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ART AND VISION IN PROPERTIUS 2.31/32*

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Elegies 2.31 and 2.32 are seldom discussed in critical accounts of Propertius, and have drawn little attention except of a textual nature.[1] It is the intention of the present study to argue that elegies 2.31 and 2.32 have not been well understood precisely because most editors have insisted on treating them as separate poems, despite the lack of any division in the manuscripts,[2] and because those few critics who have recognized their unity have obscured their connection through unnecessary transpositions.[3] Moreover, I wish to show that the unified elegy 2.31/32 systematically explores the nature of vision as a mediating faculty in both love and art.[4] As we shall see, the text displays several pivotal moments of ambiguity at which the relations between vision, love, and art become problematic. A proper appreciation of this poem will therefore not only be advantageous in its own right, but should also contribute much to our understanding of Propertian aesthetics.

I. Unity

The tendency to regard 2.31 as a complete poem by itself may be a consequence of the same analyticism which has motivated editors to carve up so many poems of Book II into discrete units in the style of the Monobiblos; but some recent criticism suggests that Propertius may have

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[1] 2.32 is dismissed as "obscure" and "incomprehensible," respectively by H. E. Butler and E. A. Barber, *The Elegies of Propertius* (Oxford 1933) 250, and by P. W. Damon and W. C. Helmbold, *The Structure of Propertius, Book 2*, UCPCP 14.6 (Berkeley 1952) 237.

[2] The poems were first divided by editors in the Renaissance. While it is true that several early manuscripts lack any divisions at all for 2.28–34, this is the only case in which all the manuscripts agree in lacking a division.

[3] Cf. J. Hetzel, *Zur Erklärung des Propertius* (Dillenburg 1876) 15; L. Richardson, *Propertius, Elegies I–IV* (Norman, Okla. 1977) 301, 303.

[4] G. Williams, *Figures of Thought in Roman Poetry* (New Haven 1980) 138f., has noted the references to vision as a thematic unifying device in 2.31/32, but does not elaborate the broader implications.

attempted to evolve in this book a new style of associative composition,[5] perhaps under the influence of Tibullus' longer and more variegated use of the elegiac form. We should note that 2.31 begins with a short question, apparently addressed to Cynthia, which puts the following into an occasional framework:[6] *Quaeris cur veniam tibi tardior*? The question is answered by the explanation that the speaker has been present at the opening of the portico of Apollo Palatinus (1f.), and this answer is followed by a very well-ordered tour of the temple-complex, leading up to a final view of the god's statue inside the sanctuary.[7] If we read 2.31 as a discrete poem, the occasional framework implied by the initial question is never resumed or explained, and the product seems to have no further significance or interest beyond the purely antiquarian.[8] But Propertius never describes works of art simply for their own sake: Propertian ecphrasis always serves an exemplificatory or symbolic function within the context of an argument. The first twelve lines of 2.12 are devoted to a description of the image of Amor, but the poem continues with twelve lines of application which describe Amor's effect on the lover/poet. So also in 2.6.27–34, the wall-paintings are significant not in themselves, but precisely because of their effect upon young women like Cynthia.[9] What we expect at the end of an ecphrasis like this one is a return to the initial second-person address and reapplication of the digression to a personal and romantic context.

I wish to argue that this is precisely what we find in 2.32.1f. The sixteen verses which we have just read constitute an elaborate apology for the speaker's lateness at a rendezvous with Cynthia. What was responsible for this peccadillo was not the portico's dedication in itself, but the speaker's interest in *seeing* it (*tantam in speciem . . . digesta*, 2.31.3) along with the impressive art-works of the temple.[10] This visual

[5] See M. Hubbard, *Propertius* (New York 1975) 44–67, and Williams (above, note 4) 125–53.

[6] For *quaeris* + indirect question as a formulaic opening, cf. 1.22.1f., 2.1.1f., 3.13.1f. But more to the point, we often find initial questions used as a way of putting the poem into a dramatic context: cf. 1.2.1–6, 1.4.1f., 1.8a.1ff., 1.11.1ff., 1.12.1f., 2.5.1f., 2.20.1–4, 3.9.1–3, 3.12.1f., 3.20.1f., 3.22.1–4.

[7] On the linear progression of this walking ecphrasis, cf. J.-P. Boucher, *Études sur Properce* (Paris 1965) 49–51.

[8] It is thus no surprise that some early scholars (such as Perreius and Pucci) thought that the end of the poem had been lost; this view has more recently been advanced by O. L. Richmond, *Sexti Propertii quae supersunt opera* (Cambridge 1928) 243, and Butler and Barber (above, note 1) 248. But the development of the ecphrasis seems quite complete; what we need here is some kind of moral or gnomic transition. This is what we find in 2.32.1f.

[9] The artists and art-works listed in priamel-form in 3.9.9–16 provide parallels to the poet's own style; the allusion to Apelles' paintings in 1.2.22 is intended as a parallel to Cynthia's beauty. On Propertius' use of art-works as parallels, foils, or frames to the beauty of the beloved, see K. Keyßner, "Die bildende Kunst bei Properz," *Würzburger Studien zur Altertumswissenschaft* 13 (1938) 173–85.

[10] Cf. Williams (above, note 4) 138.

interest (so clear in the detailed description of 2.31.3–16) is recapitulated and made the point of excuse with the expression *qui videt, is peccat* (2.32.1).[11] Although abrupt by itself, the gnomic generalization on the power of visual attraction is applied to another realm with a return to the suspended second-person address in the following *qui te non viderit ergo, / non cupiet*. The negative form of this statement does not, in a strictly logical sense, follow from *qui videt, is peccat*, but does make good sense if following upon a context (such as 2.31.1–16) in which the speaker has in fact avoided or delayed seeing Cynthia. The tone is thus rather light and teasing: Cynthia's complaint in 2.31.1 is answered with a vaunt of independence ("as long as I don't see you, I won't desire you"). She is subtly reminded that, during periods of separation, his visual attention can be turned elsewhere, and she may lose her grip on him.

