THE DEAD AND THE QUICK: STRUCTURAL CORRESPONDENCES AND THEMATIC RELATIONSHIPS IN PROPERTIUS 4.7 AND 4.8

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THE JUXTAPOSITION of the seventh and eighth poems in Propertius' fourth book has caused concern to many. How is it that Cynthia, dead and buried in the first poem, returns in the second in the fulness of life? Early critics seek a solution in the dates of composition. 4.8, they say, is an early poem, misplaced.[1] Recent solutions have been sought along more literary lines; critics have hinted at a relationship between the two poems, evident in similarities of style and content,[2] underpinned by the use of Homeric myth.[3] In what follows I attempt to track down this relationship by a close examination of structure and theme. I believe it will be possible to demonstrate that the poems are written as a pair, and that the poet intends that we should read them as a pair.

If that is so, it is reasonable to ask why. With what purpose in mind has the poet so constructed them? How does it affect our reading? Does it, for instance, offer any answer to the apparent conundrum of the order of the poems? In preparation for an answer to these questions I shall look for pairs of poems, or sections of poems,[4] elsewhere in the corpus, that relate to each other in a way comparable to 4.7 and 8. An understanding of the literary techniques common to these groupings will, I believe, help us to grasp the poet's purpose in 4.7 and 8.

Both elegies open with introductions (one couplet in 4.7, two in 4.8)[5] that detach the poet/lover from the beloved. In 4.7 the poet puts forward a general

The text of Propertius used is the Oxford Classical Text edited by E. A. Barber (1953). My thanks to Charles McNelis, to whom this article owes a debt, and to the anonymous referees of the journal.

[1] Postgate 1881: liii; Damsté 1928: 218; Fedeli 1965: xxvi.

[2] Hubbard 1974: 153, 4.8 represents a "displacement" of the tragedy of 4.7 into a sort of "comedy of manners"; Dalzell 1980: 33, "the two elegies ... belong together. Their common theme, their metrical technique and their similarity of style and scope make this clear"; Celentano 1956: 35–36; Jäger 1967: 95–98; Papanghelis 1987: 196–197; Murgia 1989: 265, n. 11; Dimundo 1990: 81–84.

[3] Evans 1971; Currie 1973: 620; Hubbard 1974: 153–156; Dalzell 1980: 33.

[4] Perhaps I can avoid the controversies that surround poem division in Propertius by saying that what are under discussion are passages of text which display a sufficiently major break to occasion some separation in a standard modern printing, but which require to be read as a whole to present their full meaning. I am claiming this status for 4.7 and 4.8.

[5] I am assuming that 19 and 20 belong after line 2. The four lines give a brief general report of the incident, with no names mentioned. The details become clear with the narrative. The order of events is as follows: after her unexpected return, Cynthia pursues Phyllis and Teia to a local hostelry (*obscurae ... taberna viae* 62), beats them up (*victrix* 63), then returns (*recurrit*) to deal with the waiting Propertius. The continuity of 1–2, 19–20 is suggested by the verbal echoes between these four lines and 58–62: *aquosas/aquas, vicina/vicinas, turba/turbant, sonuit/sonat, arcana taberna/obscurae ... taberna viae.*

sententia: *sunt aliquid manes.* He is making a contribution to a "philosophical" debate,[6] and citing what follows to prove his point.[7] By adopting this stance he distances himself from the events. It is not immediately clear that he is talking about himself. In 4.8 a similar effect is achieved by different means. Here the role the poet adopts is that of story-teller, *disce.* Again the story that he tells involves himself. He admits this grudgingly in line 20 (*famae non sine labe meae*). But all he seems concerned with is the impact on his reputation of the noisy events at the tavern—where he was not even present.[8] Though the two openings are not similar in mood—4.7 pretends a philosophical gravity, while in 4.8 the poet is a "sprightly raconteur"[9]—the stance is comparable, and much in contrast to the intense and direct communication with the beloved (on which the reader eavesdrops), which is typical of the love elegies in Books 1–3. The poet has located himself outside the poems, ready to set them in motion like mini-epics.[10]

