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*Carmina Magica:*  
Reading Magic and Ritual in Latin Love Elegy

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## Abstract

*Carmina Magica: Reading Magic and Ritual in Latin Love Elegy* focuses on the relationship between magic, ritual, and poetics in the works of each of the major extant Latin elegists — Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid — with the intention of demonstrating that the category of magic acts as an integral supporting subtext that allows the elegiac poets to interrogate and express the poetic concerns and ideological position of their work more fully. The Roman elegists span a tumultuous period of Rome's history, which saw a transition from the discord of the civil wars to the increasingly consolidated rule of the principate. Although rituals, both normative and non-normative, were a pervasive presence in Roman society, the elegists seem to purposefully associate their poetry with the occult in a way that could be seen as antagonistic to the newly emerging central authority. However, this inclusion of magic suits the inverted ethos of the elegiac poet-lover and the marginal position he purports to occupy in relation to contemporary culture. Rather than being an unwanted presence in elegy, magic, with its problematic connotations, serves to highlight the subversive nature of the genre. The research approaches the subject through an analysis of the relevant poems; it explores how the poems engage with socio-political and magic discourses, examines the dialogue between these magical poems, and draws on contemporary magic scholarship to demonstrate how recognising the magic subtext enhances our reading of Roman elegy. The thesis begins with an examination of the provocative interplay between magic and conventional ritual in the poems of Tibullus. The second chapter will show how in Books 1-3 Propertius emphasises the importance of magic to his poetry by including it in each of his programmatic poems. The following chapter, on Propertius 4, will explore how the ostensibly more patriotic façade of the book is problematised by a continued juxtaposition of magic and civics rituals. The final chapter will look at how Ovid's treatment of magic codifies it as a standard element of the genre while his engagement with the topoi of elegiac magic invites his audience to interrogate the conventions, themes, and genre of elegiac poetry more deeply. Scholars rarely delve deeply into the presence of magic in Latin elegy, and little systematic attention has been paid to how it functions or what its significance is. Instead, the presence of magic is often passed over as a commonplace element within elegy. This thesis aims to show how the various instances of magic and ritual are bound up with some of the elegists' main concerns —

politics, gender, and authority. More broadly, magic acts as a signal for subversion and resistance to poetic and political norms throughout the genre. The elegists tap into the cultural currency of the category of magic to add layers of meaning, symbolic connections, and associations to their poetry that reach beyond the elegiac *demi-monde*.

## Lay Summary

This Thesis focuses on the relationship between magic, ritual, and poetics in the works of each of the major extant Latin elegists — Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid. The Roman elegists span a tumultuous period of Rome's history (the end of the first century BCE), which saw a transition from the discord of the civil wars to the increasingly consolidated rule of the principate. Although rituals were a pervasive presence in Roman society, the elegists seem purposefully to associate their poetry with magic in a way that could be seen as challenging the newly emerging central authority. However, this inclusion of magic suits the inverted position that the elegiac poet-lover claims to occupy in relation to contemporary culture. Rather than being an unwanted presence in elegy, magic serves to highlight the subversive nature of the genre. This research approaches the subject through an analysis of the relevant poems; it explores how the poems engage with socio-political and magic discourses, examines the dialogue between these magical poems, and draws on contemporary magic scholarship to demonstrate how recognising the magic subtext enhances our reading of Roman elegy. The thesis begins with an examination of the interplay between magic and conventional ritual in the poems of Tibullus. The second chapter will show how in Books 1-3 Propertius emphasises the importance of magic to his poetry by including it in each of the opening poems to his books. The following chapter, on Propertius 4, will explore how the more patriotic front of the book is challenged by a continued juxtaposition of magic and civics rituals. The final chapter will look at how Ovid's treatment of magic demonstrates that it has become a standard element of the genre of Latin love elegy and how his engagement with magic invites his audience to interrogate the conventions, themes, and genre of elegiac poetry more deeply. Scholars rarely delve deeply into the presence of magic in Latin elegy, and little attention has been paid to how it functions or what its significance is. Instead, the presence of magic is often passed over as a commonplace element within elegy. This thesis aims to show how the various instances of magic and ritual are connected to some of the elegists' main concerns — politics, gender, and authority. More broadly, magic acts as a signal for subversion and resistance to poetic and political norms throughout the genre. The elegists tap into the cultural currency of the category of magic to add layers of meaning, symbolic connections, and associations to their poetry that reach beyond their elegiac worlds.

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## INTRODUCTION

ipsa Venus magico religatum bracchia nodo  
perdocuit multis non sine uerberibus.

Tib. 1.8.5-6

ut per te clausas sciat excantare puellas,  
qui uolet austeros arte ferire uiros

Prop. 3.3.49-50

blanditias elegosque leuis, mea tela, resumpsi;  
mollierunt duras lenia uerba fores.  
carmina sanguineae deducunt cornua lunae,  
et reuocant niueos solis euntis equos;

Ovid *Am.* 2.1.21-5

The Roman elegists make bold claims concerning the power of their own poetic *carmina*. Here we see one claim tutelage in magic from the goddess of love herself, while the other two promise to teach others how to draw reluctant mistresses from their rooms, soften perpetually hard doors, and, presumably, win the girl. These assertions convey the charms of their poetry and the potential benefits their readers might derive from it. However, these texts also reveal an intriguing association with magic. What one might call magic was often considered a set of practices relegated to the fringes of Roman society, or, at worst, a punishable offence that challenged Augustan claims to religious and moral authority.<sup>1</sup> The Roman elegists span a tumultuous period of Rome's history, a time of transition from the discord of the civil wars to the increasingly consolidated rule of the principate. Although magic and non-normative rituals were a pervasive presence in Roman society, it is curious to purposefully associate one's work with an element that could be seen as directly antagonistic to the emerging central authority.<sup>2</sup> However, the inclusion of magic might also

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<sup>1</sup> For magic defined as illegitimate rites, see Frankfurter (2019), 5.

<sup>2</sup> For the ubiquitous nature of magic in ancient Greco-Roman society see Gager (1992), Graf (1997), Faraone (1999), Dickie (2001), Ogden (2008), Rüpke (2016).

be said to suit the inversed ethos of the poet-lover and the marginal position the elegists' purport to occupy in relation to contemporary culture. Rather than being an unwanted association, magic, with its problematic connotations, serves to highlight the subversive nature of Roman elegy. The elegists tap into the cultural currency of the category of magic to add layers of meaning, symbolic connections, and associations to their poetry that reach beyond the elegiac *demi-monde*. Scholars rarely delve deeply into the presence of magic in these poems, how it functions, or what its significance is. Magic is often seen as a generic or commonplace element within elegy and not given the attention other aspects (such as mythological exempla) receive, but this is overly dismissive of the category of magic.<sup>3</sup> Most often the magic discourse in elegy remains general, using instances of magic across numerous poems or poets to reinforce an argument, rather than treating magic as an interpretive key to these poems. In this thesis, I will highlight how the juxtaposition of non-normative with normative rituals in Latin love elegy serves as a fertile ground to tease out the tensions inherent in the genre and demonstrate that magic acts as an important supporting subtext that allows the elegiac poets to interrogate and express their poetic concerns and the ideological position of their work more deeply, both in individual poems and more broadly.

Before beginning our investigation of the place of magic and ritual in elegy, it is important to define what is meant by this term and what work has already been done on the subject. We will first discuss the terminology relevant to the magic discourse. It would then be fruitful to understand some of the main approaches to the study of ancient magic, namely the emic and etic approaches. This will be followed by a brief discussion of what sources form the basis of our knowledge of these magical practices. We will then explore the role of gender in portrayals of witchcraft and ritual practices. Finally, we will look at what work has been done thus far on magic in elegy.

### **Naming the Witch: Magic Terminology**

Magic itself is a term mired in contention. It is important to keep in mind in studies of ancient 'magic' that the terms magic and witchcraft are charged words that carry certain

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<sup>3</sup> For magic in love-elegy as a stock or conventional theme see: Putnam (1973), 66; Smith (1978), 216-224; McKeown (1989), 204-205; Stratton (2007), 71-72; Gordon (2009), 219-225; Ogden (2009), 124-125.

etymological baggage and associations for modern audiences. Moreover, the task of demarcating magic as a separate cultural framework from the category of religion is a complex, and perhaps impossible, task. There is no clear conceptual dichotomy between religion and magic that can be held as a rule of thumb. Magic and religion were never mutually exclusive, so it is impossible to completely distinguish the two categories. There is no universal agreement among ancient writers and the definitions that are supplied are inconsistent with each other.<sup>4</sup> Versnel goes so far as to claim that ‘magic does not exist, nor does religion. What do exist are our definitions of these concepts.’<sup>5</sup> Rüpke asserts that the growing body of research on the magic discourse has made clear that magic was integrated into all levels of society and within what one would call religion.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, describing something as magic often has more to say about the person wielding the term than any roots in historical accuracy and is often based on anachronistic projection rather than fact. The word magic is fraught with negative connotations, from both a modern and ancient perspective.<sup>7</sup> The contrasting of religion and magic functions as a value-judgement that came to be used to designate something as illicit among the practices of socially and culturally deviant groups.<sup>8</sup> However, none of this negates the fact that magic practices existed — curse tablets, spell formulas, historical accounts, and literary texts bear witness to this fact. The terms we use to describe these practices are useful, at the very least as a signifier to help us understand and identify the phenomenon — they act as conceptual tools. Since there is no categorically accepted definition of magic, we should be as precise as possible in our discussions of the various activities that might be included in the less definable category of magic. For the purposes of my research, we will define magic as a ritualised activity that is considered non-normative, illegitimate, or ambiguous. In

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<sup>4</sup> Plato *Laws*. 10, 909b saw magicians, especially *goetes*, as charlatans who trick vulnerable people using sacrifices, prayers, and incantations; Dem. 25.79-80 magic practitioners were those who provide deadly charms and drugs; Liv. 8.18 were crazed women who created a pestilence through their poisons; Liv. 4.30, 25.1.8-12, 39.8 those who prey on the weak minded and superstitious; Plut. *De. Super.* 169d-e those who were excessively religious or superstitious were considered to behave inappropriately; Cicero *De Div.* 1.64 applies *sagae*, and its derivatives, to extremely curious old women and those who know the future; Cic. *Vat.* 14 describes practitioners as performing impious rites, necromancy, and supplicating underworld deities with the entrails of children.

<sup>5</sup> Versnel (1991), 180.

<sup>6</sup> Rüpke (2016), 64 and Gordon (2013), 107.

<sup>7</sup> For modern discussions of magic as deviance from the normative or illegitimate rituals see Martin (2004), Gordon (2008), Rüpke (2016), Edmonds III (2019), Frankfurter (2019).

<sup>8</sup> Stratton (2014), 1-40. Rüpke (2016), 3 cautions against taking the polemical accounts of the intellectual elite at face-value, but argues that these accounts still contain information about these illicit practices.

delineating the parameters of what we mean by ritual, it is helpful to borrow from Edmonds who categorises ritual as ‘symbolic action, which may include speech, gesture, movement, or other kinds of symbolic actions.’<sup>9</sup> Within the context of the shifting societal norms of post-civil war Rome, the non-normative exists in opposition to established and culturally accepted ritualised practices.

As a preliminary to this research, therefore, it is necessary to define what is meant by magic and to discuss the most pertinent terms. One way of doing so, which is grounded in the language world of the texts with which we will be working, is to list the words most often associated with magic and its practitioners. There are two main groups of words, those in Greek and those in Latin. The terms discussed here are those the Greek and Latin sources most often use to describe magic and related practices.<sup>10</sup> In Greek, the main words associated with magic and witchcraft are *epodos* (LSJ, s.v. *ἐπωδός* using song or charms to heal, a charm for or against), *pharmakeus* (LSJ s.v. *φαρμακεύς* sorcerer, poisoner), *pharmakis* (LSJ, s.v. *φαρμακίς* sorceress, witch, poisoner), *pharmakon* (LSJ, s.v. *φάρμακον* drug, whether healing or noxious, medicine, enchanted potion, charm, spell, poison), *keleteira* (LSJ, s.v. *κηλήτειρα* enchantress), *tumbas* (LSJ, s.v. *τυμβάς* witch, one who haunts tombs), *magos* (LSJ, s.v. *μάγος* magician, priest or wise man from Persia, enchanter, wizard, imposter, charlatan), *goes*<sup>11</sup> (LSJ, s.v. *γόης* sorcerer, wizard, juggler, cheat), *goeteutria* (LSJ, s.v. *γοητεύτρια* sorceress), *lamia* (LSJ, s.v. *Λάμιᾶ* female monster; OLD, witch), *agoge*<sup>12</sup> (LSJ, s.v. *ἀγωγή* carrying away, forceable seizure, spell for bringing a person, love-charm), *philtron* (LSJ, s.v. *φίλτρον* love-charm, spell, affection), *katadesmoi* (LSJ, s.v. *καταδεσμέω* bind up, inhibit by means of a spell, bind fast). Latin terms include *saga* (OLD, witch, sorceress, wise woman), *strix*<sup>13</sup> (OLD, owl, ill-omen, vampire, evil spirit), *striga* (OLD, evil howling spirit, vampire), *uenefica* (OLD, sorceress, poisoner), *uenenum* (OLD, a potent herb or substance used for medical or magical purposes, poison), *praecatrix* (OLD, enchantress,

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<sup>9</sup> Edmonds III (2019), 10.

<sup>10</sup> For a wider list of the terms that could be applied to magic practitioners and their rituals see: Faraone (1999), 15-30; Graf (1997), 20-60; Dickie (2001), 12-7; Stratton (2007) and (2014); Collins (2008), 27-62; Edmonds III (2019), 1-34; Bailliot (2019), 175-97.

<sup>11</sup> For more on *goetes* and their role and perception in Greek society see Dodds (1951), 135-76 and Johnston (1999), 103.

<sup>12</sup> The corresponding *philia* spells, as put forth by Faraone (1999), do not have an equivalent description as a potential love-charm.

<sup>13</sup> Ovid describes these owls in a fashion reminiscent of child-snatching demons, such as the *lamia* and *empousa*, and questions whether they were originally birds or women transformed by spell (*Fasti*. 6.131-42).

witch), *cantatrix* (OLD, one who uses incantations), *malefica* (OLD, sorceress, witch), *maleficus* (OLD, wicked, criminal, harmful, noxious, concerned with black magic), *lupula* (OLD, prostitute; L&S, she-wolf, witch, hag), *ueteratrix* (OLD, practised in artifice; L&S, sorceress), *magus* (OLD, one of a class of priests and diviners in Persia, magician, sorcerer), *ars magicae* (OLD, magic, black art, sorcery), *lena*<sup>14</sup> (OLD procuress, brothel-keeper, bawd), *anus* (OLD, old woman, a foolish type of person, a sorceress), *defigere* (OLD, to fix by thrusting down, to fix with a glance, to bind with a spells), *tabula* (OLD, a metal tablet used for the purposes of *defixio*), *carmen* (OLD, a ritual utterance, a religious hymn, a magical chant, an oracle), and *cantus* (OLD, singing, poetry, spells).<sup>15</sup>

We derive our modern word magic from Herodotus' description of the Persian priestly caste (1.131-2).<sup>16</sup> The name for these Persian priests came to be associated with those who practiced rituals from foreign lands — individuals who could practice effective arts or be charlatans who preyed on the weak-minded.<sup>17</sup> These Greco-Roman terms for magic are related to both individual practices or professions and to the monstrous and deadly. There is an overlap between the fraudulent, foolish, and the potentially fatal. It is fitting that Hecate is the patron goddess of magicians due to her mastery over the dead, who are often used, or closely associated with magic spells. The dread nature of the goddess stresses the ambiguous, and perhaps illegitimate, nature of many magical practices.

There are a few terms that are particularly relevant to this research. The first group centres around the words *epodai*, *carmina*, and *cantus*, which convey a multivalence of meaning.<sup>18</sup> While they often refer to speech acts, songs, or poetry, their definition also overlaps with that of spells or curses.<sup>19</sup> The lack of precision in defining these terms creates an added layer of ambiguity when they are encountered — an ambiguity that the elegists

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<sup>14</sup> The elegiac bawds become witches through the poet-lovers' association and accusation of the *lena* (cf. Tib. 1.5, Prop. 4.5, and Ov. *Am.* 1.8).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Ov. *Met.* 7.192 has Medea invoke Hecate to aid her in her spells and witchcraft (*cantusque artisque magorum*).

<sup>16</sup> Graf (1997), 21.

<sup>17</sup> See Momigliano (1971) and de Jong (1997) for a discussion of how associations with certain foreign knowledge and practices influenced the Greco-Roman world, especially in terms of rituals and practices that might be viewed as magical.

<sup>18</sup> For the multivalence of the word *carmen* (song and spell), see Richter (1970), 20; Sharrock (1994), 50-86; Papanghelis (1999), 54; Putnam (2001), 130-50; Hardie (2002), 126; Habinek (2005), 74-82; Karakasis (2011), 146; Chadha (2014), 8, 188. Sharrock (1994) argues that the ambiguity surrounding the word *carmen* allows the elegiac poets to cast their poems as a type of spell, which acts as a reflection of elegy's generic goals — to enchant the *puella*.

<sup>19</sup> Edmonds III (2019), 14.

are quick to pick up on. This allows the elegists a level of verbal latitude where they can explore and exploit this variance in meaning. The second group of words that are especially relevant relate to *pharmakon*<sup>20</sup> and *uenenum*, both of which could be a physical substance like a poison, drug, medicine, or potion, or even refer to a spoken curse or slander. This broad definition obfuscates even the laws governing the use of such materials. In the *Twelve Tables*, it is uncertain whether the law concerning *uenenum* refers to magic, cursing, slander or incorporates all these possible meanings.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, as Johnson states, there is a strong link between poisons and magic ‘because they manifest a desire to cause harm; involve secret, often ritual, preparations; and work through a hidden, or occult, process.’<sup>22</sup> Of interest to love elegy is the fact that the Latin word *uenenum* is conceptually, and potentially etymologically, linked to Venus.<sup>23</sup> There is a strong association with love potions becoming poisons if the dose is too strong.<sup>24</sup> Such magic in elegy is suggested by the conceptual blending of the lexically similar words and passages that associate love with the drinking of such poisons/potions (cf. Tib. 2.4). Therefore love, especially in an elegiac context, carries a suggestion of both the divine and the deadly. As with many of the magical terms, Venus herself is ambiguous, she can be a hindrance or a help in matters of love.

The final group of terms that are of particular interest to this research are the ones referring to the more ritualistic aspects of magic — *agoge*, *phila*, *katadesmoi*, *defixiones*. The first two fall under a category of ancient love spells as suggested by Faraone, who has

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<sup>20</sup> Homer uses *φάρμακον* to describe the powerful drugs that Circe uses in her witchcraft (*Od.* 10. 133). Moly is also considered a type of *pharmakon*, a herb or flower, used to ward off the goddess’ enchantments. It is described as good (*ἔσθλός*) to distinguish it from the kind Circe uses (*Od.* 10. 304-5).

<sup>21</sup> Philips (1991), 263-4; Rives (2012), 270-90.

<sup>22</sup> Johnson (2006), 925-7.

<sup>23</sup> While there is no explicit ancient support for this connection, scholars have drawn on passages from Lucretius, *DRN* 5.895-900 and 1009-17 and Verg. *A.* 1.688 where Venus seems to be linked to *uenenum*. Maltby (1991), provides Servius Auctus’ claim that *uenenum* is called so because it goes through the veins (*quod per uenas eat*). As Servius 1.688 connects this definition to Verg. *A.* 1.749 where Dido is described as drinking love (*longumque bibebat amorem*). This reference to the line in Servius is seen as a link to poisons/love potions, which are also drunk. O’Hara (1996, 106, 128, and 150), gives a plausible explanation for the association between the two words based on passages from the *Aeneid*, while suggesting that there might be a level of wordplay between the words, he cautions against these passages as being actual evidence of an etymological link. Hinds (2006), 47-9 asserts that *uenenum* can be viewed as a cognate of Venus in Roman poetic wordplay.

<sup>24</sup> Ogden (2002, 102-5) and Faraone (1999, 110-8) discuss the Deianeira tradition — women who attempt to strengthen the affection of their partner through a love potion, but accidentally kill their lover instead. Hercules’ death is considered an archetype for the accidental poisoning of someone with a love potion and further contributed to the conflation between poisoner and magic in the Greek (and later Roman) world. In the *Magna Moralia* 1.16.31-7, Aristotle discusses a case of a woman being acquitted of murder despite using a love potion as she administered it with good intentions.

worked extensively on ancient Greek magic.<sup>25</sup> These spells are divided into the aggressive *agoge* and the more passive *philia* type. The main difference between the two rests on the intention and the intensity of the spell.<sup>26</sup> *Agoge* spells are generally forceful spells that draw an unwilling victim to the caster. The victim of an *agoge* spell is often made to feel pain, wakefulness, burning, and other negative symptoms until they acquiesce to the caster. In contrast, *philia* spells are often viewed as the domain of women and the most likely magic to take the form of a love-potion. The goal is to increase the affection of a lover, especially if there is a chance their partner's love is waning. This type of spell is also one that can easily turn deadly, as evidenced through the Deianeira tradition where a lover might accidentally end a life rather than strengthen a love, although it is not intended to harm the victim. The potentially deadly outcome makes the more passive *philia* magic ostensibly more dangerous than *agoge* spells, which generally seek to control rather than kill.

## Scholarship Review

### *Emic versus etic*

When studying ancient magic, it is important to question whether one will adopt an emic or an etic approach.<sup>27</sup> The emic approach is the insider's viewpoint on a particular culture or set of behaviours based on its internal elements, personal understanding, and lived experience. The emic view presents a description of a belief or practice in terms of what is important to the individual observer, whether consciously or unconsciously. The etic approach forms opinions based on observation from an outside perspective. The etic perspective aims to provide an account of a belief or practice by examining it in a scientific or impartial manner. The belief or practice can then be discussed in a more generalised way and applied across cultures to compare and analyse similar phenomena. Which approach is generally favoured in studies related to magic discourse is a matter of some debate. Dickie believes that magic should first be approached from the emic perspective, in so far as an outsider is able to understand an alien culture, and then supplemented with etic

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<sup>25</sup> Faraone (1999), 41-119.

<sup>26</sup> Faraone (1999), 41-95 for *agoge* spells, and 96-119 for *philia* spells. The former is characterised as masculine and latter as feminine. I view this differentiation between the two types as somewhat disingenuous and limited in consideration of evidence for both men and women using both types, cf. Winkler (1991).

<sup>27</sup> The terms emic and etic were first coined by Pike (1954) in linguistics before being adopted for social and anthropological studies.

understanding.<sup>28</sup> Ideally, studies would be conducted with an emic approach, but given the distance from these cultures and danger of anachronism, scholars are often forced to rely on remote observation. This is easier said than done — one is liable to collapse the distinctions between the two.<sup>29</sup> The combination of the two approaches can lead to valuable insights into a subject and culture, but must be done with care. Versnel rejects the emic approach as he believes that only the etic approach is readily accessible to modern scholars and therefore is the only viable means to conduct scholarship.<sup>30</sup> Instead, Versnel advocates a heuristic approach to magical studies. He suggests that the magic discourse should make use of broad typologies until the categories can be narrowed down, if they can, to something more accurate.<sup>31</sup> To do otherwise would force scholars to remain in the dark about the thoughts, behaviours, and ritual practices of the past. Frankfurter rightly comments on the difficulty past scholars have had in maintaining a supposed emic approach in their research. He proposes a compromise between the two — the use of indigenous (emic) categories and terms with analysis from an inevitably etic perspective.<sup>32</sup>

The usefulness of broad cross-cultural studies on a given subject can be somewhat ambiguous. The first chapter of *Daughters of Hecate* uses early modern witchcraft trials as a model that informs Stratton's investigation of ancient biases against women 'witches'.<sup>33</sup> This approach, while interesting, demonstrates the potentially problematic side of the etic approach. Examining similar events from different cultures and times can help establish a pattern, but also risks falling into anachronistic paradigms when applying them to past events and different cultures. Except in the most general sense, it would be hard to compare cultures and practices, spread across such a large time span, in such a manner. For the most part, this thesis aims to follow Frankfurter's suggestion, to employ emic terms while examining magic in an etic manner. For the purpose of this research, magic is a category of ritual practice which seeks to manipulate particular individuals and circumstances to the favour of the magic practitioner, or the agent who hired them, and

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<sup>28</sup> Dickie (2001), 19-20.

<sup>29</sup> For the tendency of scholars to confound the approaches in studies of magic and religion, see Geertz (1975), 73-7.

<sup>30</sup> Versnel (1991), 185.

<sup>31</sup> Versnel (1991), 177-97.

<sup>32</sup> Frankfurter (2019), 3-6. For a similar approach see Eidinow (2007), who eschews general discussions of 'magic' to focus on material evidence, oracles, and curse tablets.

<sup>33</sup> Stratton (2014), 2-3.

acts as a means to navigate the erotic obstacles and frustrations of the elegiac worlds. This thesis is most interested in exploring how the Roman elegists employ the concept of magic and its various related rituals as well as why they do so.

### *Sources on magic*

While the primary focus of this thesis is the literary depictions of magic in Roman elegy, it is important to understand the evidence and sources for ancient magic in order to detect the potential interplay between the poetic texts and magic. The evidence for magic rests mainly in literary texts, lead curse-tablets, and Egyptian magical papyri. These are generally divided into two categories, the literary corpus and the material evidence. The literary corpus includes any text that can be mined for clues as to the nature of ancient magic. The papyri are probably the most important well of information on magical practices. The *Papyri Graecae Magicae (PGM)* and *Papyri Demoticae Magicae (PDM)*, composed between 100 BC and 400 CE, are the two main sources for spells, rituals, and our knowledge about how curse tablets were created.<sup>34</sup> The spells contained in them help to illuminate the more practical side of magic in the ancient world. The language of the extant papyri makes clear that magic rituals were usually the prerogative of one person, an agent, trying to better their own plight. Betz's translation of the *PGM* made these important texts more accessible to scholars.<sup>35</sup> While a large amount of the extant *defixiones* were compiled into collections over the last century, more recently, Gager published a commentary on a selection of new epigraphic texts discovered since.<sup>36</sup> His comprehensive introduction with pictures and translations of many different curse tablets helped bring *defixiones* into more general scholarship. Kropp provided illuminating studies of the lexical intricacies and the formulaic structure of curse tablets.<sup>37</sup> These studies were fruitful for understanding the nuances of magical language and, for the purposes of this research, to understand what words are commonly associated with these magic practices. McKie contributed to understanding the social significance of curse tablets in the Roman world.<sup>38</sup> Extensive work was done by

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<sup>34</sup> Gager (1992); Betz (1986).

<sup>35</sup> Betz (1986). This was the first English translation of the Greek magical papyri. With it, a comprehensive list of spells, rituals, and hymns became more readily available to a much wider audience.

<sup>36</sup> Gager (1992).

<sup>37</sup> Kropp (2010) and (2017).

<sup>38</sup> McKie (2017).

Faraone on the various categories of curse tablets. He posits that there were four types of agonistic spells: commercial, athletic/performer, erotic, and judicial.<sup>39</sup> According to Faraone, these agonistic binding spells were used in a crisis to provide an emotional outlet for feelings of helplessness and possibly to confer competitive advantage. Following in a similar vein, Eidinow compares oracles from the Dodona cult site with curse tablets from the rest of Greece and argues that oracles and curses were means for the ordinary man or women in ancient Greece to address what she calls 'uncertainty and risk in daily life.'<sup>40</sup> These collections of curse tablets have provided valuable contributions to the magic discourse on the vocabulary, formulas, circumstances, motivations, types of curse tablets, extent of erotic to non-erotic curses, and how they were made. Insight into the material side of magic has informed this research by revealing magical connections in the elegiac texts that might not have been as readily apprehended without an understanding of these elements.

While the material evidence provides unique insight into ancient magic, the value of literary depictions as sources for magic is a bit more ambiguous. Graf takes the position that caution must be used when using literary evidence as a window into the ancient magician.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, Dickie claims that scholars can use the depictions of magic in literary sources, albeit with a grain of salt, to divine real magic practices.<sup>42</sup> Dickie believes that sources, especially literary ones, should be taken at face value as more or less true representations of ancient society. However, Stratton believes that many scholars rely too heavily on literary sources and this gives rise to an assumption that the literary accounts are factually true or, at worst, a misrepresentation of real women's practices.<sup>43</sup> While this point is certainly valid, it can be hard to find viable alternatives when those sources are sometimes the only perspective on or evidence for a practice.

Both the literary and material sources should be consulted to gain a more nuanced view of ancient magic. There may be a correlation between the Roman literary representations of magic and actual practice of magic in the Roman world, but that is not the goal of this research. Rather the elegists evoke the concept of magic and witchcraft by using language charged with magical associations to create a world out of step with the

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<sup>39</sup> Faraone (1991), 3-31. For a more nuanced view of these agonistic categories see Eidinow (2007), 197-204.

<sup>40</sup> Eidinow (2007).

<sup>41</sup> Graf (1997), 175-6.

<sup>42</sup> Dickie (2001), 29-46.

<sup>43</sup> Stratton (2014), 3-4.

normative. While they do not offer definitive evidence for magic practice, the texts discussed in this research form a part of the contemporary discourse on magic, even if in a skewed manner.

### *The Gender of Magic*

Women are overwhelmingly represented as the practitioners of magic in Greco-Roman literature. The prototypical literary witches are Circe and Medea. According to Spaeth, Circe and Medea both fall into the period of 'magic before magic.'<sup>44</sup> That is, they are mythological characters who exhibit many of the traits or practices that later would be associated with magic practitioners, but whose practices were not necessarily ascribed to witches until a later date. In Roman representations of magic users, there is an abundance of female witches — Canidia, Sagana, Acanthis, Dipsas, Erichtho, Meroe. The ready availability of female witches skews the perception of gender in ancient magic. Various literary genres influenced the depictions of witches, but all contain similarities that transcend their differences. Like Graf and Stratton, Spaeth cautions against taking literary representations as actual representations of magical practices.<sup>45</sup> In the depiction of their unnatural power, female witches 'represent the ultimate fear of the loss of all human, or more specifically male, control over the world.'<sup>46</sup> They are outside law and threaten the natural order. There are various theories for why there is such a strong connection between women and magic. These can range from misogyny to deep subconscious fears or even economic and social upheaval. Stratton believes that these views rest on male literary stereotypes that have little to do with women's magic.<sup>47</sup> The relative lack of male magic users in the literary corpus does support this view.

Some posit that there is a significant difference between Greek witches who live in a mythical past and are usually cast in the role of the hero's helper and the Roman witch who is a lurid 'realistic' figure that functions as a reverse paradigm of proper female behaviour.<sup>48</sup> Roman witches are portrayed more negatively than Greek witches are. Spaeth suggests that there is an evolution, from the relatively benign and mostly helpful acts of the Greek

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<sup>44</sup> Spaeth (2014), 41.

<sup>45</sup> Spaeth (2014), 43; Graf (1997), 26.

<sup>46</sup> Spaeth (2014), 46.

<sup>47</sup> Stratton (2014), 5.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Stratton (2007) and Schons (1998).

witches, like Circe and Medea, to the dark rites and nefarious deeds of their Roman counterparts.<sup>49</sup> Roman witches are often depicted as driven by lust, a lust that perverts the 'natural order' of women as passive receptacles of male attention and threatens the social construction of gender roles. There is certainly something noticeably different about the portrayal of Roman witches, especially with Lucan's Erichtho. Still, it is questionable how sustainable this view is considering that both Circe and Medea are ambivalent figures, even in the Greek sources, and commit atrocious deeds. It might be argued that Roman witches are more ostensibly evil, rapacious, and sordid. However, even this portrayal is not so definitive as there is evidence for benign and even helpful witches in Roman elegy (Tib. 1.2, Prop. 1.1). As mythological prototypes of magic practitioners, Circe and Medea both embody the status of outsiders as well as priestesses of illicit knowledge and power. They are fitting prototypes of a tradition of ambiguous practices. It is usually relatively clear who is meant to be a witch or sorcerer in literary representations. However, this certainty becomes undermined by the elegists self-presentation as, at least part-time, magic users. I shall argue that, despite seeming to follow the general trend of Roman literature, not all magic users in Latin love elegy are female — rather, the poet-lovers' themselves seem to participate in and assume powers normally ascribed to witches.

Even in historical accounts, the gender of a magic practitioner seems to be socially constructed, and much like the literary representations, seems to be biased towards women. It will be beneficial to briefly discuss what is meant by a practitioner of magic, especially in Greco-Roman literature, and to describe the differences that demarcate the literary magic user from the real-world or historical magician. Many of the behaviours that a modern scholar might associate with real-world or historical magical practices would have been encompassed by other, less apparently magical, spheres of activity. In practice, the term magic user might be applied to an assorted group of people — a ritual specialist, a person who commissions a spell or curse, a scribe who writes out the spell formula onto tablets, a non-expert dabbling in magic for personal reasons. These real people were usually not so fantastical as their literary counterparts. Stratton focuses on women in antiquity traditionally associated with witches, but does not give a full account of what constitutes a

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<sup>49</sup> Spaeth (2014), 47-50. For an increased inclusion and discussion of witches in Augustan literature see Gordon (1999), 204-210 and (2009), 209-28, Stratton (2007), 71-105, Pillinger (2012), 39-79.

witch in any given period.<sup>50</sup> Rather she explores the various aspects that generate an affiliation with witchcraft.<sup>51</sup> The most recent scholarship on ancient magic and gender is found in *The Daughters of Hecate*, a compilation edited by Kalleres and Stratton, which attempts to understand the relationship between women and magic as well as why women, rather than men, seem to be more often portrayed as magic users in the literary sources when the historical and archaeological evidence suggests that men were also involved in aspects of magic practice.<sup>52</sup> However, the book deals primarily with the representations of women associated with magic rather than giving a clear view of what part men played in magic. Stratton acknowledges that much of the ‘feminisation’ of witchcraft was, at times, due to scholarly and historiographical biases that skewed the image in modern times.<sup>53</sup> Certain types of magic were considered traditionally male, such as the *agoge* spell, which sought to coerce an object of desire into acquiescing to the magic user’s demands.<sup>54</sup> Conversely, Dickie contends that both men and women used the *agogai* spells for securing sexual pleasure, although the women who did were likely prostitutes, looking to make a profit, satisfy their sexual desire, or destroy a competitor.<sup>55</sup> In Dickie’s view, the use of this kind of magic was not about securing love or affection, but about carnal satisfaction.

Women’s use of this type of magic was seen as manly and usurping the role of men, and thus dangerous, whereas men who used *philia* magic generally did so to influence male social superiors to treat them favourably and were apt to be accused of femininity. This view differs markedly from Faraone’s model, which allows for prostitutes to use *agogai* spells, but asserts that many, if not most, women used erotic magic for the purpose of preserving their relationships.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, Dickie postulates that there existed a veritable *demi-monde* of sexual competition and exploitation among prostitutes in most ancient cities, which made the machinations and activities of these figures readily recognisable in the tropes concerning erotic magic in literature.<sup>57</sup> This does seem to fit with

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<sup>50</sup> Stratton (2007), 39-142.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Chollet (2022), who provides a list of things that put women at risk of witchcraft accusations: ‘refusal of motherhood, rejection of marriage, ignoring traditional beauty standards, bodily and sexual autonomy, homosexuality, aging, anger, even a general sense of self-determination.’

<sup>52</sup> Stratton (2014), 1-2.

<sup>53</sup> Stratton (2014), 2-3.

<sup>54</sup> Faraone (1999), 41-95.

<sup>55</sup> Dickie (2001), 133-66, 284. This assumption plays into stereotypes concerning gender roles.

<sup>56</sup> Faraone (1999), 39.

<sup>57</sup> Dickie (2001), 176-7.

the image of 'witches' as portrayed by Roman authors who are easily identifiable as analogues for prostitutes or named a witch outright. Frankfurter disagrees with the supposition that only women of low social status, such as prostitutes, used the *agogai* type spells and posits instead that even married women of acceptable standing in society might resort to the more 'violent and masculine' erotic spells if they felt their position was sufficiently threatened by another, either externally or internally.<sup>58</sup> He also takes umbrage with what he sees as an over reliance on 'literary caricature and stereotype' in Dickie. Instead, he believes that only through an examination of the spells left behind by women in the material record will an understanding of the motivations for female magic use arise.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, he concentrates on the notion that the use of magic by women was an expression of agency. While harsh in his critique, he is seeking to find a better model for women's use of magic that elucidates the impetus behind the employment of magic rather than mistakenly, in his mind, relying on literary stereotypes.

More recent studies on ancient magic focus on how magic functioned as a method of navigating social tensions instead of relying solely on literary representations.<sup>60</sup> Graf believes the inconsistency between literary representations and material reality as one of projection. It was unseemly for a proper man to use magic to obtain love or a socially advantageous marriage, so magic was pushed onto women to explain its continued existence.<sup>61</sup> This dovetails nicely with Pollard's and Stratton's view of depictions of women witches being a representation of male anxiety.<sup>62</sup> In reality, men might have used or commissioned the use of magic more so than women. Of the extant erotic curse tablets, the vast majority of them are evidently males attempting to coerce female, or sometimes male, victims.<sup>63</sup> Magic in elegy, when not describing the powers of a particular witch or beseeching her aid, is often found in the form of witchcraft accusations — often at times when the presence or advice of a *lena* threatens the poet's authorial and erotic control over the text. Historical charges of witchcraft were complex and fraught with political

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<sup>58</sup> Frankfurter (2014), 319-23. Cf. Ripat (2014), who argues that married women used *agogai* spells on their husbands and curse tablets against potential rivals.

<sup>59</sup> Frankfurter (2014), 322-24. Frankfurter finds the assignment of erotic magic to the world of prostitutes a reductionist view, stating that it is overly moralistic and 'replicates as history the caricatures and censure of Christian authors' to do so.

<sup>60</sup> Frankfurter (2014); Pollard (2014); Eidinow (2017) and (2019).

<sup>61</sup> Graf (1997), 189.

<sup>62</sup> See Stratton (2014) and Pollard (2014).

<sup>63</sup> Faraone (1999), 41-3.

undertones. Pollard provides a fertile study of how magic accusations were employed against Imperial women to maintain a political power balance. Accusations of magic, at least in the Roman world, functioned as political and social weapons to cast aspersions at enemies and undermine their social standing and credibility. Pollard uses Mary Douglas' model to analyse why particular women were accused of witchcraft and to elucidate the reasons behind such accusations.<sup>64</sup> She asserts that accusations of witchcraft (*artes magicae*) against women functioned in three ways: to negotiate competitive relationships between women of status, to cope with sudden fluctuations in social power, and to realign the factional hierarchy in the nobility of the early empire.<sup>65</sup> An example of this is when Agrippina used accusations of witchcraft to rebalance her own political power after the death of her husband Germanicus led to a sudden downfall in her fortunes — wielding witchcraft accusations served as a societal equaliser. Pollard argues that the aristocratic women of Rome were vying for power for themselves. However, Stratton suggests that accusations against women, especially concerning their sexuality, were not a power play between women, but between men.<sup>66</sup> Even when not the one directly accused of witchcraft, the mere association with a magic user can taint a woman's reputation. More recently, Eidinow has published thought-provoking articles on the agency of victimhood, arguing that magic accusations were part of a narrative constructed in conversation between the various parties, allowing a certain level of agency and empowerment even to the victim.<sup>67</sup> She explores the social tensions surrounding magic accusations and how they might have been dealt with. This elaborates on arguments around magic as a tool for risk management in her earlier works. The image of the old rapacious and lurid hag is a male caricature of the Roman aristocratic woman in reaction to the social anxieties surrounding the turbulent times of the late Republic and early empire. The discussion of historical witchcraft trials, or at least accusations, in Rome provides an interesting background for the discussion of accusations in elegy, especially for the discussion of Tib. 1.5, Prop. 4.5, and Ov. *Am.* 1.8.

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<sup>64</sup> Pollard (2014), 183-218.

<sup>65</sup> Pollard (2014), 184-5.

<sup>66</sup> Stratton (2014), 1-40.

<sup>67</sup> Eidinow (2017) and (2019).

## *Magic in Augustan Elegy*

One of the first scholars to explore the topic of magic in Augustan poetry more fully was Luck, who has written widely on magic in the Greco-Roman world. He explores the speech of Acanthis in Prop. 4.5, where the poet-lover accuses the *lena* of being a witch.<sup>68</sup> Both Gutzwiller and O'Neill further expand on the relationships between the *lena*, poet-lover, and magic in Prop. 4.5.<sup>69</sup> Sharrock demonstrates Ovid's association of his own poetic *carmen* with magic *carmen* in *Ars.* 2.99-104, arguing that his poetry functions as a magic spell that seduces the audience but ultimately predicates the elegiac lover's failure to achieve his aims. For her, magic is a metaphor for this seduction in which Ovid is a witch.<sup>70</sup> Sharrock sees the failure of elegy to achieve its purported aims as necessary for the continuation of the amatory world created by the elegiac poets. Pillinger provides an illuminating discussion of the poetics of repetition in Latin poetry, specifically through the lens of Roman witches.<sup>71</sup> She looks at literary examples of witchcraft and, more specifically, at the trope of the catalogue of witches' powers commonly found in the work of the Roman poets from Vergil to Lucan. While the work contains fruitful discussion of how magic functions in the specific passages that Pillinger examines, it does not look in depth at magic in elegy. Most recently, Rüpke has looked into how Roman poets, with a special focus on Propertius, provide evidence for magic practices.<sup>72</sup> He sees Propertius' use of magic as the deployment of a particular tool, of which he has many, in response to an everchanging competitive environment.

In her doctoral thesis, Chadha builds on the argument set out by Sharrock and examines the links between magic and Augustan poetry. Following Sharrock, Chadha sees magic as a metaphor for the poet's own *carmen* and their necessary failure and deception of the audience.<sup>73</sup> While the Roman elegists certainly play a game of conceptual blending with the categories of poetry and of magic, sometimes more deliberately and sometimes more ambiguously, this is not the only work that magic does in elegy. Chadha sees magic as

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<sup>68</sup> Luck (1955), 428-38. His later work on witches in Roman literature, Luck (1962), follows up on this.