Cynthia apparently needs to be reminded of this, since she herself is too frequently absent (note *nam* in 2.32.3); her own evasions (*lumina nostra fugis*, 2.31.18) also take the form of excursions to various shrines—that of Fortuna Primigenia at Praeneste (2.32.3), the Dioscuri at Tusculum (2.32.4, if in fact this is the cult alluded to), Hercules Victor at Tibur (2.32.5), and Diana Nemorensis near Aricia (2.32.6–10).[12] The speaker's point may be that Cynthia is in no position to complain about his tardiness on this one occasion, when her cultic devotions are the cause of much more frequent and protracted separations. Indeed, it is difficult to see the relevance of 2.32.3–6 to 1f. except as a foil for the speaker's own trip; it is probably no accident that the final allusion of the series (2.32.6, 9f.) is to a cult of Diana, sister and feminine counterpoint to Apollo (cf. 2.31.15). Cynthia's interest is not so much in seeing these places (as in the speaker's visit to the portico of Apollo), but in being seen (2.32.7–10). Also significant is the fact that Cynthia always journeys out of town, whereas the speaker praises the beauty of sites located within the city of Rome: the architectural detail of the Pompeian portico (2.32.11–16) is described in a manner reminiscent of the portico of Apollo.[13] Both porticoes represent a masculine aesthetic interest (seeing

[11] General gnomic statements such as this one often serve as transitions, but never open poems in Propertius; the one possible exception is 2.18.1f., but the position and status of 2.18.1–4 are controversial.

[12] Most recent editors accept Jortin's emendation of 2.32.6 to *Lanuvium*, and thus see an allusion to the cult of Juno Sospita; Richardson (above, note 3) 304 conjectures *Ariciam anum*. I incline to the retention of *ducit anus*, as read by some of the MSS (the other readings being *ducit anum* or *dicit anum*, clearly wrong since Cynthia is not an old woman—but cf. 2.18.19f.). Geographical places, including the Appian Way (on which Aricia was situated), may be called "young" or "old"; for parallels, see D. R. Shackleton Bailey, *Propertiana* (Cambridge 1956) 126.

[13] On the parallel between the two porticoes, see Boucher (above, note 7) 51. Propertius' implication may be that the new portico (a product of the Augustan building program) is even more impressive than the older one (a product of the previous political generation).

beauty) which is somehow antithetical to the feminine romantic interests of Cynthia (being seen as a beauty).[14]

The transitional ambiguity of *qui videt, is peccat* effectively juxtaposes these conflicting interests. The verb *peccare* is used by Propertius exclusively in erotic contexts, but with two slightly different nuances—either in relation to sexual infidelity (cf. 2.6.40, 2.16.25, 2.19.10, 2.32.51) or in reference to a lover's negligence in serving his *domina* (cf. 2.25.19, 2.30.11, 3.16.9).[15] The former sense is quite appropriate to the description of Cynthia and the response which her beauty evokes in 2.32.1–10; on the other hand, the latter sense effectively conveys the sort of transgression which the speaker commits by coming late to his appointed engagement with Cynthia. And as we have noticed, a similar ambiguity is entailed in the use of the verb *videre*.

II. Vision

Readers of Propertius are familiar with his frequent allusions to the eyes and vision as organs of erotic passion.[16] Our understanding of Propertius' concept of vision in 2.31/32 may be furthered by examining another passage of Book II in which the motif is elaborated:

> at vos, qui officia in multos revocatis amores,
> quantus sic cruciat lumina vestra dolor!
> vidistis pleno teneram candore puellam,
> vidistis fuscam, ducit uterque color;
> vidistis quandam Argiva prodire figura,
> vidistis nostras, utraque forma rapit;
> illaque plebeio vel sit sandycis amictu:
> haec atque illa mali vulneris una via est.
> cum satis una tuis insomnia portet ocellis,
> una sat est cuivis femina multa mala. (2.25.39–48)

The verbs which describe the effects of the women seen on the beholder's eyes are revealing: *cruciat* (40), *ducit* (42), *rapit* (44), *una via est* (46), *insomnia portet* (47). The idea of *dolor* "torturing" the lover's eyes plays upon the eyes' capacity both as instruments of perception (seeing

[14] It is significant that both of the structures which the speaker recommends have orthodox political sponsorship, in contrast with the more *recherché* and magical cults visited by the romantic Cynthia. Note that Diana is presented in her more sinister and irrational aspect as *Trivia* (2.32.10), the goddess of witchcraft; we should also recall this cult's associations with human sacrifice.

[15] Sexual infidelity does not seem appropriate to these latter passages. 3.16.9 is an especially relevant parallel to the present case, since it arises in a context deliberating whether the speaker should come at his mistress's summons.

[16] Cf. 1.9.27, 2.14.5,7, 2.22a.7, 3.21.3,10,29, 3.24.1f.; S. Lilja, *The Roman Elegists' Attitude to Women* (Helsinki 1965) 112f.; Keyßner (above, note 9) 179–81; Boucher (above, note 7) 59f.

beautiful love-objects which excite unfulfilled desire) and lacrimation (expressing that desire). The notion of "leading" or "seizing" the lover's eyes is clearly related to the topos of "captured eyes" (cf. 1.1.1–3, 2.30.10, 3.10.15):[17] the notion seems to be that visual beauty can invade and even overcome the lover's reason and free will. By "carrying *insomnia* to the eyes," the object keeps the eyes perpetually open, and thus always under its control; the lingering image of the beloved is another common amatory motif (cf. 1.5.11, 1.19.5, 2.12.13, 2.26.41). What all these metaphors share is the idea of a path which connects subject and object, expressed literally in 46 as the *mali vulneris una via* (equally a path of sight and love).

This same idea formed the basis for most mechanistic theories of vision in antiquity,[18] and our understanding of Propertius' elaboration of the visual concept may also be advanced by considering the Epicurean theory of vision which had recently been popularized by Lucretius. In his account of sensation in Book IV, Lucretius tells us that vision occurs by the emanation of thin films or "idols" from the surface of objects, and by the transmission of these atomic configurations through the air to the eyes.[19] Particularly bright objects will cause pain to the eyes because they emit idols with extraordinary force, and the idols may even contain seeds of fire (Lucr. 4.324–31). What is interesting about this account of vision is its objective character, and the seemingly passive, helpless role of the perceiving subject, who is like the conventional "captured lover." It is perhaps no accident that Lucretius' account of erotic affection is appended to his theory of sensation at the end of Book IV. Love is excited, but never fulfilled by the perception of idols (4.1091–1104), which may linger in the lover's mind even in the absence of the beloved (4.1061f.).