What follows is in each case an "ecphrasis," a self-contained passage of description, the one (4.7.3–12) of the spectral figure of Cynthia come back from the dead, standing by the poet's bed, the other (4.8.3–14) of the weird rites at Lanuvium, in which a virgin has to climb down into a deep cave to feed a snake. If the snake accepts the food, the girl's virginity is proven, and the crops will be good. The description of the descent reads like a descent to the underworld,[11] as the passage from 4.7 describes a revenant from the underworld. One might note too that as the virgin descends to prove her chastity, Cynthia has come back to the upper world to give proof of her fidelity.[12]

[6] For the philosophical debate compare Lucretius 4.33–39: *atque eadem nobis vigilantibus obvia mentes / terrificant atque in somnis, cum saepe figuras / contuimur miras simulacraque luce carentum, / quae nos horrifice languentis saepe sopore/excierunt: ne forte animas Acherunte reamur / effugere aut umbras inter vivos volitare / neve aliquid nostri post mortem posse relinqui* (see also Lucretius 3.1078–79).

In Propertius himself, with Lucretian echoes: 2.34.51–54: *harum nulla solet rationem quaerere mundi / nec cur fraternis Luna laboret equis, / nec si post Stygias aliquid restabit †erumpnas† / nec si consulto fulmina missa tonet.* (cp. Lucr. 4.969). For the continuing debate see Juvenal *Sat.* 2.149–152: *esse aliquos manes . . . nec pueri credunt.*

[7] In this regard it is worth comparing Propertius with the Homeric original. Achilles' exclamation comes at the end of the episode (*Iliad* 23.103–107). It is a startled reaction to Patroclus' appearance and disappearance; the "philosophical" content is incidental. Propertius extrapolates it and sets it at the head of the narrative, so that it encircles the poem, becomes so to speak its raison d'être. This has its effect on the content. Achilles, having just failed to embrace Patroclus, comments on the "physiology" of the ψυχή (φρενές οὐκ ἔνι). Propertius defers the embrace and concentrates only on death and survival, ghosts and the pyre. His Homer is filtered through Lucretius (see previous note). Note also how the lapidary style of the Latin (*sunt aliquid manes*) contrasts with the running informality (ὦ πόποι, ἦ ρά τίς ἐστι καὶ εἰν Ἀΐδαο δόμοισι . . .) of the Greek.

[8] Richardson 1977: 463, "observe how with this high flown phrase the poet archly dissociates himself from the vulgar violence of the fracas."

[9] Currie 1973: 617.

[10] He is of course at the same time a character within the poems. The irony of this apparently objective self-description is one of the qualities the two poems have in common.

[11] Richardson (1977) hears an echo in line 5 of Vergil *Aeneid* 6.126–129 and 237–238.

[12] In the ritual the test of virginity is secondary; see Latte 1960: 167. Propertius has chosen to make it more central. Observe that both the test of virginity and the oath of fidelity involve the

In the next scenes (4.7.13–22, 4.8.15–26 omitting 19 and 20) we return abruptly to an everyday world, the Subura at the heart of the city, and the Appian Way that leads from Rome to Lanuvium. It is notable how each location is personified and said to be watching over events, the Subura *vigilax* (watchful), the Appian Way called to witness in an apostrophe (*te teste*).[13] Both scenes are "action-packed," Cynthia in 4.7 climbing out of her window, hanging at the end of a rope, in 4.8 driving the chariot herself hell-for-leather, leaning forward hanging over the pole[14] (note 7.17: *fune pependi*; 8.21 *temone pependit*). In 4.7 Cynthia and Propertius warm the pavement with their cloaks (20), in 4.8 the wheels whirl over the stone blocks of the Appian Way (18). In 4.7 Cynthia comes down the rope in order to "commit" Venus at the crossroads (19); in 4.8 Cynthia's "real" reason for her journey to Lanuvium is not Juno, but Venus (16). In 4.7 there is an unspoken pledge (*taciti* 21); in 4.8 Propertius will say nothing (*taceo* 23) about the fop who shares Cynthia's carriage.