<sup>69</sup> Gutzwiller (1985), 105-115 and O'Neill (1995), 49-50. Myers (1996) focuses her discourse on the complex dynamics of the relationship between the *lena* and poet in Roman elegy, which does overlap with the concept of the witch.

<sup>70</sup> Sharrock (1994), 50-86.

<sup>71</sup> Pillinger (2012), 39-79.

<sup>72</sup> Rüpke (2016), 65-79.

<sup>73</sup> Chadha (2014).

highlighting the deceit of the elegiac world, both in its content and its aims; she believes that magic acts as a means of self-reflection in elegy and that its intertextuality helps the poets to position their work in relation to other genres and predecessors. Chadha concludes her thesis with the argument that the physical attractiveness of the elegiac *puellae* constitutes its own type of magic that surpasses that of the poet-lovers' personas. While Chadha has produced an interesting discussion of the metapoetics of magic, her work is more concerned with establishing magic as a marker of a poetic pedigree that stretches back to Vergil and Callimachus. To this extent her work comes closest to providing a comprehensive examination of magic and how it functions across the Roman elegists.<sup>74</sup> However, while there is much overlap between Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid, there are also nuanced differences between their presentations that reflect the evolution of the category of magic as well as the genre.

The aim of the present thesis is to systemically examine these instances or inclusions of magic in the works of Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid. My goal to explore the origins, progression, and evolution of magic in Roman elegy directs the structure of my research. There is a chapter devoted to each individual elegiac poet to examine how magic functions in their respective works. The treatment of Propertius is divided into two chapters to accommodate the degree of difference between the poet's first three books and his final work. Ovid's highly intratextual and self-referential poetics surpass that of his predecessors in terms of sheer scale, but magic seems to be treated more deliberately in this works. For this research, I shall concentrate on his elegiac works: the *Amores*, *Heroides*, *Medicamina faciei femineae*, *Ars Amatoria*, and *Remedia Amoris*. Each chapter focuses on when and where magic appears in these works and how it subsequently evolves. To demonstrate these changes more accurately, each chapter will explore one poet — allowing for a retrospective examination of the intra- and intertextual dialogue between the various poets and poems.

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<sup>74</sup> Tupet (1976), 330-417 does provide a fairly comprehensive study of magic in the Roman elegists and how it relates to actual magical practices, but does so much explore the literary associations of the magic.

## Prospectus

In our first chapter we will look at how magic and ritual seem to be intertwined with the pastoral backdrop of Tibullus' elegiac poems. Tibullus' corpus serves as a good starting point for the discussion of magic in elegy as his poems seem to present a constant juxtaposition of what might be termed normative religious practices and non-normative or magical practices. This tension between what might be considered magic, on the one hand, and religion on the other expresses the ambiguity that exists between the two categories, making it a fertile ground in which to explore how magic functions in these poems and Roman discourse more generally. This first chapter is divided into three sections: the first examines the juxtaposition of the civic seeming harvest rituals with magical night-time rituals; then we will explore the often overlooked relationship between magic and politics in Tibullus through a close reading of poems 1.7 and 2.5; the final section interrogates how the poet-lover persona supports his authority and role by engaging with the category of magic. We contend that the poet-lover's possible status as a magic-user changes the power dynamics and the reading of certain passages in the Tibullan corpus.

The second chapter will focus on Books 1-3 of Propertius. Propertius also demonstrates a proclivity for rituals, both magical and religious in nature. The opposition set up in Roman elegy between state religion and magic in some poems further underscores the subversive nature of the male elegiac lover's pose. Magic is connected to all the major themes of Propertian elegy: love, poetry, and politics. The first section of this chapter will explore the conspicuous inclusion of magic in each of the programmatic poems to determine the extent to which magic plays a part in these elegies, while demonstrating how it functions and offering suggestions as to the purpose of magic in these poems. The second section will focus on thematic lexical intertexts with curse tablets and Roman literature in Propertius' other poems. I will look at how Propertius' engagement with these 'illegitimate' ritual practices acted as a signpost for resistance to political and poetic norms.

The third chapter will examine Propertius' Book 4, where the proposed civic goals of the collection are expressed by elegy rather than a potentially loftier genre of poetry. Book 4 merits a separate chapter due to its self-professed patriotic programme, the greater degree of tension between normative and non-normative rituals, and the unique voices found within it. Despite being a book that professes to honour the Augustan agenda and to

be more minded towards civic rituals, this final Propertian endeavour is haunted by female voices that continually call the reader's mind back to the elegiac world. This chapter will be divided into two sections: first we will closely examine poems 4.5, 4.7, 4.8, and 4.11 for their connection to magic ritual and the supernatural. This first group of poems, with their emphasis on women's voices, contains competing narratives that directly challenge the narrative control of the poet-lover. The second section will focus on 4.6 and 4.9, as representations of civic rituals and the masculine sphere, to demonstrate how these poems problematise Propertius' poetic agenda while ostensibly adhering to it.

In Chapter 4, we will conclude our examination of magic in Roman elegy by examining how magic functions in Ovid. Ovid produced more poetic output and his works span a greater length of time than Tibullus and Propertius, and thus it is necessary to curtail our discussion of magic in Ovid's poems. To that end, the final chapter is divided into three sections: the first examines how accusations of witchcraft function in *Heroides* 6 and 12 as well as *Amores* 1.8. The second section explores how magic is used to represent the anxieties provoked by the dynamics of competition and erotic frustrations in *Am.* 1.11, 1.12, and 3.7. The final section of Chapter 4 will focus on the conceptual blending of magical *carmen* with poetic *carmen* in the poet's erotodidactic works: *Ars Am.* 2.99-108, *Med.* 35-42, and *Rem. Am.* 249-90. This examination builds on the groundwork laid out in the previous chapters and demonstrates how Ovid seems to have positioned his poetic *carmen* as a powerful and superior alternative strategy to erotic magic in amatory affairs as well as how his work both encapsulates the essence of magic and surpasses it.

It is the goal of this research to deepen the understanding of the place of magic in Roman elegy. Magic is more than simply a stock theme or motif; it functions as a signpost that initiates deeper thought concerning the place of love, gender, control, authority, and genre in elegy. We will demonstrate that the tensions between what could be called magic rites and traditional rites present in elegy offers a profitable line of inquiry into the generic and poetical concerns of Latin love elegy. More broadly, we hope to show how magic functions as a form of subversion against poetic and political norms.

## CHAPTER 1 – Witches, and Curses, and Magic, oh my!

Tibullus incorporates many magical elements and motifs into his poems; his corpus abounds in allusions to people, places, or actions that are often associated with magic in the literary world. These patterns of representation go hand-in-hand with a proclivity for antiquated Roman rituals. This inclination for piety and traditional religion conforms nicely with the Augustan reforms on religion.<sup>75</sup> However, into this pious landscape, Tibullus inserts witches, curses, and magic. Tibullan elegy oscillates from one end of the ritual spectrum to the other; the programmatic poem of his first book (1.1) presents a rustic harvest ritual, whereas his final poem (2.6) contains suggestions of necromancy — the striking shift between the beginning and end of his work demonstrates the capricious nature of this elegiac *demi-monde*. This elegiac world certainly does not adhere to the pastoral image it first presents. Magic is embedded throughout Tibullus' poems and its presence often coincides with a negative shift in the narrative — the mistress' rejection, the appearance of a romantic rival, or an obstacle to the affair.

Moreover, the poet-lover's authority is constantly undermined by challengers: *lenae*, *puellae*, romantic rivals, and even divinities. One of the poet's most prominent rivals is the witch-like *lena* figure. Depictions of witches in Tibullus tend to follow the precedent set by Vergil's *Eclogue* 8 and Horace's *Epode* 5 — both present female protagonists who wield amatory spells that aim to seduce their beloveds/victims.<sup>76</sup> These witches transcend, or perhaps more accurately transgress, both Roman social mores and the elegiac poem itself by injecting themselves into or dominating the text in a way that can be jarring. The image of the witch is set up as an antithesis to the ideal Augustan Roman woman, or, in the case of the elegiac lover, as the antithesis to an ideal mistress.<sup>77</sup> In Tibullus, witches generally seem to be employed for the benefit of someone else rather than themselves, appearing both as potential helpers and potential obstacles in the poet's amatory affairs. This ambivalent

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<sup>75</sup> Cairns (1979), 20; Wallace-Hadrill (2008), 249-50.

<sup>76</sup> The portrayal of witches in Vergil and Horace are markedly different in both treatment and tone. The former has a young woman attempting to draw her wayward lover back to her with ambiguous results (*Ecl.* 8.64-109). The latter's Canidia appears across multiple poems and books (*Epod.* 3, 5, 17; *Sat.* 1.8, 2.1, 2.8) and is depicted as a decrepit, lustful, greedy, yet powerful, hag. The shift from the helpful witch, the first witch to be introduced in Tibullus, to the rapacious and vulgar witch might be a subtle reflection of these varied portrayals.

<sup>77</sup> For the witch as the antithesis of an ideal Roman or elegiac woman see Myers (1996), Stratton (2007), and Spaeth (2014).

portrayal of witches opens the door to a more complex engagement with the category of magic and helps further destabilise the narrative. However, the witch is not the only locus of magic in these poems. Tibullus complicates this presentation further by insinuating that he possesses powers analogous to, or greater than, these witch figures. The question arises as to why he should include so many magical associations in his poems and why he should place himself (or his literary persona) at the heart of it. As a member of the male elite, the poet is expected to conform to a certain set of standards, ones which would not include the practice of magic. The elegiac poet-lover is often portrayed in an unflattering light; he is poor, weak, superstitious, passive, ineffectual, feminine, and servile. Tibullus thus places himself in direct opposition to socio-political standards of his time.<sup>78</sup> His posturing as a *seruus amoris* as well as a potentially powerful magic practitioner stresses the internal conflicts inherent in these varying depictions. The presence of magic, and the uncertainty surrounding the question of who wields it, both strengthens his elegiac pose and contributes to undermining the normative power structure.

In this chapter, we will examine how magic interacts with and influences the structure of meaning within Tibullus Books 1 and 2. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section explores the juxtaposition between magical night-time rituals and civic harvest-like rituals — a juxtaposition that demonstrates a level of dissonance in the harmonious façade set up by the seemingly ‘pastoral’ elegiac world.<sup>79</sup> The second section explores the relationship between magic and politics in Tibullus through a close reading of poems 1.7 and 2.5. By examining the poet’s purported relationship to traditional power structures, the tension inherent in the insertion of magic into these supposedly conforming spaces becomes more apparent. The final section of this chapter interrogates the poet’s relationship with power more closely by examining how the poet-lover persona engages with the category of magic. We argue that the reading of the poet-lover as a possible sorcerer changes the power dynamics within Tibullus’ elegiac world as well as our understanding of certain passages. Magic in Tibullus acts in three ways; first, it reinforces the subversion of the elegiac lover’s pose in contrast to expected male norms; secondly, it

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<sup>78</sup> Hallett (1973), 114-5; Greene (1998), xii-xiii; James (2003), 3-5.

<sup>79</sup> Fantazzi (1966), 171-91 stresses the differences between pastoral and love elegy, arguing that the subjective love poetry is sublimated under Vergil’s pastoral in the *Eclogues*. Fantuzzi (2003), 1-11 argues that the pastoral symbolises an idealised world created by the elegists to assuage the wounds of their erotic affairs.

acts as a foil to explore the juxtaposition of more normative traditions/rituals<sup>80</sup>; and thirdly, it acts as a signpost for alternative readings of certain passages.

## 1. Normative religion versus non-traditional practices

Within Tibullus' elegies there is a constant juxtaposition of what might be termed more normative, or at least accepted, religious practices, on the one hand, and base superstitions, foreign practices, or unorthodox behaviours, on the other. This tension between what might be considered religion and what might be considered magic, especially given their similar uses of ritual language and activities, expresses an ambiguity that continues to exist between the two categories. Tibullus' elegies are littered with references to traditional Roman gods: the Lares, Penates, Bacchus, Ceres, Pax, Pales, Spes, Amor, Priapus, Apollo/Phoebus, the Muses, Hecate, Thetis, and Venus, who naturally figures predominately in his poems.<sup>81</sup> Hecate might be considered an outsider in this group because her associations with the underworld and magic made her an ominous figure to the average person, but her worship at crossroads, by all accounts an ancient practice, and her patronage of the magical arts places her in a uniquely liminal space — she represents both orthodoxy and less traditional activities.<sup>82</sup> Hecate embodies the ambiguity between more regular religious practices and what would be considered magical acts. Despite the proliferation of activities related to the goddess of witchcraft throughout Tibullus' poems, she is only mentioned directly by name once.<sup>83</sup> Along with these Roman gods and goddesses

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<sup>80</sup> Orlin (2010), 209 argues that in the crisis of identity that followed the civil wars, 'Roman religious practice, and the Roman understanding of those practices' became an important part of the socio-political discourse.

<sup>81</sup> The Lares (1.1.20, 1.3.34, 1.10.15, 1.10.25, 2.1.60, 2.4.54, 2.5.20, 2.5.42); Penates (1.3.33); Bacchus (1.4.7, 1.4.37, 1.7.39, 1.7.41, 1.9.34, 1.9.61, 2.1.3, 2.1.55, 2.3.63, 2.3.64, 2.5.87); Ceres (1.1.15, 2.1.4, 2.5.58, 2.5.84); Pax (1.10.45, 1.10.47, 1.10.49, 1.10.67); Pales (1.1.36, 2.5); Spes (1.1.9, 1.9.23, 2.6.20, 2.6.21, 2.6.25, 2.6.27); Amor (1.3.21, 1.3.64, 1.6.2, 1.6.30, 1.6.51, 1.10.57, 2.1.80, 2.2.18, 2.3.4, 2.3.28, 2.3.71, 2.4.4, 2.4.38, 2.4.52, 2.5.39, 2.5.106, 2.6.1, 2.6.15); Priapus (1.1.18, 1.4.1); Apollo/Phoebus (1.4.37, 2.3.11, 2.3.26, 2.3.27, 2.4.13, 2.5.1, 2.5.17, 2.5.65, 2.5.79, 2.5.106, 2.5.121); the Muses (1.4.61, 1.4.62, 1.4.65, 1.4.67, 1.9.48, 2.4.15, 2.4.20); Hecate (1.2.54); Thetis (1.5.46); Venus (1.1.73, 1.2.16, 1.2.36, 1.2.42, 1.2.81, 1.2.92, 1.2.99, 1.3.58, 1.3.79, 1.4.21, 1.4.71, 1.4.79, 1.5.40, 1.5.58, 1.6.83, 1.8.5, 1.8.28, 1.8.35, 1.9.20, 1.9.81, 1.10.66, 2.1.12, 2.3.3, 2.3.50, 2.3.72, 2.4.24, 2.4.57, 2.6.9). The mention of these divinities especially attracts notice given the brevity of Tibullus' poetry in comparison to the other Roman elegists.

<sup>82</sup> Dickie (2001), 35.

<sup>83</sup> 1.2.64 (*ad magicos... deos*) also evokes her through association with a magic ritual and her place as one of the underworld gods/goddesses. However, this happens to be the same poem where she is mentioned by name and one of the most obvious episodes of magic in Tibullus. Hecate's presence is more implicit than explicit; the goddess and her arts are always hovering in the background of the poems, disrupting the bucolic scenes.

there are a few references to less traditional gods, primarily the Egyptian Isis (1.3.23) and Osiris (1.7.27, 1.7.29, 1.7.43), as well as to the goddess Bellona (1.6.45). The inclusion of foreign gods might not seem so unusual, but the paucity of references to them as well the nature of those references makes their presence more conspicuous. This is especially so considering the overall tone of the first poem of each book. Both 1.1 and 2.1, which each contain an enactment of a rural harvest ritual, serve as programmatic poems for their respective books — they set up a seemingly traditional pious and pastoral landscape. However, this peaceful backdrop soon begins to show cracks in its façade; Tibullus intersperses his elegiac world with magic and witches. For a poet so overtly preoccupied with piety and simple harvest rituals, Tibullus makes use of ‘black magic’ and cursing more often than might be expected throughout his poems. Tibullus presents a theme of normative religion, prayer, and agrarian rituals, pitted against magic and often subversive witchcraft.<sup>84</sup> This section will identify and explore the magic embedded in the Tibullan corpus, looking at where magic appears, how it manifests itself, and what it means within the structure of the respective poem. The first part will look at the juxtaposition between agrarian and magical rituals through an examination of certain poems in Book 1: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.5, and 1.8. The second part will look at magic in Tibullus’ second book: 2.1 and 2.4. These poems are highly charged with ritual language, some more traditional and others more alternative.

### *Book 1:*

#### 1.1

Tibullus published his first book of poetry shortly after the Battle of Actium.<sup>85</sup> Poem 1.1 occupies an important place as the programmatic poem for Book 1 as well as the inaugural poem of the poet’s work. Despite the seemingly peaceful atmosphere, this poem sets the stage for the inclusion of magic as well as demonstrating a fundamental incoherence

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<sup>84</sup> While the agrarian and magical aspects might originally derive from Hellenistic influences, nevertheless Tibullus reinterprets this theme for his own poetic agenda. For Hellenistic magic see Cairns (1979), 38. For a thorough examination of the literary tradition of magic see Chadha (2014).

<sup>85</sup> Where Tibullus stands chronologically speaking in relation to the other elegists, especially Propertius, is not altogether clear. See Knox (2005) for the argument that Tibullus’ first book preceded Propertius’ first book. Lyne (1998), 521-3 also argues for an early publication date, around 30 BC. Most scholars agree that Tibullus’ first book was published sometime between 27 and 25 BC, see Murgatroyd (1980), 4-12; Lee-Stecum (2013).

present in Tibullus' elegiac world. From its first lines poem 1.1 outlines the normative path for an aristocratic Roman male to take, that of soldier.<sup>86</sup> Tibullus opens with a rejection of this path (1.1.1-6). The hardships that a soldier experiences, as Tibullus lays them out, directly correlate to those experienced by a *seruus amoris*.<sup>87</sup> The poet-lover does not want the hard life of a soldier, but his erotic reality does not widely differ from it. The comparative suffering of the elegiac lover and the soldier blurs the line of distinction between the two roles and collapses attempts at a firm delineation.<sup>88</sup> The farmer's agricultural life is perverted from being a good foundation for a hardy soldier to providing the best situation for the poet to realise his version of *otium*.<sup>89</sup> Unlike the other elegiac poets who present a tension between two contrasting ways of life (that of the *miles* and the *amator*), Tibullus is slightly more nuanced, presenting a third option in the *rusticus*.<sup>90</sup> Tibullus presents himself to the world as a pious *rusticus* and claims the goodwill of the gods as the security of his future happiness, although the current state of his affairs suggests that prayers to these gods have gone unanswered in the past or that their power was not enough to prevent the loss of the paternal fortunes he professes not to miss (1.1.41 *non ego diuitias patrum fructusque requiro*). In 1.1 traditional gods related to agriculture and the household are present: Ceres (1.1.15) and the Lares (1.1.20) are invoked to grant good harvest and wine, and Tibullus states that he always worships Pales (1.1.36) and Priapus (1.1.18) for their assistance with the herd and garden, respectively, as well as Venus for her dominion over affairs of the heart, and Hope who never fails him (1.1.9), at least not in this book. He appeases all these Roman divinities with the appropriate sacrifices according to his

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<sup>86</sup> Lee-Stecum (1998), 27-9 sees the willingness to become a soldier, undertaking temporary risk to secure future wealth, as an inversion of the poet-lover's ideal life. He further argues that military service itself constitutes a lack of control and interruption of the normal power status of an elite male, which is undergone to secure future wealth and power.

<sup>87</sup> For more on the theme of the *seruus amoris* see: Copley (1947), 285-300; Luck (1969), 129; Lyne (1979), 117-30; Murgatroyd (1981), 589-606; Conte (1994), 35-8; James (2003), 145-50; Fulkerson (2013), 180-93.

<sup>88</sup> I.e., The sentry exposed to the elements outside the mistresses' door to the marching soldier; the surprising presence of death despite the rural environments; brawls in taverns and outside mistresses' doors; lack of sleep due to being locked out of the mistress' house and not being granted a soft bed to sleep on. For the language and conditions of war being co-opted into elegy, see Harrison (2013), 134-140.

<sup>89</sup> Lee-Stecum (1998) 31-33 notes that this is an innovation on the standard Roman mores and is firmly inscribed in the ethical tradition of how to live a moral life.

<sup>90</sup> Lyne (1980) argues that Tibullus usurps the role of the *rusticus* as he is usually seen (simple, hardworking, moral) in the Roman mind, reinventing it for his own purposes. Gaisser (1983), 62-3 argues that there is both a physical (difference in material wealth) and moral dimension (association with traditional Roman values and religion) to the differing lifestyles. Lee-Stecum (1998), 42-5 argues that Tibullus conflates the values of the Roman aristocrat with that of the *rusticus*.

humble status and begs them not to scorn his meagre gifts (37-8 *adsitis, diui, neu uos e paupere mensa | dona nec e puris spernite fictilibus*). He relinquishes notions of glory and wealth for the country life. With little power or wealth of his own, the poet must rely on the support of these rural gods and his ancestral Lares. Although Tibullus beseeches the gods here to allow him such comforts in lieu of more traditional rewards, by the end of the poem he assumes, or simply hopes, that his wishes will come to pass. This begins a pattern of assuming, and even professing, that the gods support him.

However, even this rural paradise that Tibullus so desperately desires is not free from troubles; the poet prays for his meagre flock to be spared from robbers and wolves (33 *furesque lupique*), who could endanger this ideal life. Considering the programmatic nature of this poem, robbers might be construed as the poet-lover's potential rivals and the wolves as the rapacious procuresses/witches, who constantly threaten his amatory endeavours.<sup>91</sup> While there are no overt references to magic in this first poem, the language which Tibullus uses at 1.1.21-2 (*lustrabat ... hostia*) to describe part of the agricultural ritual is remarkably similar to the language used in the witch's ritual at 1.2.63-4 (*lustrauit ... hostia*). Furthermore, while the poet sprinkles milk for Pales (1.1.36 *spargere lacte*), the witch sprinkles milk for the spirits of the dead (1.2.48 *aspersas lacte*). One ritual involves sacrificing a lamb to the Lares, his ancestral guardians, and the other a black victim to the underworld gods (1.2.64 *magicos deos*). The wording of 1.2, following on the heels of 1.1, is deliberately evocative of the harvest ritual and insinuates a link between them. The first is presumably performed during the day, the second clearly at night (1.2.63 *nocte serena*). Considering that the former would supposedly correspond to a sanctioned rural or civic ritual, such as the Ambarvalia detailed in 2.1, and the latter would certainly be judged as a non-normative ritual, and thus be the subject of social opprobrium, it is suggestive that these rituals are lexically connected to each other.<sup>92</sup> Tibullus could have described the witch's rites and powers without using such similar language.

A sense of unease further creeps into the pastoral landscape with the presence of death, in the guise of the poet's imagined funeral (1.1.59-68) and in the personified figure of

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<sup>91</sup> Lee-Stecum (1998), 42. For women in the lower stratum of society, like prostitutes and witches, being compared to wolves or dogs, see Lowe (2015) and James (2003), 285.

<sup>92</sup> The only poems in Tibullus to use the verb *lustrare*, other than 1.1 and 1.2, are 1.5 and 2.1; the former contains a healing ritual and accusation of witchcraft, while 2.1 is thought to be a representation of the Ambarvalia festival.

Death (70 *Mors*). Rather than a life with Delia, the poet imagines his mistress holding him as he dies (59-60 *te spectem, suprema mihi cum uenerit hora, | te teneam moriens deficiente manu*). This might be seen as part of a rhetorical strategy, as lines 69-74 appeal to Delia to make love while young, but this does not fully explain the presentation of his death and funeral. While the poet professes to eschew traditional roles in favour of love and his life with his mistress, the only picture we have of their relationship while the poet is ostensibly living is him shut outside her door (55-6 *me retinent uinctum formosae uincla puellae | et sedeo duras ianitor ante fores*). This situation foreshadows the poet's position in 1.2, where he is also locked outside his mistress' door. This morbid episode, along with the ritual language, again seems to prefigure the dark ritual and its underworld associations that will occur in the following poem.

The clear allusion to the subsequent darker ceremony along with the references to the poet's own funeral prefigure the more subversive elements that haunt Tibullus' elegiac universe. The harvest ritual represents the more normative ceremony, occurring in public and during the day. The magical ritual, held in the dark of night, including elements of necromancy and perversions of the natural world order, conveys darker tones. However, the goal of each ritual is similar in function — to serve the poet-lover's interest; one attempts to secure material comfort and love through adherence to agricultural rituals, the other attempts to win the mistress through magical spells. The lack of delineation between the two types of rituals is central to the issues of disjunction between traditional and non-traditional religion and ritual in Augustan Rome. I propose that this association between the two poems serves to introduce and highlight the importance of magic to Tibullus' elegiac world and even the elegiac genre.<sup>93</sup> Rituals are used to explore the underlying tensions present in the position of the poet-lover — desires, politics, poetics, and relationships to traditional power structures.

## 1.2

Perhaps the poem that most clearly shows the interrelationship between religion and magic in Tibullus is poem 1.2, which begins as a prayer to an unyielding door and ends as a curse

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<sup>93</sup> Chadha (2014) argues for the centrality of magic as a marker of genre in elegy.

against those who would take pleasure in the poet's failure. This represents the tensions between hope, coercion, and disappointment often found in Tibullus; the poet continually oscillates between the extremes of emotion and action. This poem is a *paraclausithyron*, opening with the poet-lover locked out of Delia's house and praying to the door to show him mercy (1-14). The poet implores his mistress to be bold with an elegiac twist on a famous saying (16 *fortes adiuuat ipsa Venus*).<sup>94</sup> Immediately following Tibullus' entreaty for Delia to be bold, he provides a description of Venus and the favours she bestows to lovers in a section that is longer than any other in the poem (15-42). Tibullus further attempts to embolden Delia with his access to powerful magic (43-66). After his apparent failure to convince her to join him, the poet ends with a bitter tirade, which constitutes a veritable curse against those who would make light of his situation (89-98). Following the implications of his divine favour in 1.1, Tibullus presents a complicated relationship to divinity; although he enumerates the many advantages of Venus' protection, he has fallen out of favour with the goddess. Moreover, the poet is not content with only the powers of his patron goddess; he also calls upon the power of a witch to bolster his cause. Even his final recourse to cursing does not provide the poet with a successful resolution. In 1.2, much like the first poem, the more pious first half of the poem gives way to a more ambiguous second half.

In the poet-lover's attempts to woo his mistress, his first recourse is to appeal to the power of the traditional guardian of lovers, Venus. This lengthy section amounts to a miniature hymn to the goddess and advantages she bestows on her adherents (15-42). Although Tibullus claims that the goddess offers protection to lovers, Venus' benefits seem almost paltry in comparison to the world-upending powers of the witch. The goddess' concessions to lovers, such as protection from attacks at night (27-28 *nec sinit occurrat quisquam qui corpora ferro | uulneret*) or immunity to the elements (31-2 *non mihi pigra nocent hibernae frigora noctis | non mihi cum multa decidit imber aqua*), emphasise the suffering and dangers lovers endure outside. If Delia reciprocates his love and opens the door, all these dangers become meaningless and his labours worthwhile (33 *non labor hic laedit, reseret modo Delia postes*). The poet even uses the goddess to warn off those who might report his affair to Delia's husband (41-2 *nam fuerit quicumque loquax, is sanguine natam | is Venerem e rapido sentiet esse mari*). However, it may be the poet who is in

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<sup>94</sup> Putnam (1973), 61-62.

danger, rather, as there are darker undertones in this homage that evoke the role the goddess played in Dido's death.<sup>95</sup> Venus' inability to ensure the poet's success leads the poet to search for other means to win his mistress. That Tibullus moves on from Venus, a very Augustan figure, to a less reputable one, an unnamed witch, might indicate his desperation or further underscore the poet's departure from traditional paths.

After his claim to possess Venus' favour fails to win Delia, the poet turns to less traditional powers to persuade his mistress. The verbal echoes mentioned in the previous section on 1.1 reveal the close linguistic ties between the harvest ritual for the poet's ancestral Lares and the magical ritual that occurs in the description of the witch's abilities. This is the first poem explicitly to mention magic in Tibullus' corpus. Only when we move away from the countryside (1.1) to the urban setting are witches and witchcraft directly mentioned by the poet. Usually, religion is associated with the more urban and civilized population and magic is relegated to the outskirts and more remote natural locations.<sup>96</sup> It is odd that in Tibullus they seem to be almost reversed: the witch figures might exist on the fringe of society, but they operate in the cities, while more normative religion is practiced in the countryside. This situation is similar to Hor. *Sat.* 1.8, where the witches run from the pleasure garden back into the city instead of out of it (1.8.47 *at illae currere in urbem*). On one reading, this running back into the city alludes to how much 'poison' was still left in Rome from the civil war despite the prevailing peace.<sup>97</sup> Although Tibullus also locates his witches in the city, it is doubtful as to whether he is trying to convey a similar message despite the potential allusion to Horace. In this poem the woman, clearly defined as a witch (44 *saga*), acts a helper to the poet and is even given the honorific designation of being truthful (43 *uerax*).<sup>98</sup> This seems more in line with older mythological depictions of witches

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<sup>95</sup> Tibullus claims that he anxiously wanders the city at night (25 *en ego cum tenebris tota uagor anxius urbe*) and is not afraid because he is held by love (29 *amore tenetur*), phrases which echo descriptions of the Carthaginian queen in her lovesick state. Cf. Verg. *Aen.* 4.68-9 *totaque uagatur | urbe furens* and *Aen.* 1.675 *teneatur amore*. Putnam (1973), 65 and Murgatroyd (1980), 80-1, note this allusion to Dido. For the similarities between Dido and elegiac lovers see Cairns (1989), 129-50.

<sup>96</sup> Spaeth (2014), 43.

<sup>97</sup> Gowers (2012), 265; 279.

<sup>98</sup> This might also indicate that there are untruthful witches about, ones who might scam a susceptible and desperate lover. Were it not for Tibullus' claims to have witnessed this witch's powers first-hand, if we are to believe them, one might assume she was also one of these fraudulent witches, praying on the desperate and the weak.

as helpers to heroes rather than outright villains (cf. Circe, Medea), although these proto-witches were potentially dangerous as well.<sup>99</sup>

In this non-traditional section, then, Tibullus attempts to persuade Delia to submit to him by telling her that he has obtained a spell from this powerful witch. He further substantiates the claim with a catalogue of the powers and abilities that this particular *saga*, stylized as a sort of super-witch, possesses (Tib. 1.2.43-66):

nec tamen huic credet coniunx tuus, ut mihi uerax  
    pollicita est magico<sup>100</sup> saga ministerio.  
hanc ego de caelo ducentem sidera uidi;  
    fluminis haec rapido carmine uertit iter;  
haec cantu finditque solum manesque sepulcris  
    elicit et tepido deuocat ossa rogo.  
iam tenet infernas magico stridore cateruas;  
    iam iubet aspersas lacte referre pedem.  
cum libet, haec tristi depellit nubila caelo;  
    cum libet, aestiuo conuocat orbe niues.  
sola tenere malas Medae dicitur herbas,  
    sola feros Hecatae perdomuisse canes.  
haec mihi composuit cantus, quis fallere posses;  
    ter cane, ter dictis despue carminibus:  
ille nihil poterit de nobis credere cuiquam,  
    non sibi, si in molli uiderit ipse toro.  
tu tamen abstineas aliis, nam cetera cernet  
    omnia, de me uno sentiet ille nihil.  
quid credam? nempe haec eadem se dixit amores  
    cantibus aut herbis soluere posse meos,  
et me lustrauit taedis, et nocte serena  
    concidit ad magicos hostia pulla deos.  
non ego totus abesset amor, sed mutuus esset,

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<sup>99</sup> Spaeth (2014), 41.

<sup>100</sup> Tibullus uses *magus/magicus* three times in his description of the aid that this helpful witch provides.

orabam, nec te posse carere uelim.<sup>101</sup>

[Nevertheless, your husband will not believe him, as an honest witch promised me by her magic services. I saw her drawing the stars down from heaven; and I saw her change the course of a river with her swift spell; she splits the ground with her spell and summons spirits from the grave and calls bones from the warm pyre. Now she holds the infernal crowds with her magical hiss; now she orders them, sprinkled with milk, to return. When she pleases, she drives away the clouds from the sad sky, when she pleases, she summons snows in the summer sky. She alone is said to hold the wicked herbs of Medea, she alone is said to have tamed the fierce dogs of Hecate. She composed a spell for me, which you can deceive with: chant three times, spit three times, when you have spoken the spell. He will not have the power to believe anything anyone says about us, not even himself, if he would see us in a soft bed. Still you must abstain from others, for he will perceive everything else — he will be able to perceive nothing about me alone. What am I to believe? Certainly, she is the same one who said she could dissolve my love with spells and herbs, and purified me with torches, and in the serene night she sacrificed a black victim to gods of magic. I prayed not that love be totally absent, but that it be mutual, and that I would not have the power to live without you.]

Not only is the catalogue itself rather spell-like in its composition, with abundant anaphora and repeated use of words related to or suggestive of song/spells (46 *carmine*, 47 *cantu*, 48 *deuocat*, 52 *conuocat*, 55 *composuit*, 55 *cantus*, 56 *carminibus*, 62 *cantibus*), it is also one of the most extensive descriptions of a witch's powers in Latin literature.<sup>102</sup> Tibullus conveys the power of the witch through his own *carmen*. Verbs describing what she can do change to the present tense to amplify and emphasize her power.<sup>103</sup> Three successive distichs come

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<sup>101</sup> My text follows Maltby (2002). All translations are my own.

<sup>102</sup> Murgatroyd (2001), 84: Tibullus further expands upon the witches' powers by extending them from heaven to hell. Cf. Hor. *Epod.* 5.45-6 *quae sidera excantata uoce Thessala | lunamque caelo deripit*, which constitutes the only direct reference to Canidia's magic, other than her gathering or possessing many of the ingredients used in witchcraft. We get a reference to a different power of hers in *Sat.* 1.8.28-9 *ut inde | minibus elicent animas responsa daturas*. While together these abilities might form a greater catalogue of Canidia's abilities, they are listed individually in different poems. Lucan 4.434-568 contains a long description of attributes of magic and different powers, but most of them remain impersonal and are scorned by his witch Erichtho. Other examples of catalogues of powers include: Ov. *Am.* 1.8.4-19 and Prop. 4.5.5-14.

<sup>103</sup> Putnam (1973), 67.

at the height of the description emphasising this particular witch's mastery over traditional subjects associated with magic (49-50 *iam ... iam* demonstrates mastery over the dead; 51-2 *cum ... cum* demonstrates mastery over the elements; 53-4 *sola ... sola* demonstrates mastery over ingredients and creatures that are the mainstay of depictions of magic). Not only does this list imply that she has proficiency in witchcraft, but also extreme power which culminates in her being able to tame Hecate's own dogs. Heaven, earth, and the underworld are all under her thrall. Moreover, the presence of Medea (53), famous for her powerful magic and subsequent brutal vengeance against the husband who wronged her, acts as a bad omen, demonstrating the destructive power of both magic and love.<sup>104</sup> The mention of this archetypal witch, though perhaps commonplace in discussions of magic, provides a further layer of ambiguity in Tibullus' portrayal of this *uerax saga* (and other witches in general) as Medea is famous for being both a magical helper and an executioner. Moreover, resorting to the services of such an excessively potent witch suggests that Tibullus was in dire need, and that perhaps the poet-lover's normative route had been ineffectual, thus necessitating the use of such a powerful ritual expert. The reason he obtained the services of such a powerful witch was to embolden Delia to sneak past obstacles to their love, such as the door and potential guards, but it also serves to suggest to her that Tibullus has access to powerful resources.<sup>105</sup>

As the second poem in the Delia cycle, it is intriguing that a magical ritual and list of witch's powers act as the centrepiece of the poem. The presence of such a lengthy magic passage establishes a pattern for the remainder of the poems, where the magical or non-traditional elements occupy conspicuous and often large sections in their respective poems. Indeed, all the poems of the Delia cycle (1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.5, 1.6) are highly charged with ritual language. Other than Venus and Bacchus (who is merely a metaphor for wine here), no traditional Roman gods are mentioned in 1.2. While a veritable hymn to Venus precedes this magical centrepiece, the introduction of the witch overshadows the goddess. The magic ritual, coming at the midpoint of the poem, draws focus to the awesome power of the witch and her ability to aid their love affair. However, the description of the witch's abilities and her rituals also act as a bridge between this hymn to Venus and the poet-lover's questioning of what sacrilege he might have committed to so anger Venus (81-4 *num Veneris magnae*

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<sup>104</sup> Lee-Stecum (1998), 88.

<sup>105</sup> Myers (1996), 12.

*uiolau numina uerbo | et mea nunc poenas impia lingua luit? | num feror incestus sedes adiiisse deorum | sartaque de sanctis deripuisse focis?*). This is potentially humorous as the poet, when railing against Delia's door, mentions that in the past he has hung garlands on its post (13-4).<sup>106</sup> This passage insinuates that he may have stolen the garlands from a temple, potentially even Venus' temple.<sup>107</sup> If the poet did actually steal from his patroness' temple, he might have had to resort to the power of the witch because his actions closed off the more normative avenue to love. His inquiry to his patroness mirrors Canidia's own confusion in *Epode* 5 as to why her spells did not work against Varus despite her use of Medea's poisons and she concludes that the spell of a learned witch obstructs her efforts.<sup>108</sup> His lack of success also implies that he did indeed offend the goddess with such acts. Tibullus even admits that the goddess is opposed to him when he berates those who take pleasure in his current situation (89-90 *at tu, qui laetus rides mala nostra, caueo | mox tibi: non uni saeuiet usque deus*). Although the poet presents himself as a humble worshipper of the gods, especially in the preceding poem, he may have instigated his sorrows with a sacrilegious act.

In the final section of the poem, even after drawing on the power of both a goddess and a witch, the poet remains unsuccessful. Tibullus warns those that would take pleasure in his situation that they may suffer a worse fate (89-98). This warning implicitly relies on the gods, most likely Venus or Nemesis, punishing these unnamed persons for their audacity; for these people the poet spins an image of feeble old age and unrequited love. This imagined fate acts as a curse against those who would violate his love. Despite recourse to divine aid, magic, and now cursing, the poet is still unsuccessful. The reason for the poet-lover's lack of success is not easily discernible. There are numerous agents in play; the poet-lover, the goddess, the mistress, the door, potential rivals, a husband, the witch. Tibullus perhaps hopes that it is a less powerful opponent, such as her *coniunx* (41), who impedes Delia's ability to meet with him. Despite the overt presence of magic, this poem retains

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<sup>106</sup> Cf. 2.4.24 *sed Venus ante alios est uiolanda mihi*; where he threatens not just to steal the garlands from her temple, but to cause her physical harm on account of how ill-used he was by her. In 2.4 he does violate Venus with his words.

<sup>107</sup> Murgatroyd (2001), 78 attests that lovers did sometimes fashion their own garlands, but it was considered commonplace for a lover to steal them from nearby shrines and leave them on their beloved's door post as proof of their night vigil.

<sup>108</sup> Canidia takes extreme action to rectify an instance where her magic did not obtain favourable results, through no fault of her own, but because a powerful rival was apparently interfering in her erotic endeavours (*Epod.* 5.61-72 *quid accidit? cur dira barbarae minus uenena Medeae ualent...solutus ambulat ueneficae scientioris carmine*).

some adherence to traditional gods. However, the number of lines dedicated to extolling the virtues of Venus rather serves to highlight the tension between traditional and non-traditional paths; the prayers to the door and invocation of Venus shift to calling upon a powerful witch and cursing his opponents. The more traditional world seems to be warring with the more pressing concerns of the elegiac world. The similarities between the ritual in 1.1 and the witch's rites only further complicate the situation. Despite his pious comportment, Tibullus plays the field in an attempt to mitigate his erotic frustrations — using pleas, prayers, hymns, threats, witchcraft, and curses.

### 1.3

While this poem does not contain overt examples of magic, it does contain ambiguous ritual outcomes, a foreign goddess, and more traditional religious elements. The conjunction of these various elements and the interplay between them become a means of interrogating the poet-lover's position. Poem 1.3 begins as a *propempticon* addressed to Messalla. In the guise of an anti-heroic Odysseus, Tibullus is wasting away on the Greek island of Corfu (3 *Phaeacia*) after being left behind by Messalla, presumably while attempting to fulfill his martial duties.<sup>109</sup> After remarking that his patron will sail over the sea without him, Tibullus implores Death, the black goddess, to spare his life (4 *abstineas auidas Mors modo nigra manus*). Once again, as in the previous two poems, death haunts the poet. Tibullus' elegiac world seems more fraught with death and danger than love. The poet's own pre-departure, narrated in flashback, is filled with bad omens and superstition. Delia, through her anxieties over the pending departure of her lover, seemingly causes misfortune to befall the poet by performing superstitious acts despite the presence of favourable signs; it is the conjunction of these acts that have brought on the poet's current misfortune (Tib. 1.3.11-22):

illa sacras pueri sortes ter sustulit: illi  
rettulit e trinis omina certa puer.  
cuncta dabant reditus: tamen est deterrita numquam,

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<sup>109</sup> Bright (1978), 16-37 for an extensive discussion on the similarities between the plight of Odysseus and Tibullus. In this connection it might be noted that the *Odyssey* contains some of the earliest literary depictions of magic in the ancient world.

quin fleret nostras respiceretque uias.  
ipse ego solator, cum iam mandata dedissem,  
quaerebam tardas anxius usque moras.  
aut ego sum causatus aues aut omina dira  
Saturniue sacram me tenuisse diem.  
o quotiens ingressus iter mihi tristia dixi  
offensum in porta signa dedisse pedem!  
audeat inuito ne quis discedere amore,  
aut sciat egressum se prohibente deo.