But the Epicurean theory is not as strictly passive as it might at first seem. Although thought is, like sensation, generally determined by the presence of external, objective idols, Lucretius notes in 4.805–18 that the mind has the power to select which among the many available images it will pay attention to: the idols of thought-perception are so thin that they can be perceived only if the mind strains and inclines itself to them.

[17] Also, cf. Ovid, *Am.* 1.10.10, 2.18.12, 2.20.19, 3.11.48. In previous tradition, the emphasis is not so much on the lover's captured eyes as upon the capturing eyes of the beloved (alluded to by Propertius in 1.1.1 and 2.3.14); cf. Dioscorides, *AP* 5.56.3f.; Meleager, *AP* 12.109.2, 12.110, 12.113.

[18] For the path metaphor, cf. Lucretius 4.344 and 350 *vias oculorum*, and C. Bailey, *Titi Lucreti Cari De Rerum Natura Libri Sex* (Oxford 1947) III 1223.

[19] For the pedigree of this concept, see S. Sambursky, *The Physical World of the Greeks* (London 1956) 122f. It has some parallel in Peripatetic doctrine; Aristotle, while rejecting the idea of effluences, regards vision as a form of physical pressure upon the eyes transmitted from the object through an intervening medium (cf. *De Anima* 419A12ff.).

This doctrine of selective apprehension, or ἐπιβολὴ τῆς διανοίας (= "projection of thought"), may also apply in some form to vision.[20] It even seems to be relevant to Lucretius' statements on love: he exhorts the lover to turn his attention to another object (4.1063–72), and in another passage comments on the lover's ability either to overlook or to notice his beloved's physical defects at will (4.1149–91). This more active, subjective concept of vision may owe something to the earlier notion that sight occurred through the projection and rebounding of a beam of light originating from the subject's eyes.[21] But of course, we are dealing here with a much more refined theory of consciousness as an integrating intellectual receptivity to specific objective stimuli.[22]

This fundamental tension in Epicurean psychology between a passive, object-centered basis and a more active, subject-centered refinement is precisely what underlies the ambiguous notion of vision which we have in Propertius 2.32.1f.: vision is simultaneously a state of being overwhelmed, whether by the love-object or the art-object, and an active projection of the subject's will, whether in the form of desire or aesthetic judgment. By confronting aesthetic and romantic concerns, the situation of 2.31/32 shows us that the active self-projection of visual consciousness is not only exhibited in the sexual affect, but also in the opposite tendency—intellectual demystification of the erotic object (exemplified in a crude form by the aforementioned argument of Lucr. 4.1149–91). In the course of 2.31/32, we find that sight can take the form of insight, or perception of erotic truth through experience—an idea expressed negatively by 2.14.17f.: "ante pedes caecis

[20] Cf. C. Bailey, *The Greek Atomists and Epicurus* (Oxford 1928) 559–76. Bailey's view is criticized by D. J. Furley, *Two Studies in the Greek Atomists* (Princeton 1967) 206–8, who regards Epicurus' *epibolê* as not necessarily an act of concentration or deliberate attention. On the general dichotomy in Epicureanism between man as a passive spectator and active judge, see P. DeLacy, "Process and Value: An Epicurean Dilemma," *TAPA* 88 (1957) 114–26; cf. also J. M. Rist, *Epicurus: An Introduction* (Cambridge 1972) 90–99.

[21] This view seems to have originated with the Pythagoreans, and was also adopted by Alcmaeon; see J. I. Beare, *Greek Theories of Elementary Cognition from Alcmaeon to Aristotle* (Oxford 1906) 12f. Similar, although much more refined, is the notion of συναγεία which we find in Plato, *Tim.* 45A–46B, defining vision as the coalescence of the fire-ray issuing from the eyes, the fire of the colors which stream forth from the object, and the fire of the surrounding daylight. A similar doctrine may also have been advanced by Theophrastus; see G. M. Stratton, *Theophrastus and the Greek Physiological Psychology before Aristotle* (London 1917) 30f. These views have a cognate in Hellenistic love poetry's description of the active force of the beloved's gaze, particularly as a force which can "burn" the lover (cf. Meleager, *AP* 5.96, 12.72.4, 12.109.2, 12.110, 12.127.3f., 12.144.3) or hit him with a dart (cf. Meleager, *AP* 5.177.9f.; Asclepiades, *AP* 12.161.3). These motifs seem to be less common in Propertius and the other Roman poets (but cf. Ps.-Tibullus 3.8.5f.).

[22] In this respect, Epicurean theory may foreshadow the phenomenological concept of "intentionality," on which see E. Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, transl. W. R. B. Gibson (London 1931) 119ff., 241ff.

lucebat semita nobis: / scilicet insano nemo in amore videt." The idea of love as blindness is, of course, commonplace (cf. 3.14.32, 4.8.47).[23] Propertius' frequent complaints about Cynthia's clothing and cosmetics emphasize their status as attempted visual deceptions of the lover, which disguise and conceal natural truth (cf. 3.14.27, *Tyriae vestes errantia lumina fallunt*).[24] However, art is not only an instrument for concealing or revising physical reality, but can also help perceive and even reveal truth: so it is that Cupid's painter was the first to "see" his true nature (2.12.3f., "is primum vidit sine sensu vivere amantes, / et levibus curis magna perire bona").

III. Ecphrasis

This tension between the concealing and revelatory potential of the art-work is fundamental to the visual phenomenology developed in elegy 2.31/32. The progression of the ecphrasis in 2.31 is significant not only as a linear tour of the temple-complex, but also as a series of exempla illustrating both the act of artistic representation and that of aesthetic perception. Particularly striking is the contrast between the two statues of Pheobus—one outside the temple (2.31.5f.), the other inside (2.31.15f.).[25] Whatever reading we choose to adopt in 2.31.5,[26] the idea seems to be that the external statue of Phoebus strikes the spectator (*mihi*) as more beautiful than the god himself. What this expression emphasizes is the fact that the statue is a visual (*visus mihi*) representation—i.e., the representational *Phoebus* is clearly distinct from the original signified (*Phoebo ipso*). Curiously, it is the representation which seems to have greater visual force (*pulchrior*) than the authentic signified; but this force is qualified by its limitation to the realm of appearance (*visus*) and subjectivity (*mihi*). 2.31.6 emphasizes the earthly medium of the art-work (*marmoreus*). The material is manifested here in its static, limiting, self-contained aspect: the image attempts to express itself in song (*visus carmen hiare*), but this opening onto the plane of verbal consciousness is hindered by its lapidary medium and is repressed into stiff silence (*tacita lyra*).

