THE ELEGIAC LIE: PROPERTIUS 1.15

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ELEGY 15 of the *Monobiblos* opens, with animated anguish,

> *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]

Broekhuizen soberly observed in 1727 that *dura* (1) was a substantive adjective. Six commentators have passed this information along to their readers; but none—Broekhuizen included—has said anything else about the opening couplet as a sentence, nor, except obliquely, about any one of the other eleven words of which it is composed.[2] A desire to identify the "danger" referred to in what follows (*periclo* [3]) has always proved a distraction. Throughout the early years of the scholarship there was a tendency to suppose that Propertius faced the "danger" of a voyage overseas.[3] In 1898 Rothstein introduced an alternative, without proofs or argumentation: the "danger" was an illness that was gravely afflicting the poet.[4] Bailey's objection (1956) to the older interpretation was cogent—"*quanto . . . periclo*, of a *prospective* voyage, seems exaggerated, unless there was some special cause for apprehension, in which case we should expect to hear more of it"—and welcome, since the idea "voyage" had in

[1] I follow the readings and line numeration of E. A. Barber's *Sexti Properti Carmina*[2] (Oxford 1960); standard works relevant to the issues here are: J. Broekhuizen, *Sex. Aur. Propertii Elegiarum Libri IV*[2] (Amsterdam 1727); F. G. Barth, *Sex. Aur. Propertius varietate lectionis et perpetua adnotatione illustratus* (Leipzig 1777); L. Santen, *Sex. Aur. Propertii Elegiarum Libri IV cum Commentario Perpetuo P. Burmanni Secundi* (Traiecti ad Rhenum 1780); C. T. Kuinoel, *Sexti Aurelii Propertii Carmina* 1–2 (Leipzig 1805); F. A. Paley, *Sex. Aurelii Propertii Carmina*[2] (London 1872); H. E. Butler, *Sexti Properti Opera Omnia with a Commentary* (London 1905); M. Rothstein, *Die Elegien des Sextus Propertius* I[2], 2[2] (Berlin 1920, 1924); H. E. Butler and E. A. Barber, *The Elegies of Propertius, edited with an introduction and commentary* (London 1933; repr. Hildesheim 1964); P. J. Enk, *Sex. Propertii Elegiarum Liber I (Monobiblos)* 1–2 (Leyden 1946); D. R. Shackleton Bailey, *Propertiana* (Cambridge 1956; repr. Amsterdam 1967); W. A. Camps, *Propertius Elegies Book I* (Cambridge 1961).

[2] Broekhuizen's words on *dura* are echoed *ad loc.* by Barth, Santen, Kuinoel, Paley, Rothstein, and Enk. As we shall see below, some commentators do refer to *perfidia* (2)—but only by inference or in retrospect, as they attempt to deal with the *mythica* (9–22) and an occurrence of *periuria* at line 25 (see below, 30 and n. 11).

[3] *Periclo* (3) = "sea-voyage": Santen 145, Paley 32, O. Ribbeck, "Zur Erklärung und Kritik des Properz," *RhM* 40 (1885) 487; "probably" = sea-voyage: Kuinoel 1.45, Butler 151, Butler and Barber 174, Enk 2.127 f.

[4] 1.150; he is followed by Camps 79.

any case been inferred from the literary "facts" of a subsequent elegy,[5] or from references to Calypso and Hypsipyle that do not occur until six and thirteen lines *later* respectively. Yet Bailey, with a candour at once commendable and disappointing, could demonstrate in favour of the interpretation "illness" only that *periculum* refers to a *particular* disease, and that only sometimes.[6]

Commitment to one or the other of these alternatives has naturally affected readings of what follows. Those inclining towards a sick poet take *lenta venis* (4) to mean "You are slow to visit [my sick bed];" do not account for the enormous space allotted to the heroines (9–22); and can find nothing plangent or meaningful in the unkind recurrence of *periclo* in line 27. Those inclined towards a voyaging poet take *lenta venis* to mean "You are unmoved [by my danger = voyage];" assume—openly or by implication—one or both of two analogies in the *exempla*: between Cynthia, the unfaithful girl friend, and the eternally faithful and abandoned "girl friends" Calypso, Hypsipyle, the murderess Alphesiboea, and Evadne the suicide;[7] or between Propertius and the mythic Ulysses and Jason (though the one is portrayed as having *deserted* Calypso; the other, as departing *to retrieve the Golden Fleece*); and dispose of *periclo* in its recurrence at 27 f. with the odd proposition "Ah! all too bold, you that will grieve over my peril, if misfortune befall you."[8]