[Three times she drew the sacred lots from the boy, and from all three the boy reported good signs. All foretold my return: still nothing deterred her, from weeping and looking back at my journey. I myself the comforter, when now I had given orders, anxiously I also sought slow delays. Or I gave birds or ominous signs as an excuse or that Saturn's sacred day held me back. O how many times when leaving on my journey I said that my foot stumbling at the door gave sad signs to me! Let no man dare to depart when love is unwilling or he shall know that the god himself forbade his going.]

The first superstitious act comes when Delia draws the lots herself, in contravention of the regular practice.<sup>110</sup> She usurps the role usually ascribed to a ritual specialist, presumably the *puer* (12), and perhaps corrupts the ritual with unskilled hands. These sacred lots (11 *sacras sortes*) are positioned as part of normative religion, but the mention of Delia's recourse to a less traditional deity, Isis, and the relative youth of the ritual expert, make their authority suspect.<sup>111</sup> Moreover, the number three recalls the episode in the preceding poem where Tibullus attempted to convince Delia that she could circumvent her *coniunx* with the witch's

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<sup>110</sup> Cf. Cic. *Div.* 1.34, 2.85-7. Ritual lots practice: the *sortilegus* acted as an agent of the gods when drawing and interpreting lots, see Champeaux (1990), 281; Klingshirn (2006), 137-8. For lots being the avenue of divination most commonly available to the poor, see Potter (1994), 22-4. That a boy often oversaw the ritual, see Grottanelli (1993), 52-7; Johnston (2003), 146-56; Graf (2005), 61. Cf. Cic. *Div.* 2.86 *quae Fortuna monitu pueri manu miscentur atque ducuntur*.

<sup>111</sup> This was not always the case. This type of ritual may have been incorporated into Roman religious practice, but it belongs more to itinerant ritual specialists and priests who hawked their services in the Forum (Hor. *Sat.* 1.6.113-114; Liv. 39.16.8; Juv. 6.582-4). For examples of these sorts of people being cleared out by Roman authorities for their 'corrupting' influence on Roman morals, see Liv. 4.30. For their fraudulent nature, see Cic. *Div.* 2.85-7.

spell (1.2.55 *ter cane ter dictis despue carminibus*).<sup>112</sup> Delia transgresses custom further by weeping and looking back as Tibullus departs (14). Delia's desire for him to stay causes the poet to look for reasons not to perform his required military duties; unfortunately, he cannot break free from his obligations.<sup>113</sup> However, it is Delia's apprehensions about his departure and her behaviour leading up to it, so the poem suggests, that make him unable to complete his military service with Messalla. Here we see the disastrous consequences of attempting to conform to the male elite life. The poet seems reluctant to acknowledge his mistress' creation of bad omens and instead resorts to inventing some, such as negative augury (17 *aves aut omina*), a sacred day (18 *Saturniue diem*), and a superstitious act (20 *offensum ... pedem*). There is a separation between his mistress and his patron. This displays a tension between the proper observance of rites and duties and the intrusion of the elegiac world. The negative omens that were used as an excuse, by both Delia and the poet, become a self-fulfilling prophecy that impedes Tibullus' ability to fulfil either role: lover or soldier. Instead, he remains in a liminal space, unable to easily negotiate the boundaries of either sphere.

The tensions in this poem only intensify with the introduction of a non-Roman goddess, one particularly well known for her dominion over magic and powers over death. Here we find what one might posit as a typical blending of magic and religious ritual. Tibullus mentions the Egyptian goddess Isis, often associated with prostitutes and proverbially linked to magic, in relation to his mistress.<sup>114</sup> He hopes that all the time Delia spent in devotion to this goddess will now save him from his illness (Tib. 1.3.23-34):

quid tua nunc Isis mihi, Delia, quid mihi prosunt  
 illa tua totiens aera repulsa manu,  
 quidue, pie dum sacra colis, pureque lauari  
 te (memini) et puro secubuisse toro?  
 nunc, dea, nunc succurre mihi, nam posse mederi

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<sup>112</sup> Lee-Stecum (1998), 107. Three is a very common number to use in ritual, whether magical or otherwise, but again, as with the similar ritual language between 1.1 and 1.2, the reiteration of the number three following so closely on the heels of the last poem causes one to think that an allusion to magic is meant to be seen by the reader.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. Cic. *Brut.* 217: Cicero's insinuation that his colleague and opponent conveniently used adversarial magic as an excuse for his lack of ability.

<sup>114</sup> Murgatroyd (2001), 108; Lee-Stecum (1998), 111.

picta docet templis multa tabella tuis,  
ut mea uotiuas persoluens Delia uoces  
ante sacras lino tecta fores sedeat  
bisque die resoluta comas tibi dicere laudes  
insignis turba debeat in Pharia.  
at mihi contingat patrios celebrare Penates  
reddereque antiquo menstrua tura Lari.

[What use is your Isis to me now, Delia, what use the bronze rattled so often in your hand, or what use is it that you piously keep the sacred rites, you bathe in pure water (I remember) and slept alone in a chaste bed? Now, goddess, help me now — for the many painted pictures in your temple demonstrate that you can heal, so that my Delia, paying her promised prayers, should sit before your sacred doors covered in linen and twice a day with loosened hair should speak your praises, prominent among the Egyptian crowd. But may it happen that I honour my fatherly Penates and give monthly incense to the ancient Lares.]

The beginning of this invocation of the goddess is somewhat facetious and dismissive, essentially denigrating her worship since it did not spare him from his current illness.<sup>115</sup> Tibullus seems skeptical of Isis' ability to help him, perhaps displacing blame onto the goddess or begrudging the time Delia wasted on her since it did not prevent his misfortune. This apparent slight against the goddess could be dismissed as illustrative of the poet's bitterness at having become ill despite preparations, but such sentiments demonstrate dissonance with his earlier narrative; there were multiple omens at the beginning of the poem unrelated to the goddess, except perhaps through the shared presence of Delia. Moreover, Tibullus invokes Isis' aid in the imperative, not the subjunctive, which is more usual when calling upon the divine. Instead of approaching the goddess as a supplicant, the poet seems to be coercing her; the *nunc ... nunc* both implies a sense of urgency as well as a demand. This is more reminiscent of a magic spell, which demands services be performed, rather than an entreaty for salvation, which is more readily associated with orthodox

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<sup>115</sup> For the positioning of Delia as Isis and the poet-lover as Osiris see Murgatroyd (1980), 108; Lee-Stecum (1998), 110; Bowditch (2011), 107.

prayers.<sup>116</sup> Additionally, both the sistrum (24 *aura repulsa*) and painted tablets (28 *picta ... tabella*) carry undertones of magic. Tibullus uses the same phrase in a description of witchcraft in a later poem (1.8.22 *aura repulsa*).<sup>117</sup> This intertext makes the connection between Isis and magic even stronger. The painted tablets are ostensibly depictions of healing acts performed by the goddess, but they might also be subtle reference to curse tablets.<sup>118</sup> Once we reach the end of the Isis vignette, the tone again becomes supplicatory with the subjunctive *contingat*, at the same moment that traditional Roman gods are introduced into the poem. Isis' presence is especially conspicuous when it is immediately followed by reference to the poet's own household gods, the Lares and Penates, who are traditional Roman deities. It is rare for Tibullus to elaborate on or describe rituals associated with foreign gods (cf. 1.6 and 1.7). The presence of Isis is a bit suspect as her cult, although quite popular, came to be associated with political resistance in Rome.<sup>119</sup> The edict of 28 BC, issued around the publication of Book 1, banned the worship of Isis and Sarapis within the *pomerium*.<sup>120</sup> While not completely banned, the cult of Isis was certainly defined as non-Roman by this edict. Although Tibullus would have known about the banning of the cult of Isis from the city and about the earlier expulsions of astrologers and fortune-tellers, he seems to have no qualms alluding to the presence of these fringe elements in this poem. Isis is placed in opposition to the more normative religion; her presence comes with a host of cultural baggage that is not easily separated from the goddess. The poet ends by placing his

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<sup>116</sup> For the differences between prayers and curses see Versnel (2015). See Kropp (2010) for a discussion of language commonly found in curse tablets.

<sup>117</sup> Rattling bronze is commonly used to ward off evil in spells. Some examples of this are: Theoc. *Id.* 2.36; Plut. *Mor.* 944b; *Ov. Med.* 41; *PGM* 4.2110.

<sup>118</sup> Blänsdorf (2010) discusses curse tablets found in the sanctuary of Isis and the Magna Mater. For cult sites and curse tablets see Eidinow (2007). We will discuss the influence of these tablets more in Ch. 2 (on Propertius 1-3) and Ch. 4 (on Ovid).

<sup>119</sup> For the introduction of the cult of Isis in the early first century BC see Orlin (2010), 204 and Rüpke (2018), 264. For the association of Egypt with enemies of Rome in the early Principate, see Beard et al. (1998), 222. For sanctions against Isis as possible powerplays against specific Roman political figures see Coarelli (1984) for Clodius and Hayne (1992) for Pompey. For Cleopatra's self-identification with Isis, see Takács (1995), 69, 78, and 204.

<sup>120</sup> Dio Cass. 53.2.4; 54.6.6. On Isis and other foreign cults and the *pomerium*, see Orlin (2002) and (2010); on the Augustan tradition of accepting foreign cults, but excluding them from the *pomerium*, see Beard, North, and Price (1998), 180; Isaac (2004), 358. For the argument that even edicts ostensibly aimed at expelling or limiting the cult of Isis rarely had the goal of eradicating the cult, but were rather more about competing religious authorities, see Orlin (2010), 204-7.

own loyalties with the gods of Rome, casting doubt on how much faith he really had in the healing powers of the foreign goddess.<sup>121</sup>

Tibullus follows the Isis episode with an extensive account of his version of the underworld; where more traditional gods, such as Amor and Jupiter, mete out punishments to those who transgress against love and reward longsuffering lovers.<sup>122</sup> This version of hell is symbolic of the hell Tibullus experiences as an *exclusus amator* and the 'unreasoning lust, infidelity, frustration, and violence of the place' represent his own emotional spectrum.<sup>123</sup> The description of the underworld in 1.3 encapsulates both his optimism towards love and threatens punishment for rivals who would attempt to seduce Delia while he was forced to partake in military service with his patron. In this return to traditional gods, the poet places special significance on the rewards and punishments of those who violate love; the reader's attention is drawn to three repetitions of *illic*:

illic est cuicumque rapax mors uenit amanti,  
et gerit insigni myrtea sorta coma (65-6)

illic lunonem temptare Ixionis ausi  
uersantur celeri noxia membra rota (73-4)

illic sit, quicumque meos uiolauit amores,  
optauit lentas et mihi militias (81-2)

[There are the lovers to whom greedy death has come, and distinguished among the others they wear a myrtle garland in their hair ... There is Ixion who dared to assail Juno, his guilty limbs being turned on a swift wheel ... Let whoever has violated my loves be here, and also those who wished lasting military service on me.]

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<sup>121</sup> Keith (2014), 481-2 argues that the bookending of the Isis episode with more traditionally Roman rites and divinities demonstrates the imperial project of absorbing Egypt into Rome.

<sup>122</sup> Houghton (2007) argues that Tibullus' underworld presents the poet's ideals and objectives concerning his elegiac poetry.

<sup>123</sup> Bright (1978), 31.

There is a marked contrast between the first *illic* (65), which describes the lovers who will be led by Venus (58) to their own special place in the Elysian fields and the second *illic* (73) that begins the description of the punishments of those who dared to violate love. Tibullus uses a third *illic* (81) as a preemptive warning to fend off Delia's potential suitors in his absence. This is a description of hell for those who sinned against love and simultaneously a curse warning off those who might violate the bond of two lovers. He imagines that Venus herself will act as psychopomp, leading lovers to the Elysian fields after death.<sup>124</sup> When asserting this claim that lovers, like Tibullus himself, receive special treatment from the gods, the poet is aligning himself with the divine, in this case Venus — a sentiment that seems at odds with his doubts concerning his relationship to his patroness in the previous poem. Moreover, the poet claims that the gods will punish those who offend them, rivals, and those who wished military service on him; one such person would presumably be his patron. It was Messalla, a symbol of traditional masculinity, who ordered Tibullus to perform his duties and Messalla who rejected the poet's reasons for exemption. The poet's rejection of the military life seems to culminate in cursing his patron. However, the idea of cursing his patron would be counterintuitive and shocking to his audience. More likely this is meant to underscore the level of his desperation and his rejection of the traditional life. This is consistent with his appeal to a foreign goddess over a more traditional Roman god.

Despite Tibullus' initial characterisation of himself as a victim and alignment with Isis, the poet shifts to more normative gods in the latter half of the poem, even insinuating that his status as a lover will confer special privileges on him in the afterlife. Just as he did in the previous poem, Tibullus implies that he has a favourable relationship with the gods, both foreign and traditional. Yet it is Isis that the poet calls on to heal him rather than Venus, who seems to benefit him only after his death. There is a tension in this pull between non-traditional and traditional avenues. The poet's relationship to more normative religion and ritual is further complicated by a possible intertext with Homer; although there is no overt allusion to magic in this poem, the presence of Isis, the Homeric echoes, and the inclusion of an underworld scene collectively evoke a subtle suggestion of magic. Given the Homeric intertexts throughout 1.3, the underworld episode opens up the possibility of a thematic connection to the *Odyssey*: the *nekylia*, a ritual in which Odysseus journeyed to the entrance

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<sup>124</sup> Cairns (1979), 51 argues that Tibullus constructs his own special Elysium where the only requirement to purchase entrance seems to be to have loved truly rather than performed any glorious deeds.

of the underworld to question the shade of Teiresias about how to return home (Hom. *Od.* 11).<sup>125</sup> The poet does not so much seek knowledge from the inhabitants of the underworld as use the imagined fates of the dead to exert control over his mistress in his absence; it functions as reminder to Delia to stay true and warn off rivals. Moreover, there are similarities between the rites of Tibullus' witch (Tib. 1.2.47-50), who also summons ghosts, and the rite that Odysseus performs in Book 11. The Greek hero digs a trench (25 βόθρον ὄρυξ'), pours milk and honey (27 μελικρήτω), and sacrifices a black ram (32-3 ὄν ... παμμέλαν'); just as the witch splits the ground (47 *findit solum*), sprinkles milk (50 *adpersas lacte*), and sacrifices a black victim (64 *hostia pulla*). In Homer, the one who instructs Odysseus on how to perform the ritual is Circe, an archetypal Greco-Roman witch (Hom. *Od.* 10.503-74). In Tibullus, the suggestion of necromancy is enhanced through the presence of Isis, who is linked to resurrection through her role in the myth of Osiris, and the poet's survival, especially after the inclusion of the underworld scene.<sup>126</sup> Although the poet claims to be dying throughout the poem, he continues to live, possibly saved by the healing powers of Isis. With the hint of necromancy, the underworld scene subverts rather than enforces the dominion of traditional gods — it is Egyptian deities like Isis and Osiris who rule over the dead. Taking into consideration that the Romans viewed necromantic rites and knowledge of the dead in a negative manner, Tibullus' possible allusion to it further underscores a level of perversion.<sup>127</sup> The poet's tenuous relationship to Roman divinities and the potential curse of his patron creates a sense of dissonance in this poem that is not easily reconciled. Ritual here acts as a locus through which to explore the tensions inherent in game of tug-of-war being played by the poet's elegiac and more traditional drives.

## 1.5

In elegy 1.5 the poet's optimism is beginning to unravel; he recounts how his previous hopes have been thwarted and aggressively castigates a skillful procuress (48 *callida lena*), whom he blames for his lack of success with Delia. Despite going to the trouble to hire a witch to

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<sup>125</sup> For a discussion of the Homeric echoes see Bright (1978), 16-37; Cairns (1979), 44-6; Ball (1983), 50-65; Kennedy (1993), 16, 49; Lee-Stecum (1998), 103-4; Houghton (2007), 153. For the Odyssean *nekylia* being the oldest literary example of necromancy see Ogden (2002), 182.

<sup>126</sup> Orlin (2016), 458-9.

<sup>127</sup> Ogden (2001), 149.

save Delia with magic rites when she was near death, others reap the benefits of his actions (9-18). He begins to worry that perhaps his hopes for a future with Delia are nothing more than a pipe dream (1.5.19-20 *at mihi felicem uitam, si salua fuisses | fingebam demens, sed renuente deo*). Potentially, this god who vouchsafes the punishment of the procuress (57) also determined that he would not gain Delia.<sup>128</sup> This poem demonstrates the poet's ambivalence towards magic users; one old woman is helpful, the other an obstacle. The former is the old witch who performs a ritual to save Delia when she is sick (11-8) and the latter a *lena* who is subject to Tibullus' vituperative curse for interfering in his love affair (49-58). Roman authors often conflate the character of the lustful old woman with that of the witch, stereotyping these women in a negative fashion.<sup>129</sup> However, unlike his fellow elegists, Tibullus' depiction of these questionable characters is not universally negative. He includes in this poem an example of a good witch and a bad witchlike figure, though they may in fact be one and the same. The portrayal of these witchy women is ambiguous as they are portrayed as helping him (cf. the witch from 1.2 and the one who performs the healing ritual here), but also act as a foil to highlight the poet-lover's erotic frustrations and poetic power (cf. the curse against the *lena* later in this poem and at 2.6.53-4). Unlike the procuress whom he curses later in this poem, the witch is a good old woman who aids the poet in his endeavours.<sup>130</sup> The successful healing ritual is immediately followed by a vision of a model agrarian life with Delia presiding over the sacrifices to the relevant farming gods with Messalla present as the guest of honour. This dissonance between the poet's idealized life and his reality is made more stark by the subsequent introduction of gruesome aspects in his diatribe against the *lena*.

However, the helpfulness of the old woman does not last in this poem. Tibullus' dream is rudely interrupted when the poet admits that Delia has forsaken him for a rich lover (47 *diues amator*). Much like in 1.3, instead of blaming his mistress, the poet firmly displaces blame elsewhere — in this case, onto her procuress. Tibullus delivers a curse against this *lena* for supposedly turning Delia against him. This is the earliest accusation of

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<sup>128</sup> An anonymous god is mentioned twice, once when this god refuses to allow Tibullus' dream to come to fruition (20) and a second time as a ratifying agent in Tibullus' curse against the *lena* (57).

<sup>129</sup> For more on this topic see Richlin (1984), Oliensis (1991), Pollard (2008).

<sup>130</sup> There are three instances where Tibullus mentions old women in a positive manner: the *uerax saga* from 1.3.41, the one here at line 12, and the *aurea anus* from 1.6.57-8. Even these women are problematic in their own ways, with their power and loyalty being called into question.

witchcraft, or example of a curse leveled against a procuress, that occurs in Roman elegy; both Propertius (4.5) and Ovid (*Am.* 1.8) will have their own versions of invective against bawds. Here, Tibullus begins his curse against this *lena* in the subjunctive mood without naming her as a witch. Throughout his diatribe the poet curses her to perform the same types of activities generally attributed to witches and to be harassed by creatures that are often associated with them (1.5.49-60):

sanguineas edat illa dapes atque ore cruento  
tristia cum multo pocula felle bibat.  
hanc uolitent animae circum sua fata querentes  
semper et e tectis strix uiolenta canat.  
ipsa fame stimulante furens herbasque sepulcris  
quaerat et a saeuis ossa relictata lupis;  
currat et inguinibus nudis ululetque per urbem,  
post agat e triuiis aspera turba canum.  
eueniet: dat signa deus; sunt numina amanti,  
saeuit et iniusta lege relictata Venus.  
at tu quam primum sagae praecepta rapacis  
desere, nam donis uincitur omnis amor.

[Let her eat bloody food and with a gore-stained mouth drink bitter cups filled with gall; let spirits always fly around her bewailing their fate and the violent screech-owl shriek from her roof; mad with rousing hunger let her seek herbs from graves and bones left behind by savage wolves; let her run through the city howling with a naked crotch, let a fierce crowd of dogs chase her from the crossroads. It will happen: the god gives the sign; there are divinities on the lover's side, and Venus rages when unjustly abandoned. But Delia, as soon as possible, desert the teachings of the rapacious witch, for every love is defeated by gifts.]

By line 59 Tibullus has shifted to openly calling the *lena* a greedy witch (59 *rapax saga*). Whether she is a witch, or he is simply characterizing her as such as part of his invective against her is unclear; rather than an open accusation or affirmation of the procuress' status as a sorceress, the poet's curse condemns her to be one. Pillinger believes that he allows

himself to be ‘seduced by his own rhetoric’ or that the poet constructs these dubious witches in a way that invites us to question the reality of their similarities.<sup>131</sup> Moreover, there are thematic echoes between this curse and the description of Elysium in 1.3; the positive fate of lovers is contrasted with the suffering experienced by a *lena* trying to keep lovers apart. The curse at the end of the underworld exemplum in 1.3 is extended here and directly pointed at a specific obstacle. Both will be surrounded by crowds of spirits and singing birds (1.3.60, 63 *sonant carmen aues ... iuuenum series teneris immixta puellis*; 1.5.51-2 *uolitent animae ... strix canat*), the former will traverse through fields filled with sweet smelling roses (1.3.62 *odoratis ... rosis*), while the latter will fight with wolves over scrap bones in graveyards (1.5.54 *a saeuis ossa relictas lupis*). Here wolves are directly linked to witchcraft, reinforcing the echo of magic seen at 1.1.33. The current situation, with the rapacious bawd, was prefigured in the programmatic poem.

While the invective bears an accusatory tone, an actual accusation of witchcraft comes in the form of hearsay; a rival mistress accuses Delia of bewitching the poet when he cannot perform in the bedroom (41-2 *tunc me discedens deuotum femina dixit | et pudet et narrat scire nefanda meam*). Tibullus sidesteps the accusation and his impotence with the claim that it is his mistress’ physical charms that have enchanted him rather than her words (43-4 *non facit hoc uerbis, facie tenerisque lacertis | deuouet et flauis nostra puella comis*). The verb *deuoueo* has a particularly magical connotation, often meaning to bewitch or curse someone.<sup>132</sup> The poet uses it twice in these two couplets to signify his inability to perform with other women and the power Delia has over him.<sup>133</sup> Although Tibullus ostensibly dismisses the accusation of witchcraft against his mistress, the repetition of *deuouet* and his impotence suggests that she may indeed have bewitched the poet. Here there is also an implicit connection between magic and words; Tibullus’ denial that Delia charms him with words (43 *non facit hoc uerbis*) suggests that this would be the typical way to do so. That words are necessary in the casting of magic is suggestive of the poet-lover’s domain. This

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<sup>131</sup> Pillinger (2012), 57.

<sup>132</sup> See *OLD deuoueo* sense 3. However, all senses of *deuoueo* are fitting for the poet-lover’s broader situation: sense 1 — to vow as an offering or sacrifice; sense 2 — to devote (one’s life); sense 3 — to devote to the infernal gods, execrate, curse, bewitch; sense 4 — to destine, doom (to a particular fate, etc.).

<sup>133</sup> It was a common goal for a victim of magic not to be able to see/have intercourse with anyone other than the spell caster. Cf. DT 267 *non possit dormire Bonosa neque esse ... Bonosa neque aliud ... sed abrumpatur et me solum ... uideret omnibus diebus ad x ... usque ad diem mortis suae...;* DT 304 *ut amet me solum ... ut me solum, Tottina, quam peperit ... uideret ... non possit quamdiu ... omnibus diebus uixerit, usque ad diem morits suae...;* Solin 42 *nulli ali attendat nisi mihi soli, neminem alium in mente habeat nisi me.*

creates a dichotomy between the physical charm of Delia and the verbal charm of the poet.<sup>134</sup> Tibullus uses this verbal charm against the *lena*: his curse could be seen as a spell, dooming the procuress to the fate he describes. When a rival *puella* accuses Delia of bewitching the poet (41-2), he retaliates against a scapegoat — the *lena*, who serves the purpose of both excusing any negative behaviours that Delia might display and displacing the blame for any erotic discord. However, Tibullus' apparent infidelity here belies his claim that the procuress is responsible for the rift between him and Delia.

The juxtaposition between lovers in 1.3 and the *lena* in this poem also invites a comparison to another lover, the poet. There is an inherent ambiguity in the poet's relationship to this witch-*lena*. Although he characterizes her as a witch, the only evidence of this is Delia's potential use of magic, which he denies. Delia has a strange power over Tibullus, but he ascribes this to the *lena* and curses her instead — yet in so doing he becomes a veritable magic user himself. This ambiguity is especially conspicuous when one considers how the *lena* of the curse and the old witch of the healing spell might be related in status, profession, or person.<sup>135</sup> Instead, the *lena* is more of a competing rival for authority, who is turning the *puella* against the poet-lover in favour of a rich suitor. With limited resources at his disposal, Tibullus is forced to rely on the power always readily available to him: his words. The poet-lover resorts to cursing to subdue the corrupting force of the *lena* and coerce Delia back to his side. His own competing curses/*carmina* seek to counteract her influence, which is poisoning the mind of his mistress against him. In cursing the procuress to such a fate, the poet becomes more akin to a magic user than she does.<sup>136</sup> Tibullus even goes so far as to claim that a god gives him positive signs (57 *dat signa deus*) that the *lena* or witch will be punished for corrupting Delia, further enforcing the authority of his curse. In the preceding poem (1.3), the poet-lover insinuated that the gods would punish those who would violate his love; here, again, he claims that a god will strike down his enemies. The poet is attempting to reinforce the power of his own words with alleged divine favour; however, this rather paradoxically reinforces Tibullus' impotence.

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<sup>134</sup> For the argument that the physical charms of the *puella* constitute the most powerful form of magic in elegy, see Chadha (2014), 115-25.

<sup>135</sup> Myers (1996), 6-10.

<sup>136</sup> Oliensis (1998), 76 posits a connection between the poet and the witch, stating that the 'deeply rooted kinship of the witch and the invective poet cannot be easily dismissed.' Myers (1996) also argues for an identification of the poet with the *lena*/witch.

Furthermore, his invective against the procuress engages with Horace's *Sat.* 1.8. The commentaries are relatively silent on the verbal and thematic connections between Horace and Tibullus (especially *Sat.* 1.8 between Tib. 1.5).<sup>137</sup> The only time Tibullus really adds a physical dimension to the procuress, or any of his witches, is when he is describing what his curse would do to her, but he is less particular and more general in his descriptions in comparison to Horace's representations of Canidia and her ilk. His *lena* could easily be a stand-in for any of the witches found in Horace. Both eat bloody meat (Tib. 1.5.49 *sanguineas dapes*; Hor. *Sat.* 1.8.27 *pullam diuellere mordicus agnam*), they are surrounded by ghosts (Tib. 1.5.51 *hanc uolitent animae circum*; Hor. *Sat.* 1.8.29 *manibus elicerent, animas responsa daturas*), they both search out bones and herbs from graves (Tib. 1.5.53-4 *herbasque sepulcris | quaerat et ... ossa relictā*; Hor. *Sat.* 1.8.22 *ossa legant herbasque*), they walk around in varying states of undress (Tib. 1.5.55 *currat et inguinibus nudis ululetque per urbes*; Hor. *Sat.* 1.8.24 *pedibus nudis*), and dogs are present for both (Tib. 1.5.56 *aspera canum*; Hor. *Sat.* 1.8.34 *infernas canis*). Tibullus' curse against the obstructing *lena* comes at the time when he is least powerful, having yet again failed to convince the elegiac *puella* to grant him access. The poet's curse seeks to turn the tables on the *lena*, making her the victim instead of himself. This situation mirrors the ambiguity of the Priapus in Horace's *Sat.* 1.8, who wards off the witches, not with his weapon or his phallus as might be expected, but with his flatulence brought on by fear of the same witches. The god's supposed hyper-masculinity is consequently called into question. The impotence of both Priapus and the poet is revealed through the presence of magic.

Poem 1.5 serves to fashion the *lena* as a witch through associations with recognisable witch and magic topoi. However, it is Delia who ostensibly has magical power over Tibullus despite not being portrayed as a witch herself. Witches, even good ones, convey several negative connotations. Their inherently subversive nature sets them at odds with the political discourse of the Augustan period.<sup>138</sup> These witch-like figures are the ones helping to stir wars (in the bedroom) in times of peace and who refuse to let the poet-lovers rest. The presence of magic in this poem underscores the poet's ambivalent relationship to

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<sup>137</sup> Smith (1913) and Murgatroyd (2001) both mention aspects such as the presence of herbs and the fury-like revenge spirits, but in passing reference with other sources and with no analysis of 1.5's engagement with Horace on a deeper level.

<sup>138</sup> As with Canidia and her group in *Sat.* 1.8, who symbolise the negative of the civil wars barely kept under the surface of newly minted Rome.

magic. The possibility that magic might be responsible for Tibullus' current woes, through Delia's relationship to witchcraft, further underscores the subversiveness of this erotic world, where a man may be at the mercy of a girl or a witch. However, magic, both in the form of helpful witches and the poet's curses, also acts as a possible means to counteract the erotic discord. This is done through removing obstacles (the husband's sight in 1.2), saving the mistress from danger (the healing ritual in this poem), and through the poet's relationship to witches and magic.

## 1.8

The previous section discussed the poet's affinity for presenting himself as a favourite of the gods, especially Venus. In 1.8, Tibullus claims a different kind of authority as a *praeceptor amoris*; a role he first took up in 1.4, where he addresses his friend Titius and bemoans his love for Marathus, a *puer delicatus*. Here, instead of prevaricating about his own affair with Marathus, the poet doles out advice to Pholoe concerning her affair with Marathus. There are similar themes in poems 1.4 and 1.8: taking advantage of love while young, natural beauty is better than artificial beauty, and greediness will be punished.<sup>139</sup> However, there is a marked difference in how the poet addresses his friend, and by extension Marathus, in 1.4 compared to how he addresses Pholoe here. In 1.4, the poem is littered with the names of traditional gods.<sup>140</sup> In his address to Pholoe, the only traditional deity mentioned is Venus (5, 28, 35). The difference in his approach is made clear in the opening sequence when Tibullus claims to have been taught the ropes of love by Venus (5-6 *ipsa Venus magico religatum bracchia nodo | perdocuit multis non sine uerberibus*).<sup>141</sup> The poet-lover's authority comes from his experience as a lover and his instruction from Venus; magic here is conceptually blended with a traditional deity.<sup>142</sup> These lines recall a similar situation in Vergil where knots are used in a love spell (*Ecl.* 8.77-8 *necte tribus nodis ternos, Amarylli,*

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<sup>139</sup> For the contrast of youth and old age as a central theme of 1.8 see Gardner (2013), 186-91; Cairns (1979), 141.

<sup>140</sup> Gods are referenced 11 separate times: Bacchus (7, 37), Apollo (37), Priapus (1), the Muses (61, 62, 65, 67), Venus (21, 71, 79).

<sup>141</sup> For the etymological play on Venus and 'binding' (*uincire*), see Hinds (2006).

<sup>142</sup> Cf. Pind. *Pyth.* 4.213-219, where Aphrodite teaches Jason love magic to ensnare Medea. Fauth (1980), 276-7, goes so far as to suggest that Tibullus is portraying Venus as a witch to signal the presence of love magic and the power of beauty to enchant. For knots as sympathetic magic in binding spells see Faraone (1999), 119-31; Ogden (2002), 113-4; Edmonds III (2019), 61; Bailliot (2019), 180.

*colores; | necte, Amarylli, modo et 'Veneri' dic 'uincula necto*). This connection suggests the presence of a love spell, a suggestion which is strengthened when Tibullus, in his admonishment of Pholoe, speculates that she was bewitched as if by some binding spell (1.8.17-24):

num te carminibus, num te pallentibus herbis  
deuouit tacito tempore noctis anus?  
cantus uicinis fruges traducit ab agris,  
cantus et iratae detinet anguis iter,  
cantus et e curru lunam deducere temptat,  
et faceret, si non aera repulsa sonent.  
quid queror heu misero carmen nocuisse, quid herbas?  
forma nihil magicis utitur auxiliis:

[Has some old woman bewitched you with her chants or pale herbs in the silent hours of the night? A spell draws the harvest from neighbouring fields, a spell stops the path of the angry snake, a spell tries to draw the moon down from her course, and would, if not for the sound of echoing bronze. Alas, why do I complain that chanting or herbs harm me in my wretchedness? Beauty needs no help from magic.]

Lines 19-22 suggest another intertext with Verg. *Ecl.* 8 (69 *carmina uel caelo possunt deducere lunam*; 71 *frigidus in pratis cantando rumpitur anguis*; 99 *atque satas alio uidi traducere messis*).<sup>143</sup> This, and the previous intertext with *Ecl.* 8, suggest that Tibullus might be accusing Pholoe of using love magic herself to steal Marathus away in the first place. However, the final line retracts the initial accusation, instead claiming that it is Pholoe's beauty that has so enchanted Marathus (cf. Delia in 1.5); there is a certain ambiguity as to the true nature of her charms.<sup>144</sup> This is the first poem of this book to include magic that is not associated with Delia. This poem combines the catalogue of powers from 1.2 with the

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<sup>143</sup> A connection noted by Putnam (1973), 129; Tupet (1976), 345; Murgatroyd (1980), 240-1; Chadha (2014), 61. Cairns (1979), 140 notes that lines 19-22 expand on the reference to magic found in lines 5-6.

<sup>144</sup> Chadha (2014), 60-64 argues that Tibullus is insinuating that Pholoe charmed Marathus with magic to seduce him in the first place. However, she argues that the physical charms of the elegiac *puella* are compared to magic and elevated above it, 116-25.

accusatory aspect of 1.5. These lines bear resemblance to 1.2 in that they constitute a catalogue of a witch's powers. This catalogue, although a more concise example, still encompasses many of the abilities traditionally ascribed to witches (cf. discussion of 1.2).

In a similar fashion to 1.5, magic is used as a foil to demonstrate erotic frustrations and to displace blame for failure. While the poet-lover curses an old *lena* in 1.5, the only actual accusation of magic comes from one of Tibullus' disappointed lovers who accuses Delia of having bewitched the poet (1.5.41-2). This allusion to 1.5 provides a more nuanced reading of the relationship dynamics in this poem. Although it is an anonymous old woman (18 *anus*) who is styled as the offending witch, Tibullus invites the speculation that Pholoe played a part in the magic affair; either she was responsible for hiring a witch to help her seduce Marathus or she cast an erotic spell herself. If we are to imagine Pholoe as a witch and Marathus as the victim of her witchcraft, then they would be assuming the roles of Delia and Tibullus respectively. This makes the poet the disappointed lover in this scenario, accusing a rival to mitigate his own disappointment in a failed erotic encounter. This may further underscore the poet's inability to win Marathus, even as he ostensibly advises a rival as a *praeceptor amoris*. Magic here is given as an alternative excuse for the deterioration of the relationship between Pholoe and Marathus. However, the poet as *praeceptor* demonstrates a level of scepticism that clashes with his earlier professed belief in the efficacy of magic when it is employed on his behalf. Although Tibullus seems to put more store in the power of Pholoe's looks than magic here, the introduction of magic generates engagement with an intertextual web of meaning that allows a more nuanced reading of this poem that goes beyond what might be seen as a conventional reference to the art.

*Book 2:*

## 2.1

Tibullus' second book continues the pattern of the first, including liturgical language, references to religious ceremonies, and allusions to magic. In comparison to the first book, Tibullus' second can seem quite disjointed and unstructured; the pastoral landscape is present at the beginning of the book, but its precedence is quickly undermined by a new

mistress' preference for the city.<sup>145</sup> Much like his other programmatic poem, 2.1 presents details of a vaguely bucolic life, a harvest ritual, and his patron, Messalla. However, his previous mistress Delia and his boyfriend Marathus are gone from the darkening landscape of Book 2, superseded as they are by the poet's totalizing and deleterious infatuation with Nemesis. Poem 2.1 opens with an *in situ* description of what scholars believe to be the Ambarvalia festival.<sup>146</sup> The austere tone of this poem acts as a signpost for the more serious mood of this book and underscores the heightened focus on religious ritual and ceremony present throughout (poems 2.1, 2.2, and 2.5 are all highly ritualistic). Cairns sees this poem as an indirect poetic commendation of Augustus' religious and urban restoration program; specifically, he claims that the poem celebrates the princeps' restoration of the Arval brothers' priesthood — the priesthood responsible for conducting the Ambarvalia.<sup>147</sup> While this poem does not contain direct references to magic, it does set a tone for the remainder of Book 2, which continues the previous book's contrast between traditional and unconventional ritual practice. The ambiguous meaning of the end of this opening poem enhances the dissonance of the competing elements of veneration — the poet-lover's piety in adherence to traditional rites and his sacrilege in his devotion to Nemesis.

In this poem, Tibullus appropriates the role of mediator between his audience and the gods, whose goodwill he interprets. While doing so, the poet seems to bar those who have enjoyed the favour of his patron goddess, Venus, from participating in the ritual (11-2 *uos quoque abesse procul iubeo, discedat ab aris | cui tulit hesterna gaudia nocte Venus*). This injunction against lovers who might sully the rite indicates that the poet is above such rules or, more likely, that he has not recently enjoyed the favours of his mistress. Tibullus may not be able to please his mistress, but he can please the gods in his performance of the ritual (25-6 *euentura precor: uiden ut felicibus extis | significet placidos nuntia fibra deos?*). The certainty with which the poet declares his success in performing the rite of haruspicy is at odds with previous representations. In the past, the poet was always hopeful of his success, but rarely certain. The other instance of Tibullus' claiming the success of a ritual he

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<sup>145</sup> This might be part of a greater strategy of instability meant to reflect the contemporary political landscape. See Lee-Stecum (2000), 179.

<sup>146</sup> Lee (1982), 137. Bright (1978), 8-9 agrees that it most closely matches the Ambarvalia, but asserts that the festival is meant more as 'a model of pious observance' where the poet could enjoy performing as a ritual expert in the country landscape. Bright believes that Tibullus purposely made the details of this ceremony ambiguous so that it could easily be swapped with other country festivals.

<sup>147</sup> Cairns (1979), 126-134; Pascal (1988), 523-5.

partakes in is the healing ritual for Delia (1.5.11 *ipseque te circum lustraui sulphure puro*; 13 *ipse procuraui, ne possent saeua nocere*; 15 *ipse ego uelatus filo tunicisque solutis*).

Although 1.5 was a healing ritual, its location and time, along with the poet's reference to the old witch's magic spell (12 *carmine magico*), make it a magical ritual. Tibullus' direct participation in the healing ritual did not work out well for him; although he saved Delia from death, he lost her to another. Favourable outcomes often go awry for the poet (cf. the omens of 1.2), even when they serve others well. This fact, along with the Ambarvalia poem's shadowy ending, suggest that dark things may be in store for Tibullus on this occasion, too.

The poet is not the only one appropriating a new role in this poem. Amor assumes the powers formerly ascribed to Venus (71-8). Instead of Venus, it is now her son that the poet-priest seeks to appease in this poem, inviting the god to come to the feast and lay down his weapons (81-2 *sancte, ueni dapibus festis, sed pone sagittas | et procul ardentis hinc precor abde faces*). This shift to Amor might foreshadow the more violent nature of this book as the god specifically enjoys subjugating proud men (72 *audaces perdomuisse uiros*). Moreover, Messalla is entreated to join the celebration (31 *sed 'bene Messallam' sua quisque ad pocula dicat*) in a manner that suggests the convivial, wine-laden scenes of 1.7.<sup>148</sup> This recalls how the Egyptian god is set up in comparison to the Roman general. Here Tibullus uses his patron to reiterate and summarise his ideas from Book 1. To Bacchus and Ceres, the rural gods included in the Ambarvalia festival, are now ascribed the same inventions concerning wine (2.1.37-56) as were attached to Osiris in Book 1 (1.7.29-38). This recapitulation of Osiris' abilities and skills under the umbrella of various Roman gods began in 1.10 and continues here in 2.1. This, in a sense, mirrors the Augustan religious reforms by subsuming foreign influences under the guise of Roman customs and local gods.<sup>149</sup>

The programmatic opening poem of Book 2 ends on a rather dark note, with Night bringing Sleep and black dreams on uncertain feet (2.1.90 *Somnus et incerto Somnia nigra pede*). The presence of Sleep, as the brother of both Death and Nemesis (the goddess rather than mistress), insinuates a negative paradigm shift.<sup>150</sup> This is even more evident with the

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<sup>148</sup> Bright (1978), 62.

<sup>149</sup> For the cultural appropriation of foreign gods and rites under the imperial program see Hunter (2006), 58-9; Keith (2014).

<sup>150</sup> In Hesiod's *Theogony*, Night gives birth to Death, Sleep, and Nemesis: 211-2 *νύξ δ' ἔτεκεν συγγερόν τε Μόρον καὶ Κῆρα μέλαιναν | καὶ Θάνατον, τέκε δ' Ὕπνον*; 223-4 *τίκτε δὲ καὶ Νέμεσιν, πῆμα θνητοῖσι*

close juxtaposition of the adjective *nigra*, echoing the black Death (1.3.4 *Mors nigra*) of Book 1.<sup>151</sup> While Death is also directly mentioned in the final lines of 1.1 (70 *Mors*), it is part of a persuasive argument to convince lovers to seize the moment and give in to passion before their time ends. However, here the immediate meaning is not so clear. Moreover, the mention of ‘uncertain feet’ again recalls 1.3, where it was a stubbed foot (1.3.20 *offensum pedem*) that was partly blamed for Tibullus’ near-death state in the poem. The conjunction of these elements does not bode well for the poet-lover. The mention of Somnus also serves to subtly foreshadow the introduction of a new mistress, the aptly named Nemesis, due to their familial relationship. These final lines paint an ambiguous picture that is at odds with the ritualistic nature of the rest of the poem. This paves the way for the more troubled tone of Book 2, with escalating reversals on the part of the poet reflecting an uncertain mind. In the poems that follow, Tibullus undermines both traditional religion and the purity of love by reversing his previous positions. In this book, Tibullus is constantly ‘constraining the divinity to yield to his wishes’.<sup>152</sup> That is, though he does offer sacrifices in this poem, he also seems to threaten and cajole the gods to acquiesce to his desires in a manner rather similar to that purportedly belonging to magical practices. Even when he is using a supplicatory tone towards the gods, he often claims their powers to be working on his behalf, although past experiences tend to belie such assertions. While Nemesis is not mentioned directly in this poem, her dark shadow looms over Book 2. Her inherent associations with the underworld may even foreshadow the necromantic suggestions of Tibullus’ final poem, 2.6. The peaceful landscape is slowly being sublimated into a darker and more ambiguous space, which reflects the poet-lover’s increasing distance from traditional values.