[23] Cf. also Meleager, *AP* 12.106.2; Catullus 64.197, 67.25; Vergil, *Geo.* 3.210, *Aen.* 1.349; Ovid, *F.* 2.762, *Tr.* 2.373.

[24] Compare especially 1.2.1–8, 2.18.23–28.

[25] Earlier editors wanted to transpose lines so as to have one statue (e.g., E. Baehrens, *Sexti Propertii Elegiarum Libri IV* [Leipzig 1880] 92f., who transposes 2.31.5–8 after 2.31.16). But the phrasing of 2.31.16 is so similar to 2.31.6 that it would be repetitive if referring to the same thing. Most scholars today agree that two statues must have existed; see H. Last, "The Tabula Hebana and Propertius II 31," *JRS* 43 (1953) 27–29. But it is still significant that Propertius chose to focus on this feature of the temple-complex.

[26] Hoeufft's emendation *hic Phoebus Phoebo* seems most attractive; for a cogent explanation of the corruption, see W. Clausen, rev. of P. J. Enk, *Sex. Propertii Elegiarum Liber Secundus*, *AJP* 86 (1965) 98f.

The muteness of the external statue is contrasted with the unsilenced voice of the statue located inside the sanctuary (*carmina sonat*).[27] The auditory imagery is reinforced by the reference to the god here as *Pythius*—an epithet which of course recalls Apollo in his capacity as an oracular voice.[28] In fact, there is absolutely no explicit reference in this couplet to the statue as a statue: the statue instead manifests itself as the true living presence of god himself (*deus ipse . . . Pythius*).[29] This transformation is able to take place precisely through the contextualization of the object.[30] The art-work *is* Apollo (and not merely a representation of Apollo) in virtue of being located in the context of the sanctuary, the traditional cult of Apollo, his family background (*inter matrem deus ipse interque sororem*),[31] and the general "world" of Apollonian myth and history (2.31.10–14).[32]

The progression of authenticity which we have noted in moving from the external to the internal Apollo is paralleled and supported by

[27] Note the responsion of *carmina* in 2.31.16 with *carmen* in 2.31.6, both in the same metrical position. Note also the emphatic position of *sonat* as the last word, opposed to the merely instrumental *lyra* at the end of 2.31.6.

[28] This epithet contrasts with the name *Phoebus* which we have seen up to this point (2.31.1,5,10); *Phoebus* (from the Greek φοῖβος) emphasizes Apollo in his visual aspect as the "bright" god of the Sun—an image reinforced by the allusion to *Sol* in 2.31.11. It is significant that the statue which "speaks" and possesses oracular truth-force is the interior statue: speech and truth (= *a-lêtheia*) are by nature manifestations or revelations of what was once hidden and repressed. The external statue attempts to transcend its medium, but fails to achieve authenticity because of its externality and lack of context. On the consequences of an art-work's de-contextualization, see the relevant remarks of W. Benjamin, "Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit," in *Illuminationen* (Frankfurt a. M. 1961) 151ff.

[29] This contrasts with the other statue, *Phoebo . . . pulchrior ipso*. In Heideggerian terms, the internal statue becomes a "work of art" precisely inasmuch as it transcends the enclosing facticity of its physical medium, and thus erases the theoretical disjunction between signifier and signified: the signifier (i.e., the statue) in its dynamic interiority is so interfused with the force and presence of the signified (i.e., the god) that it evaporates as a mediating signifier and as a result *is* the signified.

[30] Heidegger is very eloquent on the divine presence felt in the context of a Greek temple; see "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, transl. A. Hofstadter (New York 1971) 43f.: "The temple, in its standing there, first gives to things their look and to men their outlook on themselves. This view remains open as long as the work is a work, as long as the god has not fled from it. It is the same with the sculpture of the god, votive offering of the victor in the athletic games. It is not a portrait whose purpose is to make it easier to realize how the god looks; rather, it is a work that lets the god himself be present and thus is the god himself. The same holds true for the linguistic work. . . . To be a work means to set up a world."

[31] On the level of word order, note how the "god himself" is geometrically nestled between the two females, who repose in parallel prepositional phrases.

[32] It is precisely this sense of historical consciousness that Heidegger (above, note 30) 48f., identifies as the "worldly" aspect of the work of art—the openness of self-transcendent associativity.

the surrounding artifacts. The altar of the external statue is encircled by the statues of four oxen. As in the case of the first Apollo-statue, the representations resemble life, but we are not allowed to forget that they are mere representations: we are told that *armenta* stand around the altar (like a grazing herd), but with the final word of 2.31.7 we perceive that they are *armenta Myronis* (i.e., visual artifacts by the famous sculptor). This tension between form and material (or signified and signifier) is set forth even more explicitly by the following verse, which identifies them as *artificis, vivida signa, boves*. They are *vivida*, but *signa*,[33] *boves*, but of an *artifex*;[34] not only is there a tension between each noun and its modifier, but even the word-order is carefully crafted to juxtapose the terms of nature and those of art. The temple is introduced in 2.31.9 as a material entity (*claro surgebat marmore*), but the following verse gives it a spiritual significance defined by the attention of the god himself (not his image). 2.31.11 tells us that the Chariot of the Sun is above the temple's pediment, but this is not explicitly described as an artistic representation; since the last couplet described the temple gleaming in the sunlight with its bright marble, we may just as well think of the actual Chariot of the Sun shining down upon the temple's roof (again, evidence of Apollo's "attention").[35] The temple doors are described in 2.31.12, again with emphasis on their earthly materiality as artifacts of ivory (*Libyci dentis*). But the doors do not merely depict; they actively "mourn" (*maerebat*) the subject-matter, i.e., the art-work not only evokes emotions in the spectator, but itself enacts emotions as if a living presence. It is only a few steps over this threshold of semiotic intensity to the view of the interior statue which actually resonates with the musical presence of the god himself.