Otis, the latest commentator, subscribes to neither of the traditional alternatives. In a paraphrase of the first eight lines he remarks that they presuppose a Propertius ". . . now here . . . in real danger." He interprets this "real danger," disconcertingly, as "not specified;" and considers Propertius cavalier, and careless: the *exempla* are "exaggerated as well as comically malapropos," and the development after line 25 "a return to the theme of Cynthia's perfidy or *perjury*" (his italics)—as if the *exempla* were decoration, gratuitous or perverse, and as if the poet in using the word *periuria* at line 25 had forgotten that he had begun with a reference to *perfidia*.[9]

The poem would thus seem to be something of a failure. The *exempla*, which occupy eight of its twenty couplets, offer no common denominator

[5]Ribbeck had felt that the *periculum* of elegy 15 referred "probably" (487) to the journey actually taken in elegy 17.

[6]*Op. cit.* 42, whence also the citation above.

[7]No commentator shows even a trace of uneasiness over the fact that neither Alphesiboea nor Evadne was abandoned, least of all by a "lover," voyaging or otherwise.

[8]This is the translation of Butler and Barber (175), distilled from Paley's words on the matter (33); oversight or some other consideration would seem to account for the failure of other commentators to push in like manner to its logical conclusion the equation *periculum* = sea-voyage.

[9]B. Otis, "Propertius' Single Book," *HSCP* 70 (1965). His paraphrases appear on pages 16 f.

applicable either to the poet or his addressee, and patternings of recurrent words or phrases, at first sight purposeful, lead the reader either nowhere, or astray.[10] I think nonetheless that the poem can be shown to be free of major or debilitating blunders, whether of structure or diction, and propose to offer in its defense a new interpretation. I shall begin, as no one hitherto has, with its beginning.

The numerous, frequent, and varied fears produced in Propertius by the callous hurtfulness of Cynthia's inconsistency—

Saepe ego multa tuae levitatis dura timebam

are set forth as foil for one form of pain, one fear that the poet has not until this moment experienced—

hac tamen excepta, Cynthia, perfidia.

The elements of this sentence are weighted so as to give *perfidia* the heaviest possible emphasis. Propertius uses the word three times only: twice in our elegy, once in the seventh of Book 4. In this later poem Cynthia, freshly inhumed, appears to the poet as he dreams, and complains of his phlegm and disloyalty in the immediate aftermath of her death. She finds fault with an insensitivity that has enabled him already to forget their love and his own protestations of undying fidelity (13–22); accuses him of failure to make the appropriate funeral arrangements, of absence from the procession and the rites of incineration that followed (23 f.); and goes on to describe in sad detail the wholesale takeover of her place in his life by a new girl, Chloris (35–50). Though he is guilty of still more, she will launch no larger attack. She, at least, has been faithful, and will take quietly the place she deserves among slighted ladies of myth (51–69). She began by calling Propertius *Perfide . . .* ! (13). As she cuts short her complaint and passes to instructions for the proper treatment of her remains, it is in *perfidia* that she finds the noun that fittingly describes the poet's misbehaviour (70):

celo ego perfidiae *crimina multa* tuae.

[10]Ribbeck 487 went so far as to divide the poem in two after the twelfth couplet, and was followed in this by Rothstein 1.150, 468. It seemed to them that there were two distinct themes, (1) Cynthia's continued infidelities and chilliness in spite of Propertius' *periculum* (1–24), and (2) the poet's expression of fear for himself and Cynthia in view of her manifest perjury (25–end). Rothstein felt too that the tone shifted noticeably with the injunction *desine* in line 25 and the fresh appeal to Cynthia in line 26. This division has not found sponsors other than R. Helm in his translation, *Properz Gedichte* (Berlin 1965), as far as I can tell; yet the scholarship is characterized by a certain uneasiness over the "transition" between lines 24 and 25. See Ites, *De Propertii Elegiis Inter se Conexis* (Diss. Göttingen 1908) 14–16, for a contorted and unconvincing rebuttal of Ribbeck-Rothstein. The general discomfort is reflected as well by Butler and Barber 175, Enk 2.125 (head-note) and 131, Camps 79 (head-note) and 80.

Perfide and *perfidiae* are conspicuously placed, at the beginning of Cynthia's complaint and at its conclusion. They are meant to cover actions (or failures to act) ranging from general insensitivity to the claims one has upon another (*ingrate*, 31) through breach of promise or compact (*foederis, fallacia verba*, 21) to outright erotic "two-timing" (35–50). Such is the force commentators have assigned *perfidia* in the opening sentence of our elegy: what the poet fears in Cynthia is "disloyalty."[11] Yet this idea is expressed in the "multa *tuae levitatis* dura" of its opening hexameter, and *perfidia* is differentiated from it in the pentameter. Furthermore, the hasty identification leaves out of consideration a sense often borne by the word *perfidia* in authors prior to and contemporary with Propertius, and significantly present in his own use of it toward the end of 1.15 itself:

> *tam tibi ne viles isti videantur ocelli,*
> *per quos saepe mihi credita perfidia est!*

Of the syntax involved in *credita perfidia est* no commentator has said a word; of *perfidia* itself only Rothstein and Paley have anything explicit to say. They take it to mean "false oaths of love."[12] The presence of the verb *credere*, and an occurrence of the adjective *perfidia* in the fourth elegy of Book 4, guarantee at least the presence in *perfidia* of the idea "falseness."