## 2.4

Tibullus’ second book contains only six poems, three of which (2.3, 2.4, 2.6) are dedicated to a new mistress, Nemesis. The introduction of this mistress in poem 2.3 casts a dark pall over

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βροτοῖσι | Νύξ ὀλοή. For the argument that Tibullus’ choice of the name Nemesis for his mistress taps into a nexus of Hellenistic culture and suggests the poet’s inability to achieve reciprocal love, see Stafford (2006).

<sup>151</sup> Booth and Maltby (2005), 129-8 suggest that the move from light to dark in 2.1 reflects the inversion of romantic ideals that come with Tibullus’ change of mistress.

<sup>152</sup> Burriss (1929), 126. This implies the normative view of magicians constraining divinities to their will.

the poem that sees the reversal of many of the poet's previous themes — a rejection of the countryside in favour of the city, a curse against agriculture and viticulture for their part in the production of wealth and an acknowledgement that wealth is needed to win love. It is also one of the three Nemesis poems that contains the most overt reference to magic in Book 2: in 2.4 we see a full return to the inclusion of magic and allusions to magic. In this poem the façade of the perfection of pastoral life, which sets the scene for love, is beginning to crumble. What was formerly sacrosanct to the poet-lover is abandoned unless it serves to win over his hard-hearted mistress. This is especially conspicuous when the poem is followed by the hyper-ritualistic and traditional 2.5, which focuses on the appointment of Messalinus, his patron's son, into the priesthood of the *quindecimviri sacris faciundis*. At 2.4.55-60 Tibullus claims that he would drink whatever concoction Nemesis gave him, if only she would favour the poet. This passage draws on well-known tropes to indicate the magical nature of this proposed potion. Along with the evident allusion to magic in lines 55-60, which is often dismissed as conventional, I argue that possible intertexts with Vergil deepen the connection to magic in this poem and provide a more nuanced picture of the power struggle between the poet and his mistress.<sup>153</sup>

The first suggestion that Tibullus might be drawing on a nexus of magical and literary tradition comes at the beginning of the poem. The first section of 2.4 picks up where the final line of 2.3 left off (80 *non ego me uinclis uerberibusque nego*), elaborating on the suffering the poet endures in the servitude of Nemesis (Tib. 2.4.1-7):

Hic mihi seruitium uideo dominamque paratam:  
iam mihi, libertas illa paterna, uale.  
seruitium sed triste datur, teneorque catenis,  
et numquam misero uincla remittit Amor,  
et seu quid merui seu nil peccaui, urit.  
uror, io, remoue, saeua puella, faces.  
o ego ne possim tales sentire dolores.

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<sup>153</sup> Chadha (2014), 116 sees the presence of this typical love potion as the sole instance of magic in Tibullus Book 2. However, I would argue that the entire poem is filled with suggestions of magic use; both on the part of poet-lover and the mistress.

[Here I see mistress and slavery ready for me: farewell now to the freedom of my fathers. I am given to sad slavery, and held by chains, and Love never releases my miserable bonds, but burns me whether I deserve it or whether I am guiltless. Oh, I burn! Remove the flame, cruel girl. Oh, if only I would not feel such pain.]

The language used to describe the poet's slavery to love, especially in lines 5-7, overlaps with that of one under the effects of a love spell.<sup>154</sup> The binding imagery recalls 1.8; a connection that is strengthened by the presence of magic. This passage could be read as a straightforward description of the suffering of one in love. However, the clear presence of magic in the final part of the poem as well as a further connection to Vergil's *Eclogue* 8, which will be discussed below, make it highly likely that this passage conveys a more layered meaning; the poet-lover burns as a victim of love and as a victim of a magic love spell (i.e., an *agoge* spell). Nemesis' predilection for doling out love potions, whether true or not, suggests that she may employ other forms of magic as well, and is performing an *agoge* spell on the poet. The poet's wish for Nemesis to remove the flame signifies that he will give into her desires, which seem to be for material wealth, if she would only relieve his suffering. This sentiment is reiterated, in an openly magical context, in the final couplet of this poem (59-60 *si modo me placido uideat Nemesis mea uultu | mille alias herbas misceat illa, bibam*). Furthermore, the image of burning because of love echoes Vergil: in *Ecl.* 8 the unnamed female spellcaster, who is attempting to win back her wicked lover, burns spell ingredients in retaliation for how her lover's betrayal makes her burn (83 *Daphnis me malus urit, ego hanc in Daphnide laurum*).<sup>155</sup> Her stated desire to drive away Daphnis' healthy senses with magic (66-7 *coniugis ut magicis sanos auertere sacris | experiar sensus nihil hic nisi carmina desunt*) recalls another common element in these love spells: to drive their victim insane until they give in. Tibullus wishes to be a rock at the mercy of the elements rather than feel such pain (8-9 *quam malle in gelidis montibus esse lapis | stare uel insanis cautes obnoxia uentis*). The poet-lover here would rather be a senseless rock so that he would no longer feel. This situation seemingly places the poet-lover in the role of Daphnis

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<sup>154</sup> For example: Besnier 13 *...insaniens, insaniens, uigilans uratur, comburatur ... amore et desiderio meo ... hanc obligo...*; DT 266 *...solum me in mente habeat insaniens, insaniens, uigilans; uratur frigat ... ardeat Vettia, quam peperit Optata ... amoris et desiderii mei causa...*; Solin 42 *...insaniens ... insaniens uigilans ... uratur, comburatur, ardeat spiritus amore et desiderio meo*; DTAud 227 *uratur Successa, aduratur*.

<sup>155</sup> For the desired effects of the love spell reflecting the state of the caster see MacDonald (2005), 19-20.

and Nemesis as the unnamed spellcaster. However, the situation is not as clear-cut; from the poet's point of view, Nemesis is a savage mistress (6 *saeua puella*) who desires riches over love. Unlike in *Ecl.* 8, love does not seem to be the motivation for the mistress' use of magic; her greed makes her more akin to the wicked Daphnis (*Ecl.* 8.83 *Daphnis malus*) who has betrayed his lover.<sup>156</sup> With the subtext of the poet-lover possibly being a victim of a spell, the irrational elements in Book 2 become more understandable; Tibullus is constrained against his will to reject his former ideals and to participate in harmful behaviours.

The second allusion to magic in the poem occurs during the poet's rejection of the Muses for their inability to help him win over his mistress (Tib. 2.4.15-20):

ite procul, Musae, si non prodestis amanti:  
 non ego uos ut sint bella canenda colo,  
 nec refero solisque uias et qualis, ubi orbem  
 compleuit, uersis luna recurrit equis.  
 ad dominam faciles aditus per carmina quaero:  
 ite procul, Musae, si nihil ista ualent.

[Go away Muses, if you are of no use to lovers: I do not cultivate you so wars might be sung, nor do I recite the journeys of the Sun, nor how the Moon wheels her horses and returns when she completes her orbit. I seek easy access to my mistress through song: go away, Muses, if this does not work.]

These lines function as a miniature *recusatio*, rejecting both epic and didactic poetry in favour of elegy (cf. Prop. 3.3; Ov. *Am.* 1.1). However, it is the multivalence of the word *carmen* that is most suggestive here. Tibullus' repeated rejection of the Muses implies a potential rejection of poetic *carmina*. We might then imagine that the *carmina* mentioned in line 19 would serve the poet better if they were magical *carmina*. If so, this passage hints that the poet-lover will take up the role of a magic user himself, if he has not already done

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<sup>156</sup> For a reading of the unnamed sorceress of *Ecl.* 8 wishing to melt Daphnis' heart towards her, while hardening hers towards him see Faraone (1989), 294-300; MacDonald (2005), 20; Karakasis (2011), 148.

so. Further allusions to Vergil's *Ecloques* strengthen the reading of magic. In *Eclogue* 8, the female protagonist repeatedly calls for her spells to draw her lover from the city (68, 72, 76, 79, 84, 90, 94, 100, 104 *ducite ab urbe domum, mea carmina, ducite Daphnim*). This exact refrain is repeated nine times and the final iteration is a variation of it (109 *parcite, ab urbe venit, iam carmina, parcite, Daphnis*), altered to reflect the apparently successful completion of the spell. This spellcaster seeks access to her wayward lover through use of a different kind of *carmina* than the poet's typical *carmina*, a goal in which she seems to succeed given the final line of the *Ecolgue*.<sup>157</sup> The poet-lover formerly sang the pleasures of the countryside, but his new mistress is firmly planted in the city, just as Daphnis is. However, Tibullus does not seem to have the power to draw Nemesis out with his traditional poetry.

Echoes of *Eclogue* 8 are also found in Tibullus' rejection of the Muses. The magical repetition of the second half is paralleled by Damon's song in the first part of the *Eclogue* (21, 25, 28, 31, 36, 42, 46, 51, 57 *incipi Maenaios mecum, mea tibia, uersus*; 61 *desine Maenaios, iam desine, tibia, uersus*). This earlier section has the lovelorn goatherd reject the power of his verses, and by extension the Muses, and opine that song/poetry is useless in matters of love. The power of Damon and Alpheisiboeus, who each sing one of the two songs that comprise the poem, is described as on par with that of Orpheus, as they are able to arrest both animals and rivers with their songs (*Ecl.* 8.2-4 *immemor herbarum quos est mirata iuuenca | certantis, quorum stupefactae carmine lynces | et mutata suos requierunt flumina cursus*). However, it is only in the magical second half that we see a potentially successful conclusion to the use of spells. This intertext then suggests that Tibullus' poetry will not win him Nemesis and that magic might be a viable alternative to gain access to the elegiac *puella*. The implication is that if the poet wishes to obtain Nemesis, he must resort to magic. The goatherd, after his failure to win back his love with his song, supposedly throws himself headlong from the mountains into the waves (59-60 *praeceps aerii specula de*

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<sup>157</sup> While I do believe the ending is ambiguous as to whether the spell succeeded or not, it cannot be denied that the magic drawing back the lover is a possible interpretation. If anything, the ambiguity of *Eclogue* 8's ending further plays into the ambiguity of Tibullus Book 2 and the place of magic in it. For magic being unsuccessful here see Putnam (1970), 288-90; Solodow (1977), 761; Segal (1987), 176-77; MacDonald (2005), 23-4; Chadha (2014), 32. For the relationship between magic and poetry in *Ecl.* 8, see Richter (1970), 7-8, 72; Putnam (1970), 255-92; Tupet (1976) 226-7; Segal (1987), 167-85; MacDonald (2005), 19-20; Chadha (2014), 30-3.

*montis in undas | deferar*). Tibullus' mention in lines 8-10 of becoming like a rock which waves break upon evokes this act.

The suggestion of magic in these passages is further reinforced by the open reference to love potions in the final lines of the poem (Tib. 2.4.55-60):

quidquid habet Circe, quidquid Medea ueneni,  
quidquid et herbarum Thessala terra gerit  
et quod, ubi indomitis gregibus Venus afflat amores,  
hippomanes<sup>158</sup> cupidae stillat ab inguine equae,  
si modo me placido uideat Nemesis mea uultu,  
mille alias herbas misceat illa, bibam.

[Whatever potion Circe or Medea possess, and whatever herbs which the Thessalian earth holds, and that fluid which drips from the groin of a mare in heat when Venus breathes passion into the untamed herd, she could mix a thousand other herbs. I would drink [them], if only my Nemesis would look at me with a gentle expression.]

This passage constitutes a stereotypical catalogue of magic ingredients, especially those used in love potions. Nemesis has access to the same types of potions and poisons as the witch of 1.2 (53-4). While this list might seem conventional, it functions as a charge of witchcraft against the poet's new mistress. Unlike with Delia, whose accusation comes from a rival mistress, the poet does not defend Nemesis or take back his words (cf. Tib. 1.5.41-4). Nemesis' participation in the making of potions is presented in a matter-of-fact manner rather than reported as hearsay. This difference between the two mistresses underscores the present inversion of Tibullus' elegiac world. Now, the poet confesses that he would commit any crime and even desecrate the sanctity of Venus because she does him harm by making him love a girl as hardhearted and faithless as Nemesis (24-6 *sed Venus ante alios est uiolanda mihi. | illa malum facinus suadet dominamque rapacem | dat mihi*). If Nemesis asked anything of him, the poet would do it just to please her — regardless of whether that

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<sup>158</sup> Cf. Hor. *Sat.* 1.8.18-22 where the witches stalk a former graveyard at night searching for ingredients for their nefarious spells. Other instances of Hippomanes and irregular ingredients being used by unscrupulous witches to encourage desire: Prop. 4.5.17-18, Verg. *G.* 3.280-283, Ov. *Am.* 1.8.8, *Ars Am.* 2.100, *Medic.* 38.

meant selling his ancestral home along with his Lares or committing robbery and murder, or drinking potential poisons concocted by his mistress. In an extreme shift from the first book, the formerly pious Tibullus is now willing to commit sacrilege. Here the struggle for control between the poet and the mistress is enacted through a battle of magic and *carmina*. There is an implicit suggestion, given the Vergilian intertext, that Tibullus has enhanced his regular poetic *carmen* with magic *carmen*. Magic in 2.4 highlights the poet's departure from the traditional rites and practices of his previous poems and suggests an alternative path to navigate elegiac love.

## 2. Tibullan Politics: Messalla

The reign of Augustus is marked by a particular focus on piety and a self-professed 'restoration' of Roman traditions, rituals, and religious spaces.<sup>159</sup> This restoration of Roman traditions and rituals only intensified as the Augustan regime became more secure. It could be claimed that Augustus did not reconstruct Roman religion so much as construct a new religion to bolster the imperial cult — an imperial cult that was particularly influenced by Hellenistic kingship traditions.<sup>160</sup> Tibullus, despite his early death, would have had the opportunity to witness and react to many of these reforms.<sup>161</sup> The poet presents an image of himself as pious, but continually inserts himself into ambiguous rituals. In Rome, being properly religious was often a question of *pietas*, which was a proper relationship with the gods.<sup>162</sup> This is not something that Tibullus can strongly claim to adhere to given his predilection for including magic in his poetic landscape. The political implications of this,

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<sup>159</sup> Zanker (1988), 101-66; Galinsky (1996), 288-331.

<sup>160</sup> See Hunter (2006), 50-67 on the influence of Hellenistic kingship on Augustan poetry; Gosling (1992), 511-2 on how Augustus' identification with and claim to be under the special protection of Apollo has precedents in the Ptolemaic dynasty; Koenen (1976), 128 on how the later emperors continued to adopt ideas of Egyptian kingship and worship into their reigns. Augustus further cemented his changes to the religious structures of Rome once he had obtained the position of *Pontifex Maximus*: Beard, North, and Price (1998), 21. Scheid (2005), 187-90 argues that Augustus created a stranglehold on the office of the pontifices long before he finally took up the mantle of *pontifex maximus* in 12 BC as part of his political strategy of neutralizing Lepidus' influence.

<sup>161</sup> Scheid (2005), 178-82. Scheid states that these religious innovations and reforms were formulated between the years 44 BC and 28 BC. Augustus instituted laws that merely served to reinforce an already existing religious structure in Rome.

<sup>162</sup> Scheid (2005), 177. Beard (1998), 217 defines a 'religious' person during this period as someone 'carrying out or committing ritual in accordance with the custom of the state and are not involved in superstitions.' This is an interesting definition to make considering that later writers like Suetonius characterized Augustus as both a very religious and very superstitious man (Suet. *Aug.* 90-3).

however, are not straightforwardly visible: although the politics of his time may be present in the backdrop of his pastoral world, Tibullus rarely openly engages with them.

That said, the most constant figure in Tibullus' poems is not his lover(s), but Messalla. Tibullus' relationship with his patron presents the poet's most ostensible engagement with politics. Tibullus wrote under the patronage of Marcus Valerius Messalla Corvinus (64 BC – 8 AD). A literary patron as well as a man of staunch republican virtues, Messalla is directly mentioned or alluded to in poems 1.1, 1.3, 1.5, 1.7, 2.1, and 2.5.<sup>163</sup> During the civil wars his patron initially supported Brutus and Cassius, joining Antony after the battle of Philippi. He later shifted his support to Octavian and fought at the battle of Actium. Subsequently, Messalla held commands in the East and earned a triumph (27 BC) for his victory over the Aquitanians.<sup>164</sup> He was supposedly also the person who, on behalf of the senate, persuaded Augustus to accept the title of *pater patriae*.<sup>165</sup> The Republican values of his patron, the poet's repeated distaste for warfare, and his failure to pay homage to Augustus, at least overtly, have led some to believe that Tibullus was not a supporter of the new regime.<sup>166</sup> However, it would be too simplistic to judge the poet's political leanings from his work; despite the adage, art does not always imitate life, and the poet views on the new regime remain unknown. Taking into account that there are precious few references to any real or historical events and persons in Tibullus as a whole, it is not so strange that the poet does not openly mention recognizable contemporaries other than his patron. It might be more pertinent that Tibullus wrote his poetry in the early years of Augustus' rule when there was no guarantee that this would be a lasting period of peace or that civil war might not break out again.

This brings us to the discussion of the poems that do have some bearing the poet's more contemporary situation, poems 1.7 and 2.5. Two of the most ritualistic poems, other

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<sup>163</sup> Smith (1913), 37; Syme (1986), 200-43; Pelling (2016).

<sup>164</sup> Murgatroyd (1980), 10.

<sup>165</sup> Suet. *Aug.* 58. The title was conferred to Augustus by the Senate in 2 BC.

<sup>166</sup> Ball (1975), 45-6 believes the poet's exclusion of the princeps implies a dissatisfaction with current policies. Murgatroyd (1980), 11 does not agree with the sentiment that Tibullus' exclusion of any specific mention of Augustus equates to opposition to him, but he does believe it is unusual. Gosling (1987), 333-9 sees Tibullus' focus on the topics of order, peace, and prosperity in 2.5 as an engagement with national themes, but not necessarily with the princeps himself. On the other hand, Cairns (1979), 44 sees his exclusion as normative considering the patron/client dynamic that would have existed between Messalla and Tibullus. In contrast, Burkowski (2016) sees the references to Apollo, especially in 2.5, as representative of the princeps and the poet's engagement with politics. Gardner (2013), 111-2 believes that Tibullus' strong endorsement of his patron might equate to a wholesale approval for the Augustan regime and its social-political program.

than the programmatic poems, they are also the two most involved with current affairs. The first poem, 1.7, celebrates both the triumph and birthday of Tibullus' patron, Messalla. The second celebrates the induction of his patron's son, Messalinus, into the priesthood of the *quindecimviri sacris faciundis*. While poems 1.7 and 2.5 are unique in their connection to the outside world, they also present an interesting intersection between elegy, politics, and magic that should be explored further.

### 1.7

This poem displays an intersection of the religious and political to a greater degree than most other Tibullan poems and is the only poem not to contain explicit references to love.<sup>167</sup> Instead of the celebration of his patron being the centrepiece of Book 1, that position is supplanted by 1.5.<sup>168</sup> The triumph reinforced Romans' sense of imperial identity by providing a 'persuasive ritual discourse' on their strengths, achievements, and unity in the wake of the civil war.<sup>169</sup> This Roman triumph is neither the typical agrarian nor the non-traditional ritual often found in Tibullus. Messalla's triumph may evoke the *princeps*' own triumph of 29 BC, which celebrated the victory of Actium as well as the acquisition of Illyria and Egypt.<sup>170</sup> Some see Tibullus' celebration of his patron, a man well-positioned in the Augustan power structure, as an implicit approval of the *princeps* as well.<sup>171</sup> However, the Roman relationship to Egypt, especially so closely following the civil wars, was a complex one. The threat of foreign influences was often used as a means of exerting political power in Rome. Thus, Agrippa's aedilician edict of 33 BC, expelling astrologers and *goetes* from Rome, and Augustus' 28 BC ban of Egyptian cults, can be viewed in a similar light. Officially, Agrippa's edict had the intention of protecting the people from foreign influences that would prey on them, but could easily have been part of the rhetoric against Antony, by

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<sup>167</sup> Hunter (2006), 50-67 explores this poem's relationship to Ptolemaic Egypt, especially in the literary and religious sense. Bowditch (2011) argues that this poem has greater implications for generic conventions in gendering the East/West opposition and acts as a form of cultural imperialism. For studies on the connections between Egyptian, Greek, and Roman religion and cult see Grimal (1969) and Koenen (1976).

<sup>168</sup> For this view see Gaisser (2012), 15, who believes that Tibullus was potentially inspired by Vergil's *Eclogues* 4 and 5. Murgatroyd (1980) sees the Messalla poems as a bridge between the erotic poems.

<sup>169</sup> Bowditch (2011), 89. For the propagandising of triumphs, see Konstan (1978), 176; Beard (2007), 295-6.

<sup>170</sup> Murgatroyd (1980), 214; Maltby (2002), 284; Bowditch (2011), 90, 95.

<sup>171</sup> Gaisser (2012), 22.

emphasising the dangers of foreign (Egyptian) influences.<sup>172</sup> Although Egypt is depicted in a fairly positive light, it is assimilated into Roman culture by the end of the poem.<sup>173</sup>

Poem 1.7 stands out among the elegies of Book 1, not only for the fact that it makes no mention of an elegiac mistress or lover, but also due to its conspicuous inclusion of Egyptian motifs and, notably, the god Osiris.<sup>174</sup> The poem begins by describing Messalla's triumph and referencing his eastern expeditions (1-22); addressing the Nile (23-6); comparing his patron to Osiris with a hymn to the god (27-48); inviting the Genius in Messalla's birthday celebrations (49-56); describing Messalla's contributions to Rome's restoration (57-64). This poem, along with 2.5, is the most inclusive of current political events and the socio-historical context of Rome within Tibullus' elegies. Unlike the other elegists, Tibullus generally avoids discussion of contemporary politics, so the open celebration of a triumph stands out among his elegies. The poem has an official tone and invokes traditional ritual both in the triumph and in the birthday celebration. His patron's birthday seems almost a side note to the description of Egypt and Messalla's triumph; a reward for Messalla's victories over the Aquitanians. The glorious destiny of Messalla cannot be unwoven even by the gods themselves (1-2 *hunc cecinere diem Parcae fatalia nentes | stamina, non ulli dissoluenda deo*). Unlike the poet who is constantly in flux, Messalla's destined eminence was set in stone by fate. The *miles* is juxtaposed with both the *amator* and the *rusticus*. Tibullus primarily depicts his patron in the role of the soldier, and so in a role with which the poet has an ambiguous relationship. Here, Messalla and his triumph represent the normative path of an aristocratic male. This poem is ostensibly a celebration of this traditional path. Tibullus even claims to have contributed to his patron's victories (1.7.9) and by doing so aligns himself with the power of his more traditional elite

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<sup>172</sup> Agrippa thus fits into a long tradition of Roman men, holding positions of power in the state, who protect Rome and the people from themselves: cf. Liv. 4.30: in 427 BC the aediles enforce worship of Roman gods in time of crisis; Liv. 4.25.1: in 186 BC state took harsh measures to prevent the subversion of Roman values by the popular foreign cult; Liv. 39.8: a praetor expels Chaldaean and Jewish cults during times of famine; Dio. Cass. 49.43.5. Frankfurter (2019), 16 argues that new regimes and governments tended to hide their own 'magical' practices while creating a discourse of illegitimate Other rituals to be defined against. These foreign magical practices act as a foil to the modernity or centralised image of the state.

<sup>173</sup> Bowditch (2011), 95.

<sup>174</sup> The comparison of Messalla and Osiris has received much scholarly interest: Gaisser (1971), 221-9, sees this poem as an ode to the patron's military achievements and literary tastes and notes the juxtaposition of Osiris with Messalla's Genius; Konstan (1978) examines Osiris and Egypt in the context of a Roman triumph; Lee-Stecum (1998), 205-26, explores the power dynamics between Tibullus and his patron; Hunter (2006), 61 notes the geographical parallels between Messalla and Osiris.

male patron. This is in stark contrast to his sentiment in poem 1.3, where it is Messalla who forces Tibullus to leave Delia to go on campaign. There is a tension between the proper Roman civic life and that of the poet's ideal elegiac life here.

However, though glory and fame are certainly a byproduct of his martial action, Messalla is portrayed more as a cultivator and protector of the Roman people through his comparisons to Osiris rather than a soldier. While there are no clear allusions to magic in 1.7, the location, the inclusion of an Egyptian god closely related to the underworld, and the juxtaposition of varying power structures, lays the groundwork for a magical intext in a later poem — elegy 2.6. Not only is Messalla clearly equated to Osiris (27-8 *te canit atque suum pubes miratur Osirim | barbara Memphiten plangere docta bouem*), but the composite hymnic style of the poem suggests the divine nature of his patron.<sup>175</sup> The conflation of Osiris with Messalla blurs the distinction between the god, the patron, and the tenets of elegy. Messalla, although a paradigm of an elite Roman male, is blended with the elegiac world through this poem, which focuses less on his martial abilities and more on his relationship to peaceful activities. His patron is equally imbued with the trappings of the elegiac world; although love is not mentioned in this poem, there seems to be an insinuation of it in the physical description of Osiris. Directly before transitioning to the birthday celebration, Osiris is described in a feminine manner that evokes the elegiac lover's subservient pose (43-8 *frons corymbis ... lutea palla ... teneros pedes ... Tyriae uestes*); an odd manner of portraying a god linked to his patron fulfilling a traditionally masculine function.<sup>176</sup> The celebration of the Genius further highlights this association when the poet describes perfumed locks and suggests hanging garlands around his neck (51-2 *illius et nitido stillent unguenta capillo | et capite et collo mollia sarta gerat*).

Despite the poem's official subject matter, it also delves into unorthodox terrain — Egypt and its religion. The discrepancy between his earlier attitude towards warfare and his current posture here in 1.7 might be seen as a renegotiation of the power dynamic between the poet and his patron, where Tibullus seems to profit from his patron's prestige.<sup>177</sup> Alternatively, the poet might be engaging more with national themes by showing how

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<sup>175</sup> Ball (1975), 731-4; Lee-Stecum (2013), 75.

<sup>176</sup> Bowditch (2011), 104-6. For the traditionally masculine portrayal of the Egyptian god, see Bommas (2012). Instead, here the god seems to be feminised in his Romanisation.

<sup>177</sup> See discussion of power dynamics of 1.7 in Lee-Stecum (1998), 205-26; Bowditch (2011), 90-1.

Rome, through the guise of Messalla, has subsumed Egyptian kingship and culture.<sup>178</sup> This poem is unique in that it contains myth and politics, an unusual pairing in Tibullus. It seems strange that the poet structures an entire poem around an Egyptian god. Poem 1.7 demonstrates the ability of ritual to convey a multiplicity of meanings — the ambivalent relationship between Rome and Egypt, the complex relationship between patron and poet, the gender inversion evident in the elegiac pose. There is a tension between Roman tradition and Egyptian otherness: it is uncertain whether Tibullus is playing into the domestication of Egypt (Messalla's triumph) or including Egyptian elements as something unpredictable and other, in line with elegy itself.

## 2.5

As the penultimate poem of Book 2, 2.5 is the longest and arguably the most complex of Tibullus' elegies, depicting a highly ritualistic setting and language. While 1.7 had a strong focus on Osiris, this poem invokes a much more Augustan deity, Apollo.<sup>179</sup> What some might call the most 'Augustan' of Tibullus' poems is wedged between two elegies devoted to the poet's new darker mistress: 2.4 and 2.6, both of which engage with the category of magic.<sup>180</sup> Considering the overtly religious nature of this poem it is perplexing that it is immediately followed by a much darker poem, one that concludes the second book and the poet's corpus. Elegy 2.5 presents an ostensibly religious and traditional front as it celebrates the entry of Messalla's son into the *quindecimviri sacris faciundis* priesthood of Rome.<sup>181</sup> Its liturgical language focuses on the induction of Messalinus, the Sibyl's prophecy, the destiny of Rome, and Tibullus' relationship to them. The poem begins as an invocation of Apollo to bless the appointment of Messalinus (1-10); emphasises the god's dominion over the

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<sup>178</sup> For the argument that this poem represents the cultural assimilation of Egypt by Rome see Bowditch (2011) and Keith (2014).

<sup>179</sup> For the complex representation of Apollo in Tibullus' Book 2 as a sign of the poet-lover's deepening irrationality, see Burkowski (2016). She further argues (165-9) that in 2.5 the poet declares political independence through the Apollo subtext from 2.3, which implies that Tibullus is still alienated from traditional roles and society despite the content of this poem.

<sup>180</sup> Cf. Ball (1975), Gosling (1987), and Burkowski (2016). Gaisser (2012), 20 argues that the 'highly charged visions of fertility, piety, and the simple life' found in 2.5 underscore the central importance of these values to Roman identity and demonstrate an engagement with national themes. However, this also suits the poet-lover who has presented these as staples of his desired elegiac life.

<sup>181</sup> Messalinus is present on an inscription (*CIL* VI.32323.152) listing the members of the priesthood in 17 BC, but this does not provide solid evidence for when he actually joined the *quindecimviri sacris faciundis*.

prophetic arts and entreats him to teach Messalinus those same arts (11-8); describes Aeneas' flight from Troy and the simplicity of life before the founding of Rome (19-38); relates the first person prophecy of the Sibyl (39-64); lists the omens that predicted terrible wars to come (65-78); beseeches Apollo for peace, both in matters of war and love (79-106); and wishes for respite from love so that the poet can perform his duties to his patron (107-22). Despite the ostensibly traditional themes of the poem's opening, a female voice soon intrudes — the Sibyl's prophecy acts as the centrepiece of the poem and the preamble to her direct speech prefigures the elegiac concerns that rear up in the final lines of the poem.

Central to poem 2.5 is the prophecy of the Sibyl presented in the first person. The presence of an acrostic stating *audi me* in her speech places greater emphasis on her prophecy.<sup>182</sup> This highly ritualistic section demonstrates the assimilation of foreign influences into Roman religion in the Sibylline Books.<sup>183</sup> As one of the *quindecimviri*, Messalinus would have had the responsibility of interpreting these books of prophecy when ordained by the Senate; this was only done when Rome was in peril and it was believed that the *pax deorum* had been disturbed. Here, Aeneas' Sibyl foretells (2.5.39-66) the future glory of Rome, the growth of the eternal city, and describes the progression of the Trojan descendants that will eventually destroy the bucolic landscape as it existed in Aeneas' time. The prophetess does not openly mention the civil wars that would darken the last years of the Republic; instead, ominous portents are recited in the lines discussing the history of the transmission of the Sibylline oracles along with a plea that no more of these omens might appear (65-82). Tibullus' Sibyl seems to insinuate future warfare is inevitable, not through only her own words, but through the enclosing description of her prophecy. Despite the true vision of the future glory of Rome that the Sibyl prophesizes for Aeneas, nothing will prevent the terrible strife that will beset Rome in the form of fraternal civil war, paradigmatically encoded in the myth of Romulus and Remus (23-4 *Romulus aeternae nondum formauerat urbis | moenia, consorti non habitanda Remo*). The description of the destruction of Troy, with the insinuation of fratricide, subtly hints at the civil wars that

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<sup>182</sup> Kronenberg (2018), 508-13 draws attention to a pattern in the Sibyl's prophecy (2.5.16-26) that spells this phrase, which is a Latin equivalent of the Greek hymnal invocation.

<sup>183</sup> Gillmeister (2015), 217 argues that the more Roman Sibyl, as a sort of pan-Hellenic figure, became associated with the books after their initial destruction in a move towards culturally globalising Roman religion. For the recreation of the Sibylline books after the Capitoline fire of 83 BC see Parke (1988), 138; Scheid (1998), 11-26; Moatti (1998), 22-3; Fevrier (2002), 821-41. For the cultural appropriation of Greek models, see Veyne (1979), 22-24.

recently almost destroyed Rome.<sup>184</sup> The presentation of the destruction of the countryside as a necessary element of civic expansion and growth creates a sense of dissonance with the poet's love of the rural life. The Sibylline books and the prophecies contained therein represent an aspect of established Roman religion. Although subordinated under Apollo, these prophecies were tightly controlled as they pertained to the future wellbeing of Rome that could be harmful if not properly interpreted.<sup>185</sup> Here, Tibullus is using the Sibyl to present scenes of the Golden Age that may or may not have 'returned' to Rome.

Though the Sibyl portends both growth and destruction, it is a superseding power that will bring proper peace and order. Tibullus beseeches Apollo to put an end to foreboding prophecies, omens, and wars. Apollo is the one able to put an end to prodigies that might symbolize future civil wars by sinking them beneath the sea (2.5.79-80 *tu iam mitis, Apollo | prodigia indomitis merge sub aequoribus*). This could easily be a reference to Augustus, who finally brought an end to bloody civil wars by instituting peace throughout the empire, as he claimed Apollo as his personal patron; if so, then lines 79 and 105 might refer to Augustus and his endeavours to preserve peace following the civil wars.<sup>186</sup> Here Apollo the god, and potentially the *princeps*, has brought the current peace and has the power to ensure that war does not reoccur. However, this peace, if it exists, is darkened by the tribulations of love. After suing for peace in the public sphere, the poet asks for the god's aid in the domestic sphere (2.5.105-110):

pace tua pereant arcus pereantque sagittae,  
 Phoebe, modo in terris erret inermis Amor.  
 ars bona, sed postquam sumpsit sibi tela Cupido,  
 eheu quam multis ars dedit ista malum!  
 et mihi praecipue, iaceo cum saucius annum

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<sup>184</sup> The Sibyl as a prophetess of doom and gloom: Lact. *Div. Inst.* 1.6.8–12; Paus. 10.12; Plut. *Mor.* 397a.

Gillmeister (2015), 212 argues that the Sibylline books were an important part of globalising Roman religion and especially of Augustus' symbolic language. Bloch (1940), 21–28 argues for the Etruscan origin of this Roman Sibyl.

<sup>185</sup> Tibullus' engagement with Vergil's *Aeneid* may constitute his most open engagement with current politics. For a discussion of scholarship on the Vergilian intertexts, especially surrounding the portrayal and prophecy of the Sibyl, see Ball (1975). For an indication of how the *princeps* might have felt towards prophecy, even in the Sibylline books, see Suet. *Aug.* 31.1.

<sup>186</sup> Burkowski (2016) reads Apollo as Augustus here.

et faueo morbo cum iuuat ipse dolor.

[Phoebus, if you will, let perish bows and arrows, if only Love might wander the earth unarmed. It is a good skill, but after Cupid took up archery, alas, how many has that art inflicted evil on! And especially me, I have lain wounded for a year and I favour my sickness since the pain itself delights.]

Here the poet blames Amor for his sojourn in the elegiac world and the interruption of his duties. Even in this ode to Messalinus' new role of responsibility, Amor intrudes reminding the reader what the genre of the poem is, despite the more traditional opening. Tibullus would wish for an end to the warfare that would separate him from his beloved and to be free of the goads that first forced him to become entrapped by his love. That strife of a kind still exists in this supposedly peaceful world does not bode well for the poet-lover. Tibullus must appeal to Apollo for mercy in the matter of love.

However, the poet's pleas to Apollo are undermined by his subsequent request to Nemesis that she allow him peace so that he may continue celebrating more traditional subject matter (2.5.111-8):

usque cano Nemesim, sine qua uersus mihi nullus  
uerba potest iustos aut reperire pedes.  
at tu, nam diuum seruat tutela poetas,  
praemoneo, uati parce, puella, sacro,  
ut Messalinum celebrem, cum praemia belli  
ante suos currus oppida uicta ferret  
ipse gerens laurus: lauro deuinctus agresti  
miles 'io' magna uoce 'trumphe' canet.

[I sing endlessly of Nemesis, without whom no verse of mine could find words or the proper measure. But you, I warn, girl, for there is a guardian god who protects poets, spare your sacred poet, so that I might celebrate Messallinus when he carries the conquered towns, prizes of war, before his chariot wearing the laurel himself: the soldier wreathed with rustic laurel will sing in a loud voice, 'Behold the Triumph!']

Tibullus is the *uates* of Nemesis, just as the Sibyl is that of Apollo, and the poet complains that he cannot compose poetry without his mistress.<sup>187</sup> This new role further aligns the poet with the irrational as he chooses the mistress over the god. Moreover, the poet's desire to celebrate a future triumph of Messalinus (115-20) insinuates the presence of future strife, whether fraternal or external. While lines 65-78 most likely refer to the recent civil wars, the inclusion of a hope for more triumphs, despite the request for the gods to lay down their weapons (105-6), renders these lines ambiguous. The request that Nemesis spare the poet so that he can sing of war is oddly dissonant with a poem celebrating peace and order.

There is also the subtext of a previous representation of Apollo to contend with. Apollo in 2.3 is set up as an elegiac lover, who also demonstrates the negativity of being willing to give up status and his identity. The irrationality demonstrated by Apollo as a lover foreshadows the poet's own at the end of the poem and in Book 2 more generally.<sup>188</sup> This elegiac Apollo is recalled by the strife that erupts between the lover and his beloved during the agricultural festival (2.5.101-4). Here, it is shown that love is a different type of war; despite the poet's endeavours to make his elegiac realm peaceful, it only acts as an interruption of the normative aristocratic male path. The first lines invoke the god on behalf of his patron's son in a public setting, but the end of the poem reverts back to the poet's private concerns (121-22 *adnue: sic tibi sint intonsi, Phoebae, capilli, | sic tua perpetuo sit tibi casta soror*). This potentially renders the poem a rhetorical device aimed at persuading Nemesis for leniency. For Messalinus the poet wishes Apollo's favour (2.5.1 *Phoebae, faue*), but only craves the favour of Nemesis and love sickness (110 *faueo morbo*) for himself. If 1.7 represents the cultural appropriation of Egypt into Rome, poem 2.5 represents the incorporation of Roman ritual and authority into elegy.<sup>189</sup> This poem might be said to prefigure Propertius 4 in its blending of seemingly more traditional subjects and the elegiac.

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<sup>187</sup> The word *uates* appears only twice in Tibullus, at 2.5.18 and 2.5.114, referring to the Sibyl and the poet respectively. For the parallels between the Sibyl and Tibullus in 2.5, see Gowers (2005), 170; Miller (2009), 245-247. For the rivalry between Nemesis and Apollo as demonstrative of elegiac versus Augustan poetics, see Miller (2009), 234-247. For the rivalry of Nemesis and Amor with Apollo as a threat to the stability of the religious, social, and political façade in 2.5, see Lee-Stecum (2000), 200-211; Burkowski (2016), 160-169.

<sup>188</sup> Burkowski (2016), 158-9 argues that the juxtaposition of the two Apollo's further underscores the irrational pose of the poet-lover who is willing to give up all the normal tenets of male elite life for love.

<sup>189</sup> Lee-Stecum (2000), 204.

### 3. Coopting power: Tibullus' magical pretensions

#### 2.6

It seems significant that Tibullus' final poem ends with a curse against the *lena* who inserted herself between him and Nemesis, exculpating his mistress, yet again, for her behaviour. The *lena*, who has her own experience and knowledge in matters of love, has taught his girl tricks that consequently bar her from the poet. He uses the last two lines of this poem, indeed of his entire corpus,<sup>190</sup> to curse the person he perceives as responsible for corrupting his *puella* (Tib. 2.6.53-54 *tunc tibi, lena, precor diras: satis anxia uiuas / mouerit e uotis pars quotacumque deos*). Instead of the piety typical of Tibullus' first poems, and even of many in this second book, the reader is left with an ominous curse against a perceived interloper in his love affair. Given the poet's predilection for cursing throughout his poems, especially after the failure of appeals or prayers, this is hardly a surprising end to his work. The 'good' witches of Book 1 no longer exist. The pastoral landscape has crumbled before the harsh realities of love for hire. Tibullus seems to have lost hope and confidence in his own powers. Ironically, this is the poem where he evokes hope the most (20, 21, 25, 27).

Tibullus' pattern of claiming a special relationship with divinities and actively participating in rituals remains in this poem where he resorts to performing his own rituals.<sup>191</sup> Not only does he appeal to the power of others, he actively attempts to usurp the authority of others, claiming their power for himself. Indeed, Tibullus has a marked tendency to usurp power and authority for himself, with negligible success. This can be seen when he fashions himself as a *praeceptor amoris* in 1.4, stealing the role from Priapus after presumably asking for his advice, while casually asserting his own mastery of the arts of love. In another instance, during his friend Cornutus' birthday party, he steps in as an augur

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<sup>190</sup> Whether or not Tibullus' second book was ever completed remains a topic of debate. Reeve (1984), 235-9 argues that what he sees as an abrupt ending to 2.6, both thematically and stylistically, leaves the book unresolved with no sense of closure and so the book must have been cut short by the author's death. According to him, even the poem itself seems incomplete. On the other hand, Maltby (2002), 479 believes that the presence of the word *satis* in the final couplet of 2.6 signifies closure. This is reaffirmed by the similar use of *satis* at the end of 1.10, a poem which clearly was meant to cap Book 1. Furthermore, Maltby (2005), 112 argues that other examples of collections of six, such as Callimachus's *Hymns* and six books of Lucretius give precedent for there only being six poems in Tibullus' second book. Moreover, the seemingly abrupt end to 2.6, and the second book, fits with the darker and inconsistent mood of Tibullus' final book.