The emphasis which both statues place on Apollo's identity as a musician is significant. The implication may be that the same perceptual dynamics which apply to vision (and visual art) also apply to sound (and auditory art). And of course, "song" (*carmen*, 2.31.6; *carmina*, 2.31.16) is a metonym for poetry. We should perhaps remember that Apollo is particularly a god of poetic inspiration and that the temple precinct on the Palatine also contained a large library.[36] Given the topical nature of

[33] Of course, *signa* are not only statues, but "signs" or "signatures" in general. Such signs are more than just representations of a signified, but are the artist's "seal" or personal imprint upon reality.

[34] The juxtaposition is even more apparent if we read *artifices* instead of *artificis*, as many earlier editors do, following Broekhuyzen.

[35] Lest we think that Propertius was being overly imaginative here, this analogy was probably the intention of the architect who chose the chariot of the Sun as a fitting ornament for the pediment.

[36] Cf. Suetonius, *Aug.* 29; Dio Cassius 53.1.3; *CIL* 6.5188, 5189, 5884; Horace, *Epp.* 1.3.17.

statuary and architecture as metaphors for poetry,[37] it is not unreasonable to suppose that the whole ecphrasis of 2.31 may be designed as an introduction to reflection on the nature of poetic vision and the poetic work in the following part of the text (2.32).

IV. Reversal

Critics have noticed that there is a very distinct and abrupt shift in tone in the middle of 2.32, after 24. 2.32.1–24 appear to be marked by the embittered passion of a rejected lover, who confronts Cynthia directly with her infidelity and says that she deserves her bad reputation ("famae iactura pudicae / tanta tibi miserae, quanta meretur, erit," 2.32.21f.). On the other hand, 2.32.25–62 appear to take a much more enlightened and sympathetic attitude toward Cynthia's indiscretions and even seem to mitigate the bad reputation with which she has just been reproached ("sed tu non debes inimicae credere linguae," 2.32.25). Postgate attempted to address this discrepancy by making 2.32 a dialogue, with large sections after 25 spoken in the persona of Cynthia herself as a self-defense.[38] Others have seen in 2.32.25ff. a turn toward light-hearted Ovidian sarcasm.[39] But the best way of analyzing the division here may be to see the text as an exploration of two different ways of looking at the subject matter: one can focus upon Cynthia subjectively, romantically, and thus judgmentally, or one can "bracket" these value-judgments and view her from a more detached and objective perspective as part of a social, literary, and historical context. These two artistic perspectives

[37] On which, see Keyßner (above, note 9) 169–71, and L. T. Pearcy, "Horace's Architectural Imagery," *Latomus* 36 (1977) 772–81. The idea goes back at least as far as Pindar; cf. *N.* 5.1f., *O.* 6.1–4,27, *P.* 3.113f., *P.* 6.9, *P.* 7.3, *N.* 3.4f., fr. 194.1–3 Snell-Maehler.

[38] J. P. Postgate, *Corpus Poetarum Latinorum* (London 1894) I 304. Richmond (above, note 8) 245, and S. G. Tremenheere, *The Elegies of Propertius* (London 1932²) 160f., follow him at least with regard to 47f. But everywhere else where Propertius has Cynthia or some other character speak, it is clear either through a verb of speaking or a vocative form of address. We should also note that Cynthia's speeches (as in 1.3, 4.7, or 4.8) always accuse Propertius of infidelity; they do not exculpate her own infidelity. Even apart from these general objections, it is necessary to understand 27f. in the voice of the speaker, and these lines appear just as apologetic as 25f. E. A. Barber, *Sexti Properti Carmina* (Oxford 1960²) 80, proposes assigning 25–30 to Cynthia and positing a one-couplet lacuna afterward; this solution creates the curious anomaly of the *fama* of 21 being Cynthia's and the *fama* of 27 the speaker's, even though the speaker's behavior and reputation are not in question here. 2.32.29f. provides an excellent introduction for the following list of *exempla*; they should not be detached from each other.

[39] Cf. M. Rothstein, *Die Elegien des Sex. Propertius* (Berlin 1898) I 414; F.Jacoby, "Drei Gedichte des Properz," *RhM* 69 (1914) 448f.; G. Ustrnul, *Studien zur Komposition und Einheit der Elegien des Properz* (Diss. Wien 1959) 148–50; E. Lefèvre, *Propertius Ludibundus* (Heidelberg 1966) 75f. But comparison with the Ovidian poem closest to this in subject-matter (*Am.* 3.14) reveals a considerable degree of difference in the explicitness of the irony.

have been foreshadowed in a more plastic form by the two statues of Apollo—the external statue being an object of the audience's subjective judgment ("visus mihi pulchrior ipso," 2.31.5), the internal statue constituting an objective truth as defined by its context.

This tension is illustrated by the specific descriptions of the visual act which we find scattered through the text. We have already commented upon the ambiguity of *videt* in 2.32.1 (referring either to aesthetic contemplation, in accord with the preceding, or romantic fascination, as elaborated in the following verses). The explicit connection of vision with desire in the rest of the couplet places the poetic text into a highly subjective and judgmental framework. The phrase *facti lumina crimen habent* (2.32.2) has interesting implications: either sight of a beautiful love-object will induce what seems to be "criminal" behavior in the perceiver, or he will behold "criminal" behavior on the part of his love-object. The first, object-based notion recapitulates the initial *qui videt, is peccat*; the other interpretation—*crimen* as subjective judgment—applies well to the subjective judgments which the speaker makes about Cynthia's imagined crimes in 2.32.3–10. Either way, the concept of *crimen* is made contingent on the subject's visual attention.[40] The emphasis on vision returns again in 2.32.9f., where the speaker fears the crowd's seeing Cynthia on the pilgrimage to Aricia; the implication is that Cynthia's participation in such a public spectacle could excite men's passion, and thus result in some further sexual crime (*qui videt, is peccat*). In 2.32.17f., the speaker accuses Cynthia of making such excursions in order to flee *lumina nostra*. In light of 1f. and 9f., this would seem to refer to visually excited arousal, but 17 ("falleris, ista tui furtum via monstrat amoris") suggests that there is also a sense of moral judgment here (as in our second interpretation of *facti lumina crimen habent*): Cynthia flees the speaker's knowledge and censure of her infidelity, but his eyes perceive it anyway (albeit indirectly).