[11]Unambiguously, but only by implication and in retrospect, as was remarked above (30 and n. 2): Paley 33, " 'Not one of whom could induce you to follow her example, viz. of *constancy* and *devotion to one man*, and render yourself illustrious in history;' " Rothstein 1.150 (head-note), ". . . Frauen, an deren *treuer Liebe* sich Cynthia ein Beispiel nehmen sollte," and 154, "Cynthia sollte nach dem Wunsche des Dichters selbst ein Beispiel von *weiblichen Treue* werden. . . . ;" Butler and Barber 174 (head-note), "The poet has to face some peril, perhaps a journey overseas (cp. 9–20), and Cynthia shows her indifference *by taking to herself another lover*;" Enk 2.129, on lines 9–22, quotes Schöne, *De Propertii Ratione Fabulas Adhibendi* (Diss. Leipzig 1911) 21, "Calypso, Hypsipyle, Alphesiboea, Evadne, quae viris amatis in omne tempus amissis *fidem praestiterunt*" (in spite of the etymological sense Enk himself presumes elsewhere [2.131]; Kölmel, *Die Funktion des Mythologischen in der Dichtung des Properz* (Diss. Heidelberg 1967) 54, "Fast alle Gegenbeispiele sind . . . *der Treue* gewidmet. So in I 15, 9 ff. [he quotes lines 9–14 only] Kalypsos Tränen sind Zeichen *ihrer Treue*. . . . ;" Otis 16, ". . . perfidy . . . ," "*perfidy* or *perjury* . . . ," and ". . . *faithful* heroines of myth: Calypso, Hypsipyle, Alphesiboea, and Evadne, the glory of Attic [*sic*] *pudicitia*. . . ." (The italics, save Otis' *perjury* and *pudicitia*, are mine.) This identification is less ambiguous, naturally, in the work of translators, old or new: Phillimore, *Propertius* (Oxford 1906), ". . . treachery such as this;" Butler, *Propertius* (London 1912), ". . . treachery such as this;" Gantillion, *The Elegies of Propertius* (London 1912), "this perfidy;" Paganelli, *Properce, Elégies* (Paris 1929), ". . . cette perfidie;" Bonazzi, *Le Elegie di Sesto Properzio* (Rome 1939) and *Propertius Resartus* (Rome 1951), ". . . questa perfidia tua" [Italian and French friends inform me that *perfidia/perfidie* refer principally to acts of treachery]; Watts, *The Poems of Sextus Propertius* (Chichester 1961), ". . . treachery such as this;" Carrier, *The Poems of Propertius* (Bloomington 1963), "that you'd betray me so;" Helm (above, n. 9), ". . . dass du die Treue mir brächst."

[12]Paley 34; Rothstein 1.156.

Tarpeia there extends Titus Tatius an invitation to steal over the Capitoline and seize Rome. She will herself be guide, for

> *lubrica tota via est et* perfida: *quippe tacentis*
> *fallaci celat limite semper aquas.* [49–50]

The path is *perfida* in presenting to the eye an aspect of safety belied by the presence of water, imperceptible but abundant. This sort of language may recall the inhospitable *hospes* Paris, at Hor. *Carm.* 1.15.1–2; yet more meaningfully related to Propertius' explicit juncture of the ideas *perfidia* and credulity in elegy 1.15 are such *callidae iuncturae* as the following:

> *Ulla si iuris tibi peierati*
> *poena, Barine, nocuisset umquam,*
> *dente si nigro fieres vel uno*
> *turpior ungui,*
>
> crederem: *sed tu simul obligasti*
> perfidum *votis* caput, *enitescis*
> *pulchrior multo iuvenumque prodis*
> *publica cura.* [*Carm.* 2.8, *init.*]
>
> *ut* Proetum mulier perfida credulum
> falsis *impulerit* criminibus *nimis*
> *casto Bellerophontae*
> *maturare necem refert.* [*Carm.* 3.7.13–16]