<sup>191</sup> Lee-Stecum (1998), 58 asserts that 'the attempt to gain power over his situation, especially through appeal to others, has concerned the poet throughout 1.1.' I argue that this extends beyond the first poem and remains a primary concern in both his books.

when his friend hesitates and then proceeds to presume his deepest wishes (Tib. 2.2.11 *auguror uxoris fidos optabis amores*), which seem to match Tibullus' own desire for fidelity from his mistress. He also inserts himself into magic rituals or hints that he has powers comparable to those who perform these ceremonies or the divine powers that support them. The insinuation that he has these various layers of mastery behind him places more weight in his threats and power to persuade. Tibullus styles himself as a ritual expert, who specialises in both magical and religious rites, whichever has the greatest benefit for him at the time. His first poem (1.1) begins with assertions of ritual purity and devotion to the agricultural gods that support his desired lifestyle, as well as to his patron goddess Venus, yet as early as his second poem, we see Tibullus resorting to illegitimate powers to sway his mistress (the magical ritual in 1.2). By the end of the second book, the poet-lover is willing to resort to any authority, or means, that will allow him access to his mistress, even if it would require him to renounce all he held dear before. Tibullus is continuously attempting to assert more authority within his own work or to claim greater power for himself and for his poetry; he inserts himself into these positions where power seems assured as a means of bolstering his own authority in the face of constant rejection and failure.

Another clear example of this appropriating behaviour is in 1.5, when Tibullus hires a witch to help him save Delia when she is near death. The poet's possible influence over life or death anticipates the powers he insinuates that he possesses in 2.6. As previously mentioned, Tibullus makes sure to emphasize his own role in the salvation of his mistress (1.5.9-16):

ille **ego**, cum tristi morbo defessa iaceres,  
te dicor uotis eripuisse meis.  
**ipse**que ter circum lustravi sulphure puro,  
carmine cum magico praecinuisset anus;  
**ipse** procuraui, ne possent saeua nocere  
somnia, ter sancta deueneranda<sup>192</sup> mola;  
**ipse ego** uelatus filo tunicisque solutis  
uota nouem Triuia nocte silente dedi.

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<sup>192</sup> See *OLD deueneror, deuenerari*. It means to ward off/exorcise. Murgatroyd (2001), 165 notes that this is one of the few extant uses of the word in Latin.

[When you lay dying it was through my prayers, I am told, that you were snatched from gloomy sickness. I myself walked around you three times with pure sulphur, while an old woman chanted her magic spell. I myself expiated your nightmares lest they harm you, three times averting them with holy grain. I myself, wearing a woolen fillet and loose tunic, offered nine vows to the Trivia in the silent night.]

In a rather spell-like manner, *ipse* is repeated at the beginning of three successive couplets as Tibullus describes the healing ritual. The ritualistic language of the description itself might be another means of highlighting his involvement while subtly asserting the power of his own words. Here the poet emphasizes his role in saving his mistress from certain death. Tibullus claims that he helped save Delia and illustrates his actions during the ritual: his walking around Delia with the right ingredients while wearing the proper accoutrements. The *ter* here (line 14), while formulaic, is reminiscent of the *ter* at 1.2.56 where Tibullus gives Delia a spell that will make her activities with the poet invisible to her *coniunx*, as well as the *ter* included in the ritual at 1.3.11 where, in an inversion of this example, it is Delia who usurps the role of the expert in drawing lots. As all three examples occur in the first half of book one, it would not be a stretch to suppose there is a relationship between them. As the first two highlight unfavourable outcomes, it seems likely that his own success in other rituals, such as the healing rite of 1.5, would be called into doubt. This is especially true given his general lack of efficacy elsewhere. Regardless of Tibullus' success rate, his presence in these various rituals sets him up as an experienced ritual practitioner.

Tibullus' affinity with magic and appropriation of alternative powers culminates in poem 2.6. In this final poem, we see the poet entreating Nemesis to give in to him so that her departed little sister might rest in peace (2.6.30 *bene sub tenera parua quiescat humo*). If read in a magical context, it is very probable that instead of sincerely wishing Nemesis' little sister to rest in peace, the poet is subtly hinting that unless his mistress complies, the sister will not find that peace. Since the words *tenera humus* are the exact ones used at 1.7.30 when describing how Osiris first taught people to disturb the earth with iron, the alteration of the more normative grave inscription from *terra ... leuis* to *tenera ... humo* might hint at the possibility of Tibullus unearthing the sister's bones for nefarious

purposes.<sup>193</sup> This might seem a bit farfetched, but taking into account the magical associations of Egyptian gods, Osiris' association with resurrection, and the corresponding line numbers (both occur on line 30 of their respective poems), an intratextual link here becomes more probable.<sup>194</sup> Murgatroyd and Putnam both attribute the modification of *leuis* to *tenera* as a measure indicating the tender years of the sister.<sup>195</sup> However, this seems to side-step any magical associations and does not fully consider why Tibullus would have gone out of his way to alter the formula. Rather, the insinuation is that the poet will perform necromantic rites to disturb her sister's bones.

This suggestion is strengthened by Tibullus' claims that Nemesis' sister is sacred to him and that he will lay garlands sprinkled with his own tears on her grave (2.6.31-32 *illius dona sepulcro | et madefacta meis serta feram lacrimis*).<sup>196</sup> This treatment of the sister's grave is reminiscent of Tibullus' actions towards the door in 1.2: both are styled as possible avenues of access to the elegiac mistress and worshipped for the benefits they might confer. At first glance this episode seems like a tender vignette, showcasing his devotion to his mistress by tending the grave of her dead sister. However, it soon becomes clear that the context of the scene is more sinister than it appears. As mentioned, the language that Tibullus uses at the sister's grave recalls his actions towards the obstructing door in the first book (1.2.12-14 *ignoscas: capiti sin precor illa meo | te meminisse decet, quae plurima uoce peregi | supplice, cum posti florida serta darem*). Now his prayers are directed to the dead girl's bones (2.6.29 *parce, per immatura tuae precor ossa sororis*) and the garlands are laid on her grave (2.6.31-2 *sepulcro ... serta feram*) instead of on door posts. The poet is still a suppliant (2.6.33 *supplex*), this time before a grave rather than a door, strongly suggesting that he is making, or willing to make, a compact with the ghost to obtain his wishes. Tibullus will sit as a suppliant before the little sister's grave and, if his demands are not met, the departed girl will help him obtain his object; he performs a lover's vigil, but at a grave rather than his mistress' door. The sweet façade initially afforded the lines is beginning to break down. The location, a grave, and the evocation of a spirit implies a connection with magic.

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<sup>193</sup> Lattimore (1962), 65-73 notes that *sit terra tibi leuis* is the more traditional expression. Cf. *CIL* II. 1094, 3453, XII. 5811.

<sup>194</sup> For the association of Isis and Osiris with the underworld and raising the dead, see Orlin (2016), 684-5.

<sup>195</sup> Murgatroyd (1980), 259; Putnam (1973), 198.

<sup>196</sup> Dickie (2001), 126-8 argues that liminal spaces, such as graveyards, were especially popular places to deposit *defixiones*.

Indeed, Tibullus further underscores the very probable connection to magic when he threatens to send Nemesis' departed sister against her, in the bloody manner in which she died, as punishment for her locking the poet out and refusing to give him access to her (2.6.36-40):

illius ut uerbis, sis mihi lenta ueto,  
ne tibi neglecti mittant mala somnia manes  
maestaque sopitae stet soror ante torum,  
qualis ab excelsa praeceps delapsa fenestra  
uenit ad infernos sanguinolenta lacus.

[In her name, I forbid you to be indifferent towards me, lest slighted spirits send you evil dreams, and, in sleep, your sorrowful sister stands before your bed, just as she was when falling from that high window she came headlong, blood-spattered, to the lakes below.]

This is morbid, twisted, and manipulative; a far cry from the pious persona first presented. Note the irony that, in this poem, Tibullus would be the cause of Nemesis' nightmares, but in 1.5.13-4 he takes credit for ending Delia's nightmares and healing her. This is another subtle reversal from his position in the first book. The poet represents the opposite end of the magical spectrum: instead of performing what might be defined as white magic to heal his mistress, he now adopts necromancy to coerce her affections. He is threatening her with emotional pain and terror if she does not acquiesce to his demands. If Nemesis does not want her sister's ghost to suffer, she should submit; otherwise, what follows, the defilement of her sister's grave, is her own fault. While Tibullus could physically defile the grave, the only way he would have the ability to send her sister's spirit against her is through a magic spell, unless we are to believe that Nemesis' sister, of her own volition, would be inclined to help Tibullus. The poet here attempts to turn the tables on Nemesis, both in terms of magic use and in causing pain, through his own use of magic.

Even if Tibullus is merely appealing to the gods to raise the dead sister on his behalf, the request itself is suspect, and would still constitute a form of necromancy. The relative youth of the sister only further calls attention to the possibility that this is evocative of a magic spell, as those who died young (cf. Hor. *Epod.* 5) were seen as especially useful in

magical spells.<sup>197</sup> This is due to the ancient belief that the sudden death of young people, or unexpected death in general, aroused intense jealousy towards the living on the part of the deceased and, for this reason, the graves of children were sought out since they would have a greater desire to 'avenge' themselves on the living by willingly helping a magic practitioner.<sup>198</sup> In Horace, however, Canidia makes the act much more gruesome by actually starving a young boy to death in order to use his organs for her spells rather than scavenging for bones and other ingredients necessary for her craft in a graveyard (as she does in *Sat.* 1.8.17-20). Necromancers like Canidia and Sagana have the discomfiting ability to dredge up the ghosts (and bodies) of the past. In *Epode* 5.32-40 the witch does not send out the spirit of the young boy to harass victims; she instead seeks to use his physical parts which, due to the nature of his approaching death (starvation), would work well in a love spell as an ingredient for sympathetic magic (37-40 *exsecta uti medulla et aridum iecur | amoris esset poculum | interminato cum semel fixae cibo | intabuissent pupulae*). However, the boy's curse against her, when he realizes he will die, threatens to send his spirit after Canidia like an avenging Fury (Hor. *Epod.* 5.91-6):

quin, ubi perire iussus expirauero  
 nocturnus occuram Furor  
 petamque uoltus umbra curuis unguibus,  
 quae uis deorum est Manium,  
 et inquietis adsidens praecordiis  
 pauore somnos auferam

[What's more, when doomed to death I expire, I'll come to you as a Fury by night, and as a shade I will tear your faces with crooked claws, such is the power of underworld gods, and settling myself in your unquiet hearts, I'll drive sleep away with terror.]

The sending of a spirit, though here it is voluntary, was considered a common way for a spell against a rival to operate. This creates a literary precedent for invoking spirits against perceived wrongdoings. This constitutes a reversal of the situation in Tibullus: the poet is

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<sup>197</sup> Lowe (2015), 152. The dead often became fury-like avengers after their death.

<sup>198</sup> Graf (2014), 390-391.

threatening Nemesis with a spirit because she will not submit to him, whereas, in Horace, the dying boy uses his last words to curse the witches who have murdered him. It is the victim, of an attempt to make an erotic potion no less, that threatens to disturb the witches' sleep as a ghost. Here Tibullus tries to repay Nemesis' coldness towards him with emotional trauma. Another support for the magical nature of this passage is that it echoes the curse Tibullus levels at the *lena* for her interference with Delia, wishing that the *lena* be consistently hounded by wailing spirits (Tib. 1.5.51 *hanc uolitent animae circum sua fata querentes*); he threatens to send angry spirits against the witch who he perceives harmed him. The passage in 2.6 is not a passive appeal for chthonic powers to intercede on his behalf, but a deliberate warning that Tibullus can cause Nemesis, and her procuress, harm if he so chose. Like the witch he also has access to nefarious powers, or, at least, so he claims. The final poem of Tibullus' elegiac corpus brings together the various threads of magic and ritual insinuations found throughout his elegies, to end on a rather dark note. Gone are the traditional deities of the field and farm, leaving the reader instead with death and necromantic rites.

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Magic is embedded throughout Tibullus' two books of elegies. It acts as an alternative source of power or a vehicle of competition for the poet and his rivals alike to use, often acting as a signpost towards a more negative shift in the narrative. The poet oscillates from one extreme to the other, in the beginning maintaining a pious and traditional comportment only to have it uprooted by his sacrilegious attitude in the final poems. Excessive religiosity, such as Tibullus possesses at the start of the collection, rather than characterizing him as pious, would more likely be considered the sign of a weak mind in a man, which plays into the inverted pose of the poet-lover. Throughout Tibullus' elegies his masculinity is consistently undermined by other determinants (*amor*, gods in general, a *lena*, a *puella*, rivals). Moreover, the poet occupies the reverse side of the power spectrum normally reserved for the elite male (poor, weak, superstitious, passive, ineffectual, feminine, servile). Male and female reversal in Tibullus act as a means of transforming, or conversely, destabilizing traditional power relationships and poetic paradigms. Magic further contributes to the elegiac lover's pose and adds another layer to the subversive

nature of the elegiac *demi-monde*. Although the poet-lover claims a certain level of authority, indeed usurps the power from traditional figures in his narrative, none of the appropriated authority seems to help him achieve his aims. In the end, Tibullus fully occupies the other end of the traditional spectrum by embracing magic and necromantic rites. The poet's predilection for associating himself with witchcraft and magic helps destabilise the world further. The goal of this chapter has been to suggest an alternate reading of the elements of magic in Tibullus; rather than simply being a stereotypical literary device used to show Hellenistic learning, magic was an integral part of Tibullus' poetic agenda, helping to shape and delineate his views as poet-lover.

## CHAPTER 2 - Practical Magic: Cynthia this Way Comes

In this second chapter we move on from Tibullus' increasingly ambiguous rituals to focus on how magic emerges and functions in Propertius Books 1-3 (Book 4, being *sui generis*, will be treated separately in the next chapter). The ambiguity between the representation of rituals, magic, and religion among the elegists is especially conspicuous given the concurrent climate of socio-political and religious rehabilitation in Rome in the wake of the civil wars. Although the civil war was over, through the *princeps* continual social, moral, and structural reforms, Rome remained in flux. Propertius can be seen to engage with the subject of magic in a manner that demonstrates a tension between the increasingly moral image of Rome put forward by Augustus and the *demi-monde* in which the poet situated himself and his poetry. Propertius also demonstrates a proclivity for both magic and Roman religious rituals, at times placing them in juxtaposition with each other. As was the case in Tibullus, magic continues to be something to be reckoned with in the works of Propertius. The poet-lover's first recourse in his search for a means to soften Cynthia's heart is to a witch (1.1.19-24) instead of to his trusted friends. His is a world turned upside down, where he would call on witches whose appropriation of quasi-divine powers and ability to invert the natural order of the world fly in the face of the religious morality and stability that Augustus sought to instil.<sup>199</sup> This is especially striking to the contemporary reader of this first book of poetry, published not long after the Battle of Actium, while Rome was undergoing a period of socio-political reform and rehabilitation.<sup>200</sup> This chapter sets out to examine the topic of magic and ritual in the first three books of Propertius. The first section of this chapter will explore each of the three opening programmatic poems (or sets of poems) to determine the extent to which magic plays a part in these elegies — observing what forms of magic are present in

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<sup>199</sup> For the dating of Octavian/Augustus' religious and moral reforms, see Scheid (2005), 178-82. Propertius 1 may well have been influenced by these reforms or known of them; however, it is only in Propertius' following books, when Augustus became an established figure in the political and moral landscape, that we can see more evident interaction with imperial rule.

<sup>200</sup> The composition dates of Propertius' books remain a matter of some debate. For the generally accepted dates of 30/29, 26, 23, and 16 for the respective books, see: Butler and Barber (1933), xxv-xxvi; Camps (1961), 6-7; Hubbard (1974), 42-3; Sullivan (1976), 3-8; Richardson (1977), 9; Goold (1990), 1; Katz (2004), xxxv; Cairns (2006), 159. For controversy on the dating of Propertius see: DuQuesnay (1992), 52-83; Batstone (1992), 301-2; Lyne (1998), 520-1; Williams (1968, 480-95) argues that Books 1-3 were published as a distinct unit which then would have been published sometime before the year 20 BC. More recently Heslin (2010) has made an argument that Propertius 1 was composed before the battle of Actium. His dating would place book 1 in 33 BC rather than the more traditional 30/29 BC. Although an earlier date might change the dynamics of Octavian's political power, it would still place the book in a period of instability and reform.

each, how they function, and offering suggestions as to the purpose of magic in these poems across the collection. It will be shown how these poems successively build on each other and become increasingly intertwined with magic. The second section will look more closely at the various forms of magic throughout the books, focusing on how Propertian poetry seems to participate in a contemporary discourse of magic through thematic and lexical intertexts with curse tablets, various types of magic, and magic in other Roman literature. Read in conjunction with the contemporary background of socio-political flux and uncertainty in Rome, Propertius' inclusion of potentially illegitimate rituals and subversive elements problematises efforts to create a stabilised image of Rome. I shall argue that, much like with Tibullus, Propertius' inclusion of an opposition between more normative paths and magic functions as a foil for the poet's concerns about politics, gender, poetic authority, and love. Magic, then, acts as a signpost for subversion and resistance to poetic and political norms throughout these poems.

### **1. Programmatic Magic:**

Propertius' first three books span a tumultuous period of Rome's history, a time of transition from the chaos of the civil wars to the increasingly centralised rule of the emerging *principate*. The poet's books reflect this to a certain extent, coming to engage more and more with official themes over the course of his works. The major themes of Propertian elegy are love, poetry, and politics — magic is connected to all three themes given its use in erotic spells, the multivalence of the word *carmen*, and how it stands out against the religious backdrop of the Augustan moral reforms.<sup>201</sup> This section will analyse each of the programmatic poems of Propertius books 1-3, demonstrating the prevalence of magic throughout these opening poems and how magic engages with and enhances these themes. Due to these poems' position as the first of their respective books and their importance to the arrangement of their books, how they interact with magic is illuminating. Propertius 1.1 sets the precedent for the inclusion of magic by exploring the potential of magic to assist in his affair. 2.1 is perhaps the most politically oriented of the programmatic poems, with direct reference to Maecenas, Augustus, and a rejection of epic poetry. This

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<sup>201</sup> For a select bibliography on these themes see: Stahl (1985); Janan (2000); James (2003); Miller (2004); Greene (2005); Cairns (2006); Keith (2008); Wallis (2018).

second programmatic poem equates elegiac love to forms of magical torture that are still more preferable than assuming a conventional role in society. Rather than looking exclusively at the first poem of the third book, the first three poems of Book 3 will be examined for their programmatic significance and direct relevance to magic. The third book assumes a markedly religious tone in its first poem, the second poem demonstrates the persuasive power of magic, and the third expands on the relationship of poetry to magic. We will establish how each poem successively builds on the magic connection and themes of the previous poem, culminating with an outright equation of poetry to magic in 3.3. Unlike Tibullus, whose programmatic poems insinuate the darker elements of his elegiac poems while maintaining a veneer that appears largely traditional in nature, Propertius associates his elegies with magic from the beginning and is not afraid to touch more openly on the darker elements of Augustan Rome.

### *1.1*

We will begin the investigation of magic in Propertius by looking at poem 1.1, which establishes a pattern for the remainder of the first book as well as sets a precedent for the subsequent books. This deliberate inclusion bears witness to the importance of magic to elegy and merits closer scrutiny. By introducing magic into his very first poem, Propertius sets a tone for the rest of his corpus — a tone which he adheres to by consistently inserting magic into all his programmatic poems. This poem begins by stating how Cynthia captured the poet with her eyes (1-2); describes love in military terms (3-6); presents the mythical exemplum of Milanion to characterise devotion and a willingness to suffer for this newfound love (7-18); implores some witches to aid the poet's plight (19-24); turns to the poet's friends for a cure after dismissing magical help (25-8); and finally asserts that Venus is against him and cautions against recklessness in love (29-38). There are two areas of this poem that seem to carry associations with magic. The first comes in the opening line of the poem, insinuating the possibility that Propertius' current state of suffering is due in some way to the use of the evil eye. The second instance comes in the form of an appeal to witches, whom the poet implores to intercede in his love affair. These are two distinct forms

of magic — one ‘pure’<sup>202</sup> in form, the other following a more ritualistic formula akin to prayer. First, we will examine how reading the evil eye in the opening line changes the dynamics of the poem by adding nuance to Cynthia’s power over the poet. Then we will look at how prayer language is integrated into the appeal to the witches and what this means for the poem. Finally, we will consider how Propertius interacts with other poets through the presence of magical intertexts.

### Evil Eye and Love Spells

‘There be none of the affections which have been noted to fascinate or bewitch, but love and envy. They both have vehement wishes; they frame themselves readily into imaginations and suggestions, and they come easily into the eye.’ Francis Bacon, *On Envy*

This section focuses on the implication that the evil eye is used in Propertius 1.1 and how the ambiguity of its presence helps set the stage for an elegiac world off kilter. From the very opening line of Propertius’ oeuvre (1.1.1 *Cynthia prima suis miserum me cepit ocellis*)<sup>203</sup> the reader is presented with overlapping layers of subversion. This frequently discussed opening line bears more significance to magic than one might suspect at first glance. On the one hand, it serves to demonstrate from the outset the disruption caused by the act of falling in love, which prompted the poet to break from norms of the *mos maiorum* and place himself under the thumb of a woman. On the other hand, it also perhaps reveals the first hint of magic in the poem. Some scholars have persuasively argued that this first line, so famous for the introduction of Cynthia, is indicative of a love spell or related to the evil eye. The two most germane to this chapter are Richardson and Sharrock: one notes that the first line insinuates the evil eye, the other that the line indicates a love spell. Richardson points out that *cepit*, used in conjunction with *ocellis* is highly suggestive of bewitching and the evil eye.<sup>204</sup> Although the verb *cepit* does not necessarily have strong associations with the evil

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<sup>202</sup> ‘Pure’ in the sense that it requires no ritual, words, or materials to cast and relies on the intrinsic power of the caster themselves. For definition of pure magic, Nuno (2012), 296, who draws on Evans-Pritchard (1937).

<sup>203</sup> For the text of Propertius, I draw primarily on Fedeli (1980), (1985), (2005).

<sup>204</sup> Richardson (1977), 146. For other potential instances of the evil eye see Prop. 1.3.19, 1.5.11-2, 1.9.27-9, 1.15.33-42, 1.16.29-32, 3.10.15-6, 4.8.55; non-Propertian examples: Call. *Aet.*f1; Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 4.1638-93; Strab. 14.2.7; Cat. 5.12, 7.12; Verg. *Ecl.* 3.103 (here the effects of the evil eye match the symptoms of one in love); Hor. *Epod.* 1.14.37-8, 5.9; Ov. *Am.* 1.8.15-6, *Met.* 7.365-6.

eye in general, one of its secondary meanings (to bewitch or charm a lover) conveys a similar sense as the more common word used to describe the evil eye in Latin (*fascinare*; *fascinum*); this more usual term only has the meaning ‘to cast a spell’ or ‘bewitch.’<sup>205</sup> Therefore *cepit* carries a broader lexical association that can encompass both the more recognised military connotations as well as the more subtle magical ones. The multivalence of this first line, combining *militia* with magic, strengthens the concept of the poet’s overpowering domination by a force outside his control, namely his mistress.

One of the most notable aspects of the evil eye is that it was generally considered involuntary, but it could be intentional as well if the caster’s negative emotions or evil glances were powerful enough.<sup>206</sup> Despite its status as a type of malicious curse, the evil eye was not something belonging to all magic users.<sup>207</sup> Moreover, the evil eye could be enacted without the use of *voces magicae*, *carmina*, prayers, or any other sort of ritual action.<sup>208</sup> Due to the often involuntary nature of the evil eye it is not a ritualised form of magic and cannot be learned in the same manner as other spells and curses. The often indiscriminate nature of the curse adds to a sense of that it is inescapable. Someone might harm another human being through jealousy even when they had no intent to harm that person. The harm could include general misfortune, suffering, illness, loss, and death. There is an evident association of the evil eye with jealousy, a theme which is a major component of elegy.<sup>209</sup> Moreover, the symptoms of those afflicted with the evil eye are often compared to those who suffer from the pains of love. In his discussion of the evil eye, Plutarch claims that negative

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<sup>205</sup> See *OLD capio*, -ere, sense 18: this definition specifically states ‘to fascinate, enthrall with love, enamour.’ Pliny. *NH*. 7.2.8 uses *fascinum* to denote the act of performing the evil eye. Aulus Gellius reports that *fascinum* comes from the Greek *βασκαίνειν* (*AN*. 16.12.4). See *OLD fascino*, -are.

<sup>206</sup> Elliott (2015), 25. The use of the evil eye was generally considered to be involuntary or anonymous. Cf. Plut. *Quaest. Conv.* 682b; Cat. 5.12: *aut nequis malus invidere possit*; Verg. *Ecl.* 3.103: *nescio quis teneros oculus mihi fascinat agno*.

<sup>207</sup> Elliott (2015), 45-6. Although there was a notion of inheritance with the evil eye, see Nuno (2012), 296. Cf. Ov. *Am.* 1.8, Dipsas has the *pupula duplex* that is considered a physical sign of the possession of the evil eye.

<sup>208</sup> The only known instance of the ‘evil eye’ being intentionally cast is found in Apollon. 4.1638-93, where Medea uses her gaze to bewitch the giant Talos. Since Medea also uses spells (*ἀουδιῆσι*) as well as ritual action (*γουνάζομένη*), this is not a pure case of the evil eye. For more on the involuntary nature of the evil eye see Dickie (1991), Nuno (2012), and Elliott (2015).

<sup>209</sup> The evil eye is closely related to the concept of jealousy (cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 3.20.1-9; Cat. 5.12 and 7.11-12; Plin. *NH*. 19.19; 28.8). For the importance of eyes in the representation of jealousy and the evil eye in Graeco-Roman art, see Dunbabin and Dickie (1983). In amulets and apotropaic inscriptions, the evil eye is frequently denoted by the term *invidia*. See *OLD invidio*, -ere for the verb’s link to the evil eye. For the importance of jealousy in elegy, see Caston (2012).

emotions such as jealousy cause the skin to change colour (presumably become paler) and causes illness in the body.<sup>210</sup>

One is reminded of Propertius' own description of lovers, including himself, as pale or thin and sickly (e.g., 1.5.21-2; 1.9.17; 1.13.7; 2.5.30; 2.22.22; 3.8.28; 4.5.71). A more immediate example occurs in this poem when Propertius asks the witches to make Cynthia paler than him (22 *facite illa meo palleat ore magis*). The poet not only wants Cynthia to suffer in the same manner he does, but he also wants her suffering to be more intense. Furthermore, Plutarch (*Quaest. Conv.* 681b-c) explicitly compares the effects of the evil eye to those experienced by lovers. He claims that love is a violent emotion that begins with sight (καὶ τῶν ἐρωτικῶν, ἃ δὴ μέγιστα καὶ σφοδρότατα παθήματα τῆς ψυχῆς ἐστίν, ἀρχὴν ἢ ὄψις ἐνδίδωσιν ὥστε ῥεῖν καὶ λείβεσθαι τὸν ἐρωτικόν); that it is looking at each other that causes lovers pain (εἴτ' ἄρα φῶς εἶτε ῥεῦμα, τοὺς ἐρῶντας ἐκτῆκε καὶ ἀπόλλυσι μεθ' ἡδονῆς ἀλγηδόνι μεμιγμένης, ἣν αὐτοὶ γλυκύπικρον ὀνομάζουσιν); and that this act of gazing causes the greatest suffering (οὔτε γὰρ ἀπτομένοις οὔτ' ἀκούουσιν οὔτω τιτρώσκεσθαι συμβαίνει καὶ πάσχειν, ὡς προσβλεπομένοις καὶ προσβλέπουσι). Love, then, acts on the victim in much the same way the evil eye does — operating through sight and causing suffering in excess. Another example of the elision of victims of love with those of the evil eye can be seen in Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*, a much later work, which sees the Egyptian Calasiris mask the symptoms of love in Chariclea by claiming they are a result of the evil eye (*Aeth.* 3.7-9). Here again there is a continued association of the effects of love with those of the evil eye. Love and jealousy are both strong passions that have the potential to cause physical harm to their victims. The comparison between the evil eye and victims of love further elides the differences between them and serves to obfuscate knowing whether Propertius is a victim of love, magic, or both. This ambiguity over his status is both trivial, in the sense that he is still under the thrall of his mistress, and potent, in that it adds to the sense of uncertainty and of the irrational that runs throughout the book. The magic subtext also acts as a preview of his poetry, insinuating that Propertius will suffer in love.

Sharrock takes the argument that the first line is indicative of magic a step further by suggesting that Cynthia uses an actual binding spell on Propertius to ensnare the poet and

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<sup>210</sup> Plut. *Quaest. Conv.* 681e: λῦπαι δὲ καὶ φιλαργυρία καὶ ζηλοτυπία τὰ χρώματα τρέπουσι καὶ καταξάινουσι τὰς ἕξεις: ὧν οὐδενὸς ὁ φθόνος ἦττον ἐνδύεσθαι τῇ ψυχῇ πεφυκῶς ἀναπίμπλησι καὶ τὸ σῶμα πονηρίας.

drive him insane, thus explaining his subsequent actions and relentless passion for his mistress.<sup>211</sup> This would constitute a more aggressive and dynamic act on the mistress' part. If we to believe that Cynthia used a masculine *agoge* spell on the poet rather than the more normatively feminine *philia* magic (usually a love potion or charm), then her actions would be playing further into the theme of inversion, especially that of male and female roles, that is present in elegy.<sup>212</sup> This would then help set the stage for the insertion of more recognisable occurrences of magic and reveal the practice of magic as disruptive, playing a part in the poet's abdication from the normative path of Roman male elite life. Although Cynthia occupies the first word of the poem, she is not mentioned again in 1.1 and we are given no information about her other than the fact she has enchanted Propertius. She is characterised by the pain and decline in status that results from the poet's love of her — much like how victims of malicious curses can suffer, among other things, loss of wealth, prestige, and love.

Furthermore, the use of military language in lines 1-6 gives the impression that Propertius is a victim who is forcibly compelled to love Cynthia. By describing the act of falling in love in such terms, he inextricably binds his love to the normative masculine sphere. In doing so it is not just *Amor* who functions as *triumphator* over the poet but, by capturing Propertius, Cynthia also embodies this role. For Greene this conceptual blending of the military into the personal sphere demonstrates how deeply public and private discourse is interwoven in elegy.<sup>213</sup> Even without any reference to magic, this first line establishes the poet in an inverted state, at the mercy of an outside agent and a female one at that.<sup>214</sup> The reading of magic into the first line of this poem enhances the concept of inversion already present — the reader's first impression of Propertius' elegiac world begins with the feminine and the subversive. The well acknowledged military subtext and the less well-known magic subtext work together to demonstrate the abject condition of the elegiac

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<sup>211</sup> Sharrock (1994), 57.

<sup>212</sup> On gender inversion in magic, see Faraone (1999), 144-60. This is in contrast to the normative paradigm where a female victim is usually acted upon by a witchlike figure at the behest of a male employer, either the poet-lover or a rival, or by a male practitioner of magic. Winkler (1991) and Graf (1997) demonstrate a discrepancy between representations of the magic user's gender in literature versus the actual gender of magic users in practice. Although curse tablets with female agents have been found, their number pales in comparison to those extant with male agents.

<sup>213</sup> Greene (1998), 40-1 following Wyke (1989) sees Cynthia fundamentally as a representation of poetic material rather than a beloved and as a vehicle to express Propertius' poetic concerns.

<sup>214</sup> Greene (1998), 40.

lover. The ambiguity of whether the evil eye, or some form of cursing, was used against the poet helps to mitigate his personal responsibility for his actions and establishes him as a victim of irrational and inescapable forces.

### Prayer Language

The second instance of magic comes in the form of a direct plea to witches to use erotic magic to aid the poet in his plight. This is the most prominent passage in terms of magic in 1.1, providing a pattern for the inclusion of magic, and the dangers inherent in it, throughout the first book. There is a shift from the vague implication of a possibly uncontrollable form of magic to an open association of the poem with magic in a formulised prayer. In this passage there is an appeal to witches (19-22), an account of their abilities (19-20; 23-4), a request to make Cynthia love him (21-22), and a promise to not doubt their abilities again should they grant his request (23-4). Propertius' supplication to the witches resembles prayer language (Prop. 1.1.19-24):

at uos,<sup>215</sup> deductae quibus est fallacia lunae  
et labor in magicis sacra piare focus,  
en agedum dominae mentem conuertite nostrae<sup>216</sup>  
et facite illa meo palleat ore magis!  
tunc ego crediderim uobis et sidera et amnis  
posse Cytinaeis ducere carminibus.<sup>217</sup>

[But you who deceive men by drawing the moon from heaven, and toil to solemnise dread rites on magic altars, go change my mistress' heart and make her cheeks grow paler than

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<sup>215</sup> The appeal to witches here suggests a certain intimacy with their services, a knowledge of their methods, that could be seen as an anticipation of the poet's familiarity with and accusations against Acanthis in book 4.

<sup>216</sup> Caston (2012), 35-6 notes that Propertius seems to be imitating Lucretius' *alio mentem conuertere* (1064), a line from a passage where the philosopher is advising on cures for love. In the nominal vein of inversion, Propertius uses it to convey the opposite meaning — increasing his love rather than extinguishing it. A similar phrase, *animum auertere* is a stock phrase in Latin curse tablets, see Faraone and Kropp (2010), 391.

<sup>217</sup> Cf. Verg. *Ecl.* 6.70-1: a passage that refers to the supernatural power of song over nature. Orpheus' *carmina* took this power a step further and were often likened to a form of persuasive magic that not only had the power to move the earth, but also soften the hearts of gods (of the underworld). If these witches can essentially move heaven and earth as well, it stands to reason that they should be able to alter Cynthia's heart, or that the poet might with his own *carmina*.

mine own. Then will I believe that you are able to lead the stars and rivers with Colchian charms.]

Propertius' appeal to witches also bears similarity to ancient prayer formulae.<sup>218</sup> The usual order of the tripartite prayer formula is first the invocation (*inuocatio*) of deities and powers by their names to ensure the right ones come to the supplicant's aid, followed by the argument (*argumentum*) where the reasons why a request should be granted are stated, then the actual wish (*preces*) is spoken. Graf argues that, based on the evidence, this formula is used for both magical as well as civic rituals with little to differentiate the two categories.<sup>219</sup> However, a difference can be detected in the materials used for sacrifice and the intent of the ritual. Not all magic spells are malicious in nature, but many of them demonstrate antisocial behaviours that would have been unacceptable in ancient society. As Propertius is soliciting the witches to make Cynthia paler than him, he is ostensibly seeking to cause her harm by making her suffer the effects of love more severely than himself. This hope, then, likely falls on the side of aggressive magic rather than a more mild form of magic or prayer. Propertius follows the tripartite address of a prayer — first he evokes the witches by their domain, then petitions them to change Cynthia's heart, and finally proposes what he offers in return for such services. An attentive reader might notice that Propertius seems to invert this general order as the *preces* comes before the *argumentum*. While this is not the most common order, in cases of extreme need or urgency, it is not unusual for the *argumentum* and the *preces* to be reversed.<sup>220</sup> The switch emphasises Propertius' urgency and need. This adds another subtle layer to the desperateness of the poet's plight.

This reversal of the normative prayer formula is not the only inversion of order we find in the poem. The invocation of the witches begins with the general *uos* (19), which is echoed by *et uos* (25) directed towards his friends. After Propertius entreats the witches to change his mistress' heart (19-24), he follows the prayer with a similarly constructed plea to his friends to change his own heart (25-8). The appeal to his friends seems to mirror the invocation of the witches — calling on the friends who wish to save him, requesting that

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<sup>218</sup> Furley (2007), 117-131. For curse tablets, especially the 'prayer for justice' type, as a potential basis for the invocation of witches, see Ogden (2002), 219-22; Gager (1992), 175-199.

<sup>219</sup> Graf (1991), 188-97. The *uocae magicae* that many associate with magic spells are not essential to the format of a spell and are often excluded.

<sup>220</sup> Graf (1991), 189. See *PGM* VIII.1-60 for an example of this reversal.

they seek all possible cures, which the poet then promises to endure if he is permitted to speak freely. His plea to his friends may take up fewer lines, but it still meets the requirements of a prayer — including the *inuocatio*, *argumentum*, and *preces*. However, this prayer aims to free him from his love and bears no malicious intent to others. This fact, coupled with the civic quality of appealing to the public (his friends), even if for a personal matter, casts this as a more traditional prayer. The recourse to these two different methods of dealing with his affliction act as the centrepiece of the poem. First, Propertius appeals to the power of witches to make his mistress reciprocate his love. Only after expressing doubt that such a feat could be accomplished (so great would be the task!) does he turn to his friends. He does not ask them to help him persuade Cynthia; rather he seeks their aid to cure himself of his love (26 *quaerite non sani pectoris auxilia*). Despite his request Propertius indicates in the first line of this address to his friends that all their efforts will be in vain when he characterises them as those who would call him back too late (25 *qui sero lapsum reuocatis*). Perhaps it is due to this fatalism that Propertius has written the prayer to his friends in the correct order; he does not believe that they can cure him so his appeal lacks urgency. That Propertius is still willing to undergo painful cures despite his belief in their inefficacy illustrates the desperate nature of his condition.

In this sense, one could state that Propertius' introductory poem delineates two different strategies with which the poet attempts to negotiate the problem of his disproportionate love for Cynthia, methods which seem to fail in the face of his elegiac love. Moreover, although he appeals equally to each respective party, it is telling that he does not call on his companions first in his poetic project. Introducing the witches first and the poet's friends only second, forces the reader to move from the outside to the inside, from what is strange to what is familiar, from the amatory to the public realm. This only further contributes to the notion of a world turned inside out, or in this case, outside in. This shift illustrates how Propertius plans to make his personal woes a matter of public record. He is firmly situating himself in the wider social landscape by calling upon friends who represent the more normative path for a Roman male. The poet-lover's mind is too strained by the burden of his obsession to seek aid in the appropriate order. The juxtaposition of a request to perform magic with a prayer for his own health serves to enhance the sense of inversion.

There is a final *uos* (31) in the poem, again associated with prayer, directed towards his poetic audience. This last *uos* is an admonition directed at lovers, more specifically those

whose prayers in love received a favourable response, to not take their success for granted. Propertius juxtaposes those who enjoy felicity in love with his own hardships. Here, Venus, while still the poet's patroness, is named as the source of his suffering — nights are bitter because love is absent (33-4 *in me nostra Venus noctes exercet amaras | et nullo uacuus tempore defit Amor*). Propertius' disclosure of his failures in love stands in stark contrast to the anonymous group of lovers lucky in love. The poet's misfortunes might harken back to the curse at the beginning as some of the consequences of the evil eye were thought to be loss of love and inability to perform sexually. Where one would expect a prayer to a more traditional deity, such as Venus or Amor, to rectify the matter, here there are prayers to witches and friends. Instead, both divinities traditionally associated with love are portrayed as antagonists to the poet-lover. Amor even tramples the poet underfoot in imagery that evokes a warrior conquering a victim (4 *et caput impositis pressit Amor pedibus*). Besides the generic statement indicating that Propertius is a proponent of love elegy, this line shows him at odds with the god of love. Such a comment in itself would not be out of the ordinary as such imagery is commonplace for lovers, but combined with the magical episode as the centrepiece of the poem, the lack of evident religious engagement with the deities of love, and the mention of Venus' hostility at the end, it becomes more meaningful.<sup>221</sup> The second mention of Amor (34) reminds the reader of the poet's subjugation to the god at the beginning of the poem and his position outside elite male conventions as an elegiac lover. Venus should be a lover's first port of call, but instead she is an adversary, and the poet-lover is forced to look elsewhere for aid in love.

In contrast, Venus' depiction in Tibullus 1.2 depicts a goddess who favours those who are bold in matters of love (16 *fortes adiuvat*) and acts as a helper (19-22) as well as a protector to the poet-lover (27-9).<sup>222</sup> The goddess' role as a helper of lovers bolsters Tibullus' persuasive argument for why Delia should take a chance on him — an argument that includes claims to have sole access to powerful magic. Instead, in Propertius, Venus is characterised by her obstruction or torment of the poet rather than support. This opposition forces the poet to search outside of conventional avenues to find relief. In light of this, it only makes it more conspicuous that Propertius turns to spells as an alternative to

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<sup>221</sup> For examples of hostile love see: Plaut. *Bacch.* 21, *Cist.* 72, 215; Verg. *Ecl.* 8.45-9, *Ecl.* 10.29, 44, *G.* 3.259, *Aen.* 4.412, 6.24, 442, 7.461; Prop. 2.30.7-8; Ov. *Am.* 1.2.6-10.

<sup>222</sup> Tib. 1.2.19-22. Refer to discussion of 1.2 in Chapter 1.

prayer. Instead of opening with an appeal to the appropriate gods, the reader is first confronted with the more illicit option. There is no mention of any attempts to supplicate Venus or Amor beforehand, though his reference to lovers who have had their prayers answered (31) might indicate he has been frustrated in his own prayers. Yet it is only after exhausting this alternative avenue that the poet appeals to a more normative route. This dissonance between expected religious and actual magic recourse creates a semantic doubling.<sup>223</sup> The various ways in which one divinity could be portrayed — in this case Venus — demonstrates the manifold power that can come ‘from the interaction between the various ways of figuring her divinity.’<sup>224</sup> Here Propertius might be playing with her status as goddess with dominion over his intensely personal realm and her increased public significance under Augustus.<sup>225</sup> The repetition of *uos* at evenly spaced intervals, addressed to different groups in increasing order of suitability, enhances the impression of a world turned upside down. Propertius begins with an appeal to what should have been his last resort, magic, before moving on to his peers, and finally addressing the successful lovers whom the gods have favoured. His mention of well received prayers suggests that he might also have sought success through prayer before appealing to magic. The very ambiguity of Propertius’ actions lends itself to the sense of disturbance in a poem where he is forced to seek help in an inverted hierarchy.