The second half of the text features a much more detached, non-judgmental mode of vision. In 2.32.28, Phoebus is again introduced, but this time as the perceiving subject rather than the object of contemplation: "testis eris puras, Phoebe, videre manus." As the all-seeing Sun, Phoebus is the paradigmatic example of visual distance and worldly perspective; as a god of reason, restraint, and balance, he embodies dispassionate contemplation. What Phoebus sees is the truth that Cynthia's "crimes" are, in the broader context of human history, at most only *parva crimina* (30): she is not guilty of carrying poison or committing some other violent act. Cynthia's minor crimes are viewed within the

[40] This is opposed to the unengaged and seemingly non-judgmental use of the term in 2.32.30 (*non me crimina parva movent*); but even amid this presumption of detachment, there is an element of subjective judgment present just in calling the accusations *parva*.

perspective of female behavior in myth (Helen, 2.32.31f.; Venus and Mars, 33f.; Paris and Oenone, 35–40; Pasiphae, 57f.; Danae, 59f.), literature (Lesbia, 45f.), and contemporary social mores (43–52). These events also constituted public spectacles which were seen by many witnesses,[41] but were ultimately without any serious judgmental consequences (*sine decreto*, 2.32.32; "nec minus in caelo semper honesta fuit," 34). The element of public spectacle is also very prominent in Propertius' telling of the Paris-Oenone story,[42] where the love-affair is witnessed by the other nymphs and satyrs of the surrounding countryside (*hoc . . . spectavit turba*, 2.32.27) and spoken of by the mountains (*Ida . . . dicat amasse*, 2.32.35). But there is no trace of moral reflection or judgment anywhere in this narration.[43] The whole idea of gossip, speculation, and scandal in such an *examen* is explicitly rejected ("an quisquam in tanto stuprorum examine quaerit / 'Cur haec tam dives? quis dedit? unde dedit?,'" 2.32.41f.).

We thus see four distinct levels of visual engagement progressively elaborated in the text—aesthetic vision (2.31.1–16), passionate vision (2.32.1f., 9f.), judgmental vision (2.32.2, 17f.), and non-judgmental vision (2.32.28, 37f., 41f.). But the transition from the more engaged modes of vision to the detached mode of observation is bridged by another form of perception—hearing (2.32.21–26). Hearing is necessarily a less direct and more imaginative form of perception than seeing; particularly in the form of *fama* (2.32.21, 27), *rumor* (24), or *fabula* (26), hearing is a way of apprehending what someone else has seen.[44] The epithets used with

[41] This is particularly true of Vulcan's mechanical capture of Venus and Mars *in flagrante*; the public exposure of the act is the high-point of Demodocus' song (*Od.* 8.305–43).

[42] The theory that this passage refers to Paris and Oenone was originally advanced by A. Palmer, "Miscellanea Critica," *Hermathena* 3 (1879) 260f.; some critics (e.g., A. E. Housman, "Butler's Propertius," *CR* 19 [1905] 319) complain that this affair is insufficiently scandalous. But the whole point of this passage is to suggest that nothing is particularly scandalous any more. The allusion to Paris' free and easy promiscuity is quite apposite after 2.32.31f., and an apt parallel for Cynthia's behavior. Those critics who object to Paris and Oenone emend *Parim* (although no certain substitute can be agreed upon—see the proposals listed in Butler and Barber [above, note 1] 252) and refer the myth to Venus and Anchises, although their affair was anything but public and anything but carefree. This latter interpretation would also require detaching 34 from 33 and construing it with 35f.—a major disruption of the neat couplet-structure which we have had up to this point.

[43] On the use of *spectare* here to mean "look on and find no fault," see W. A. Camps, *Propertius, Elegies: Book II* (Cambridge 1967) 213f.

[44] On the deeply rooted connection between "fame" (κλέος) and "hearing" (κλύειν) and their opposition to "seeing"/"knowing" (εἰδέναι) in early Greek epic tradition, see G. Nagy, *Comparative Studies in Greek and Indic Meter* (Cambridge, Mass. 1974) 231–55; G. Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans: Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry* (Baltimore 1979) 271f.; P. Pucci, "The Langauge of the Muses," in *Classical Mythology in Twentieth-Century Thought and Literature* (Lubbock 1980) 168f.

these terms also show a progression, only in the opposite direction: *fama* here is good reputation (*famae pudicae*, 2.32.21; *non . . . damnata est fama*, 27), while *rumor* is a negative and judgmental perception (*non bonus . . . fuit*, 24), and *fabula* pure fiction of a highly prejudicial nature ("sed tu non debes inimicae credere linguae: / semper formosis fabula poena fuit," 25f.). It is interesting to note that the realm of hearing is characterized by negation (*famae iactura*, 21; *rumor . . . non bonus*, 24; *non debes . . . credere*, 25; *non . . . damnata est fama*, 27), and thus the absence of concrete assertion. These considerations may explain why the passage on hearing is the one in which the subject gains enough distance from the object (and from himself—cf. 2.32.21, *sed de me minus est*) to reevaluate his emotional stance.[45] The ideas of fame and rumor frame events in a public context (*in tota . . . urbe*, 24). Although Cynthia is still an object of judgment and censure ("famae iactura tanta . . . quanta meretur," 21f.; "laedit rumor, et non bonus fuit," 23f.), it is no longer a strictly personal feeling on the part of the speaker. It is in fact a feeling on the part of other subjects, which allows the original subject to gain some perspective on the nature of perception and opinion-formation. He comes to recognize that perceptions may be prejudiced (*inimicae linguae*) and incorrect: *fama* can become *rumor*, which can in turn become *fabula*. This process of perspective-formation ultimately causes the speaker to reexamine his own perceptions in a broader context and reassert Cynthia's good *fama*: she is not guilty of any great crime, and this is witnessed by the most objective of all observers—Phoebus the all-seeing Sun (2.32.27f.). We are not back in the realm of sight (*testis eris . . . videre*), but a purified and self-conscious mode of vision.