For the use of the adjective in this same general sense but from a more explicitly erotic standpoint one may cite evidence from *Aeneid* 4. While Dido finds *perfidus* the epithet appropriate for Aeneas when he has *proved* disloyal (at line 421, for instance), she uses it of him also as he *pretends* in her presence that his love has not changed, but is in fact engaged behind her back in the preliminaries for desertion:

> *at regina* dolos *(quis* fallere *possit amantem?)*
> *praesensit, motusque excepit prima futuros,*
> *omnia tuta timens. eadem impia fama furenti*
> *detulit armari classem cursumque parari.* [296–299]
>
> *tandem his Aenean compellat vocibus ultro:*
> *'dissimulare etiam sperasti,* perfide, *tantum*
> *posse nefas tacitusque mea decedere terra?* [305–307]

While there is a difference between dissembling and disloyalty, the adjectival form of *perfidia* may be used to describe persons culpable on either count.

Perfidia itself may refer to disloyalty, as any dictionary makes clear; the different *indices verborum* reveal that it also means falseness, dissembling—or plain lying. The Parcae, for example, fix individual fates, or those of nations. A Roman poet may portray them as weavers, and speak of their "fatal fabric" as "indissoluble."[13] More often their function is translated

[13]Tibullus 1.7.2. See K. F. Smith, *The Elegies of Albius Tibullus* (Repr. Darmstadt 1964) 324.

into a metaphor of song, either separate from that of weaving, or conjoined with it. When this happens, the idea of "indissolubility" is transformed into one of truthfulness. So Horace can call the Parcae *veraces*, or *non mendaces*; Persius, *veri tenaces*.[14] Catullus both opens and closes his description of the Parcae's spinning with references to the truthfulness of their prophetic "Marriage of Peleus and Thetis" (64.323–381). They are introduced as striking up "*veridicos* . . . cantus" (306), and at the close of the passage the metaphor of song—and truthfulness—recurs:

> *haec tum clarisona pellentes vellera voce*
> *talia divino fuderunt carmine fata,*
> *carmine*, perfidiae *quod post nulla arguet aetas.* [320–322]

Veridicos . . . cantus, preceding (306), and *veridicum oraculum*, following (326), offer welcome controls for interpreting the reference to *perfidia* between: no succeeding age will impeach the Parcae for "lying."

Cicero's usage shows that, as etymology hints, *perfidia* is used precisely of lying to one who, more than any other, has reason to believe in the liar's truthfulness[15]—or of lying accompanied by an empty show of good faith. The banker Pythius, for example, sold C. Canius a little summer resort at Syracuse for an exorbitant price by telling him, first of all, that the property was not for sale; inviting him nonetheless for dinner there the next day; and in the meantime, persuading all the local fishermen to assemble in their skiffs before the hour in question and come ashore at the right moment with their whole day's catch. Canius was swindled, though he did not know it until the next day, when his new neighbor remarked, *hic piscari nulli solent*; *itaque heri mirabar quid accidisset*; and Pythius' salesmanship became paradigmatic of *dolus malus*, "criminal fraud," which was defined by Cicero's jurist friend C. Aquilius as *cum esset aliud simulatum, aliud actum*. Cicero accordingly calls Pythius, along with all *aliud agentes, aliud simulantes, 'perfidi, improbi, malitiosi.'*[16]

I do not of course wish to suggest that *perfidia* and its adjectival derivative are necessarily juridical jargon, when used in this sense. In the colourful and familiar language of Plautus *perfidia* appears in the company of *mendacia, fallaciae, fraudulentiae, falsiiurium, doli, fuci, astutiae,*

[14] *Vosque veraces cecinisse, Parcae* (Hor. *Carm. Saec.* 25); *Parca non mendax* (*Carm. Saec.* 2.16.39); *Parca tenex veri* (Pers. 5.48).

[15] Ernout-Meillet, *Dictionnaire Etymologique de la Langue Latine*[4] (Paris 1959) 497, assume that *perfidus* is used of one whose behaviour deviates from an expectation of trustworthiness on the part of his victim; Cicero's text offers passages where this behaviour takes precisely the form of dissimulation, and *perfidia* appears in the company of the verbs *fallere, decipere*, and *inducere*; the adjective *mendax*; and the nouns *fraus, fallacia, mendacia, insidiae, malitia* (for *malitia*, see the citation below from *Off.* 3.60 ["dolus *malus*"], the Plautine citation, and notes 16 and 17), and *simulator* (*Rosc.* 20–23, 46; *SRosc.* 117; *Fam.* 1.5a.4; *Inv. Rhet.* 1.71; and cf. *Commentariolum Petitionis* 39).