### Magical Intertexts

Propertius’ plea to witches is not only a prominent instance of magic in this poem, but also has a broader textual significance. As part of the invocation (19-20), the prayer presents the witches’ domains as a truncated catalogue of the witches’ powers. This is similar to the catalogue in Tibullus (1.2.43-64) discussed in Chapter 1, where the poet attributes a long list of magical abilities to his personal witch.<sup>226</sup> Aside from the length, there are descriptive

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<sup>223</sup> Hunter (2006), 68 discusses how metonymy acts as a powerful vehicle for exploring religious and poetic ideas. Rüpke (2016), 71 contends that the juxtaposition of *magicis* and *sacra* semantically implies the existence of opposing systems of magic and sacred rituals.

<sup>224</sup> Feeney (1998), 101-4. For example, the presentation of Venus in Horace’s *Odes* goes through a transformation, from a privately worshipped goddess to a recipient of state honours, from the inside to the outside.

<sup>225</sup> Beard, North, and Price (1998), 123: Venus Genetrix doubled as the divine progenitress of the Julian line.

<sup>226</sup> Cairns (1974), 101 believes that these helpful witches are white witches. He does not consider how performing a sacrifice to the *magicos deos* (Tib. 1.2.61-2) in the middle of the night to constrain another would

differences between the two. Propertius addresses multiple witches in a formal prayer, whereas Tibullus uses his purported relationship with an extremely powerful witch as a persuasive tool to convince Delia to acquiesce to his desires. Heyworth believes that Propertius is attempting something even more powerful than Tibullus in asking the witches to perform a *psychagogia*, the act of directing a soul by means of speech (what the poet ostensibly tries to do with his poems), so as to gain mastery over Cynthia.<sup>227</sup> Heyworth's argument relies on exchanging *amnis* (Ω) with *manes* (Housman) in line 23 (above) to emphasise the witches' mastery of souls and the dead. However, if one leaves the original *amnis* in place, there is a stronger intertextual link with Tibullus' catalogue of powers mentioned above, where the hyperbolic powers of a witch are used as part of Tibullus' rhetorical strategy to draw Delia out. The specific repetition of rivers and stars over which his witch has dominion (1.2.45-6 *hanc ego de caelo ducentem sidera uidi | fluminis haec rapidi carmine uertit iter*) mirrors this Propertian passage.<sup>228</sup> Furthermore, the Tibullan passage seems to semantically co-opt the witch's powers by claiming that they will only work for him and by introducing first person pronouns and verbs that insert him into the magical scenes.

Considering the verbal echoes between the two passages it would not be farfetched to construe that Propertius is insinuating a certain intimacy with the witches and their powers, especially in light of his recourse to them before his friends. This would align nicely with Heyworth's argument that Propertius' inclusion of magic in this poem signifies a programmatic revelation that the poet has found an alternative to magic through his own poetry.<sup>229</sup> Heyworth's suggestion that Propertius has found the means necessary to seduce

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not be an antisocial activity. He also claims that *sacra piare* (Prop. 1.1.20) suggests purification rather than nefarious practices, although the spell is clearly aimed at manipulating Cynthia's emotions.

<sup>227</sup> Heyworth (2007a), 9-11 argues that *umbras* or potentially even Housman's emendation of *et manes et sidera vobis* would make more sense for line 23. Exchanging the two would strengthen the suggestion that the poet is attempting to perform a *psychagogia*. In combination with *magicis ... focis* on line 20, he perceives there to be an insinuation of necromantic rites. This suggestion would function thematically, reinforcing the witches' claim to power by granting them dominion over life and death, but as the changing of a river's course was a common trope among the catalogue of witches' powers, it does not seem overly necessary to emend the text here (cf. Apollon. 3.528-33; Ov. *Met.* 7.197, *Her.* 6.87).

<sup>228</sup> For chronology of the elegiac poets, see Chapter 1. It is not overly important to ascertain which poem was first to appreciate the magical engagement, but if Tibullus came second, it lends credence to *amnis* as the original word in 1.1.

<sup>229</sup> Heyworth (2007a), 10-11 thinks that it is especially suggestive that the poet ends the section on magic with the word *carminibus* (line 24), which he sees as Propertius linking his own poetry to the magic of the witches. Caston (2012), 42-5 also makes the suggestion that poetry is a balm for love, though perhaps not the poet's own love.

Cynthia with his own poetry may be reinforced by comparison with the aforementioned Tibullan passage. This proposal seems sensible, especially in light of later poems such as 3.3, where the power of poetry is directly equated to that of magic, but it is not entirely seamless. If Propertius has found a solution in the power of his own poetry, then it would be strange that he immediately afterwards beseeches his friends to cure him (lines 25-8), before dismissing their ability to help him as well. Moreover, Propertius implies that he is dubious of the witches' claims of mastery over the elements (23-4 *tunc ego crediderim uobis ... posse ... ducere*) if they cannot, at the very least, change Cynthia's heart.<sup>230</sup> The use of the subjunctive verb *crediderim* further undermines belief in the ability of the witches. This use of *credo* recalls Vergil's employment of the same verb (*Ecl.* 8.108 *credimus? an, qui amant, ipsi sibi somnia fingunt?*) where a magic user doubts the efficacy of love spells and questions the lover's reality. Perhaps Propertius truly does see his poetry as a viable alternative to magic; however, magic remains embedded in his elegiac world.

Another indication of what the presence of magic might communicate is given in line 24 with the word *Cytinaeis*.<sup>231</sup> Colchis was famous for being the birthplace of Medea, an archetypal witch.<sup>232</sup> Given her infamy and prominent relationship to magic one would presume that even a subtle reference to her birthplace would conjure up Medea in the reader's mind.<sup>233</sup> Reference to Medea situates elegy in a rich tableau of mythology and magic. This link to Medea might indicate the inability of the witches to effect any changes on the poet-lover or his mistress and the failure of magic in general in the amatory realm.<sup>234</sup> However, for this assertion to hold entirely, one would need to forget that in some accounts Medea herself was subject to an *agoge*-type love spell (cf. Pind. *Pyth.* 4.213-219). This spell

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<sup>230</sup> Camps (1961, 44), suggests that *fallacia* (19) embedded in the first line of this magical episode implies a sense of doubt and scepticism concerning the witches' abilities.

<sup>231</sup> Trinacty (2010), 454 argues that *Cytaeines* should be read in line 24 instead of *Cytinaeis*, thus linking the *uos* (line 19) with a specific witch, Medea. He claims that *Cytaeines* as the (Greek) genitive would more fully imply that the *carminibus* belong to Medea specifically rather than to witches in general. However, this would ignore the plurality implied by *uos* in line 19.

<sup>232</sup> For Cyta as Medea's birthplace see Apollon. 2.399-403, 2.1267, 3.228, 4.511.

<sup>233</sup> Among the elegists, Medea appears most frequently in the poems of Propertius (Prop. 1.1, 1.12, 1.15 2.1, 2.4, 2.16, 2.21, 2.24b, 2.34, 3.11, 3-19, and 4.5). Tibullus references Medea at 1.2 and 2.4 (arguably two of the most magical poems of his corpus). Ovid mentions her in *Am.* 2.14, *Her.* 6 and 12.

<sup>234</sup> Prince (2002), 73-4 and (2003) has argued persuasively for the importance of Medea to the thematic structure of elegy, both in terms of the disastrous consequences (for herself and others) of her love for Jason and her position as an archetypal witch in Greco-Roman culture. She acts as a prototype of the elegiac lover, no matter how powerful a witch Medea was she still had to endure a tragic love. Sharrock (1994) and Chadha (2014) more broadly link magic with failure in elegy.

was performed by Jason who was taught by Aphrodite. A spell might account for Medea's all-encompassing love for Jason — a love that caused her to forsake her natal family and homeland. In this version of the myth, despite all her strength she was powerless in the face of love magic, thus making erotic magic a very potent instrument.

Allusion to Medea here might insinuate the potential failure of both magic and the poet in the amatory sphere but it also indicates a fissure between the amatory and the broader social realms. Medea, if anything, represents the destructive capacity of magic. While she embodied both the helper and the destroyer, she is most often remembered for her more transgressive acts.<sup>235</sup> Her crimes, as they might be called, are especially galling in Augustan Rome as they involved familial homicide. Antony's defeat at Actium saw the end of the civil strife in Rome, but the memories of the wars would still have been fresh in the minds of the readers of Propertius' first book. Under the thrall of love, Medea did not simply abandon her family, she either aided in the death of or directly killed her own brother.<sup>236</sup> Such an act of fratricide could easily draw a parallel in the recently concluded civil wars. Moreover, this is not Medea's only transgression against family members; she infamously murdered her own children as part of a revenge plot against Jason and tricked Pelias' daughters into killing their own father.<sup>237</sup> She was more than simply a magical threat, she was a threat to the proper order of relationships, maligning both domestic and political spheres through her actions. Her presence in Propertius' text represents more than just as a representation of the dangers, or potential inefficacy, of magic, it also demonstrates a danger to the social order. In a similar fashion the poet-lover is distanced from the political realm by his antisocial behaviour. Much like Medea, he uses love as a justification for this behaviour. If an implicit reference to Medea is meant in line 24, what the poet seems to be doing is hinting at the detrimental consequences of magic generally as well as insinuating the potential dangers that it presents to social order. He is aligned with the archetypal witch, not as a powerful magic user, but as an irrational lover at the mercy of another's

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<sup>235</sup> E.g., the killing of her children; the poisoning of Creusa; the murder of her brother; tricking Pelias' daughters into committing patricide. Out of these trespasses it is only in the poisoning of Creusa that she employs her own magic.

<sup>236</sup> Eur. *Med.* 16-7, 1334 (she kills him at home); Apollon. 4.338-81 (where Jason kills him after Medea lures him to an ambush); Ov. *Tris.* 3.9 and Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.9.24 (where she dismembers her brother and throws him in the sea to stall her father's pursuit of the Argo).

<sup>237</sup> For her children: Eur. *Med.* 1271-8; Verg. *Ecl.* 8.47; Prop. 3.19.17-8; Ov. *Met.* 7.391; Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.9.28; Paus. 2.3.6-11. For Pelias: Eur. *Med.* 9-10; Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.9.27; Dio. *Sic.* 4.50.5-4.53.2; Paus. 8.11.1-3.

power and as someone transgressing social mores. Reference to Medea and magic embedded in the heart of this amatory poem serves to demonstrate that the poet is using magic as one strategy to negotiate the fault lines in a world turned upside down.

Moreover, the inversion of normative gender roles in love elegy lends to this sense of a world out of sorts. Ross' discussion of 19-24 suggests that the figures appealed to are magicians rather than witches, probably due to what he sees as practices suggestive of an *agoge* spell which would usually be enacted by a male practitioner.<sup>238</sup> The lack of an explicit delineation of gender in the passage (19 *uos*; 23 *uobis*) may lend itself to the ambiguity, but to assign male status to these magic users would contradict the conventional gender of amatory magic practitioners in elegy (cf. Tib. 1.2; Prop. 4.5; Ov. *Am.* 1.8). The gender of these magic users might seem like a trivial matter, but gender and the various roles attributed to it play an integral role in elegy.<sup>239</sup> Besides the usurpation of 'masculine' powers by witches in Roman literature, the fact that the poet-lover appeals to a fringe group of women first and only secondarily to men is also integral to the theme of inversion present in the genre. Even women of the *demi-monde* occupy a higher rung than Propertius' male peers in his esteem. Moreover, Gardner sees the witches in this passage here as acting in a twofold manner: first as representations of the *puella's* looming future as an old woman and, secondly, as symbolic of the nature of Cynthia's power over him, portrayed as almost supernatural in its disruptiveness.<sup>240</sup> For Gardner these witches represent more than a recourse to the magical, they embody the concept of 'women's time', a cyclical mode of existence that defies normal linear time, which is exemplified by the elegiac *puella*.<sup>241</sup> Accordingly, the fact that these witches have power over the cyclical moon<sup>242</sup> (19 *deductae quibus est fallacia lunae*) and potentially Cynthia, further sets them and other magic users up as rivals to the poet (a theme more fully fleshed out by the belated appearance of Acanthis in Book 4). Here it is not the male presence that threatens to rupture Propertius'

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<sup>238</sup> Ross (1975), 65-6.

<sup>239</sup> Cf. In Tibullus' final poem, we saw how this inversion came full circle to have the poet-lover usurping the practices attributed to witches beforehand in order to win over Nemesis.

<sup>240</sup> Gardner (2013), 76. This also is in line with the view of Gutzwiller (1985), Myers (1996), and James (2003) that the elegiac *puella* is the precursor to the *lena* who seems to haunt the poet-lover.

<sup>241</sup> Gardner (2013), 60. This women's time acts in direct opposition to the more normative linear time and is used by the poet-lover as a means to delay the inevitable duties of aristocratic male life.

<sup>242</sup> See Habinek (1982) for his argument that the combination of the number of couplets in Propertius' first book matching the number of days in the lunar year (354), the name of his mistress, and the professed length of his passion mark his allegiance to Hellenistic writers such as Callimachus.

elegiac world so much as the female, whether through Cynthia herself or witches, in a struggle for dominance between the sexes that perhaps defines elegiac discourse.

Propertius' appeal to the witches represents one avenue, and the failure thereof, of handling the pains of the Cynthia affair.<sup>243</sup> He has made recourse to magic and it was of no avail to him. Not only does Propertius include magic, but he includes magic of the lowest kind, the amatory magic practiced by figures on the margins of society. His recourse to these witches, female authorities on love, subverts the natural order which would situate him both above such concerns and in a socially superior position; instead, it is these witches that dominate the centre of elegy 1.1. These amatory ritual experts are often considered rivals for persuading the girls (e.g., Acanthis and Dipsas), yet the elegiac poets often seem to appeal to them. Here Propertius briefly considers enlisting magical aid before rejecting the notion and immediately turning to his friends for help instead, though he insinuates that he is already beyond help by either supernatural or mortal means. This first episode also constitutes the most ostentatious mention of magic in his first book. More often magic is alluded to rather than referenced outright.<sup>244</sup> That being said, magic is frequently mentioned in direct reference to Cynthia, whether it is being used on her or by her, as if to justify why she does not return the poet's affections despite the best efforts of his own *carmina*. The failure of his, and others', attempts to divert him from Cynthia is fully voiced when he later states that neither his friends nor the power of a witch could save him from his love (3.24.9-10 *quod mihi non patrii poterant auertere amici | eluere aut uasto Thessala saga mari*). Cynthia as subject matter dominates and fuels the poet's *carmina*. This enchantment with his poetic creation is made clear in the first line of this poem and continues throughout the first book. The magical elements of the poem serve to enhance already existing themes of love, poetry, and power while cultivating a sense of instability inherent in this elegiac world.

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<sup>243</sup> Cf. Theoc. *Id.* 2 which depicts a seemingly earnest young woman, Simaetha, who wishes to induce her lover to return to her after exhausting other methods and learning magic from similar witchlike old women. Also, a more immediate model, Verg. *Ecl.* 8, where again an *agoge* type spell is being used against a male victim.

<sup>244</sup> The second half of this chapter will discuss these allusions more fully.

## 2.1

The pattern of incorporating magic into the programmatic poem does not end with the first book; it is still decidedly a part of Book 2. While 1.1 does not appear overly political in nature, the same cannot be said of 2.1 which functions as a *recusatio*, denying Maecenas, and by extension Augustus, the poet's skills in writing traditional epic.<sup>245</sup> Poem 2.1 opens with a declaration that his mistress is the sole provider of his poetic inspiration, rather than the Muses or Apollo<sup>246</sup> (1-16); declares that even if he did have the ability to write epic he would not write on the more traditional mythological subjects but on the exploits of Caesar and afterwards those of Maecenas (17-36); presents a set of mythological analogies describing the strength of Augustus and Maecenas' friendship (37-8); professes that Propertius does not have the skill nor heart to describe Augustus' deeds in verse (39-50); compares the dangers of various witches' enchantments to loving Cynthia (51-6); claims that no medicine, no matter how potent, could cure love (57-64); asserts that anyone who is able to free the poet from love would be able to contravene the laws of the gods and free all the sinners of Tartarus from their eternal punishments (65-70); and ends with the insistence that the poet is doomed to die from love but that he hopes that Maecenas will visit his grave (71-78). Propertius promotes his choice of love elegy over epic throughout this poem, even going so far as to assert that with Cynthia as the subject he could write whole *Iliads* (14 *tum uero longas condimus Iliadas*); a statement that incorporates epic into elegy and places the lofty genre in a subordinate position to elegy.

However, this *recusatio* goes beyond the standard refusal to write in a specific style on proposed subjects. The poem seems to purposely recall the more negative aspects of Augustus' rise to power. Propertius not so subtly states that among the events that he would celebrate in verse if he took up epic are the bloody civil wars that the *princeps* waged against his political rivals. He specifically highlights the casualties of Octavian's wars (27 *nam quotiens Mutinam aut ciuilia busta Philippos*), the annihilation of Sextus Pompeius' fleets (28 *aut canerem Sicalae classica bella fugae*), and the hearths desecrated during the siege of

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<sup>245</sup> On poetic autonomy see Roman (2014), 91-262; Keith (2008), 139-66. On the shift from Tullus to Maecenas as patron see Cairns (2006), 35-69.

<sup>246</sup> Curtis (2019) argues that Cynthia, especially in Book 2, represents a divine epiphany and source of poetic inspiration; she combines aspects of Venus and Apollo.

Perusia (29 *euersosque focos antiquae gentis Etruscae*).<sup>247</sup> This is a heavy concentration on war for a poem professing the poet's aptitude for only writing amatory poetry. For Lowrie, 2.1 demonstrates Propertius' sublimation of the higher genre of epic into his personal elegiac realm through an engagement with more official themes: the poet writes on death, magic, erotic themes, and funerals.<sup>248</sup> Miller argues that this programmatic poem represents a disruption of the 'social structures that produce the gendered subject' by presenting feminine elegy under the guise of masculine epic.<sup>249</sup> By placing epic themes within the framework of elegy, Propertius inverts the relationship between the two genres, placing elegy on top. Lowrie further asserts that rather than using public ceremonies to express a connection to the larger political picture, Propertius subverts this technique by inverting it to encapsulate a private event, his own funeral; in doing so, he is drawing the public into his private world.<sup>250</sup> Again we see this confusion of order as the poet brings himself closer to more official cultural practices in a way that undermines the structures of the more traditional genres and social order. This poem, and book, engages more intimately with the Augustan regime as the poet, in his alienated posture, negotiates the concerns of the past, present, and uncertain future in Rome.<sup>251</sup> This section will show how the undercurrents of magic reinforce Propertius' status as a victim of love and highlight the political subtexts of the poem. The first part will examine how magic functions to represent

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<sup>247</sup> Osgood (2006), 182 believes that Augustus omits the siege of Perusia from his *Res Gestae* because he could not portray it in a positive light as he did with his other civil wars or displace blame for the brutality of it onto Antony. Augustus does not hesitate to admit that he waged civil wars (*Aug. Res. 3 bella terra et mari ciuilia externaque toto in orbe terrarum saepe gessi*) or that he settled his veterans on land (*Aug. Res. 3 iis omnibus agros adsignauit*). The *princeps* does, however, leave the details vague in the *Res Gestae*. Propertius prominently recalls this siege in the last two poems of his first book (1.21 and 1.22). Presumably these would have been the last poems a reader would have encountered before reading 2.1, making the allusions to Perusia, and the civil wars, more poignant. Heyworth and Morwood (2011, 19) contend that since Propertius writes two poems about Perusia in his first book, one that would have been published contemporaneously with the closing of the Gates of Janus (29 BC), the *princeps* is inextricably linked with 'disorder and death' despite his attempts to establish order, and all references to him should be read with that in mind. Cf. Verg. *Ecl.* 9 and Hor. *Epod.* 2.2 for how other Augustan poets recalled the land confiscations for veterans.

<sup>248</sup> Lowrie (2009), 278.

<sup>249</sup> Miller (2004), 137-9 argues that Propertius casts the opposing poles, love and war, in terms belonging to the other. This undermines the poet's claim that he does not possess the skill to write epic while simultaneously subjugating the more masculine genres of history and epic to elegy. He seems to deliberately confuse the form and content of the poem.

<sup>250</sup> Lowrie (2009), 177.

<sup>251</sup> He directly mentions Augustus 29 times throughout his books: by Caesar (1.21.7; 2.1.25, 26, 42; 2.7.5; 2.16.41; 2.31.2; 2.34.62; 3.4.1, 13; 3.9.27, 33; 3.11.68, 72; 3.18.12, 34; 4.1.46; 4.6.13, 56, 59; 4.11.58); by Augustus (2.10.15; 3.11.50; 3.12.2; 4.6.23, 29, 38, 81). His only direct reference to the *princeps* in the first book is the second to last poem where he is lamenting the death of a relative at the siege of Perusia. In no other poem does Propertius name Augustus as much as in 2.1, except for 4.6 which is a celebration of Actium.

the dangerous while the second part will explore how magic rituals are juxtaposed with healing ones. As a long poem with competing themes its coherence calls itself into question, but the details of magic and medical practices late in the poem map onto the earlier political material in suggestive ways.

### The Dangers of Magic

In the programmatic poem of this book magical elements appear towards the centre of the composition. Propertius introduces magic in the form of a comparison between famous examples of magical perils and the sufferings of the poet-lover who is caught in Cynthia's snare. The mythological exempla of magic acts are juxtaposed with mythological exempla of healing acts. Here the presence of magic further contributes to the theme of inversion and forces the reader to look more closely at the relationship between genres, social status, power, and the private and public spheres. The magical episode alludes to potions (51-2), deadly and helpful herbs (53; 61), altar fires/hearths (54; 62), and incorporates a description of his own funeral (56) (Prop. 2.1.51-64):

seu mihi sunt tangenda nouercae pocula Phaedrae,  
pocula priuigno non nocitura suo,  
seu mihi Circaeο pereundum est gramine, siue  
Colchis Iolciacis urat aëna focis.  
una meos quoniam praedata est femina sensus,  
ex hac ducentur funera nostra domo:  
omnes humanos sanat medicina dolores;  
solus Amor morbi non habet artificem.  
tarda Philoctetae sanauit crura Machaon,  
Phoenicis Chiron lumina Philyrides;  
et deus extinctum Cressis Epidaurius herbis  
restituit patriis Androgeona focis;  
Mysus et Haemonia iuuenis qua cuspide uulnus  
senserat, hac ipsa cuspide sensit opem.

[Whether I have to touch the stepmother Phaedra's cups (potions), cups that were not destined to harm her stepson, or whether I must perish by Circe's herbs, or the bronze Colchian vessels on Iolcos' hearth. Since one woman has robbed me of my senses, from her house my funeral will be led forth: medicine heals all human pains; love alone has no practitioner for its illness. Machaon healed the slow legs of Philoctetes, Chiron, son of Philyra, healed Phoenix's eyes; and the Epidaurian god [Aesculapius] restored the dead Androgeon to his father's hearth with Cretan herbs; and the Mysian youth felt the assistance from the Thessalian spear, the same spear which his wound had previously felt.]

This section on magic and mythological healing introduces three mythological exempla, all related to magic in some way, that function to characterise the depth of Propertius' love and the suffering it causes him. The first refers to the story of Phaedra's attempts to seduce Hippolytus with a love potion (or to poison him). The second focuses on Circe's magical herbs, used to transform Odysseus' men into animals and Scylla into a monster. The last cites Medea's magic cauldron, which was used to murder King Pelias. While Camps believes that these three female figures are included here because they represent 'typically powerful witches' this statement does not apply to Phaedra, who does not belong to the category of archetypal witches, though she does have a familial relationship to magic.<sup>252</sup> There is no precedent for Phaedra as a sorceress herself, but Propertius might be drawing inspiration from Euripides where it is her nurse who suggests giving Hippolytus the love potion (Eur. *Hipp.* 510-15). In this version Phaedra tried to 'poison' Hippolytus through use of a love potion, something that often doubled as a poison as well.<sup>253</sup> Phaedra, as the niece of Circe and the cousin of Medea, also bears a familial connection to magic.<sup>254</sup>

Tupet stylises all three as witches and sees the *pocula* (51-52), *gramine* (53), and the *aëna* (54) as different types of love spells employed by each, but seems to ignore the danger posed by such *philtera* when she says '[i]l n'est pas question ici de rites de destruction'.<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> Camps (1967), 74.

<sup>253</sup> See discussion of the Deianeira tradition in n.24 for the ambiguity of *pharmaka* and *uenena* and for links between female attempts at administering love potions and accidental poisoning.

<sup>254</sup> Heyworth (2007a), 113 attempts to circumvent Phaedra's involvement entirely, arguing that the line should be emended to *Thesei* instead, thus referring to Medea, Theseus' step-mother through marriage to his father Aegeus, rather than Phaedra. It seems odd to refer to her twice in such a short span, only broken by the mention of her relative Circe. While Medea did attempt to poison Theseus (Apollod. *Epit.* 1.5), any potion, whether meant for good or evil, carried the risk of death so there is no need to replace Phaedra.

<sup>255</sup> Tupet (1976), 357.

The lack of potential deadliness of these items seems unlikely given that the poet follows the two couplets on magic with one on his own funeral (55-6), and especially when each of these examples places emphasis on the ritual instruments used to harm others, not on the witches themselves. Although each of the witches' items have the potential to harm as well as heal, Propertius focuses on their sinister rather than beneficial aspects. Moreover, each of these mythological women have a violent connection to love. Phaedra's attempt to seduce her stepson led to the death of Hippolytus, Circe was famously rejected by Odysseus but, more pertinently, turned the naiad Scylla into a monster in a fit of jealous rage when spurned by Glaucus (Hyg. *Fab.* 199; Ov. *Met.* 14.1-74), and Medea carried out many atrocities in the name of love. These mythological exempla then are not simply indicative of powerful magic users, but of the destructive nature of love to its victims when paired with magic and its power to undermine natural and social order. This section bears a similarity to Prop. 1.5.6 (*et bibere e tota toxica Thessalia*), where the pain derived from the poet's love for Cynthia is equated to that of drinking all the poisons of Thessaly.<sup>256</sup> There is also a corresponding passage in Tibullus (2.4.55-6 *quidquid habet Circe, quidquid Medea ueneni | quidquid et herbarum Thessala terra gerit*) where the poet-lover professes his willingness to drink the all the poisons of Circe, Medea, and of Thessaly if it would curry favour with his hard-hearted mistress. Here Propertius is not so much willingly advocating the use of magic, as Tibullus does, as enduring suffering on par with such deadly magical instruments. While these tools themselves present a certain ambiguity as they could be used for good or ill, the poet chooses to focus on their potential for deadliness. This section on magic further underscores how hopelessly in the thrall of Cynthia Propertius is or perhaps how much he would rather endure the perils of loving her than adhere to a more normative path.

### Magic versus Healing

Death lurks throughout his elegiac landscape, from the inside with the dangers of love magic and from the outside with the pressures of male elite life. The mythical episodes to which the magic references allude represent forms of destructive magic that coerce their victims

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<sup>256</sup> Papanghelis (1987, 30) notes that while this earlier line may hint at what is to come in 2.1, its generic countenance does not convey the same level of feeling and suggestiveness that the trio of 'witches' do here.

into undesirable positions and threaten social order. Phaedra attempts to seduce Hippolytus, a chaste devotee of Diana, who is also her stepson. Circe subverts the natural order by turning men into base animals and an innocent nymph into a hideous monster. Medea tricks Pelias' daughters into murdering their own father to remove Jason's political rival. Each woman perpetrated subversive acts, with two of the deeds specifically related to familial death: Theseus uses one of the special curses granted by his father to kill Hippolytus for his son's presumed crime and Pelias' daughters unwittingly commit patricide during a false magical ritual. These are interesting stories to invoke considering the fratricidal nature of the recent civil wars, which are so prominently recalled during the preceding *recusatio* section. The fallout from these magical transgressions poses a threat to the social realm.<sup>257</sup> They are emblematic of the potential disruption uncontrollable love paired with illicit power can produce. These female figures are inextricably linked to these antisocial acts; Cynthia, who is the cause of the poet's own antisocial behaviour, is then placed in an analogous position to these women. Moreover, these particular women evoke weightier genres than elegy: tragedy and epic. There is an explicit emphasis on the suffering caused by their magical rites (poisoning, death, burning) that generates an insidious undercurrent, especially as it is offered up as a preferable alternative to an easier life pursuing the more traditional genres. The stories about these women, who are ostensibly seen as outsiders due to their foreign nature or their perpetration of transgressive acts, place them on the inside through their participation in epic and tragic dialogue. Propertius presents here a 'problematization of boundaries' — a confusion between what constitutes the outside and what constitutes the inside.<sup>258</sup> These magical acts do more than comment on the character of Propertius' love, they also demonstrate a practice of perversion and inversion that runs throughout the poem.

The paired section on mythological healing and medicine (57-64) is also indicative of magic and further elaborates on the desperateness of the poet's situation while continuing the theme of inversion. Since there was no great discrepancy between the practices of

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<sup>257</sup> Cf. Gowers (2012), 274 who sees the presence of witches in Hor. *Sat.* 1.8 and their movement from the outside into the city as an indication that there was still plenty of venom left over in Rome from the civil wars. In a similar fashion, the witches in Propertius introduce a heightened sense of social transgression to the elegiac realm. An element that neither the socio-political nor the amatory is free from in this poem.

<sup>258</sup> Miller (2004), 140, 'there is consistent practice of contamination throughout the poem, as one generic and gendered frame is invaded by another and what appears to be the outside is revealed to be always already inside.'

various ‘doctors’ and ‘healers’ and those of witches who offered healing services, a certain level of conflation between magic and medicine is not unexpected.<sup>259</sup> Many who were skilled healers were essentially thought to be skilled magicians. Pliny’s (*NH.* 30.2) assertion that magical arts sprang from the craft of medicine is indicative of this ancient attitude where philosophers, practitioners of foreign religions, and magic users were often indistinguishable from each other in practice. This conflation between the magical arts and the medical arts does more than simply adhere to convention, it also plays into the confusion of boundaries inherent in the poem. The choice of great healers referred to here is telling and demonstrates a continued, if somewhat tenuous, link with magic. They are all men, or creatures, from Thessaly, a region heavily associated with witchcraft, and the *focis* of line 62 echoes both the *focis* of line 54 and the *magicis ... focis* in 1.1.20. This noticeably recalls the more immediate reference to Medea’s cauldron used to trick King Pelias’ daughters into murdering their own father, but also evokes her restoration of Aeson that initially inspired the princesses to imitate the witch.<sup>260</sup> This connection is only made stronger with the herbs (61 *herbis*) ending the line immediately preceding it, as Medea used these to restore Aeson whereas Pelias’ daughters wrongly attempted to boil the pieces of their father in a cauldron — an instance of a magical ritual intended to heal corrupted by a rival for power. The association of hearths or fires (*focis*) with death is reinforced by the previously mentioned hearths (29 *focos*) that refer to the hearths destroyed during the turmoil of the siege of Perusia, when Propertius’ family land was seized to resettle civil war veterans. Here the loss of his ancestral lands is compounded with the concept of magic and the healing arts. The former he accepts as par for the course in love, the latter he rejects as incapable of alleviating his condition (57-8).

That healing methods are discounted as ineffectual for someone in his position and thus of less consequence than magic is notable. Heiden proposes that not only do the mythological exempla related to magic suggest resistance to the Augustan program, but the healing ones do as well.<sup>261</sup> Each instance of healing can be linked directly to Troy and more

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<sup>259</sup> For more on the conflation between the categories, see Papanghelis (1987), 31; Graf (1997), 71-77, 97-117; Dickie (2001), 21-4, 112, 195-201; Stratton (2007), 21-22.

<sup>260</sup> Ovid. *Met.* 7. 159-293.

<sup>261</sup> Heiden (1988), 358-61. His interpretations of the healing episodes are as follows: Philoctetes is healed only to fight in the Trojan war (59) — Propertius’ love cannot be healed so he will never have to fight; Phoenix’s eyesight is restored so that he can tutor and bring Achilles to Troy (60) — male children are meant to be reared for war; Androgeon is restored to his ancestral hearth (61-2) — a place Propertius can never go as it

specifically the Trojan War. Considering that Aeneas, a prince of Troy and survivor of the war, was the protagonist of Vergil's work-in-progress national epic on the origins of Rome that glorified Augustus' ascendants, it would not be a leap — in the formal context of the poem as a *recusatio* — to see the rejection of these healers' abilities as a subtle rejection of the epic style.<sup>262</sup> More generally, since each example involves war, an activity from which the poet abstains, and because no mortal is capable of healing him of love, these examples carry an implicit rejection of the ideology that Maecenas and Augustus represent. This reference to both magic and healing in this programmatic poem seems to mirror 1.1, repeating the pattern of introducing the magical arts (1.1.19-24) before turning to medicinal arts (1.1.26-27), and then finally resigning to fate (1.1.33-4). In a similar manner here, the destructive power of magic (51-6) is introduced first, then the miraculous arts of healing (57-64), two strategies that proved ineffective for the poet-lover in 1.1. However, these two arts shift from failed strategies to deal with his love in the first programmatic poem to a means of characterising the poet's abject condition in this second one. The poet follows the allusions to female magic users with a description of male healers. Once again, traditional male figures, more so due to their mythological status, come second to powerful, transgressing females. Moreover, these sections on magic and healing both end with direct reference to the poet's funeral, further underscoring the destructiveness of one and the ineffectiveness of the other, neither of much avail to a lover.

Propertius ends 2.1 by juxtaposing how powerful a person would have to be to cure him of his love (Prop. 2.1.65-70) with a declaration that his current path will lead to his death (71-8). After exploring legendary episodes of healing, the poem appropriately continues in an underworld themed vein that exhibits how critical Propertius' condition is and how powerless anyone is to relieve him of it. The presence of Androgeos (62), who is revived by Aesculapius, anticipates the underworld scene here.<sup>263</sup> Similar to how the magical rites anticipated and intermingled with the healing rites, so the healing rites

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was destroyed by Augustus; Telephus is cured by the same spear that wounds him (63-4) — Propertius will not join the battle, or here the poetic programme, so he cannot be cured.

<sup>262</sup> Although the *Aeneid* was not published until after Vergil's death in 19 BC, and therefore after the publication of Propertius' second book, drafts likely circulated before then. See Cairns (2006), 264 for his interpretation of lines 41-2 (*nec mea conueniunt duro praecordia uersu | Caesaris in Phrygios condere nomen auos*) as an allusion to Vergil's *Aeneid*.

<sup>263</sup> Papanghelis (1987), 32 views love as an infernal journey and death, which supersedes any other sort of human suffering or ailment in Propertius' elegiac world.

anticipate and fail to prevent the poet's death. The association between death and magic inherent in the stories linked to the mythological exempla above foreshadows the funeral that finishes the poem. As the entirety of the poem seems to be addressed to Maecenas, at first it appears as if he is set up as an Orpheus-like or perhaps a heroic figure who is able to subvert the eternal punishments ordained by the gods (66 *hoc si quis uitium poterit mihi demere, solus ... poterit*). What follows is a list of some of the paradigmatic punishments that the patron would also be able to end if he could cure Propertius of his love.<sup>264</sup> For Maecenas to fulfil the role of Propertius' saviour he would have to go against the gods, thus disrupting the natural order. However, the last two couplets make clear that there is no rescue in sight for the poet with *busto* (75) alerting the reader that the poet's fate is already sealed. The mention of the poet's own grave recalls the civilian *busta* (27) at the beginning of the poem, bringing the concept of death and disorder full circle.

Propertius builds on the previous model of his friends being unable to cure his love in 1.1 to Maecenas himself being the one not powerful enough to overcome his affliction. This transition enhances the programmatic rejection of epic and the male elite life by shifting from anonymous friends to a prominent member of Augustus' party. Poem 2.1 begins with epic themes, almost portraying the elegiac as embedded within the loftier genre, yet this programmatic poem ends with a firm declaration that Cynthia still holds sway over the poet, subverting the expectation that Maecenas and the draw of more traditional paths would win the day. Even a man as influential and respected as Maecenas cannot manage to steer the poet away from his mistress. The wish that Maecenas should weep at his humble grave (72-77) matches the behaviour that an elegiac lover desires from his mistress after his death (cf. Tib. 1.1.61-66).<sup>265</sup> The poet is subtly portraying his patron in the role of an elegiac mistress — a symbol that the normative and epic path is incorporated into and subsumed by the elegiac. This is not simply a confounding of generic and gender boundaries, but of moral and religious boundaries as well. The presence of magic at the

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<sup>264</sup> The invocation of Orpheus-like abilities carries with it an implicit suggestion of sorcery or a supernatural mastery over the world. The suggestion then would be that to combat the spell Cynthia has laid on the poet, Maecenas would need to be an immensely powerful sorcerer and employ methods considered objectionable under the contemporary moral programme.

<sup>265</sup> The last line of 2.1 (*huic misero fatum dura puella fuit*) directly inverts the situation in Tib.1.3.55-6 (*hic iacet immitti consumptus morte Tibullus | Messallam terra dum sequiturque mari*) where Tibullus, in a poem notably reminiscent of the Odyssey, imagines his death caused by the vicissitudes of war — by following his patron Messalla down the appropriate path. Both sections are imagined as the inscriptions on the respective poet's gravestone.

heart of a poem that interacts with more Augustan themes demonstrates another layer in this process of inversion. Magic alone would be an indicator of discord, but the disruptive nature of the magical acts is only enhanced by the relation of each witch-like character and their actions to behaviours that are transgressive to the social and political order. Rather than writing in a traditional style of poetry, the poet would prefer to chance the effects of potentially deadly magic. Just as Cynthia's powers over Propertius and his elegiac world transcend the natural order of things, turning expectations on their head, Propertius' poetry engages with, and corrupts, contemporary Roman ideology by co-opting traditionally masculine and epic language to describe the inversion of social norms in his elegiac world. This pattern of subversion continues in the programmatic poem of the next book.

### 3.1-3

While the programmatic poem of the third book is markedly different from its predecessors, a certain relationship to magic persists. One of the more notable differences is the distribution of the book's planned project over multiple poems rather than in a single introductory poem.<sup>266</sup> This book's first three poems will be discussed here as they have the most significant relationship to religion and magic. The third book seems to eschew magic initially, assuming a markedly religious tone in its first poem, but magic remains a prominent part of the programmatic poems. The second poem picks up the magic thread and positions magic as an analogy for persuasive power. The final poem expands on the relationship of poetry to magic, building on the magic connections established in the previous poems to culminate with an equation of poetry to magic. This last poem undermines the more conventional image put forth by 3.1 — even as Propertius comes to engage more closely with traditional themes, his poetry retains a level of ambiguity as the poet uses magic vocabulary to describe its power.

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<sup>266</sup> Woolley (1967) groups the first five poems of this book together and sees strong parallels between books 1 and 3; Courtney (1969) advocates that the first 5 poems establishes Propertius' literary position in book 3; Courtney (1970) remarks on how the whole of book 3 tends to follow a pairing between amatory and non-amatory poems as well as respond to many of the previous poems; Putnam (1980) also agrees that the first 5 poems are linked and demonstrate a development in self-awareness that sees Propertius leaving the private elegiac world behind for a more critical role and place among the traditional genres. For him 3.1 focuses on the influence of poetry, 3.2 on the power of *carmina*, and 3.3 on the content on this new book, 99; Butrica (1996) believes 3.1-3.5 should be read together, especially the first three poems, 135.

## The Cult of Poetry

3.1 is notable for being the first programmatic poem that does not ostensibly contain any magic. However, there is an adoption and use of sacral language that is more prominent in this poem than in any of his previous poems. This religious element is most conspicuous in 3.1 but continues to be relevant through all three poems. Another distinctive aspect of the poem is the striking absence of Cynthia from it. The first mention of a mistress only comes in the succeeding poem, although Propertius does make his continued allegiance to amatory poetry clear here. These combined differences mark quite a shift from the format of his previous programmatic poems. Hunter sees 3.1-3 as an attempt to engage more actively with the emergent poetic discourse of the Augustan principate.<sup>267</sup> This would be continuing in the vein of 2.1, which saw an increased interaction with the traditional Roman value system through the co-option of epic vocabulary and subjects. There is a movement of increasing familiarity with traditional structures and poetics throughout Propertius' books. Each successive book seems to engage more with the emerging poetic discourse. There seems to be a legitimisation of elegy as it is brought more in line with Augustan language, thought, and poetics while simultaneously usurping and subverting the more established forms of poetry by incorporating them under the umbrella of elegy. In these poems the interplay between magic and religion acts as a vehicle to negotiate the boundaries of traditional poetics — both upholding and transgressing those very boundaries.

This poem begins as an address to the shades of Callimachus and Philetas (1-6); includes a generic statement professing Propertius' continued allegiance to elegy (7-18); a prophecy elucidating the future glory he will reap from his poetry after his death (19-36); and Apollo's affirmation of the poet's predictions (37-8). The more overtly magical connotations of the programmatic openings in Books 1 and 2 shift here to the rituals of poetic initiation and affiliation with the central Augustan god, Apollo. Although the poem begins as an invocation of the spirits of Callimachus and Philetas, there is no response from the shades of the Greek poets or any hint that the reader is supposed to envision them in the scene in some manifestation<sup>268</sup> (Prop. 3.1.1-7):

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<sup>267</sup> Hunter (2006), 22.

<sup>268</sup> Unlike in 4.7, where Cynthia's ghost seems to oscillate between corporeality (the very graphic description of her charred remains) and ghostliness (Propertius' inability to clasp her).