Aside from being a paradigm of objectivity and truth, Phoebus has special significance here both as a god of poetry and as a reminder of the reflections on artistic presence at the beginning of the text. Contemplating the linguistic fabric of a poetic text is the most refined form of hearing, even as viewing an art-work is the ultimate form of seeing. Poetry is the medium which produces *fama* and *fabula*, even as marble is the medium for plastic representation. It is thus by being examined in a poetic/mythological/historical context that Cynthia's *fama* is rehabilitated in 2.32.25–62. Introducing the passage on *fama*, the speaker calls himself *doctus* ("tendis iners docto retia nota mihi," 20); on first reading,

[45] Even though less immediate, hearing implies the potential for more objectivity, inasmuch as it involves language and linguistic reflection. Note the movement of elegy 1.1, progressing from subjective passion at the beginning, expressed by the eye-imagery ("Cynthia prima suis miserum me cepit ocellis," 1.1.1; "tum mihi . . . deiecit lumina," 1.1.3), to objective audience-oriented didacticism at the end of the poem, expressed by the reference to the ears ("vos . . . quibus facili deus annuit aure," 1.1.31; "si quis monitis tardas adverterit aures," 1.1.37).

this refers to his erotic experience and "learning," but it may also refer to Propertius' identity as a *doctus poeta*, i.e., a poet aware of all the mythological paradigms and conventions of Hellenistic and neoteric love poetry. This is learning of a less personal and immediate sort, but which in its breadth may unmask inner truths obscured through the haze of empirical learning: empirically, the speaker learns that Cynthia is unfaithful and becomes angry about it, but through poetic reflection he comes to perceive that her faithlessness is merely conventional. Artistic self-expression moves perception from the realm of subjectivity into the realm of self-consciousness and intersubjectivity, as the subject's perceptions themselves become objects of perception.

The text at the same time presumes to transcend the self (*sed de me minus est*, 21) and continues to elaborate the reactions of the self (*nostras me laedit ad aures*, 23; *non me . . . movent*, 30); clearly, this self-transcendence attempts to take the form of phenomenological self-analysis. But this self-analysis does not, in the end, succeed. After the extensive development of 2.32.25ff. and all the pretensions to tolerance, detachment, and non-judgment therein, we find that judgmental terms still color the speaker's vocabulary (*corrupta libidine*, 33; *stuprorum*, 41; *o nimium nostro felicem tempore Romam!*, 43; *peccare*, 51; *lectum pudicum*, 55; *non potuit . . . casta negare*, 60). The censorious tone and language especially of 2.32.41–62 sound Juvenalian in many ways. It is perhaps not surprising that the speaker's final declaration gives freedom to Cynthia only in terms of judgment ("semper vive meo libera iudicio," 62);[46] "judgment" is in fact the last word of the poem. What we observe here is very disturbing: even as the speaker attempts to transcend his own subjectivity through ironic detachment from his empirical perceptions and emotions, this irony is itself undercut by another deeper level of irony which reasserts the authenticity of those ridiculed empirical attitudes against the demystifying program of phenomenological self-awareness. Even as the speaker presumes to analyze and control his emotional reactions through poetic contextualization, that context also contains the ambivalent seeds of regression back to the former emotional, judgmental framework.

This undercutting emotional regression has been implicit in the speaker's remarks even from the very beginning of his objectifying conversion in 2.32.25. We would do well to remember that these verses are all addressed to Cynthia, not to the speaker himself.[47] But why would

[46] Note how "freedom" (*libera*) is enclosed between the words *meo* and *iudicio*. The very form of this statement struggles against its surface meaning, and discloses a deep psychic conflict beneath the surface.

[47] The referent and meaning of 25f. have caused great confusion to the commentators. Some follow Postgate in attributing the statement to Cynthia and thus making *tu* Propertius (cf. Richardson [above, note 3] 306); on which, see above, note 38. Others follow Lachmann in making this the speaker's self-address, despite the clear reference of the

the speaker need to advise Cynthia in 25f. against believing rumors about her own activities? Presumably no one knows the truth about her behavior better than Cynthia herself.[48] Shackleton Bailey may be correct in seeing humor in this awkward defense of Cynthia,[49] which, even though literally addressed to her, is really aimed at convincing the speaker. But there is more to this strange conversion of attitude than just humor. At the same time that the truth-value of *rumor* is being challenged (*non debes credere* in the sense of "you ought not to believe"), its potency and danger are reaffirmed (*non debes credere* in the sense of "you ought not to trust"). Cynthia is being warned that her promiscuous behavior leaves her exposed to the negative effects of invidious gossip, and she should not "trust" other people's tongues to refrain from such talk;[50] there are numerous examples of beautiful women who have been harmed by such stories ("semper formosis fabula poena fuit," 26). She may not be guilty of poisoning (2.32.27f.), but her reputation has been tainted nevertheless. "Small crimes" do not move the speaker ("non me crimina parva movent," 30), but the implication can equally well be that her crimes are not small.[51] On the scale of historical consequence, Helen's adultery with Paris (2.32.31f.) was hardly a "small crime."[52] While the speaker palliates Cynthia's behavior out of one side of his mouth, he simultaneously continues to lecture out of the other side of his mouth. The text speaks at once with two contradictory voices.[53]

To recapitulate, what we see in 2.31/32 is a four-fold movement, originating in a state of detached aesthetic contemplation (2.31.1–16), which is reversed into emotionally colored perception and judgment (2.32.1–24), apparently progressing to a demystified contextualization of perceptions (2.32.25–62), but at the same time relapsing step-by-step into the former, prejudicial framework of perception. This dialectic has been

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second-person in 23f. and 27 to Cynthia. The only certain cases of self-address in Propertius are 2.3.1–4 (made clear by *quaerebam* in 5) and 2.8.17ff. (made clear by the vocative *Properti*).

[48] Some try to avoid the problem by emending *credere* to *cedere* (as originally proposed by Wakker; cf. Camps [above, note 43] 212), or by construing *credere* in the sense of "pay attention to" (cf. Butler and Barber [above, note 1] 251f.), despite the lack of parallels for such a meaning.

[49] Shackleton Bailey (above, note 12) 127; cf. P. J. Enk, *Sex. Propertii Elegiarum Liber Secundus* (Leiden 1962) II 411.

[50] Compare 2.18.37f.

[51] The position of *non* before *me* leaves it uncertain whether we should take it as negating *parva* or *movent*.

[52] Cynthia is often compared to Helen (cf. 2.3.32–40, 2.15.13f., 3.8.29–32), always with highly ambivalent overtones.