What follows are funeral arrangements in 4.7 and party arrangements in 4.8. The juxtaposition is piquant: in 4.7 Cynthia accuses Propertius of neglecting the procedures involved in carrying the body of the dead Cynthia to her pyre beyond the city walls; in 4.8 Propertius makes no mistakes in the arrangements to invite Phyllis and Teia to join him for the evening. The physical arrangements are described with precision: *quaeris concubitus*?[15] *inter utramque fui.* In 4.7 Cynthia upbraids him for not calling on her name: *unum impetrassem te revocante diem* (24); in 4.8 he doesn't neglect to call: *his ego constitui noctem lenire vocatis* (33).

Domestic recriminations follow in 4.7. First Lygdamus (35): "torture the truth from him." Then a list of individuals (Nomas, Lalage, Petale, etc.) slated for punishment or thanks. In 4.8 we turn to the details of the party, with a rogues' gallery of participants, led off once again by Lygdamus (37), and followed by fluteplayers, castanet players, and a dancing dwarf. A striking verbal echo is the word *saliva*—of the poisonous secretion added to the wine by Nomas (and presumably served by Lygdamus) at 4.7.37, and the Methymnaean wine served by Lygdamus at 4.8.38. These are the only two occasions when Propertius makes use of the word.

The next section is the hinge of each poem. In 4.7 (49–54) Cynthia finally declares her purpose; in 4.8 (49–54) her entry marks the turning point of the

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hissing of snakes—8.7–8: *serpentis honos... ex ima sibila torquet humo*; 7.53–54: *vipera nostris/ sibilet in tumulis.*

[13] In the case of *Appia* the personification may be assisted by implied reference to the gens, or to a female member of it, looking with disgust at Cynthia's antics. Richardson (1977: 464, *ad loc.*) hears an echo of Cicero's evocation of Appius Claudius in his attack on Clodia in *Pro Caelio* 14.33–34.

[14] Hubbard (1974: 155) points out that Cynthia assumes the position of Juno herself as depicted on coins of Lanuvium; see Latte 1960: Plate 10b. Juno is in her chariot, carrying sword and spear, leaning out over the horses. The snake is shown below.

[15] *Concubitus* usually implies sex; for reclining at dinner we would expect *accubitus* (Richardson 1977: 466, *ad loc.*).

narrative. In 4.7 Cynthia asserts her fidelity; in 4.8 she lays bare Propertius' infidelity. There is a nice contrast between Cynthia's more conciliatory manner at this point in 4.7, *non tamen insector*, and the violence of her assault in 4.8.

The following scenes (4.7.55–70; 4.8.55–70) each show, though in very different ways, what happens inside—in the *gemina sedes* beyond the river, or behind the *valvae* in Propertius' garden. Sexual aberrants suffer condign punishments, Clytemnestra and Pasiphae in 4.7.57–58, Teia and Phyllis in 4.8.57–58. The joyous music of the abode of the blessed (4.7.61–62) is set against the cacophony of Rome by night (4.8.59–60). Note 4.7.62, *mitratisque sonant Lydia plectra choris*; 4.8.60, *omnis et insana semita nocte sonat.* As Andromeda bewails her arms bruised with chains (*livere catenis/ bracchia*, 4.7.65–66), Cynthia wears out her arms with beating *(lassavit bracchia plagis*, 4.8.67). Suffering woman becomes avenging woman. Andromeda's hands did not deserve the chill rocks (*nec meritas*, 4.7.66); Propertius' eyes got what they deserved (*qui meruere*, 4.8.66).

By line 71 in each poem something like normality is restored. The scene from the underworld has faded; the battle is over. It is time to make terms and give instructions[16] (*sed tibi nunc mandata damus* 4.7.71; *tum demum ad foedera veni*[17] 4.8.71 and cp. 4.7.91 *iubent leges*; 4.8.74 *formula legis*, 4.8.81 *indixit leges; respondi ego "legibus utar"*). In each case instructions start with a conditional protasis (*si forte* [4.7.71], *si vis* [4.8.73]), followed by four lines of negative commands (*ne* 4.7.73; *ne* 76; *neque* 4.8.75; *nec* 76; *cave* 77). Then the crucial instruction: burn the poems (*quoscumque meo fecisti nomine versus/ ure mihi* [4.7.77–78]). Sell Lygdamus (*Lygdamus a primis, omnis mihi causa querelae/ veneat* [4.8.79–80]). In both cases the command is made more emphatic by enjambement. Both commands are somewhat puzzling[18]—but the structural correspondence at least is clear.