Callimachi Manes et Coi sacra Philetæ,  
 in uestrum quaeso me sinite ire nemus.  
 primus ego ingredior puro de fonte sacerdos<sup>269</sup>  
 Itala per Graios orgia ferre choros.  
 dicite quo pariter carmen tenuastis in antro?  
 quoue pede ingressi? quamue bibistis aquam?  
 a ualeat, Phoebum quicumque moratur in armis!<sup>270</sup>

[Spirit of Callimachus and sacred rites of Coan Philetas, allow me, I pray, to go into your grove. I am the first priest to come from the pure spring to bear the Italian mysteries through Greek music. Tell me, in what grotto did you together refine your song? Or with what foot did you begin? Or what water did you drink? Away with the one who delays Apollo with arms]

In this poem, Propertius emerges as a priest (3 *primus ... sacerdos*) who leads the chorus and later assumes the role of an augur (36 *auguror*). This invocation bears some similarity to 1.1, where witches are invoked instead of spirits. *Sacra* (1) may call to mind its previous use in Propertius (1.1.20) where it describes the rites performed by witches on an altar. In conjunction with the word *manes*, and in the context of calling upon spirits, the situation is evocative of necromancy. Horace uses the word to describe the nefarious rites Canidia and her ilk performed (*Epod.* 5.52 *arcana cum fiunt sacra*), which aimed to concoct a love potion. Wallis sees the use of *auguror* (36) as creating a ring formation with *sacerdos* (3) where Propertius appropriates the ‘guises of a poetic priest’ in a manner befitting Horace, which in turn signals his ability to incorporate epic and lyric under the auspices of elegy.<sup>271</sup> He claims that this move displaces the *princeps*, while demonstrating elegy’s transition from

<sup>269</sup> Cf. Hor. *Od.* 3.1.3 where Horace is a *musarum sacerdos*. The placement of *sacerdos*, both on the third line and as the last word of the line, clearly draws on Horace’s poem — a poem that expresses a certain reluctance to treat nationalistic themes in lyric verse.

<sup>270</sup> Heyworth (2007a, 283) sees this as a potential oracular response to the questions posed at lines 5-6. Heyworth and Morwood (2011, 100) see this reference to delaying Apollo as a tongue in cheek way to refer to those who write weighty epic (e.g., Vergil) rather than Propertius’ own light poetry. However, considering Apollo’s position as Augustus’ personal god in conjunction with *armis*, it would not be untoward also to think that it is the *princeps* that is meant to spring to mind here. Propertius as augur in 4.6 supports the oracular nature of the response.

<sup>271</sup> Wallis (2018), 32.

the private to the public forum.<sup>272</sup> Luck, following Shackleton Bailey, believes that the *sacra* are reference to the two *manes*, those of Callimachus and Philetas, and the rites associated with honouring them, or the ritual of initiation into Hellenistic poetry.<sup>273</sup> For Hunter the combination of Italian and Greek rites (*4 Itala per Graios orgia ferre choros*) is particularly evocative of Bacchic cults, though also imitative of Greek religion and poetry more generally.<sup>274</sup> He sees 3.1 as setting Propertius up as a type of Dionysiac priest to a mystery cult, which demonstrates the importance of Dionysus to poetry in Rome. This serves to rework the boundaries between what constituted Greekness and barbarianism through poetry. This aligns with Feeney who asserts that Romans self-consciously appropriated Greek religious rituals and were constantly renegotiating their relationship to Greek culture.<sup>275</sup> The negotiation between religion and foreign rites acts as a vehicle for social discourse and a catalyst for change. Propertius conjures up non-Roman figures who exemplify the poet's literary concerns. Initially, more normative, if somewhat foreign, religious rites come to the fore here.

At the same time, Propertius becomes more orthodox by aligning himself and his poetic project with the god Apollo,<sup>276</sup> claiming that as an augur he has the power to foresee his future glory after death, a gift under the domain of the god of prophecy (3.1.36-8):

illum post cineres auguror ipse diem.  
ne mea contempto lapis indicet ossa sepulcro  
prouisum est Lycio uota probante deo.<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> Wallis (2018), 25-6.

<sup>273</sup> Luck (1957), 175-9; Shackleton Bailey (1956), 135-6. Heyworth (2007a, 281) observes the two variant readings and seems to lean more towards the *sacra* being rites of some sort. Ross (1975, 52), also views this poem as a sort of induction of the Roman poet into the tradition of Hellenistic poetry. Hunter (2006, 7-8) sees this as a Roman appropriation of priestly role of worshipper of the Muses and antecedent poets. Shrines, rites, worshipping of past poets was a normal part of Greek culture. Poets would be worshipped like and alongside gods. In this view, Propertius is paying an elegiac version of homage to his Hellenistic predecessors.

<sup>274</sup> Hunter (2006) 10. The ambivalence Romans had towards the importation of foreign religious cults can be viewed in the Senate's forceful assimilation of the Bacchanalia into traditional Roman religious structures in 186 BC.

<sup>275</sup> Feeney (1998).

<sup>276</sup> Feeney (1998), 31. Apollo mediates the rites between the foreign and the familiar — he is introduced into the *ludi saeculares* (17 BC) by Augustus. The *princeps'* adoption of Apollo as his patron placed a new militaristic emphasis on the already complex deity. For Augustus' relationship to Apollo, see Miller (2009).

<sup>277</sup> Cf. Prop. 2.1.71-7 where the poet imagines his humble tombstone mourned only by his patron Maecenas. See Call. *Fr.*1.22 for Apollo's epithet.

[I myself foresee that day after [I become] ashes. It has been provided that the tombstone will not mark my bones on a neglected grave, the Lycian god has approved my prayer.]

While Propertius spurned the aid of the Muses and Apollo in 2.1 (3-4 *non haec Calliope, non haec mihi cantat Apollo; | ingenium nobis ipsa puella facit*), here he adopts the more traditional posture of a poet, claiming Apollo as his patron. Now the poet is decidedly in Apollo's camp and, although he remains a proponent of elegy, Propertius seems to be assuming a tone and language here that is more in line with other Augustan poets, most notably Horace.<sup>278</sup> It is by no means unusual for a poet to associate himself with the god of poetry, but the initial rejection of Apollo coupled with Augustus' personal relationship to the god makes this new acceptance suspect. Propertius alludes to Actian Apollo when he speaks of Apollo being delayed by war (*7 a ualeat, Phoebum quicumque moratur in armis!*).<sup>279</sup> So, not only is Apollo now his patron, but this version of the god incorporates Augustus' warlike incarnation. Propertius' assumption of the roles of priest and augur, titles that bear significance in official Roman religion and politics, places the poet in a more authoritative role — a role presumably sanctioned by Apollo.

In this poem Propertius continues the funeral motif from 2.1, using the performance of funeral rites to shift the focus from something that might be considered more civic, the veneration of two great poets, to express his poetic concerns. He has reversed the order of events: rather than subsuming civic rituals into his own funeral, he explores elegiac poetics within the confines of a civic-like ceremony. This shift from the private to the public sphere began as early as 1.1, which saw the poet-lover co-opting masculine language to describe his amatory situation; 3.1 shows an escalation in this trend. Propertius seems preoccupied with establishing elegy as a poetic pedigree worthy of, if not greater than, the fame allotted other more established genres. In this first poem magic seems to have given way to another type of ritual — one with a more traditional and religious tone to it. Alongside this newfound association with Apollo is an underlying Bacchic element. If the *orgia* (4) does indicate Dionysiac mystery rites, it would suggest that there exists an undercurrent of chaos

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<sup>278</sup> For the poet as *uates*, see Newman (1967).

<sup>279</sup> Cf. 2.34.61 *Actia Vergilium custodis litora Phoebj*; 4.6.67 *Actius Phoebus*. For more on the relationship between Apollo, Augustus, and poetry, see Miller (2009), 298-331.

in the poem as well as invoke Augustus' former political rival Antony.<sup>280</sup> This sounds a rather strange note in a poem that initially appears to have finally embraced Apollo and, in turn, the *princeps*. The licentiousness that Bacchus embodies is diametrically opposed to the Augustan moral reform program. The religious tone of the poem creates an illusion that magic has been left behind, that is, until we reach the next programmatic poem.

### Magical Persuasion

While 3.1 does not contain any overtly magical elements, the same cannot be said of the following poem. In 3.2 Propertius continues the boastful vein of the previous poem, but muses on his poetic abilities and the fame it will bring him in a more personal manner. If 3.1 could be characterised by its concern with the glory of poetry, then 3.2 is more interested in the power of poetry. After the prophetic confirmation of Apollo at the end of 3.1 the poet turns the subject back to his *puella* (1-2); provides mythological exempla that articulate the power of *carmina* (3-8); claims the sustained companionship of Bacchus, Apollo, and the Muses (9-16); and announces the lucky fortune of any girl who should be praised by his poetry and the everlasting glory it will bring them both (17-26). Although this second poem marks a return to more elegiac material, Cynthia is not explicitly named and the subject instead becomes a generic *puella*. Whoever is depicted in Propertius' poems, whether they are Cynthia or someone else, would be a fortunate person as they would live forever through his poetry (17 *fortunata, meo si qua est celebrata libello*). Now his poetry is less about his relationship to one mistress than it is about his ability to produce something eternal. The most relevant section of the poem for this chapter contains the three mythological exempla that describe the power of *carmina* (3.2.3-8):

Orphea delenisse feras et concita dicunt  
flumina Threicia sustinuisse lyra;  
saxa Cithaeronis Thebanam agitata per artem  
sponte sua in muri membra coisse ferunt;  
quin etiam, Polypheme, fera Galatea sub Aetna

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<sup>280</sup> Plu. *Ant.* 60.5. For Augustus as Apollo and Antony as Dionysus, see Zanker (1988), 44-53; Friesen (2015), 97-8. For Bacchic elements in Augustan poetry, see Schiesaro (2009), 61-78.

ad tua rorantes carmina flexit equos.

[They say that Orpheus charmed wild beasts and stayed swift rivers with his Thracian lyre; they say that Cithaeron's stones were moved by the Theban's art, and by their own will assembled the parts of the wall; indeed, Polyphemus, under wild Etna even Galatea turned her dripping horses towards your songs.]

The first of these couplets names Orpheus, considered an archetypal poet, sorcerer, prophet, and founder of the Orphic mysteries.<sup>281</sup> The second couplet refers to the story of Amphion using songs to magically build the walls of Thebes.<sup>282</sup> The third recounts how the cyclops Polyphemus was able to successfully seduce the beautiful nymph Galatea with his song.<sup>283</sup> All three examples demonstrate the fundamentally magical capacity of *carmina*. The examples of what *carmina* have power over progress from the impersonal, wild beasts and inanimate objects, to the personal, lovers. Each of the mythological exempla emphasises the beneficial aspects of magical powers and *carmina* in their presentation here. However, the mythological figures also have more ambiguous elements to their stories that call into question the actual advantage of these abilities. Orpheus, for all his gifts and persuasive power, is unable to save his wife Eurydice. Even after braving the journey to the underworld and convincing Persephone to restore his love, he fails in the final moment to abide by the rules of the exchange and loses her forever. Amphion, king of Thebes, was the husband of Niobe and saw his children murdered by Apollo and Artemis as a result of his wife's vain boast. Apollo, who is usually more likely to be linked to poetry, prophecy, and healing, initially takes on a more martial bearing under Augustus, which this exemplum seems to slyly hint at in reference to an avenging Apollo here and coupled with the

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<sup>281</sup> Paus. 2.30.2: θεῶν δὲ Αἰγινήται τιμῶσιν Ἐκάτην μάλιστα καὶ τελετὴν ἄγουσιν ἀνὰ πᾶν ἔτος Ἐκάτης, Ὀρφέα σφίσι τὸν Θρᾶκα καταστήσασθαι τὴν τελετὴν λέγοντες. This explicitly links Orpheus to Hecate, thus further cementing his proverbial association with magic. For more testaments of his magical abilities see: Eur. *Al.* 357-9, *Ba.* 561-4, *IA.* 1211-14, *Cycl.* 646-8; Plat. *Prot.* 315a; Strab. 7.18; Verg. *Aen.* 6.119-20, G. 4.465-84; Ov. *Met.* 11.1-2.

<sup>282</sup> Paus. 6.20.18: ἡξίου δὲ οὗτος Αἰγύπτιος εἶναι μὲν Ἀμφίονα, εἶναι δὲ καὶ τὸν Θρᾶκα Ὀρφέα μαγεῦσαι δεινόν, καὶ αὐτοῖς ἐπάδουσι θηρία τε ἀφικνεῖσθαι τῷ Ὀρφεῖ καὶ Ἀμφίονι ἐς τὰς τοῦ τείχους οἰκοδομίας τὰς πέτρας.

<sup>283</sup> Cf. Theoc. *Id.* 11 where Polyphemus is unsuccessful in his pursuit of Galatea, but finds consolation in song. The opening of the poem directly compares the ability of song to cure love, calling it a type of *pharmakon*, something that no doctor's *pharmakon* could do (*Id.* 11.1-3 οὐδὲν πότε τὸν ἔρωτα πεφύκει φάρμακον ἄλλο Νικία οὐτ' ἔγχριστον, ἐμὴν δοκεῖ, οὐτ' ἐπίπαστον, ἢ ταὶ Πιερίδες). The equation of poetry with healing recalls the argument that Propertius' own poetry functions as a type of cure for love in Caston (2012), 39-42.

reference to Actium Apollo earlier (3.1.7). In this poem Polyphemus' *carmina* are powerful enough to enchant Galatea, but in other versions of his story the cyclops is unable to win over the nymph. Despite lauding the power of *carmina*, and thus his own poetry, Propertius undermines this power by introducing more negative facets — loss and failure.

The more intimate relationship to traditional poetic forms and Augustan ideology seemingly established in 3.1 is put in jeopardy by the presence of magic in 3.2. This ambiguity is further on display when Propertius places emphasis on his personal relationship with both Bacchus and Apollo (*9 nobis et Baccho et Apolline dextro*). By introducing the disruptive Bacchus alongside rational Apollo, there is a poetic doubling that strengthens the discord implied by the exempla. This both assimilates and resists ideological incorporation into state poetics. He is claiming Apollo, Augustus' particular deity, as his own, yet yoking him to the disruptive Bacchus as well as reminding the audience of the darker acts that Apollo is responsible for despite his veneer of peacefulness. The presence of Bacchus in this poem demonstrates a resistance towards purely Apollonian drives, moving from hints of Dionysiac rituals in 3.1 to an open affiliation with the god. Propertius even depicts the Muses as close companions of his (15-6 *at musae comites et carmina cara legenti | nec defessa choris Calliopea meis*). The dancing (*choris*) combined with the crowd of girls who worship his elegiac prowess (10 *turba puellarum si mea uerba colit*) pushes him further towards Bacchus by conjuring up imagery that is evocative of maenads and Bacchic celebrations.<sup>284</sup> The Dionysian undercurrent serves as a reminder that things are not as straightforward as they first appear. The inclusion of magically related mythological exempla in this poem disrupts the religious atmosphere created by 3.1. By using magical *carmina* as an analogy for persuasive power, Propertius sets the stage for his poetic *carmina* to become persuasive spells in their own right in the next poem.

### Magic as Poetry

The last of the three programmatic poems discussed here is 3.3, which draws inspiration from Callimachus' *Aetia*. Here the poet receives advice from Apollo and dreams

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<sup>284</sup> Cf. Prop. 1.3.5-6 (*nec minus assiduus Edonis fessa choreis | qualis in herboso concidit Apidano*) which describes Cynthia sleeping peacefully as like an exhausted maenad. Unlike the likely mortal maenads, the muses are tireless, and in a sense, eternal companions. This might speak to his poetic ambitions, he ends the poem on a note very reminiscent of Horace in *Od.* 3.30, which proclaims the lasting glory of poetry over more physical monuments.

about meeting the Muses on Mount Helicon.<sup>285</sup> It also mimics Ennius' importation of the Muses from the Helicon into Latin poetry in his *Annales*.<sup>286</sup> Yet again Cynthia is conspicuously absent; here the emphasis is not on Propertius' ability to call his mistress from her house but his capacity to teach others the same trick.<sup>287</sup> In this poem Propertius dreams that he has the ability to write epic (1-12); Apollo directs Propertius away from such fantasies (13-24); a description of the Muses' grotto follows (25-36); Calliope reminds the poet of his proper place (37-50); and finally, she anoints Propertius with water from the Muses' font (51-2). This dream grotto is littered with cult objects (28 *tympana*, 29 *orgia*, 29-30 *imago fictilis*, 30 *calami*) that evoke Dionysiac worship.<sup>288</sup> Again we see the word *orgia* used in conjunction with the Muses, here used to describe mysteries in Propertius' poetic cult. Although Apollo does feature at the beginning of the poem, there is far greater emphasis placed on the Muses and their grotto, and subsequently on the Bacchic influences on Propertius' poetry. One of the Muses is even described as making a thyrsus (35 *haec hederas legit in thyrsos*), a staff specifically carried by the followers of Bacchus.<sup>289</sup> The manner in which the poet alludes to the Hippocrene, a spring traditionally associated with the Muses and poetic inspiration, contains a rather monstrous connotation (32 *Gorgoneo ... lacu*).<sup>290</sup> However, Propertius' proper subject matter is garlanded lovers and nocturnal adventures (47-8 *quippe coronatos alienum ad limen amantes | nocturnaeque canes ebria signa fugae*).<sup>291</sup> These references and activities seem to give precedence to chaotic

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<sup>285</sup> Heyworth and Morwood (2011), 113-5. For Apollo's speech see *fr.*1.21.-8; for the dream sequence with Muses see *fr.*2.1-2.

<sup>286</sup> Hinds (1998), 56-7.

<sup>287</sup> Wallis (2018), 44-5.

<sup>288</sup> Hardie (2004, 34) asserts that the items in Prop. 3.3.27-30 represent cult objects and assimilate worship of the muses to Dionysiac mystery worship. Cf. 3.17.33-35 where Propertius again evokes mystery religions.

<sup>289</sup> Eur. *Ba.* 704-11; Ov. *Met.* 3.664-5; Plut. *Adv. Col.* 2.

<sup>290</sup> Pegasus, the progenitor of the Hippocrene, was born from Medusa's severed neck: Pau. 9.31.3; Hes. *Th.* 281.

<sup>291</sup> Cf. *CIL.* 12, 581; Livy's account of the Bacchanalia Affair (39.8-19). He specifically states that the nocturnal rites and wine drinking were dangerous for Roman values and could lead to all sorts of immodest behaviour (39.8.6 *discrimen omne pudoris extinxissent*). Here Propertius is held up as a proponent, or at least a recorder, of drunken nocturnal rituals of a sort. Livy paints this affair as a conspiracy that threatened to undermine the stability and safety of the state. The introduction of legislation around Bacchic worship was likely concerned with stabilizing power and unity in the wake of the Second Punic War. Feeney (1998, 82), notes that it was typical of Roman political rhetoric to stigmatise opposing policies as disruptive of the *pax deorum*. For the association of foreign rites as detrimental to the *pax deorum*, see Liv. 4.30, 25.1. Although incorporated into state religion, the Bacchic religious experience promoted a level of freedom that was incompatible with the Augustan moral reforms. Moreover, the images of drunken revelries also invoke Antony (Plut. *Ant.* 24) and his association with Bacchus, inserting, despite the cult's official status, a suggestion of opposition to Augustan

elements over order despite the ostensibly increasing alignment of the poet's poetry to more official themes and subjects.

The poem proceeds from the religious to the magical when Propertius uses a specific phrase to describe the power of his poetry (3.3.49 *ut per te clausas sciat excantare puellas*).<sup>292</sup> Here the poet is making an explicit claim, through the voice of Calliope, that his poems equate to magic spells in their ability to draw out things such as elegiac mistresses. The verb *excantare* is very rare in Latin poetry, used only twice in the extant sources before Propertius. It is improbable that Propertius would have chosen such an unusual word without a knowledge that a contemporary reader might infer a certain correlation with magic. The association of this word with magic is further enforced by its specific use in the *XII Tables* to denote the magical act of drawing crops from a neighbour's fields.<sup>293</sup> The use of a word lexically linked to magic builds on the paradigms of Orpheus and Amphion in the previous poem, who were also able to use their *carmina* to move objects and people, which implies that the poet's *carmina* also possess supernatural persuasiveness. This assertion of poetry's power is at odds with his previous poems, which exhibit a contentious relationship between the poet and Cynthia. If Propertius' *carmina* were so powerful, he would not have needed to seek assistance from witches in 1.1. There seems to be an evolutionary progression of Propertius' abilities, that is, if we are to believe that the power that the Muse attributes to him is real rather than the poet's boast.

Elements of magic and mystery religion act in concert to create an underlying subversive layer to these programmatic poems. As they seem to come more in line with national themes they actually diverge more greatly; there is a certain implied resistance built from within. This is demonstrated when Propertius elucidates his poetic purpose using language appropriated from the Roman law codes (49). Despite the official nature of some of the poetic material he draws on, the poet undermines its conventions by co-opting terminology and introducing magical allusions. Propertius uses the more official language to

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religion. The Dionysiac/Bacchic connection also taps into a rich cultural history that vies for primacy over any 'traditional' ancient Roman religious rites the *princeps* might reintroduce.

<sup>292</sup> Cf. Hor. *Epod.* 5.45 *quae sidera excantata uoce Thessala*. In Horace's case, the verb is explicitly used to describe a magical rite, the drawing of the stars and moon from the sky by the Thessalian prayers. This is the same act described at Prop. 1.1.23-4 above.

<sup>293</sup> Pl. *NH.* 28.4; Sen. *NQ.* 4.7; Apul. *Apol.* 47. Rives (2002, 271-5) the 'first' law of the XII Tables, only extant in later Latin quotations, was concerned with the removal of crops from another's field through the use of chant, the literal drawing out of crops through song/spell. *Excantare* is only used 10 times in the extant sources, including Horace and here in Propertius, before the fourth century.

express his elegiac ambitions. Even as his poetry moves more towards Augustan poetics, it remains firmly outside the norms of the more traditional genres. Propertius' self-identification of his poetry with magic in this poem acts as a statement — just as he incorporated different forms of poetry into elegy, he now subsumes the category of magic into elegy by claiming feats that even magic has not been able to produce. Instead of seeing Propertius reformed, as 3.1 might seem to indicate, the third poem reveals magic as part of a newfound confidence in his elegiac abilities. The Bacchic hints in 3.1 foreshadow the incorporation of destabilising elements here.

### *Conclusions:*

The presence of magic is evident in each of the programmatic poems of books 1-3. The repeated engagement with the category of magic enhances already existing themes of love, poetry, and power. The first programmatic poem demonstrates a tendency for magical disruption from the outset of Propertius' elegiac poetry and cultivates a sense of instability inherent in his elegiac world. The second continues to explore the potentially dangerous and transgressive nature of magical acts in a more political setting — with each witch-like character posing a subtle threat to the social and political order. The final programmatic poem of Book 3 builds on the previous two poems of the book and includes a revelation — the syncretisation of poetry and magic. Propertius' own *carmina* have incorporated and transcended the category of magic by insinuating that his poetry can win over even hard-hearted mistresses, a feat that no magic or medicine could previously do. Propertius' poetry engages with the category of magic and uses it to enhance his inversion of social norms in his elegiac world. The association of his poetry with magic places elegy even further outside conventional nationalistic themes, while simultaneously engaging with a broader intertextual tradition.

## **2. Practical Magic: Case Studies**

We have demonstrated that magic and the supernatural are embedded in each of the programmatic poems. However, magic is not limited to these first poems; its pervasive presence is seen throughout the work of Propertius. The inclusion of magic is not simply a literary trope, but a means of engaging with both Alexandrian poetry (Theoc. *Id.* 2) and

Roman predecessors (Verg. *Ecl.* 8; Hor. *Sat.* 1.8, *Epod.* 5) as well as a device to explore the tensions between poetics, religion, and politics. Magic enhances the inversion of the male elite position and helps create a world out of sorts that subverts social expectations. In the next section the tensions between magic and religion, illicit and official forms of dealing with the problematic in the elegiac condition, continue; magic, curses, and prayer seem to be blended with each other. This section will first discuss the prominence of *agoge* spells in Propertius, drawing on the body of extant *defixiones* to demonstrate how one might identify curses in Propertian poetry. Then the juxtaposition of spells and prayers will be examined before looking at an accusation of magic use. Curse tablets and erotic spells represent a sub-culture of alternative means of dealing with social anxieties in the ancient world.<sup>294</sup> The aim is to demonstrate how the various instances of magic and ritual function as a foil for some of the main poetic concerns — politics, gender, and authority.

### *Agoge Spells*

One of the more prominent categories of magic to appear in Propertius' books is that of the *agoge* spell. As noted in the discussion of 1.1, this first line of poetry could be read as a type of curse. This is not wholly unexpected given the links between the amatory realm and binding spells.<sup>295</sup> As *agoge* spells belong to the category of agonistic binding spells, it is not surprising that they often appear in situations that challenge or subvert control — over self, mistress, or poetry itself.<sup>296</sup> The potential allusion in 1.1 to a binding spell (the poet being captured by Cynthia) conveys a loss of control over the self from the outset of Propertius' elegiac work. Often an *agoge* spell serves to illuminate the dichotomy between Propertius and potential rivals in his poetic world. These rivals can take the form of a domineering mistress, another lover who threatens to steal Cynthia away, or even challengers to his poetic prowess. This section will discuss two instances of potential *agoge* spells in Propertius, poems 1.3 and 1.8, and their lexical similarities to extant curse tablets.<sup>297</sup> The aim is to demonstrate how Propertius' poems insinuate the use of and engage with the concept of malicious erotic spells.

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<sup>294</sup> Frankfurter (2019), 9.

<sup>295</sup> See introduction for *agoge* spells and how they were used.

<sup>296</sup> Faraone (1991), 3-32.

<sup>297</sup> Other potential examples include Prop. 1.5 and 1.19.

### 1.3 - Troubled Nights

In Propertius 1.3, we find reference to a potential *agoge* spell. While the poet gazes upon his mistress, he expresses his anxiety over the nature of their relationship by insinuating that a rival may be using a binding spell on Cynthia. This recourse to magic as an excuse for Cynthia's coldness towards him helps mitigate Propertius' lack of confidence in the romance. In this poem we see a comparison of a sleeping Cynthia to Ariadne, Andromeda, and a Maenad (1-6); the poet coming upon a sleeping Cynthia after a night of revelries (7-10); his attempt to make advances on her while his fear of her outweighs his lust for her (11-18); him placing garlands and fruits around her in worship (19-26); Cynthia's restlessness giving him anxiety (27-33); and Cynthia waking and chastising the poet (34-46). When Propertius compares Cynthia to Ariadne (1-2), Andromeda (3-4), and a Maenad (5-6), the poet highlights both his mistress' beauty and her potentially volatile character with references to these mythological women.<sup>298</sup> When he comes upon a sleeping Cynthia, instead of waking her, the poet begins to lavish garlands (21 *corollas*) and fruit (24 *poma*) upon her as if paying homage to a divinity.<sup>299</sup> As he is doing so a dark thought steals over him (Prop. 1.3.27-32):

et quotiens raro duxti suspiria motu,  
obstupui uano credulus auspicio,  
ne qua tibi insolitos portarent uisa timores,  
neue quis inuitam cogeret esse suam;  
donec diuersas praecurrens luna fenestras,  
luna moraturis sedula luminibus

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<sup>298</sup> The allusion to Andromeda is slightly enigmatic, her participation in a *hieros gamos* ritual, as a sacrifice to Cetus, perhaps anticipates the marriage of a mortal to a god (Ariadne and Bacchus) and the poet's own union to Cynthia. Cf. Prop. 2.28.21 (*Andromede monstribus fuerat deuota marinis*) where Andromeda is devoted to the sea monster in recompense for her mother's hubris. The word *deuota* has a particularly religious connotation, often referring to an offering to the gods, whether voluntary or to expiate sin, as seen here. Harmon (1974, 154) sees Ariadne and Andromeda as representing two potential sides of Cynthia and the poet's relationship; one where the promises of fidelity are false and the other where they are true. There is no clear answer as he exhibits his devotion to her while she accuses him of straying. The reference to Andromeda might point to Cynthia's status as a potential victim. Each of the women, then, would be a representation of Cynthia in the various stages of the poem — as a sleeping goddess, as a victim, and as a wrathful and violent woman. For maenads and witches visually and thematically linked in Roman imagination, see Pollard (2008), 141.

<sup>299</sup> For Cynthia's divine status, see Curtis (2019). For Cynthia as beloved and poetic *materia*, see Greene (1998), 37-66. Greene (1998), 51-9 argues that a sleeping Cynthia is a *tabula rasa* for the poet's erotic fantasies, both good and bad.

[And as often as you made an occasional movement and heaved a sigh, I froze, full of fancy at the empty omen, lest some dream bring you strange terrors, or someone force you to be his against your will; until the moon, running past the parted shutters, the moon busy with lingering light]

The situation seems straightforward: Cynthia is experiencing a nightmare. However, lines 29-30 also contain a potential allusion to an *agoge* spell. The poet-lover fears that his mistress' troubled dreams are caused by potential romantic rivals. *Agoge* spells often work by making their victims suffer (burning, pain, and in this case restlessness) until they submit to the caster.<sup>300</sup> Moreover the setting for an *agoge* spell is at night, often with a view of the moon and lamps or torches.<sup>301</sup> In extant curse tablets, the agent often asks the gods to punish their victims (usually women) with sleeplessness, and this is especially prevalent among the erotic spells.<sup>302</sup> In these types of spells, the victims are meant to feel the described symptoms continuously until they submit to the desires of the caster; only once they have given in can they experience relief from the effects of the spell. Some examples of curse tablet wishing restlessness on their victims are as follows:

*...neque somnum uideat...* (DT 265)<sup>303</sup>

*...ut amoris mei causa non dormiat...* (DT 266)

*...non possit dormire Bonosa neque esse...* (DT 267)

*...p[oss]it dormire; scapulas nec poss[it] sanus dormire...* (CIL 1.02520a)

The possible presence of a binding spell makes the true nature of the dream more ambiguous. The couplet describing the moon lingering over Cynthia's sleeping figure further

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<sup>300</sup> Faraone (1999), 55-68; Winkler (1991), 214-43.

<sup>301</sup> For examples see *PGM.* IV.1496-1596, IV.1716-1870, IV.2006-2125, IV.2441-2621, IV.2708-84, IV.2891-2942, VII.862-918, XII.376-96; *PDM.* XIV.1070-77, LXI.112-7.

<sup>302</sup> Propertius even mentions Orpheus' song lulling her to sleep (40-1 *nam modo purpureo fallebam stamine somnum | rursus et Orphea carmine, fessa, lyrae*), which could represent the machinations of a rival.

<sup>303</sup> See Audollent (1904) for full inscriptions.

substantiates the magical connotations of the passage.<sup>304</sup> The moon's disrupted course, in combination with Cynthia's troubled sleep, suggests that perhaps someone is interfering with both the mistress and the moon's cycle. As influencing the moon is a typical ability of a magic user, this would further enhance the idea of a rival working to steal Cynthia away from the poet. Booth argues that this scene is indicative of a potential rape.<sup>305</sup> She builds on a noted connection with Philodemus *Anth. Pal.* 5.123, which Propertius' description of the moon seems to be modelled on, arguing that the intertext casts the moon in an adversarial light and paints the scene as an opportunistic rape rather than the meeting of two lovers. This would fit with Propertius' desire to molest her sleeping form, encouraged by passion and inebriation. Despite Cynthia being the potential victim of a spell, it is Propertius who is terrified of it, and the possibility of losing her. Whether the poet truly fears the binding spells of rivals or is just insecure in his mistress' affection is unclear. The restlessness caused by *agoge* spells and the potential hostility of the moonlight are both candidates for waking Cynthia, and thus spoiling the poet's fantasies.

The idea of mutual, or perhaps coercive, love implicit in the Philodemus intertext is turned on its head by the added layer of magic. Propertius, instead of being in a reciprocal or assertive position, is now plagued by unknown rivals. His power is undermined by the magical subtext. The thought that even the strong-willed Cynthia could be bent to another's will unnerves the poet when he has so often failed to move her by his own means. His actions towards Cynthia are not dissimilar to lovers towards doors, where the excluded lover alternatively lavishes gifts and curses the door posts. Even though he is inside the room with her, he is still excluded from her love. Considering that 1.1 might constitute a type of binding spell with Cynthia acting as the agent, the poet's fears for his mistress all the more ironic, subverting the reader's expectation that it is the poet who is in danger of being bewitched. If curse tablets and erotic spells were as ubiquitous as scholars claim, then this magical episode would have resonated with audiences who sought such methods to alleviate their erotic anxieties. The elegiac poets play with the traditional categories of gender to heighten their poet-lovers' displacement from an expected central role in

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<sup>304</sup> Betz (1986), 195, Selene is the goddess most frequently invoked for love spell formulas in the *PGM*. C.f. *PGM*. VII.875: [And at night, at the 5<sup>th</sup> hour, put it away, facing Selene in a pure room. And also offer the lunar offering and repeat the following in succession and you will send dreams, you will bind with spells.]

<sup>305</sup> Booth (2001).

Augustan Rome.<sup>306</sup> Greene demonstrates how despite the seeming change of gender roles, the mistress is still no more than an object of male erotic domination, expressing the poet's concerns about control.<sup>307</sup> In this light, the poet is less worried for Cynthia herself and more for his potential loss of control over the relationship. The infringement of potential rivals on his mistress expresses an anxiety about narrative authority. Magic here functions as a foil to these anxieties, highlighting his potential displacement and undermining his control over his elegiac world.

## 1.8 - Bound Bodies

While Propertius was seemingly concerned about a rival potentially using an erotic spell against Cynthia in 1.3, the poet has no qualms about resorting to magic himself. In elegy 1.8 it is the poet who uses magic by turning himself and his poem into a type of *agoge* spell, to bring his mistress back to him. In this poem we see the poet abandoned by Cynthia for a rival lover. This elegy functions as a *propemptikon* for Cynthia, beginning with the desperate poet begging his mistress not to leave him and ending with Cynthia unexpectedly returning to him. The reader might well be reminded of poem 1.6, where Propertius was held back from accompanying Tullus to war by a pleading Cynthia; here the situations are reversed. Although Cynthia abandons Propertius in turn, the poet still prays for her safe return as he stands rooted on the shore calling out to his mistress (15-6 *et me defixum uacua patiat in ora | crudelem infesta saepe uocare manu*). Propertius remaining in Rome lies in stark contrast to the wanderings of Cynthia.<sup>308</sup> His characterisation of his body as fixed in place (*defixum*) carries magical undertones with it. The verb *defigo* in particular has strong associations with magic as *defixiones* were often an essential part in the creation of ancient binding spells and the verb was one of the most commonly used.<sup>309</sup> Curse rituals are generally composed of verbal components and object manipulation — usually during the performative aspect of the curse ritual, the lead tablet (or other material) was pierced as

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<sup>306</sup> Wyke (2002), 44-5.

<sup>307</sup> Greene (1998, 52) argues that the mistress is objectified as 'either a dangerous siren or unruly hag' who threatens dominant male narration.

<sup>308</sup> Lindheim (2011), 634. Her n.4 provides some illuminating examples of Propertius at Rome while Cynthia wanders: 1.6, 1.19; and the dangers that might befall him should he leave: 1.17, 1.18.

<sup>309</sup> Gager (1992), 30. Curse tablets are one of the more common (or at least more lasting) material references that we have for binding spells. For a compilation of the various *defixiones* see Gager (1992).

the curse was spoken over it.<sup>310</sup> The verb *defigo*, usually in the first person or the imperative, would often begin the inscription on a curse tablet. Some examples of this are:

*tibi, santne Dia, defigo [Ro?]danum* (CIL XIII 11340. I)

*Malchio Niconis: oculos, manus, dígitos ... defigo...* (DT 135)

*deutos, defixos inferis* (AE 1999: 954)

*defigite, perfigite, consumite ... Maurussum* (DT 250)

In 1.8, the poet is rooted to the shore while calling out for an absent mistress. Propertius' own body acts as the physical object of the curse and his cries act as the verbal components. His description functions as a sympathetic magic ritual, a persuasive analogy, where the object is to summon Cynthia back to him.<sup>311</sup> This impression is reinforced in when we learn that despite the wind snatching away the poet's prayers, his actions and words seem to have had the desired effect (28 *uicimus: assiduas non tulit illa preces*); Cynthia returns to Propertius. The elegiac mistress' rejection of material wealth in favour of the poet might appear sweet, suggesting that Cynthia is finally reciprocating Propertius' love, but the verbal allusions to curse tablets suggests a more nuanced reading. If the poet did truly enact a binding spell, then Cynthia only returns because she is forced to. There is a hint of this discord with words like *crudellem* and *infesta* evoking a sense of disquiet and negativity that jars with the congenial conclusion. If one remembers that the function of many *agoge* spells was to torture a victim until they acquiesced to the caster's desires, then the phrasing of his victory is also suspect. Cynthia returns because she cannot bear his continuous prayers. The use of prayers (*preces*) with the imagery of a curse tablet suggests that these prayers are actually part of the cursing ritual. It is only when she returns to him that she receives respite from these constant 'prayers'.

Once again it becomes difficult to separate the use of magic from Propertius' poetic prowess. In the poem he claims that it is his words (1.8.40 *potui blandi carminis obsequio*) that lead Cynthia back to him. Paired with the reference to *defixiones*, prayers, and unexpected success there is an insinuation that something more is afoot here. In light of the

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<sup>310</sup> Kropp (2010), 358.

<sup>311</sup> Faraone and Kropp (2010), 381.

circumstances, *carmina* carries both the connotation of poetry as well as spells. This would fit with Propertius' claim to magical poetic powers in 3.3. Even when Propertius expresses joy at his change in circumstances towards the end of the poem (43 *nunc mihi summa licet contingere sidera palmis*) and boasts of having perpetual access to Cynthia (44 *siue dies seu nox uenerit*) there seems to be something amiss. At first glance such a phrase would be innocent enough, but one must consider the overlapping layers of meaning. The inclusion of *sidera*, though not an uncommon metaphor for divine favour, provides a verbal link to a previous use of the noun earlier in Propertius (1.1.23 *tunc ego crediderim uobis et sidera et amnis*), which correlates to an episode of magic. Moreover, it is an episode where Propertius appealed to witches to change his mistress' heartsomething that he is now able to do himself through the power of his own *carmina*. The poem's success as a symbolic embodiment of a curse tablet indicates that he performed an *agoge* spell. It is not simply a matter of poetic license; Propertius' use of allusions to magic act as a continued part of his rhetorical strategy. The conflation of the two subjects must be deliberate — the poem functions as a curse tablet and provides another means for bolstering the poet's authority and power over the elegiac mistress.

### 2.28 *The Power of Prayer*

This section focuses on how magic and religion are juxtaposed during an episode that sees the poet-lover attempting to help his sickly mistress. This builds on the juxtaposition between magical and traditional avenues in 1.1. In 2.28 we find the poet exploring different strategies with which to save Cynthia from a life-threatening illness. Propertius begins with an appeal to Jupiter (1-2); cites Cynthia's lack of piety as a reason for her current ailment (3-8); asserts that her beauty and tongue offended some goddess (9-16); provides mythological exempla of other beautiful women who suffered from the jealousy of goddesses (17-24); surmises that Cynthia will occupy a place of prominence in the underworld in the company of those who suffered similar fates (25-34);<sup>312</sup> fails to save her with his magic ritual (35-8); appeals to Jupiter a second time (39-46); then appeals to Persephone (47-58); and promises to repay the gods for sparing Cynthia (59-62).

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<sup>312</sup> Cf. Prop. 4.7.

This poem sets up a parallel between a magic spell (35 *magico ... carmine*) and a sacred song (43 *sacro carmine*) that merits further exploration of the subject. Scholars often contrast the 'successful' *sacrum*, a more official form of prayer, with the failed magical spell, a less acceptable means of negotiating with the divine.<sup>313</sup> There is reference to a failed magical ritual, or the failure of magic in general, that is different from most other allusions to magic in Propertius as it aimed to heal Cynthia (Prop. 2.28.35-8):

deficiunt magico torti sub carmine rhombi,  
et iacet extincto laurus adusta foco.  
et iam luna negat totiens descendere caelo,  
nigraque funestum concinit omen ausis.

[There is no power in the whirling of the rhombus to the accompaniment of a magic song, and the singed laurel is silent in the extinguished hearth, and the moon now refuses to descend from the sky so often, and the bird of night sings its funeral omen.]

Although this ritual is presented as an attempt to heal the mistress, it is structured more like one meant to seduce her.<sup>314</sup> Unlike Tibullus 1.5, where the poet-lover aides a witch in a healing ritual aimed at saving the elegiac mistress, Propertius' ritual seems to lack power. The ritual here is filled with negative omens: the impotent rhombus, the silent laurel, the fixed moon, and the funeral song. These elements do not convey a sense of success. Moreover, there are potential intertexts with Theocritus and Vergil here. The spell uses a rhombus like Simaetha (Theoc. *Id.* 2.29-30) and burns laurel (Theoc. *Id.* 2.23-26; Verg. *Ecl.* 8.82-3). In both these magical intertexts, the actual result of the magical rituals is left open to interpretation. Neither gives a clear answer as to whether they were successful or not, but both seek to attract wayward lovers.

It is only after recourse to magic that a more official figure is called upon to aid the poet. When the poet cannot heal Cynthia, he turns to the king of gods, Jupiter, for help.

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<sup>313</sup> Richardson (1977), 292; Alessi (1985), 44-5. Tupet (1976, 360) sees these references to magical practices as commonplace and simply an expression of the poet's anxiety over Cynthia's condition. Fedeli (2005, 800) reads the spinning rhombus as a bad omen.

<sup>314</sup> Cf. Prop. 3.6.26; Ov. *Am.* 1.8.7; Mart. 9.29.9, 12.57.17. The rhombus was a magical wheel used during love spells and the laurel evokes Verg. *Ecl.* 8.82-3. Rüpke (2016, 75), does not believe this is a healing ritual, whereas Syndikus (2006, 301) does see it as a healing ritual.