[53] This complex circular movement from happiness to passionate outrage to intellectual objectification to passionate relapse is similar to the sort of textual "irony" which is discussed by P. de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," in C. Singleton (ed.), *Interpretation: Theory and Practice* (Baltimore 1969) 196–201.

adumbrated by the ambivalent reflections on the work of art in 2.31.1–16 (which acts as a sort of prologue). I would argue that this structure of conflicting perceptual modes constitutes Propertius' reaction to a seminal precursor-text—Catullus 68.[54] Here too we see an emotionally charged rhetoric giving way to a detached tolerance of Lesbia's infidelity, which is ultimately undercut by irony; we also find a programmatic prologue which foreshadows the tensions of the later part of the poem.[55] The debt to Catullus is quite explicitly acknowledged in 2.32.45f.: "haec eadem ante illam iam impune et Lesbia fecit; / quae sequitur, certe est invidiosa minus." Catullus 68 is also evoked in reminiscences of detail, especially in the preceding 2.32.29–44.[56] The whole series of examples of which these are only a part embodies the idea of poetic and mythological tradition. It is significant that Cynthia's behavior is framed at the end of the poem not only in terms of judgment (*meo iudicio*, 62), but also in terms of "imitation" ("si tu Graias †tuque es† imitata Latinas," 61). The Greek and Latin women are clearly the women of Greek and Latin literature.[57] Cynthia's ultimate freedom (like Lesbia's) is attained by her mimetic sublimation into a literary object; but in a state of detached objectivity, she becomes a matter of indifference to the speaker. What smoldering fires of passion the speaker still feels are not directed toward her, but lurk as resentment against the perverted morality of the entire world.[58]

[54] The influence of Catullus 68 on the present text has been acknowledged by previous commentators, especially Richardson (above, note 3) 301. Cf. J. Ferguson, "Catullus and Propertius," *Proceedings of the African Classical Association* 1 (1958) 58f., who notes that Catullus 68 was the most influential of all Catullan texts for Propertius.

[55] For a more detailed exposition of this text and its mutually deconstructing rhetorical strategies, see my article, "Catullus 68: The Text as Self-Demystification," *Arethusa* 17 (1984) 29–49. Propertius brings into sharper focus tensions which are only implied in the Catullan text; Catullus 68 never directly accuses Lesbia, even though it clearly suggests a smoldering resentment beneath the pretence of patient tolerance.

[56] Both texts suggest that it is foolish or old-fashioned to expect chastity on the part of a mistress ("ne nimium simus stultorum more molesti," 68.137; cf. 2.32.47–52). Propertius is unmoved by *parva crimina* (2.32.30), even as Catullus endured *rara furta* (68.136). Propertius cites the divine liaison of Mars and Venus as a paradigm (2.32.33f.), even as Catullus cited Jupiter and Juno (68.138–40); cf. Ferguson (above, note 54) 58f. Of course, the whole Trojan context of Paris and Helen recalls the central lament of Catullus 68, immediately framed by allusions to Paris' and Helen's adultery (68.87f., 103f.).

[57] *Latini* is not used as an ethnic designation nearly so often as a linguistic one.

[58] It should be noted that this text itself becomes a source for poetic imitation by Ovid in *Am.* 3.14. Cf. R. Neumann, *Qua ratione Ovidius in Amoribus scribendis Properti elegiis usus sit* (Göttingen 1919) 50–54; K. Freeman, *Ovid's Art of Imitation: Propertius in the Amores* (Leiden 1977) 102–4. Just as we have seen Propertius exploiting and developing tensions implicit in Catullus 68, Ovid takes the process one step further by reading the visual emphasis of 2.31/32 as a concern with appearance to the neglect of moral reality, and transforming this tendency into an explicit rhetorical opposition and even advocacy of hypocrisy.

We can observe a similar structure of reversal in the neighboring elegy 2.33, which begins by lamenting Cynthia's devotion to the Isis-cult (2.33.1–6, parallel to her absence for cultic devotions in 2.32.3–10), accuses her of being indifferent to the speaker (her not "listening" in 2.33.23–26 parallels her not wanting to see him in 2.32.16–20), then shows concern about the effects of her behavior on herself (2.33.33f., on the harmful effects of wine on a woman, parallels 2.32.21–24 on the consequences of rumor), but reverses course and adopts an attitude of enlightened tolerance and personal detachment at the end (2.33.35–44, paralleling the similar about-face in 2.32.25ff.).[59] Both texts move from emotional outrage to patient indulgence. However, in so doing, the speaker actually distances himself from his love-object: 2.33.43f. concludes that his own absence may make him better appreciated, even as 2.31.1f., ("Quaeris cur veniam tibi tardior?"; cf. 2.32.1f. "qui te non viderit ergo, / non cupiet") implied the same at the very beginning.[60]

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In summation, we have attempted to show that elegies 2.31 and 2.32 should be regarded as a single poem, and that 2.32.1f. makes good sense as a transitional couplet, contrasting aesthetic and romantic modes of vision. This tension between an emotionally engaged, judgmental form of perception and a more detached, objective view is also manifested by the speaker's apparent (albeit self-questioning) shift in tone after 2.32.24. The text's development here has been adumbrated by the progression in the ecphrasis of 2.31.1–16: in both cases, the text moves from an external form of vision, limited to the material facticity of the object, to a more internalized vision which perceives the object's full significance by placing it within a phenomenological context. We have explored the general framework for Propertius' thinking about vision, both by analyzing the terms for vision in other Propertian contexts and by examining the background of contemporary Epicurean theory, which features a similar tension between a passive, physically determined mode of vision and a more active intellectual capacity for selective apprehension. And finally, we have supported our interpretation of the self-revising dialectics of this text by comparison with a related precursor (Catullus 68), successor (Ovid, *Am*, 3.14, see note 58), and neighbor (2.33).

[59] Note that both sections flatly contradict the previous warning: 2.33.35 says that wine does not have any harmful effects on Cynthia, just as 2.32.25 denies that rumor hurts her. Note also the emphatic imperatives addressed to Cynthia (*iam bibe*, 2.33.36; *semper vive libera*, 2.32.62); these brusque commands almost constitute a dismissal of the beloved.

[60] Note the ring-structure enclosing the two poems as a pair. By giving Cynthia independence in these poems, the speaker also gives himself a sort of independence.