[16] Dimundo (1990: 81) notes the parallel.

[17] On *foedera* see Noonan 1983: 46.

[18] What does the burning of the verses signify? They are mine, and I should have their benefit (*mihi, meas* [78]); he may no longer continue to use me. In a sense they are to be an offering (*ure mihi*). Does she wish to free herself of his literary clutches? If so, we might at first wonder why she asks for a poem 6 lines later; we note, however, that she specifies that it must be *dignum* (83); and she provides the text. The interpretation of the lines depends also on how we read *pelle* (79 f., "drive away the ivy"). Some are puzzled by the injunction: it "contrasts rather curiously with those sepulchral epigrams ... in which ivy is exhorted to surround the graves of poets" (Shackleton Bailey 1956: 253–254). Sandbach (1962: 273–274) proposes that we read *pone* for *pelle* in 79. (But why should *pone* become *pelle*, especially if the sense is less obvious?) A critical question is whether line 80 describes something desirable or undesirable: does one (did Cynthia) want to have the ivy tendrils (like hair) in twisted knots around one's bones? It is not the picture offered by 94 (*mixtis ossibus ossa teram*)—and the two lines at such close quarters should have some bearing on each other. Supporters of *pone* cite Simias *AP* 7.22 which calls on the ivy to creep gently over the tomb of Sophocles. It would not, however, be beyond Propertius to turn his model on its head. We note that "above the tomb" in Simias has become "around the bones" and the "gently" (ἠρέμα) may, if we accept the reading *mollia*, have undergone a more dramatic change. For the only sense you can get out of "soft bones" is proleptic: that is, that the ivy makes the bones crumble. For discussion of the reading, and other suggestions, see Camps 1965, Sandbach 1962, Shackleton Bailey 1956.

In 4.7 Cynthia continues with instructions concerning the location and care of her tomb. There is no equivalent for this in 4.8. Indeed it stands out in 4.7 as a passage of particular solemnity which survives the subversive irony that characterizes much of the poem.[19] It would be consistent with this that it should be exempt from the ironic effect of the "double reading."

At 4.7.87 and 4.8.81 the poems come together again. Instructions give place to ritual and religious law. In 4.7 Cynthia tells Propertius, from her advantaged view point, of the laws governing visitations from the underworld, warning him to take her words seriously. She is a dream from the "holy" gates. 4.8 describes the process of cleansing and fumigating with the use of sulphur and water. The ritual nature of the procedure is evident in line 86. Three times (*ter*) she touches his head with sulphur.[20] The lustration that Cynthia performs belongs both to love magic and to the getting rid of disease.[21] Both are relevant here. The foulness must be cleansed (*pura aqua).* The evil spirits must be exorcised.[22] So as the *pia somnia* of 4.7 are sent back to the underworld, the evil spirits that bring disease are driven back whence they came.

Cynthia leaves in 4.7 with a promise (or threat) of an eternal embrace: *mox sola tenebo* (93). Propertius attempts to embrace the departing shade and fails. 8 ends with a successful consummation.The final couplet of 4.8 (87–88) corresponds structurally (and ironically) to the final couplet of 4.7 (95–96).[23] But it comments

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On balance I now accept (as I did not before [Warden 1980: 53]) *pelle* and the literary interpretation. It provides continuity (79–80 follows from what precedes—the destruction of the poems—and leads to what follows—the epitaph on the tomb) and thematic point ("keep your ivy tendrils out of my tomb; that's all finished; others will have you now; you'll be mine later").