[16] Cic. *Off.* 3.58–60. The anecdote is prefaced as an action typical of those who "*orationis* vanitatem adhibuerunt" (58, *init.*).

sycophantiae, *praestigiae*, *malitia*, and *audacia* as part of the arsenal for duplicity and general bamboozlement indispensable to the clever slave or *meretrix*;[17] it is *Perfidia*, in fact, that is singled out from among the rest as a patron-goddess, and presented by the slave Libanus with a hymn of thanks for her presidency over their successful implementation:

> *Perfidiae laudes gratiasque habemus merito magnas*
> *quom nostris sycophantiis, dolis astutiisque*
> *[scapularum confidentia, virtute ulmorum freti]*
> *advorsum stetimus lamminas, crucesque compedesque*
> *nervos, catenas, carceres, numellas, pedicas boias*
> *inductoresque acerrumos gnarosque nostri tergi!* [*Asin.* 545–551]

In the light of the evidence adduced above, it seems fair to conclude that the term *perfidia* can refer to the simple lie, or, as the Plautine citations show, to an entire "act" performed by one party to hoodwink or defraud another. A glance at 1.15.39 f., with its evocation of forced tears and put-on pallor, reveals that such is the sense Propertius clearly has in mind in using the word *perfidia* at 1.15.34, immediately before.

What of *perfidia* in the opening sentence of our poem? Rhetoric and syntax here emphatically distinguish *perfidia* from *levitas* in general, as has been said; and it is unlikely to bear the sense "disloyalty." We may verify this unlikelihood by stepping outside the context of the opening sentence to consider the place occupied by this elegy in the stylized erotic autobiography of the *Monobiblos* at large. "Disloyalty" cannot be termed an exceptional cause of fear at this juncture in Book 1 (*hac tamen . . . excepta*).[18] It was precisely because Cynthia's behaviour betrayed signs of infidelity that Propertius composed the wry and elegant second elegy of the book; it was an open threat of abandonment and departure for Illyria with a new lover that caused the anguish of 8a, and the passing of this fear that occasioned the joy of 8b; elegy 11 is full of the feeling that Cynthia's stay at Baiae will bring a breach in their love, and this feeling is confirmed for the worse in elegies 12 and 13. There is no reason to take *perfidia* in line 2 differently from *perfidia* in line 34: we may assume that in our elegy Propertius will explore poetically the fear that his love is a liar.

Propertius speaks of this fear in the first verse (*timebam*) and in the fourth (*in nostro . . . timore*). *Periculum* is lodged between; yet commentators have persisted in seeking outside this configuration of fears a further

[17]See, e.g., *Capt.* 516–532, *Mil.* 187–192, 941 ff., *Ps.* 579–583.

[18]While I do not concur in detail with the quiet dogmatism of the recent and popular view of Skutsch ("The Structure of the Propertian *Monobiblos*," *CP* 59 [1963] 238 f.) and Otis (*art. cit.*; above, n. 1) that elegies 1–19 of the *Monobiblos* display the aspect of a stylized erotic autobiography, I do think that the ensemble is indeed an ensemble, and meant to be read from beginning to end; and that, in this sense, we may confidently assume that the "events" of elegy 15 are meant to be viewed, for instance, as "subsequent" to those of elegy 13 and "prior" to those of 17.

set of circumstances to which it might refer. I think we need not widen this search. *Pericula* are the contingencies of a situation or course of action; and events are usually so termed only so long as they are prospective. This is an important (if admittedly obvious) fact; and it accounts for another one, not unfamiliar, and of no less importance here: *periculum* is handled as if it were synonymous with other words that we ordinarily translate "fear."[19] When the young Aurunculeia refuses in tears to step forth into public view, afraid that her appearance may prove unworthy of her groom's expectations, the chorus offers the following inducement:

> *flere desine. non tibi Aurunculeia periculum est*
> *ne qua femina pulcrior*
> *clarum ab Oceano diem*
> *viderit venientem.* [Catull. 61.82–86]

Aurunculeia is troubled by the prospect that she may appear less beautiful than she would like; Propertius, by the prospect that Cynthia may be lying. His use of the word *periculum*, embraced by *timebam* and *timor*, is not therefore really surprising: it is an evocative variant upon the idea "fear," used—in trepidation—of a new set of imponderables that his love for Cynthia now forces him to face.[20]

She has said something to him that he fears is a lie. What might this be? And what in her behaviour impairs its credibility? The answer to the former question is found in Propertius' practice throughout the elegies: inspection of the vocabulary of dissimulation and mendacity shows that the only important elegiac lie, told the lover by his love, is that she is true.[21] The answer to the latter is found in Propertius' attribution to Cynthia of *lentitudo* (4), and the description of the form it takes in her conduct (5–8). Cynthia claims that she loves the poet, but with a painfully conspicuous

[19]The commentators need only have consulted a dictionary; e.g., Lewis and Short, *s.v.* II B. *Pericula*, so conceived, may like the Greek κίνδυνος refer to a situation in which the "chances" or "prospects" are good (Hor. *Carm.* 3.25.18 ff.) or bad—whether implicitly (*Carm.* 3.20.1 f.) or openly (Prop. 2.28a.15 f.). The life of the *amator* is, of course, uniquely *periculosa*, as the *indices verborum* to the elegists and the *Odes* of Horace reveal.

