside, the adulterer will be within.  
 She sins less, for whom it is permitted to sin;  
 Power itself renders the seeds of deceit more sluggish. 10  
 Trust me, stop stirring up her vices by forbidding;  
 You will better control them by your lenience.  
 I recently saw a horse striving to go like lightning,  
 His mouth struggling against his bridle,  
 But as soon as he sensed the reins relaxed, 15  
 He stopped and the loosened bridle fell free on his flowing mane.  
 We always strive for the forbidden thing and desire things denied us;  
 Thus does a sick man strive for prohibited waters.  
 Argus wore a hundred eyes on his forehead and neck,  
 Yet Love himself often deceived them. 20  
 Danae, handed over as a maiden into an everlasting  
 Wedding chamber of iron and stone, became a mother;  
 Penelope remained chaste, though she had no guard,  
 In the midst of so many young suitors.  
 Whatever is guarded, we desire more, the protection itself calls the thief; 25  
 Few men love what another allows.  
 She pleases not with her face, but by the love of her husband;  
 They think that there is something that has captured you.  
 She, whom a husband guards, doesn't become virtuous, but a valued adulteress;  
 Fear itself determines the price more than her body. 30  
 You may be offended, forbidden pleasure pleases;  
 The girl who can say "I'm afraid," alone pleases.  
 Still it is not lawful to guard a freeborn girl –  
 Let this fear afflict the bodies of a foreign race.  
 Surely as a guard can say "I did it," 35  
 Would she be chaste in the praise of your servant?  
 He is too unrefined, whomever a cheating wife harms,  
 And he possesses too few of the known customs of the city  
 In which the twin sons of Mars,

Romulus and Remus, are not without sin. 40  
What good to have a pretty girl, if only that she be chaste?  
Beauty and chastity cannot mix in any way.  
If you are wise, indulge your girl and soften that severe expression,  
Don't uphold the rights of a strict husband,  
And cultivate the friends whom your wife will have brought, 45  
And she will bring many. For thus will a great reward arrive with little work;  
Thus will you always attend the banquets of young men,  
And see many things in your house which you did not give.