Why is Lygdamus *omnis causa querelae* in 4.8? As far as the narrative goes, he took no initiative in setting up the party. I suppose it is a tradition of comedy that the slave suffer for the master's crimes (Richardson 1977: 470, *ad loc.*). We might note that he is the first to be punished in 4.7. Like the poems, he is to be burnt (7.35, *Lygdamus uratur*). For his role in 4.8 it is interesting to compare 3.6. Here Lygdamus is offered his freedom if he can bring about reconciliation: 41–42: *si e tanto felix concordia bello / extiterit per me Lygdamus liber eris.* In 4.8 it is no *felix concordia* but total submission *(supplicibus palmis).* And Lygdamus, so far from being freed, is to be put up for sale. One might compare line 32, *poena erit* (*sc.* for Propertius) *ante meos sera sed ampla pedes*, with 8.72, *vix tangendos praebuit illa pedes.* In 4.8 the *poena* follows.

[19] Warden 1980: 53–58.

[20] *Ter* is of course commonplace in ritual procedures. An appropriate example is Tibullus 1.5.11–14, where the poet is describing the measures he took when Delia was sick. First he purified her with sulphur, then three times offered prayers with offerings of meal to avert her evil dreams. See Murgatroyd 1980: 164–166, *ad loc.*

[21] See Smith 1913 and Murgatroyd 1980 for examples. Love magic: Theocritus 24.91–100; Nemesianus 4.62; Ovid *Rem. am.* 260; Tibullus 1.2.61 (for lustration with fire); Disease: Claudian *De sexto cons. Hon.* 324; Pliny *HN* 35.176–177. See Currie 1973: 619 f. on sulphur in *Odyssey* 22.481–482.

[22] See Murgatroyd 1980: 164, "*lustratio* was a sort of exorcism."

[23] One should observe, though the point is obvious, that both poems take place in and around the same location. Throughout 7 Propertius is in bed (*fulcro* 3, *lecti* 6). Much of the action of 8 takes place around a bed (*lectulus* 35, *fulcra* 68, *lecto/toro* 87/8).

also on the preceding couplet. Cynthia demonstrates in the world of the living the *mox sola tenebo* which in 4.7 is promised after death.[24]

Let me conclude this section by trying to sum up diagrammatically the main structural correspondences:

4.7	4.8
1–2 Introduction	1–2 Introduction
	(+19–20)
3–12 Description of ghost	3–14 Description of ritual at Lanuvium
13–22 Life on the Subura	15–26 en route to Lanuvium
23–34 Cynthia's funeral	27–36 Preparations for the party
35–48 Lygdamus etc: punishments	37–48 Lygdamus etc: party–time
49–54 Assertion of *fides*	49–54 Entry of Cynthia. Discovery of *perfidia*
55–70 *Gemina sedes*	55–70 The attack
71–80 Instructions	71–80 Instructions
[81–86 Cynthia's tomb]	
87–94 Return of ghosts	81–86 Fumigation
95–96 Embrace aborted	87–88 Embrace fulfilled

If the case has been made for structural parallels, the next question is, what are they for? The first approach to an answer, as I indicated earlier, will be to look for similar pairings elsewhere in the corpus. Are there juxtaposed poems, or sections of poems,[25] which relate to each other in a way comparable to 4.7 and 4.8? And if so, what light do they throw on the poet's intentions?

The sort of juxtaposition that comes to mind first involves temporal sequence—two episodes, in separate poems or sections of poems, where the objective situation changes between one episode and the next. One may take as an example poem 8a and b from the *Monobiblos*. Cynthia is going away. The poet expresses his distress. She changes her mind and decides to stay. The poet expresses his exultation. The two sections are not continuous. There is an interval of time during which things happen off stage. The objective situation is changed; and the second section responds to this change. The same is true of 2.28a and b: Cynthia is sick; the poet prays for her restoration to health; she is healed; he gives thanks. The change of situation allows the poet to ring the changes on his erotic monologue.

J. T. Davis, who has analysed this type of "dramatically paired poems,"[26] identifies the following criteria, among others. The poems, or sections of poems, are "to be imagined as having been written by the poet *as the events described in them are going on*" (his italics); and they are irreversible.[27] Clearly this will not do for 4.7 and 4.8, both of which are narrated after the event. Furthermore they

[24] Fedeli 1988: 321; Dimundo 1990: 81.

[25] See above, n. 4.

[26] Davis 1977: 20. He includes in the category Propertius 1.8a–b; 1.11 and 12; 2.28a and b; 2.29a and b; Ovid *Amores* 1.11 and 12; 2.2 and 3; 2.13 and 14; 3.7 and 8.