[20]For a divinity or "the divine" (*fortuna*, here) as *raptor*, sweeping one off (to a destination unknown or indeterminate, but against the victim's will—and to his apparent disadvantage or destruction) see 3.7.59 and 4.11.66; elsewhere in Propertius such *raptatores* are more palpable—the winds, or a human enemy (see also Bailey 42). Propertius attempts to arrest the attention of his phlegmatic addressee by an excited and exaggerated appeal that she at least look his way, to behold "in how great a state of 'chanciness' [his] *fortuna* sweeps him along" (*fortuna* is a typical hypostatization of the poet's fortune/misfortune of being in love with Cynthia; cf. 1.6.25 f. and 2.22a.17 ff., and their contexts).

[21]Note the following, at least: 2.6.1–12; 2.16.53–end; 3.25.5 ff.; 2.32.17 f.; 4.5.27 ff. (an elegiac *praeceptum* on the efficacy of this sort of lie); 2.24b.47 ff.; 2.26a.1–3. In Propertius the *amator* tells the *amata* the same lie: 1.13.5; 2.21 (entire); 1.11.7 f.

lack of ardour, given the poet's fearful suspicions to the contrary ("in nostro *lenta* timore *venis*").[22] This phlegmatic attitude is underscored by the almost literal reference to her lack of emotion in his use of the word *desidia* (6): the attention she so sedately continues to spend upon her personal adornment in the face of his own trepidation leads Propertius to conclude that she is preparing herself to meet a new lover (7–8). These lines (4–8) are not, of course, blandly narrated, but delivered to Cynthia as a rebuke. And it is this rebuke, it would seem, that the *mythica* following are meant in some way to support.

Propertius employs myth in equations or comparisons; it provides elements of likening or measure conformable with an intent to elevate or disparage the immediate subject, or to persuade or deter the immediate addressee. Lines 9–22 of our elegy are negative paradigm ("at *non sic* . . . ," 9) and, as is revealed both by the general contumely they contain and the recriminatory reflection found in the concluding couplet (23 f.), at the same time underhanded deprecation.[23] The problem here is to uncover from among its antecedents (1–8) the precise aim of the deictic "at *non sic*." What is the affront? From what does Propertius wish to dissuade Cynthia?

Commentators have uniformly assumed that Calypso, Hypsipyle, Alphesiboea, and Evadne are set forth as types of fidelity, corresponding *per contrarium* to Cynthia, to whom lines 1–8 ascribe infidelity. Evadne's presence here may be viewed as to the point. She is mentioned elsewhere in the same breath with Penelope (3, 13, 24), because her suicide is complementary to Penelope's continence. Penelope appears five times in the elegies, as the paradigm of unparalleled loyalty.[24] Her household, after all, was full for twenty years of would-be substitutes for the absent Ulysses, yet for twenty years she said "No;" Evadne said "No" only once, in one-sided and anticipatory disdain for the very idea of other men. Like Evadne's suicide, Hypsipyle's unceasing love for Jason is not without

[22] *Lentus* is used of those unmoved in face of another's commotion. Thus it may mean "cold-shouldered," in an erotic context, as here, or "phlegmatic" in a wider and more general sense. See Fordyce on Catull. 64.183; Ov. *Pont.* 8.18, *Am.* 3.6.59 f.; Prop. 2.33b.23 ff., 2.14.11 ff., 1.6.11 f., 2.15.7 f., 3.23.12 f. Enk's blunt statement *ad loc.* "**lenta venis**: immota *es*" is fully argued in his note on 1.4.10, Bailey's misgivings (42) notwithstanding: the latter, after all, took *periclo* (3) as referring to disease, with no warrant, as has been said, and with disconcerting disregard for the fact that Propertius did not, in any case, write *meo lenta periclo venis* but *meo lenta timore venis*.

[23] See Schöne 7–10 and Kölmel 46–107. The latter (54) calls passages like ours "Gegenbeispiele." Cf. the similar movement and tenor of 2.9.1–24 (the behaviour of mythic heroines [3–16; summarily stated, 17–18] supports an inference formulated in the opening couplet, and is turned against the addressee in 19–22) or, more pointedly, 1.2.15–20 (the behaviour of mythic heroines [*non sic* . . . 15–20], expanding a series of affronts from the life of nature [9–14], supports an opening inference or complaint [1–8], and ends in a summary reflection aimed at the addressee [21–24]).