[27] Davis 1977: 20.

are, notoriously, not irreversible. In other words they do not belong to the same (fictionally) real temporal sequence.

One "dramatic pairing" that Davis includes may come closer to our needs. 2.29 falls into two sections. In the first (A) the poet is out alone at night and is arrested by a group of *erotes*, who rebuke him for his infidelity, put a rope around his neck and drag him back home, presumably to a house shared with Cynthia. In the second (B) the poet sneaks into Cynthia's bedroom early in the morning to check on whether she is sleeping alone. He is stunned by her naked beauty. She wakes, rebukes him for his spying, and throws him out.

It is questionable whether this poem belongs in Davis's list. It is certainly not imagined as written "as the events are going on" (Davis admits this). Both sections are narratives after the event. And it is not obvious that it is irreversible. A apparently took place last night (*hesterna nocte*); B at least several days earlier (*ex illo felix nox nulla*). It is hard to see how the two sections can be brought together as episodes in a temporal sequence. Critics have used great ingenuity in attempting to do so. A, they say, is the story that Propertius told Cynthia to explain his arrival at her bedside early in the morning; whereas B is what actually happened.[28] But there are limits to a critic's licence to write stage directions.[29] I find it easier to believe that the two sections are independent in the sense that they describe two different events, but related in that the two events have a common or contrasting theme, and that the two sections are tied together by structural correspondences comparable to those discovered in 4.7 and 8.

The first line of each section[30] outlines the time of day and the setting, each with its clause starting after the penthemimeral caesura and its imperfect subjunctive (*vagarer, quiesceret*). Propertius is alone (A2); so is Cynthia (B24). He encounters his "adversaries"[31] and is dumbfounded (A4: *timor*; B25: *obstipui*). In A Propertius is confronted with a vision that threatens him with harm (*visa est vincla parare mihi* [A6]); in B he remembers Cynthia asking Vesta whether her dreams threatened them with harm (*mihi ... nocitura forent* [B28]). Both parties, Erotes and Cynthia, are naked (A7, B30). In both cases Propertius is caught, as runaway slave[32] or early morning spy. The "life-styles" of the faithless Propertius and the "stay-at home" Cynthia are contrasted (*nescioquas quaeris ... fores* [A14]; *sat erit mihi ... unus* [B33]). Four lines follow in each (A15–18, B35–38), the first describing Cynthia ready to make love, and smelling of love, while in the second she bitterly shows her bed undisturbed by copulation or the smell of sex. The scenes are brought to a conclusion with the *erotes* throwing the

[28] In addition to Davis see White 1961: 217–223; Williams 1980: 131–133; Benediktson 1989: 59–65; Cairns 1977: 325–349.

[29] See Jäger 1967: 235.

[30] I start from Davis's analysis in his chapter on 2.29, esp. p. 68.

[31] Davis's term.

[32] For Propertius as runaway slave, see Cairns 1971.

poet's cloak on to him,[33] Cynthia getting out of bed, putting on her slippers, and pushing him away. The *erotes* absolve him because he has pledged true love (*certos spondet amores* [A19]) and bid him stay at home at nights (*noctes disce manere domi* [A22]). Cynthia, on the other hand, rejects his advance, so that he is deprived of his sacred love (*sancti amoris* [B41]) and barred from the house (*felix nox mihi nulla fuit* [B42]). The two sections are contrasting scenes in a diptych, linked not by temporal sequence but by the ironic juxtaposition of theme. Through the device of parallel poems, the poet wins his freedom from the yoke of a lover's stereotype, the monochrome expression of suffering, outrage, or joy. He can illustrate different aspects of the erotic life, a diversity of moods: the romance and fantasy of A, the sour realism of B.

About another pair at the end of book two there is less controversy. 2.33a and b are accepted by most scholars as separate poems.[34] In the first the poet laments the rites of Isis which will deprive him of Cynthia's sexual partnership for ten days; in the second he complains that the object of his desires (presumably Cynthia, though some deny it) won't come to bed, but will stay up till the wee hours drinking and gaming. Camps (1967: 219) after discussing and rejecting the possibility that the poem is a continuous monologue, concludes that the two "are, however, not unrelated, having both for subject a frustrated condition of the lover. It will be noticed that they are identical in length." I shall pursue this hint of a relationship.

Both sections open with reference to night and the time that must be waited out (*iam noctes . . . decem* [A2]; *iam* [B23] *mediae . . . noctes* [B25]). There follows in each a curse (*utinam pereant* [A3], *a pereat* [B27]) on the cause of the trouble (the *sacra* of Isis [A], the inventor of wine [B]). There is a similarity, metrical and stylistic, in the lofty language[35] in which perpetrator and victims are described (*Inachis Ausoniis* [A4], *Icare, Cecropiis* [B29]). In both cases the results were bitter (*amara fuit* [A6], *amarus odor* [B30]). The passage following describes physical change and degradation: Io (*tu . . . Io* [A7]) takes on bovine shape and loses the capacity to speak (*perdere verba* [A10]); wine causes the death of Eurytion and Polyphemus *tu . . . o Eurytion, . . . tu Polypheme* [B31–32]); it destroys beauty (*forma perit* [B33]) and leads to physical corruption; its victims lose the capacity to recognise their lovers (*suum nescit . . . virum* [B34]). Twelve lines into each section there is an abrupt reversal. Io is restored to her beauty and godhead (*superba . . . es* [A14]); Cynthia is beautiful in spite of her drinking (*formosa es* [B36]). The mood changes to one of optimism. In spite of delay and adversity we will win out—over religious abstinence, over drinking and dicing. At A17–18 the poet asks Io why she wants women to sleep alone (*viduas dormire puellas*) and advises her to go back where she belongs. At B41–42 he explains that no woman willingly sleeps alone

[33] It was customary for runaway slaves to be stripped (Cairns 1971: 457).

[34] Miller 1981–82: 104 and n. 1; see Jäger 1967: 230–234; for a unitary view see White 1961: 225–228, Richardson 1977: *ad loc.*

[35] Miller 1981–82: 105 and n. 7.

(*lecto recipit se sola*). Love, he adds confidently, has its own imperatives. In the final lines of A the poet is looking forward to the end of the period of abstinence, when they will make the journey three times in a row. B concludes with words that apply to both parts: absence increases passion; there is something to be said for a period of separation. B43 answers A5: Isis is finally worsted. She may set lovers apart (*tam cupidos totiens divisit amantis*); but the effect of the enforced separation is to increase their passion (*semper in absentis felicior aestus amantis*).

We are presented with two sets of *sacra* based on Graeco-Egyptian myth and ritual: the rescued Io identified with the goddess Isis, Dionysius as the bringer of wine (he of course being regularly identified with Osiris brother of Isis).[36] The implied comparison between the solemn observation of chastity and a night of drinking and gaming shows up the pseudo-seriousness of the first poem. Once the point is made, we can see the element of play in A: the vision of the metamorphosed Io, cropping oak leaves and wild strawberries,[37] belongs to the same world of mythological play as the corpse of the drunken Polyphemus offered as an example of how wine can spoil your beauty.

The poet seeks by these means to expand the expressive capacity of erotic elegy. We have seen that the "dramatic pairings" of the 1.8 type allow for the introduction of new information so that the poet/lover may ring changes on his emotional responses (the effect is comparable to the entry of a messenger in tragedy). Where the relationship is thematic and structural rather than sequential, the expansion of range is of a more subtle kind. The poet lets himself be seen as literary artist, giving the lie to the biographical fiction by the contrived nature of the juxtaposition. In 2.29 the romance of A is undercut by the realism of B; in 2.33 we return to A from a reading of B, less inclined to take seriously the solemn rites that deny the poet his sexual satisfaction.

Thus equipped,[38] we can return to 4.7 and 8. What we find is a diptych[39] of narrative scenes like 2.29, and a juxtaposition of materials, which at first sight seem markedly different in tone, tied together by thematic and structural correspondences, as in 2.33. The apparent solemnity of 4.7, with its funerary scenes and laments, is shown up as mock tragic, subverted by the correspondences drawn with the bravura adventures of 4.8. 4.7 starts with ascent; 4.8 with descent; the direction is reversed by the end of the poems. In 4.7 Cynthia goes down

[36] Burkert 1983: 191: "By the fifth century B.C. the Greeks considered Osiris and Dionysus identical."