[24] 2.6.23 f.; 9.3–8; 3.12.19–38; 3.13.9 f.; 4.5.7 f.

meaning, if we picture Cynthia here as being accused of infidelity. But the references to Calypso and Alphesiboea are jarring. The latter would be less so if the poet had (or could have) said that she slew her brothers as a defence against charges that she was unfaithful. As it is, her lover (i.e., her husband) was dead; her act of vengeance, no protestation of fidelity, but the measure of an extreme form of love, the existence of which was not in question. Calypso is an even poorer choice, if the poet's point was to hurl a charge of faithfulness at Cynthia. The goddess had little scope for promiscuities, insulated as she was, and dependent for love upon maritime mishap: the Ithacan was the first and the last.[25]

The conspicuous absence of Penelope here and the seemingly imperfect focus of the appeals to Calypso and Alphesiboea suggest that the phrase *at non sic* may not introduce types of fidelity at all; in addition, we have discovered good cause for believing that Cynthia in the opening eight lines is actually portrayed as *saying* she is in love, while her *behaviour* as she says so hints strongly that she is not. Perhaps, then, we should consider whether the *heroinae* following are not meant to serve as paradigms for Cynthia of credible because genuine protestations of love. On this analysis the details in which Calypso is presented acquire a relevance proportionate with their number and content. They clearly match by contrast the pregnant but scant particulars of the assault upon Cynthia; she is *lenta* and *desidiosa* (4, 6), while Calypso is *mota*, full of tears, *maesta*, and in pain (9–11, 13). Cynthia sits, occupied fully with coif, cosmetics, and the jewelry box, like a girl preparing to go out; Calypso is seated too, but sadly—her hair undone—assailing the unfairness of the sea. The function of immediate counterfoil is inescapable, and has not gone unobserved. But there is an additional and wider frame of reference in the portrayal of Calypso: her perturbation (9), tears (10), dejection and dishevelment (11), querulousness (12), and pain (13) are not random items of merely lugubrious or solely carping import. By the ancient reader they will have been viewed—ἔξω τοῦ ποιήματος, and on the level of erotic convention—as a full and salient register of τὰ σημεῖα ἔρωτος, familiar in their literary form since the days of Middle Comedy at least.[26] Propertius has cast Calypso as the *type* of a women really in love. The words *at non sic*, then, aimed directly at Cynthia, offer this measure: Calypso, in *her* love, was no dissembler; nor (worse, perhaps) ambiguous. Neither was Hypsipyle. No one would have thought her behaviour meant anything but that she was genuinely in love (it is mentioned how she in fact never loved another [19 f.], in case *nec sic*

[25]The tradition, as far as I can tell, mentions no other love; and Hyginus reports a version in which poor Calypso, though *immortalis*, slays herself at Ulysses' departure (H. J. Rose, *Hygini Fabulae* [Leyden 1933] 151).

[26]See F. Leo, *Plautinische Forschungen* (Repr. Darmstadt 1966) 145 and n. 1. The commentators have uniformly missed the point; Camps and Otis are typical: the former (80) writes, "Calypso *grieved* [my italics], Hypsipyle never loved again, Evadne killed

and *anxia* [17] might have failed in their purpose). Evadne's suicide, useful enough as a sign of fidelity, is still more pointed, given the context I assume here. There could be no more emphatic and final protestation of the genuineness of her love for Capaneus than this act of fiery self-destruction—unless, of course, it was Alphesiboea's fratricidal vengeance on behalf of an unfaithful husband; here indeed was a startling and memorable spectacle of what real love looks like.

Lines 9–22, then, need not be viewed as a morose reminder merely that other women have been faithful. They are in effect a pointed lesson for Cynthia in how loving women who are not lying actually behave. Cynthia, measured thus, is plainly deceitful and never to be confused with such as these. He urges that Cynthia cease recalling through present protestation (*tuis . . . verbis*, 25) *prevarications uttered upon oath* in days bygone (*periuria*, 25). And this makes sense, if we have taken *perfidia* at line 2 aright: fresh lies remind the gods—who have forgotten—of the old.[27] *Periculum* too recurs, not strangely: Cynthia's exposure of herself to the gods' disfavour is a *particular* risk Propertius does not want to take, or, rather, a risk he could wish she would not force him to face through her continued lying (*nostro . . . periclo*, 27). After all, he loves her, and harm to her is harm of equal hurt to him (27–32).[28] So, another more agitated enjoinder against lying—final, and unambiguous. The poet is fully alive

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herself for her husband, Alphesiboea went even further [?] and killed her brother[s];" the latter (16) writes, "Lines 9–24 describe the faithful heroines of myth: Calypso, Hypsipyle, Alphesiboea, and Evadne, the glory of Attic [*sic*] *pudicitia. All* of these *mourned in squalor* for their men!" (My italics.) Propertius displays elsewhere intimate familiarity with the τόπος noted by Leo: see 1.3.43–46; 2.20.1–14; 3.8.9–20, 23–28; 3.25.5 f., and, for a *tour de force*, 3.6 in its entirety. The only σημεῖον ἔρωτος omitted in the portrayal of Calypso here is *pallor*; but then Cynthia displays that herself, deceitfully, at the close of the elegy (39).