[37] Miller 1981–82: 107.

[38] This is not offered as a complete list of such pairings. No doubt others could be found; and other sorts of relationships. 4.1 for instance shows a similar kind of poetic subtlety: the opening poem of the book, so often presented as a sort of poetic manifesto, statement of intent, or at least table of contents for what follows, is here rendered ambiguous by the irruption of Horus and his advice, which contradicts, often with structural and verbal correspondence, what has preceded. The poem accurately describes the mixed and ambiguous nature of the book. For further discussions (and differing views) see especially Macleod 1977; Kidd 1979; Murgia 1989.

[39] Dimundo 1990: 84.

again to the world of the dead, leaving the poet to lament alone. In 4.8 she returns and order is reestablished, with the sexual union characteristic of the comic exodos. The early scenes depict Venus in motion, on the sidewalks of the Subura, hurtling to an assignation in Lanuvium. The youthful fervour of their early love is set against Cynthia's shoddy infidelities. Propertius' own infidelities are more scandalous: the funeral is compared with an evening of debauchery; the poison that disposed of Cynthia (or so she says) becomes the wine with which they celebrate (*saliva*). (Where is the truth? We have only Cynthia's word for it. But it is the poet who is putting the words in her mouth. The effect of the ambiguities, of the juxtapositions, is to make the "truth," "what actually happened," irrelevant. That allows us to concentrate on the texture of relationships untroubled by historicity.) The abode of the blessed is juxtaposed with the sordid cacophony of the streets of Rome; our heroine holds centre stage in both. The parallel exploits to the full elegy's capacity to hover between symbol and reality.[40] The resultant Cynthia is an unforgettable amalgam. She lays down the law to the poet, reduced, by different means, to helplessness in each poem. It is only on her terms that their bodies will be united, whether it be here and now, on clean sheets, or in some eternal future in the grave. The paronomasia of 4.7.94 and 4.8.88—*teram/toro*—has much to tell about the ambiguous figure of the lover, faithless but helpless, a slave to his *domina*, finding gratification in his slavery, his sexual union an act of surrender. It is important to note that the relationship between the poems works both ways. It is not just that 4.8 requires us to re-read 4.7. 4.7 too has its impact on 4.8. The comic exodos carries with it not just the joy of restoration but a note of the pathology of male/female relations, of the proximity of sexual ecstasy to death, and, though darkly coloured, of its promise of eternity.

The relationship is given additional dimensions by the Homeric references.[41] These might be compared to the use of "sibling" myths (Isis and Osiris) in 2.33, but they are much more fully and subtly articulated. There is an element of generic play. Propertius is making epic claims. We might recall his description of his love-making: *tum vero longas condimus Iliadas* (2.1.14). The Homeric scenes come from similar points in the development of each respective epic—close to the point of culmination. So too these two poems, the last in the corpus concerning Propertius' love for Cynthia, mark a culmination. This is the end of his epic, told once in the manner of the *Iliad*, once in the manner of the *Odyssey*, the one tragic (or rather mock tragic),[42] the other comic.

We do not need to be troubled then by the fact that the quick follow the dead, that the living Cynthia reappears in 4.8 in the full bloom of life after her skeletal remains have apparently been laid to rest. Odysseys follow Iliads. This is

[40] Boucher 1965: 438.

[41] Above, n. 3. For a discussion of Vergilian echoes in the two poems see Allison 1980 and Dimundo 1990: 83–84.

[42] Dalzell 1980: 34.

not a frivolous answer. The poet is insisting, in the strongest possible way, that we read the poems not literally, but literarily. One should not protest that this is to trivialize the poet's activity as "mere" *lusus*. It is rather to take it with full seriousness. One is set free from the constricting bonds of biography. The poems read as poetic texts are much more than amatory episodes, local and ephemeral; as examinations of human interrelationships, they lay claim to a literary universality.

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