[27]The relationship of *perfidia* (2) and *periuria* (25), a vexation for the commentators (above, nn. 10, 11), seems thus comfortably—and simply—resolved: as the imperfects *timebam* (1), *iurabas* (35), *cogebat* (39), and the perfect *credita . . . est* (34) reveal (not to mention "revocare" [25] and *oblitos* [26]), the *periuria* of 25 are distinct from Cynthia's present lying (*hac . . . perfidia* [2]; *tuis verbis* [25])—a conclusion one might have foreseen from knowing that *perfidia* and *periuria* are not in any case synonyms. As far as structural procedure is concerned, the integrity of the ensemble 1–24/25–end is guaranteed when we perceive that 25–26 comprise an expected enjoinder: the *mythica* have been deployed to illustrate the poet's inference that Cynthia is lying, and to dissuade her from doing so (above, 36 ff. and n. 20).

[28]For the meaning *here* of *periclo* see Bailey 44 f. For the ἀδύνατα and the appropriate translation of *sis quodcumque voles, non aliena tamen* (32) see Rothstein, Butler and Barber, Enk, and Camps, all *ad loc.* One might add that *non aliena* (*eris*) restates, negatively, the clause *prius quam tua mutetur cura* of the preceding verses, and means "you will not cease to be an object of concern (= love, here) to me." See Ter. *Haut.* 75–77 and Ashmore's note on line 76 (*The Comedies of Terence* [Oxford 1908]); Plaut. *Mostell.* 940–42; Cic. *Phil.* 8.18.

to Cynthia's well-being and his own, and governed in this both by what we have discovered the tenor of lines 1–8 and 9–24 to be: Cynthia says she loves, but does not, as is obvious to him; and by his recollection that when she lied before, she did so upon oath: "I swear by these eyes of mine; may they fall out into my hands, if I prove liar." How dare she look upon the sun, that sees all; nor fail to tremble, knowing, as he does, that she has done precisely what she says *now* she has not (33–38)? Why, finally, pass through shades of pallor *forced*; why induce from eyes *unwilling* all these tears (39 f.)?

The commentators face the concluding couplet with some calm. As a sentence, it presents little difficulty, given the varied intractabilities in what has gone before. Is *quîs* ablative masculine, referring to Cynthia's eyes, last mentioned four lines above; or neuter, referring to the ploys that inform *all* eight lines preceding? Is *pereo* used in its tropical and weakened erotic sense or does it, with greater emphasis upon its root signification, signify actual demise? Regarding the former it should be observed that *quîs* is ultimately and by nature *ambiguous*; regarding the latter it must be said with Rothstein and Enk that the tense or aspect of *moniturus*, taken in conjunction with *pereo*, suggests strongly that the more literal sense of the latter is uppermost in Propertius' mind: the poet in his death will constitute a *monimentum* for others, like him, in love.[29]

I should like to conclude by suggesting that the terms of the *monimentum*—

O nullis tutum credere blanditiis

—support the interpretation toward which I have been working here. They contain in *tutum*, negatived,[30] the idea initially introduced into the poem through the poet's use of *periclo* (3), and repeated with sharpened focus at line 27; and *blanditiis credere* colourfully and finally touches upon the nexus "mendacity-credulity," a central theme. Propertius closes archly, by translating the particularities of his quarrel with Cynthia into an elegiac aphorism of like import.[31]

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[29]Rothstein 1.157 f.; Enk 2.135.

[30]Rothstein, *ibid.*

[31]That the adjective *blandus* refers to verbal insincerity is well known (see, e.g., *Oxford Latin Dictionary* [Oxford 1968] *s.v.* 2b, 3); and that *blanditiae* may be taken as insincere is an inherent potentiality of the word—its presence in a given case being controlled in part by context. The whole of our poem (verses 33–40 in particular), and the phrasing and point of "O *nullis* tutum *credere blanditiis*," guarantee that presence here (see also Plaut. *Bacch.* 50; Cic. *Rep.* 4.7.7, *Amic.* 91 for pointed equations of *blanditia* with *adsentatio*, *fallacia*, etc.).