Unlike with the witches in 1.1, the traditional avenue does seem to find success: Cynthia survives the illness (59 *tu quoniam es, mea lux, magno dismissa periclo*). The failed magic ritual and the bad omens that accompany it are contrasted with the *sacrum carmen* to Jupiter (43-4 *pro quibus optatis sacro me carmine damno | scribam ego 'per magnum est salua puella louem'*). This plea to Jupiter follows directly after the failure of magic to effect change on Cynthia's condition. Jupiter is the punisher of false oaths; however, his prominence as the chief god places him in the dual position of being the arbiter of both 'white' and 'black' prayers, that is of official hymns and magic. It was common for Jupiter to be called on to exact justice on those who were deemed to have transgressed, especially in violation of vows.<sup>315</sup> Although the god could preside over both types of rituals, here it seems that the more normative prayers and actions won the day.

However, Jupiter is not the only deity from whom the poet seeks help. He also prays to Persephone and Pluto to have mercy on his mistress (47-8 *haec tua, Persephone, maneat clementia, nec tu | Persephona coniuinx, saeuior esse uelis*). His appeal to the Queen of the underworld recalls Orpheus' plea for Eurydice's life. A certain symmetry is displayed with the archetypal poet-sorcerer and Propertius, they both faced desperate situations and called upon their own and higher powers to save their loves. Where Orpheus relies on the persuasive power of his song to win over Persephone, Propertius must rely on his prayers after failing in his performance of a healing ritual. His mistress' sudden recovery presumably confirms that the poet's prayer was answered, aligning him further with Orpheus. Despite the poet making a conditional promise to Jupiter (44-6) and appealing to Persephone on Cynthia's behalf, Diana and Isis appear at the end of the poem as those who will be rewarded, Cynthia must give song and dance to Diana and ten nights of vigil to Isis (61-3): *munera Dianae debita redde choras | redde etiam excubias diuae nunc, ante iuuencae | uotiuas noctes et mihi solue decem*. The gift offered to Diana seems an odd offering in comparison to his gift to Isis (and rather more of a punishment to the poet). The Egyptian goddess is associated with the power of healing, but her mention only at the end of the poem is curious (Cf. Tib. 1.3.23-32). Diana and Isis are associated with traditional prayer and magic respectively. The dissonance between Propertius' earlier promise and his

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<sup>315</sup> For examples of slander spells (*diabolai*) see PGM.IV.2441-2621; VI.2622-2707. Prayers for justice or judicial prayers see Versnel (1991), 60-72 and (1998), 263-4. There is a conceptual blurring of the lines between *defixiones* and prayers for justice.

new vows undermines the suggestion that it is conventional religious prayers that lead to Cynthia's recovery. Rather, despite the poet's own failed rituals, magic is suggested by the presence of the poet's healing ritual and the appeal to the various deities.

### *3.6 Potions and Spells*

In discussion of 2.28 we saw intertextual engagement with both Vergil *Eclogue* 8 and Theocritus *Idyll* 2. These two poems can be seen as models for magic in elegy. In 3.6 we see more intertexts with these literary predecessors and the strongest magic passage of the third book. After two rather patriotic poems (3.4 and 3.5) we return to elegy proper, with Cynthia seemingly angered at the poet's infidelities. She chastises him for being drawn away by the magical practices of another. This is fitting considering his last few poems excluded her completely. The poem begins with Propertius questioning the slave Lygdamus about Cynthia (1-8); questions suggest what state the poet imagines Cynthia to be in (9-18); quotations of Cynthia's supposed speech are provided (19-34); then poet sends Lygdamus back to Cynthia with a message of affirming mutual passion (35-42). In her speech Cynthia accuses an unnamed girl of conspiring against her to seduce the poet (3.6.24-30):

si placet, insultet, Lygdame, morte mea.  
non me moribus illa,<sup>316</sup> sed herbis improba uicit:  
staminea rhombi ducitur ille rota;  
illum turgentis sanie portenta rubetae  
et lecta exsucus anguibus ossa trahunt,  
et strigis inuentae per busta recentia plumae  
raptaque funesto lanea uitta toro

[If it pleases him, he can dance on my corpse, Lygdamus. She has conquered me not with her character, but with herbs: he is being pulled by the thread-drawn wheel of the rhombus. It is the magic powers of the toad that swells with pus that haul him in, and picked bones of

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<sup>316</sup> *Ilia* being the suspected female rival. Cf. Prop. 4.7.72 where Chloris is named as Cynthia's assassin and one who seduced the poet using underhanded magic.

dried-up snakes, and the feathers of screech owls found among recent tombs, and woolen fillets snatched from a funeral bier.]

The use of herbs (25), wool (26), and a fillet (30) are highly evocative of Verg. *Ecl.* 8.64-109, which sees a lover using magic to coerce their beloved into returning to them.<sup>317</sup> The toad puz (27), snake bones (28), and owl feathers (29) are a new addition to the formula. Owls in Roman literature were often associated with the supernatural and were usually seen as synonymous with a witch.<sup>318</sup> Propertius uses *strix* only twice in his poetry, here at line 29 and at again at 4.5.17. In both instances the owl is associated with nefarious deeds and love magic, and both episodes carry implicit suggestions of death as well.<sup>319</sup> The augmentation of the spell components possibly places Cynthia's rival witch in a place of power over her literary predecessors. The intertext with Vergil, as mentioned previously, carries with it an insinuation of doubt over the efficacy of magic. This is not the first time Cynthia has doubted the poet's fidelity to her (cf. Prop. 1.3), but here magic is used as a scapegoat to excuse the poet's inattention to his mistress, at a point and in a book that gradually seems to move further away from elegy proper, culminating in Propertius' dismissal of Cynthia in 3.24-5. For now the poet eagerly pledges his continued devotion to his mistress, and elegy. There is no indication that anything prevents him from returning her affection willingly, perhaps invalidating Cynthia's accusations.

Moreover, Cynthia's own knowledge of magic, much like the poet's in 4.5, serves to undermine her accusations against a potential rival. From the hints given in earlier poems, there is a possibility that she has likely come into contact with magic before, either as victim or perpetrator.<sup>320</sup> Witchcraft accusations often reflect more on the accuser than the accused, representing asymmetrical power dynamics.<sup>321</sup> The only other direct accusations of witchcraft in Propertius both come in his fourth book, Propertius against Acanthis in 4.5 and Cynthia against Chloris in 4.7. It suggests that both parties might be guilty of using magic to

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<sup>317</sup> In Vergil: *vitta* (64), *licia* (74), *herbas* (95). The use of a rhombus, though not directly mentioned, is implied by its presence in Theoc. *Id.* 2, on which *Ecl.* 8 is modelled.

<sup>318</sup> See *OLD strix, strigis*. For a discussion of the ominous nature of owls in Augustan poetry, see Stocks (2016), 162-74.

<sup>319</sup> Ovid takes this association of screech owls with ill omen and death a step further in his *Fasti* (6.131-40) where he paints the *strix* as a vampire-like creature, not dissimilar to a *lamia*, that attacks children in the night.

<sup>320</sup> Cf. 1.1.1, 1.1.19-24, 1.3.29-30, 1.5.5-6, 4.5, 1.12.9-10, 4.7.35-8, 71-2.

<sup>321</sup> For the social implications of accusations see Evans-Pritchard (1937), 63-83; Graf (1997), 104-9; Gordon (1999), 194-204; Stratton (2014), 1-40; Pollard (2014), 183-218.

achieve their amatory ends. This seems especially true if one remembers Propertius' boast in 3.3 that his poetry could charm girls out from behind their closed doors, although his powers rarely seem to work on Cynthia herself. Women's agency, and the fear of it, often expressed anxieties over potential loss of control.<sup>322</sup> These accusations could be seen to represent the struggle for poetic dominance between Propertius and Cynthia. These instances of magic demonstrate that there is an element of the subversive running through Propertian elegy, one that heightens his rejection of the normative way of life for a Roman elite. This poem, much like 1.1, suggests that magic plays an integral part in stealing the poet away from his appropriate path. He is not only at the mercy of Cynthia, but potentially of any girl willing to resort to enchantments. Magic is central and contributes to the poet's antisocial position.

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This chapter has examined Propertius' representation of the various episodes associated with magic and the supernatural as found in his first three books of poetry. It has been the goal of this chapter to deepen the understanding of the place of magic in Propertius. Magic acts as a signpost that initiates deeper thought concerning the place of gender, control, and authority in elegy. By inserting familiar language in unfamiliar contexts Propertius conjures up a set of conventional concepts and associations while forcing the reader to question their basic assumptions about what truly constituted proper and improper poetic interaction during a time of flux. In this sense magic and ritual engage in a dialogue with contemporary religious practice; whether this should be taken as a serious sign of transgressive behaviour is less certain. This inherent ambiguity in the text reflects the disruptive nature of the civil wars and a still uncertain future. These magical instances do not necessarily support or criticise the increasingly stable Augustan government, but rather underline a fundamental incoherence in the world of the aristocratic male and, more generally, the Roman citizen. I hope to have shown that magic plays an underappreciated supporting role in this depiction of a world out of sorts. Magic is inescapably woven into the landscape of elegy. By situating the locus of his poetry in the amatory, and thus the private sphere, Propertius accomplishes

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<sup>322</sup> Stratton (2007), 78.

a blurring of the lines between magic and religion that seems to purposefully obfuscate whether something is meant as sincere religious sentiment or appeal to the divine or a hint towards more nefarious powers. Why did Propertius embed prayer language within references to ritual occasions, both magical and official? In part, perhaps, to show that these purportedly subversive acts were not so different from the official religious ones and that life was not so easily tidied up as the Augustan regime would have one think.

## CHAPTER 3 - *Sacra Facit Uates/Sunt Aliquid Manes*: Haunted Rituals

This chapter will examine the interplay of magic and ritual in Propertius Book 4, where the poet's proposed civic-minded poetry and new subject matter clash with the elegiac milieu in which it is situated. As in Tibullus and the previous Propertian books, there continues to be a juxtaposition of magical and non-normative private rituals with more normative civic rituals. The self-professed patriotic programme creates a greater degree of tension between these rituals. In this new book, Propertius declares that he will sing of rites, gods, and the ancient names of places (4.1.69 *sacra deosque*<sup>323</sup> *canam et cognomina prisca locorum*). Although the poet expresses a desire to sing about themes and traditional rituals more appropriate to Augustus, this final Propertian endeavour is haunted by female voices that continually call the reader's mind back to the elegiac world.<sup>324</sup> Despite Propertius' performance of a *renuntiatio amoris*<sup>325</sup> in 3.24, elegiac themes remain very much a part of Propertian poetry in Book 4. The uncertainty surrounding the future of Propertian elegy at the end of Book 3 sets the stage for the complexity and ambiguity of this new work. The transition from private to more public poetic concerns that begins in Book 3 ostensibly culminates here with poem 4.6. However, Propertius' inability to break free from his amorous past muddies the lofty goals the poet has set for himself in this book.

The blended nature of this final book presents a more nuanced and complex picture of magic and ritual than the poet's preceding works. The elegiac poems of Book 4 are composed in a manner that sharply contrasts with what was previously written on the poet's relationship with Cynthia; this causes the reader to re-evaluate what they thought they knew about the affair. Both the newly introduced *lena* Acanthis and the well-known mistress Cynthia take turns as narrators, directly challenging Propertius' dominance over the narrative. Propertius' fourth book is marked by strange temporal contradictions, seeing Cynthia return from the dead, not once, but twice. These textual inconsistencies are dismissed by some scholars who claim that there is no narrative or chronology that unifies

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<sup>323</sup> Here I follow Wellesley and Heyworth with *deosque* instead of *diesque*.

<sup>324</sup> Cf. Dufallo (2005), who reads the entirety of Book 4 as a necromantic raising of voices.

<sup>325</sup> For a discussion of false elegiac closure, see Sharrock (1994), 92-3; Wilson (2009), 197; Wallis (2018), 201-2.

Propertius' poems.<sup>326</sup> This certainly seems to be the case when halfway through 4.1, the poet's programmatic opening, the astrologer Horos interrupts with a variation of a *recusatio*, denying Propertius the skill to actualize his proposed poetic project.<sup>327</sup> The certainties promised at the beginning of the book are confounded by the poetry, politics, and affairs of the past. In the very first poem of the Propertian corpus, as we have seen, the poet demonstrates his willingness to use magic to win over his erstwhile mistress. His first recourse in his search for a means to soften Cynthia's heart was to a witch (1.1.19-24), instead of to his trusted friends. Magic and ambiguous rituals continue to act as a disruptive force in this poetic landscape, and rituals continue to act as the locus through which we can interrogate the major themes in Propertian poetry more deeply.

Building on the discussions of the previous chapters, this chapter will be divided into three sections. Firstly, we will explore the interruption of Propertius' poetic plans by Horos in 4.1. Then we will examine poems 4.5, 4.7, 4.8, and 4.11 for their connection to magic, ritual, and subversion. This group of poems, with their emphasis on women's voices, contains competing narratives that directly challenge the narrative control of the poet-lover. Elegy 4.5, one of the most discussed poems in relation to magic,<sup>328</sup> is important for this chapter for its direct engagement with the category of magic and as it sets the stage for later discussions in the following chapter on Ovid. In 4.7 we see a ghostly Cynthia reproaching the poet-lover for his actions and accusing a new mistress of witchcraft. Meanwhile 4.8 begins with a ritual that foreshadows the later events of the poem and initiates a reversal of gender roles. Finally, Cornelia's role in her own trial in 4.11 problematizes the paradigm of the Augustan womanhood that she is meant to represent by assuming a dominant role in her own post-mortem trial.

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<sup>326</sup> Fränkel (1945), Boucher (1965), Veyne (1988). Conversely, Gardner (2013, 59-60), sees this lack of time as a poetic device of delaying the poet's civic responsibilities. Grimal (1952, 52) believes that, despite the seeming disparity between the various poems of Book 4, there is an overall unifying theme, and that there is a discernible pattern between the aetiological and amatory poems.

<sup>327</sup> The disjunction between the two halves of 4.1, often labelled 4.1a and 4.1b, has led scholars to question the division of this poem, see Hutchinson (2006), 61; Heyworth (2007a), 424-5. Regardless of whether they should be read as one or two poems, the latter is clearly responding to the former and should be read as one half of the programmatic set up of Book 4. For the argument of whether this *recusatio* is accurate or not see Stahl (1985), 265-305; Liebeschuetz (2013), 971-83. For the view that this book represents a fusion of elegy and the aetiological see Debroun (2003). For 4.1's engagement with Vergil and east/west dynamics, see O'Rourke (2011).

<sup>328</sup> Gutzwiller (1985), Myers (1996), O'Neill (1998), Pillinger (2012), Chadha (2014).

The second section will look at two of the poems, 4.6 and 4.9, that ostensibly exemplify the proposed masculine, patriotic, and poetic objectives of this new Propertian oeuvre. The contrast between these poems and their amatory counterparts is made more stark by their placement among elegiac episodes. Propertius 4.6, the poem that engages most with Augustus, is wedged between the two poems containing the strongest connections to magic in this book. There is a certain disjunction in reading an account of Actium, Augustus, and Apollo, delivered by Propertius as *uates*, following the death of a drunken procuress (and accused witch) and immediately preceding the appearance of Cynthia's ghost. In poem 4.9, we see the paradigm of masculinity, Hercules, transgress the sanctuary of the Bona Dea while reminding the reader of his slavery to a woman, which seems to continue the theme of gender reversals found in 4.8. The former seems overshadowed by memorable elegiac poems and their connections to magic, while the latter sees a traditionally masculine figure transgressing a feminine civic religious space. These poems, which seek to accomplish the proposed aims of the book, problematise and challenge the poet's own goals and, more broadly, the *princeps'* own civic agenda. In each of the poems discussed here, magic and ritual play a part in undermining or overturning the audience's expectations and forcing a revision of previous encounters.

### 1. The Astrologer - 4.1

At the midpoint of 4.1, the poet's programmatic opening is dramatically cut off by Horos, an interloper with both magical and foreign associations, and who acts as a competing narrator. The peaceful, serene, religious, and official atmosphere of the poem is quickly dispelled by what amounts to a *recusatio* against Propertius' new poetic project. It is worth considering the effect of Horos' intervention on Propertius' pious project before looking at the effect of his intervention as an astrologer. This is not the first time that another intrudes with a *recusatio* on behalf of the poet. In 3.3, Propertius dreams of composing epic poems (3.3.1-12), but is instead directed down the path of elegy by Apollo himself (3.3.13-24).<sup>329</sup> Here, rather than being derailed by a traditional figure of religion (and poetry), the poet is directed back to elegy by a rather ambiguous figure, that of an astrologer. The astrologer's palinode to the poet's opening is the first hint of subversion in Book 4, indicating that not

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<sup>329</sup> For the opinion that Propertius uses Apollo to underscore his *recusationes*, see Gosling (1992), 503.

everything will go as Propertius planned, and that the reader may well expect other competing narrators throughout the book. Horos' repetition and reworking of the poet's own words foreshadows the upcoming instances of revision that permeate the book, forcing the reader to re-examine their knowledge of the earlier poems.

While insisting that the poet's talents would be better served by continuing to write elegy, rather than attempting to write aetiological poetry, Horos echoes Propertius' own words (4.1.65-6 *scandentis; ingenio; muros*) back at him (4.1.125-6 *scandentis; murus; ingenio*).<sup>330</sup> It is Horos who reminds Propertius of his appropriate path as he recites a previously unknown speech of Apollo — a speech which had helped establish the poet's elegiac inclinations (4.1.135-8):

at tu finge elegos, fallax opus (haec tua castra)  
scribat ut exemplo cetera turba tuo.  
militiam Veneris blandis patiere sub armis  
et Veneris pueris utilis hostis eris.

[You are to compose elegies, deceitful work: this will be your campaign, so that the rest of the crowd may write in imitation of you. You will endure military service under the attractive arms of Venus and you will be a useful enemy for Venus's sons.]

This new, yet also historical, proclamation from Apollo serves a threefold purpose: it recalls the earlier rejection of epic (3.3.12-24), it revises the reader's perception of the poet's impetus to write elegy and forgo the more normative path (it was Apollo's dictate rather than Cynthia's arresting beauty), and it diminishes the refuge offered by soft elegy (though elegy was never without its hardships). In 3.3, the god directs the poet away from epic and into the safe harbours of elegy (23-4 *alter remus aquas, alter tibi radat harenas, | tutus eris: medio maxima turba mari est*), whereas in 4.1 the poet under elegy will suffer service to Venus (137), be a plaything of her children (138), and potentially suffer many threats (147-9). Elegy no longer seems to lessen the cares found in some of the more burdensome forms of poetry. While there is little evidence of the astrologer's ability to truly predict the future,

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<sup>330</sup> Green (2014), 184: finds this echoing itself suspect, suggesting that the astrologer was eavesdropping on the poet rather than using divinatory abilities.

Horos' echoes of the poet and god do act as an indicator of what is to come; the reworking of the poet's words functions as a microcosm of the greater programme of revision running through the fourth book, and Apollo's speech<sup>331</sup> insinuates that there still remains something of love elegy. Horos' repetition of the poet's words foreshadows the upcoming instances of revision that permeate the book, forcing the reader to re-examine some of the earlier poems. The astrologer's focus on Propertius' past also underscores the revisionist nature of this book and serves to remind the poet as well as his audience exactly what genre he belongs to.<sup>332</sup> Horos' rejection, on behalf of the poet, may also constitute a veiled criticism of Augustus' reforms, implying that lofty new enterprises cannot erase a well-known past. Despite the poet's best efforts to begin a new project, he also cannot entirely escape from the shadow of his elegiac past, which will continue to interrupt his attempts at more patriotic poetry.

Who is this astrologer who acts as the mouthpiece of Apollo? Horos' ambiguous status, as both outsider and magic user, make him an odd choice of intermediary between the poet and the divine. The mention of his Babylonian heritage (*77-8 me creat Archytae suboles Babylonius Orops | Horon, et a proauo ducta Conone domus*) may help establish the astrologer's pedigree and connections to the east (along with all its powerful magical connotations), but it also underscores his otherness.<sup>333</sup> Horos is an apt name because it evokes Horus, the Egyptian sun deity, and, simultaneously, Apollo, his Greco-Roman equivalent in Alexandria.<sup>334</sup> The choice of name is even more fitting as Horos claims to be expressing the will of Apollo (*4.1.73 accersis lacrimas cantans, auersus Apollo; 133-6 tum tibi pauca suo de carmine dictat Apollo | et uetat insano uerba tonare Foro*); his disruption of the poet's programmatic poem is as a mediator for the god of poetry. This is the second time, if the reader is to take Horos at his word, that Apollo has steered Propertius away

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<sup>331</sup> For the ambiguity of where Apollo's speech begins and ends, see Coutelle (2015), 463.

<sup>332</sup> Liveley (2010), 113.

<sup>333</sup> For Horos as a means to express the divided self under imperial conditions, see Lowrie (2011).

<sup>334</sup> The astrologer's name also evokes ὄρος (limit, boundary), echoing his (and Apollo's) advice to Propertius to stay within his generic limits rather than embarking on a new poetic project, and ὥρα (season, year), which is etymologically linked to horoscopes, lending legitimacy to Horos' professional abilities; see Green (2014, 188) and DeBrohun (2003, 19-21; 73). DeBrohun further expands on the character of Horos, insisting that he plays an integral role in the interaction between Apollo and Propertius as he recalls the Callimachean Apollo who inspired Propertius' earlier poetry, as well as the martial/epic Apollo who belongs both to this newly proposed aetiological program and to Augustus (he is clearly linked with Augustus at 4.6.67 when he is called Actius Apollo). For 'foreignness' acting to bolster legitimacy for ritual experts see the studies of Wendt (2016) and Haack (2006).

from more lofty forms of poetry. However, in this instance, it is a questionable character that voices the god's apparent objection and reminds the poet of the path previously allotted to him. Practitioners of astrology, as with many foreign ritual experts, were generally portrayed in the literary sources as charlatans who preyed on the weak-minded.<sup>335</sup> Horos' own words do not do much to alleviate concerns of deceitfulness. He does provide an informed survey of the poet's life thus far: his origins (121-6), his family situation (127-30), how Apollo dictated that he should write love poetry (131-46). However, much of his speech is spent elucidating his credentials (75-108) and the two predictions he gives as examples of his divinatory prowess seem to rely more on common sense or an educated guess (soldiers risk dying on the battlefield and women in labour often pray to Juno), than magical powers or a knowledge of the stars.

However, there is a certain amount of cultural currency in the act of predicting the future, regardless of whether it is a legitimate prophecy or not.<sup>336</sup> Although Horos' interjection expresses an obvious interruption of the normative path, even in Propertius' part of the programmatic poem there is an evident tension between normative and non-normative rituals; this contrast manifests in the longing for a past when simple local rites (18 *patrio sacro*) were enough and the criticism of the current vogue of seeking out foreign gods (17 *externos diuos*). There is subtle irony in this earlier lack of desire to seek out external divinities and satisfaction with Italian rites when Horos makes his unsolicited appearance in this poem. In light of these lines, his status as an outsider peddling foreign rites, those of astrological divination, uncomfortably clashes with the initial tone of the poem. Horos' very presence is indicative of a certain amount of subversion and draws the reader's mind towards contemporary politics. The fact that this interloper is an astrologer, a legally dubious profession in Augustan Rome, makes him suspect to begin with; the position of astrologers in Rome was ambiguous. Octavian may have published his own horoscope, according to Suetonius, as part of his campaign for legitimacy, yet he still endorsed the banishment of astrologers and magicians from the city by Agrippa in 33 BC.<sup>337</sup> Both these

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<sup>335</sup> Cf. Hor. *Sat.* 1.6.113-4; Liv. 39.16.8; Juv. 6.582-4. There has been much debate concerning whether Horos should be taken seriously or not. For a discussion of this, see Fedeli (1965) and Caldini (1979).

<sup>336</sup> Cf. the presence of Cassandra (4.1.51-2) and the Sibyl (4.1.49-50), both true prophetesses, in the first half of the poem. For a discussion of these certified seers, see Pillinger (2019).

<sup>337</sup> For the publishing of Octavian's natal chart see Suet. *Aug.* 94.12. For the expulsion of astrologers and magicians see Dio Cass. 49.43.5, 52.36.1-2. Ripat (2011, 118) argues that the expulsions of astrologers and other foreign ritual experts had more to do with anxiety over 'unregulated ritual activity undermining social

events would have been relatively recent to readers' minds.<sup>338</sup> Green believes that the expulsion of foreign ritual practitioners was likely motivated by politics rather than by a drive for religious and moral reform that would later characterize the young consul's rule, as Octavian's propaganda campaign against Antony was at its height and he may have wanted to limit the perceived influence of astrologers, often eastern in origin, on the masses.<sup>339</sup> Regardless of the reasons behind the expulsions of these supposedly fringe elements from Rome, the presence of an ambiguous character such as Horos would constitute a red flag, in terms of the poet's chance of success in his new endeavour, to the reader.

Horos uses the term *uates*,<sup>340</sup> a very potent word, to describe himself (75-6 *certa feram certis auctoribus; aut ego uates | nescius aerata signa mouere pila*). The use of such an austere word, one specifically adopted by Augustan poets, by a fringe member of society continues to confuse the categories between what is acceptable and what is not; here it is a foreigner who is attempting to steer the poet from his patriotic track, but under the guise of being a delegate of Apollo, a god who occupies a prominent role in official religion and in the princeps' personal mythos. It is fitting that this is the same word used in the opening line of 4.6, the book's most patriotic poem, of the priest who is performing the rites associated with dedicating the temple of Palatine Apollo. Both Horos, who acts as Apollo's unofficial representative, and the priest, who acts in an official capacity for the god, perform rites associated with the god of prophecy, but how each of these figures are viewed is completely different. Horos' existence precludes the formation of a clearcut dichotomy between the two. Moreover, even without the associations that a foreign eastern ritual expert would call to mind, divination and magic are closely linked through function: 'both divination and magic are practices that manipulate a non-mundane, supernatural, or supra-

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stability.' Green (2014, 186) believes that Propertius escapes directly criticizing Augustus by differentiating between those who falsely practice the astrology, such as Horos potentially, and the actual science of the art, which was reputable when practiced by a knowledgeable person.

<sup>338</sup> For the general consensus that Propertius 4 was published around 16 BC see Hutchinson (2006), 2-3; Debroun (2003), 35; Pillinger (1969), 190; Bulter and Barber (1933), xxvi-xxvii.

<sup>339</sup> Green (2014), 103. Whether this is true or not his actions would have only been a temporary measure against astrology/magic as Agrippa's authority technically only lasted a year and did not extend beyond the boundaries of Rome. In 12 BC, Augustus seems to have had a similar drive towards political consolidation when he purportedly collected all prophetic writings and burned them, except for the Sibylline books, which he kept in the newly built Temple of Apollo that was attached to his private residence, incorporating private with public worship. Later in his reign, Augustus forbade private prophecies and any prophecies at all concerning the death of another citizen in the edict of 11 AD.

<sup>340</sup> See *OLD* sense 1 'a prophet, seer' and sense 2 'a poet, bard.' For the importance of the term *uates* for Augustan poets, see Newman (1967).

human domain.<sup>341</sup> Both practices are highly ritualised activities that often contain a displacement of agency that allows a mitigation of responsibility.<sup>342</sup> This is especially true in divinatory practices like astrology, which rely on the authority of the external source, in this case Apollo, for their legitimacy. This astrologer, even if unbidden, displaces a certain level of agency from Propertius in his execution of a new poetic project; in the same way, Apollo, both here and previously, provides justification for the poet's choice of elegiac poetry over epic. Horos' outsider status foreshadows the subversive and ambiguous nature of the poetry in this book. This confusion between what is normative and what is non-normative further contributes to the collapsing of distinctions between categories — epic, elegy, magic, religion, east, west, feminine, masculine.<sup>343</sup> This tension between magic and religion lends itself to the ambiguity in Propertius Book 4.

## 2. Female Voices: The Elegiac Sphere

This section will analyse four poems (4.5, 4.7, 4.8, and 4.11) that demonstrate a level of engagement with elements of magic, female voices, and ambiguous rituals. These four poems, with their emphasis on women's voices, contain competing narratives that directly challenge the narrative control of the poet-lover, much like Horos does in the opening poem.<sup>344</sup> These marginal characters are used to provoke thought and cause us to re-examine the world crafted by Propertius. As Gardner asserts, 'the very marginality associated with feminine subjectivity makes the female subjects of elegy potent figures of resistance.'<sup>345</sup> There is a veritable graveyard of women in this book. Two of the women concerned, Acanthis and Cynthia, further occupy a liminal space both as members of a *demi-monde* and through the uncertainty of their continued existence, since one is said to have died and the other first appears as a ghost in this book. Even Cornelia, the character most aligned with Augustan Rome, inhabits this uncanny space as she speaks to the reader from

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<sup>341</sup> Sørensen and Petersen (2021), 11.

<sup>342</sup> For a fuller discussion of what this entails see Sørensen and Petersen (2021), 11-12.

<sup>343</sup> On the erosion between aetiological and erotic categories in Book 4, see Wyke (2002), 83; DeBrohun (2003), 22-4; Hutchinson (2006), 2; O'Rourke (2011), 14.

<sup>344</sup> These are not the only poems of this book to articulate female voices, but they will be the focus of this present section as they also have strong thematic links to magic and ritual.

<sup>345</sup> Gardner (2013), 152. Cf. Wyke (2002), 78: '...literary representations of the female are determined both at the level of culture and the level of genre.'

the grave. In the first part of this section, we will look at how ambiguous rituals are potentially used to hasten the death of the procuress Acanthis in 4.5. Then we will look at Cynthia's return from the dead and her accusations of witchcraft against a female rival. In 4.8, we will look at how the ritual at the beginning foreshadows the later gender role reversals in the poem. Finally, in Propertius' final poem, 4.11, we will look at how Cornelia is positioned as both a paradigm of normative values as well as a detractor of them. Propertius 4 is embedded in an atmosphere of death and darkness. Ambiguous rituals take centre stage as this new poetic project forces the reader to reexamine Propertian poetry.

#### 4.5

The subject of 4.5 is a previously unknown *lena* named Acanthis, who gives practical advice to Propertius' mistress on how to garner the most profit from a lover. As Hutchinson notes, Acanthis comprises one of the most substantial characters in Propertius' elegies, other than the poet-lover himself and Cynthia, and ostensibly reintroduces the fourth book to elegy proper.<sup>346</sup> The procuress' lessons are antithetical to the aims of the poet-lover, who seeks to gain access to the mistress for a song. Acanthis is not the first marginal, or even female, voice in this book, but the ambiguity of her status (living or dead), the presence of sympathetic magic rituals, and the temporal contradictions in the poem set her apart from the others. Unlike Tibullus, who goes out of his way to paint the interfering procuress as a witch-like figure rather than proclaiming it outright, here Propertius directly accuses Acanthis of practicing magic. In lines 5-18 he supplies a list of her magical abilities and activities. He uses the hyperbolic examples of Hippolytus (line 5) and Penelope (line 7), both famed for their chastity, to underscore how powerful Acanthis is that she is able to bend even these two to her will should she wish it. Propertius then becomes more specific in his description of her abilities (Prop. 4.5.11-18):

quippe et, Collinas ad fossam mouerit herbas,  
stantia currenti diluerentur aqua:  
audax cantatae leges imponere lunae

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<sup>346</sup> Hutchinson (2006), 136-7.

et sua nocturno fallere terga lupo,  
posset ut intentos astu caecare maritos,  
cornicum immeritas eruit ungue genas;  
consuluitque striges nostro de sanguine,<sup>347</sup> et in me  
hippomanes fetae semina legit equae.

[Indeed, if she had brought Colline herbs to the trench, solid objects would dissolve into running water. She dared to place spells on the enchanted moon and to disguise herself as a nocturnal wolf; so that she would be able to blind watchful husbands with her arts, she ripped out the undeserving eyes of crows; she consulted screech owls<sup>348</sup> on how she might have my blood, and she gathered the fluid of a pregnant mare [to use] against me.]

At first, those whom Propertius claims that Acanthis could harm are mythical, and thus improbable victims. However, by the end of his description of her powers, the *lena* constitutes an explicit threat to the poet, as well as to the unnamed husbands, whom she threatens with her sympathetic magic spell, and further, she is allegedly seeking special counsel to deal with Propertius. How the procuress would use these things against the poet is unclear; the ambiguity could be purposeful, adding to the ominous atmosphere of the poem. The mention of blood suggests something sinister, but it could simply be for the purpose of crafting a more potent love potion or spell rather than something more intentionally deadly.<sup>349</sup> Yet, it is odd that Propertius, as an elegiac lover, would align himself

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<sup>347</sup> *Nostro de sanguine* — this exact phrase is used at Prop. 2.7.14, a poem that expresses the tension between traditional warfare and love, to describe the poet's inability to conform to Roman conventions that dictate that he should marry and beget sons to fight for the glory of Rome. More specifically, the poem seems to be referencing a marriage law that would have forced the poet and his mistress apart. What the specific law was is unclear: see Badian (1985). Gale (1997, 90-1) argues that 2.7 is more nuanced than a simple rejection of the Augustan moral program as well as the conventional dictates of his class and gender, and that Propertius is playing on the ironies between the normative and his own persona in the poem to demonstrate the inconsistencies that exist in both stances. How this translates to Acanthis' consultation on the poet's blood is less clear. However, if we are to take the phrase in 4.5 as a reference to a love potion, Propertius would be so enamoured of Cynthia that he would be unable to conform (even if he wanted to) to societal custom and marry. This could be another piece of revision, with Acanthis' interference as the reason why he is so adamantly opposed to behaving according to his station and why he is so infatuated with Cynthia.

<sup>348</sup> Or, potentially, other witches. Wilkinson, (1967, 137) believes, in line with Shackleton Bailey (1956, 241), that the *striges* here refer to witches rather than screech owls. The passage could either be interpreted as Acanthis using a form of haruspicy (or, less likely, augury) or that she was consulting with other witches on how best to proceed with whatever enterprise she required the poet's blood for.

<sup>349</sup> This draws on the Deianeira tradition. A more immediate literary reminder of this episode is contained in Horace's *Epod.* 17.76, when the poet mentions that he burns more than Hercules under the effects of Nessus'

with potential rivals by placing himself in the role of the victim alongside the deceived husbands. If anything, Acanthis' magical spells would be beneficial to the lover who is trying to gain access to the elegiac *puella*, in the sense that the blinding of husbands would be a service that lovers might seek from witches (cf. Tib. 1.2.43-60) to more easily gain access to the elegiac mistress, who is often under guard of a husband.

Although the poet accuses Acanthis of practicing magic, he does not claim that he has personally witnessed her powers in the same way others have. However, his knowledge of her supposed actions implies that he is acquainted with them in some fashion, perhaps from his own recourse to her services (1.1.19-24), which would suggest that he was not unwilling to pay for her assistance in the past. Or this accusation could be part of an attempt to undermine Acanthis' influence on others, namely Cynthia, by maligning her character as he only claims firsthand knowledge of her death, not her practices.<sup>350</sup> In further contrast from the *lena* of Tibullus' poems, Acanthis seems to have more agency: rather than being cursed into becoming witch-like, she performs such activities of her own volition, at least according to Propertius. Moreover, Acanthis' magical powers are described, at first, with verbs in the subjunctive mood (8 *cogeret*; 11 *mouerit*; 12 *diluerentur*), and then shift to the indicative (16 *eruit*; 17 *consuluit*; 18 *legit*). This change comes when the poet moves from recounting her generic abilities, those that conform to the typical catalogue of a witch's abilities, to outlining actions that could cause him personal harm. Regardless of the mood, the verbs are all in the past tense, signaling that her influence over him is also in the past. However, directly following Propertius' allegation that Acanthis had formerly acted as an impediment to his love affair, the reader is confronted with the *lena's* direct speech (presumably to Cynthia or another protégé) on how to be a profitable mistress.<sup>351</sup> Her speech (21-62) occupies more than half of the entire poem. This speech serves to highlight

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blood (the main ingredient in the 'love potion' used by Deianeira). The poem is a palinode retracting Horace's earlier abuse of Canidia and his doubts concerning her power. The reference here could be doubly magical, first alluding to the tradition of love philtres as poison, and secondly in relation to Horace's Canidia, who acts as the Latin archetype of the greedy and rapacious old woman witch-figure. Even the context of the poem, as a palinode, might be a hint at the revision of earlier books that is about to occur in Acanthis' speech. Propertius may not be retracting his earlier statements, but Acanthis is causing certain episodes to be cast in a new light, and essentially placing him in the position of an unreliable narrator.

<sup>350</sup> Cf. Hutchinson (2006), 137-42 argues that the poet's aspersions against magic act to diminish the reader's confidence in the narrator, who uses magic as a smoke screen to prevent a comparison between himself and the *lena*.

<sup>351</sup> James (2001), 35-70 argues that Acanthis, and other *lenae*, are former mistresses themselves and their advice comes from experience; sex workers who give themselves away for free (for a song) become poor.

the jarring temporal shift that occurs when the *lena*, who is depicted as already dead, is suddenly placed in the present before having her death and pathetic funeral (67-72) described immediately after her speech. The chronological confusion of events in this poem is likely purposeful. Placing the poem ostensibly in the past from the outset suggests that earlier events will be reexamined in a new light, in line with the revisionist nature of Book 4.

In her own words, Acanthis never advises Cynthia to resort to witchcraft and, indeed, seems to subtly disparage its use in love affairs when she says that Thais should be used as a model for love rather than Medea (4.5.41-44 *nec te Medea delectent probra sequacis | (nempe tulit fastus ausa rogare prior) | sed potius mundi Thais pretiosa Menandri | cum ferit astutos comica moecha Getas*).<sup>352</sup> Although she has been characterized as a witch, not once does Acanthis advise her protégé to do anything remotely magical. Indeed, the only reference to magic in the procuress' speech, despite the narrator's claim that she is a proficient magic user, is the mention of Medea, an archetypal witch. However, it is not for her magical abilities that she is named, but as a negative paradigm; she is an example of how not to behave as a mistress. Reference to Medea here is not necessarily out of place, especially given the accusation towards Acanthis at the beginning, but it is a bit more nuanced than that. Here Acanthis' rejection of Medea could be seen as a direct contradiction of the poet's characterization of her. This raises questions as to the reliability of Propertius as a narrator.

Furthermore, it could be said that, poetically speaking, the poet-lover needs the *lena* because if his love is simply fulfilled, then he would have no material to write his poetry with. The lack of Acanthis' presence in his first three books does not lessen this fact. Rather her appearance in this poem acts as a vehicle for revision, causing the readers to question what they previously thought certain, effectively rewriting the story of Propertius' relationship with Cynthia. The prominent placement of 4.5 in this book asks the reader to reflect on previous poems and question Propertius' previous narrative. While Acanthis threatens the poet's authorial control, she also plays a necessary role in elegiac poetry. This accords with the argument that the *lena* is the poetic alter-ego of the elegiac narrator, but

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<sup>352</sup> O'Neill (1998), 61-2 notes that her presentation of two characters, Medea and Thais, one as a negative paradigm and the other as a model courtesan, plays subtly with the genres of tragedy and comedy, expressing the dichotomy of definition between whether Acanthis is a witch, as he claims, or a courtesan, as she claims. While both Hutchinson (2006) and Heyworth (2007) mention Medea as an exemplum, neither comment on her magical associations.

also the predecessor of the elegiac *puella*, who one day will also suffer the fate of growing old and ugly without a guarantee of financial security.<sup>353</sup> Winkler supports this interpretation of the roles of the lover and the *lena*, asserting that the women who often earn the designation witch are victims of male anxieties.<sup>354</sup> Despite the accusation of witchcraft, it is the poet who seems to step into the role of magic user.

Propertius takes his curse poem a step further than Tibullus, who merely implies that he has the ability to perform magic, by actually performing a magical ritual. Although the poet accuses Acanthis of using sympathetic magic, tearing out of crows' eyes to blind husbands (15-6), she offers no evidence of such activities in her own speech. All her advice, while mercenary in nature, is practical to the point of being mundane. The only case of sympathetic magic present in this poem where the reader sees a potential result is committed by Propertius himself, not the *lena*, when he cuts the throat of a dove. This act immediately follows Acanthis' advice to Cynthia. Tibullus describes his participation in a healing ritual (Tib. 1.5.9-16) and hints at his ability to do more nefarious things (Tib. 2.6.37-40), but never goes so far as to describe anything concretely malicious. On the other hand, Propertius freely admits to partaking in a ritual of sympathetic magic, veiled as an act of devotion to Venus, in which the express purpose could only be to cause harm to Acanthis (Prop. 4.5.65-70):

sed cape torquatae, Venus o regina, columbae  
ob meritum ante tuos guttura secta focos.  
uidi ego rugoso tussim concrescere collo,  
sputaque per dentes ire cruenta cauos,  
atque animam in tegetes putrem exspirare paternas:  
horruit argenti pergula curua foco.

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<sup>353</sup> Myers (1996), 1-21 and Gardner (2013), 208-218. James (2003), 53 argues that the *lena* is the true rival of the poet-lover, that her persuasive power is so great it threatens the elegists' authority and the poet's recourse to cursing exemplifies his failure to best the *lena*. Janan (2001), 89-90 notes that the poet's charges against Acanthis seem to magnify the traits in Cynthia which he did not care for (rapaciousness, fickleness), which further emphasises Cynthia's imminent future as a *lena* herself, when her faded beauty can no longer attract lovers. Acanthis' 'posthumous' advice also vindicates Cynthia's behaviour in earlier poems, which is important to justify the claims that Propertius' mistress makes in 4.7, the next elegiac poem of book four.

<sup>354</sup> Winkler (1991), 85.

[But accept my offering, Queen Venus, the throat of a ring-dove cut before your altar. I saw the cough stiffen in her wrinkled throat, and the bloody spittle pass through her hollow teeth, and saw her breathe her [last] putrid breath on ancient bedcoverings: her crooked hovel shivered with its fire gone out.]

Directly following his description of the ritual Propertius claims to have seen her death (*uidi ego*); the timing suggests that this death is a result of his spell. The object of this ritual is made evident when the poet describes Acanthis' bloody end. The parallels between his act of devotion to Venus and the death, imagined or not, of Acanthis is evident. O'Neill makes an interesting point that this rite is followed by a couplet beginning with *uidi ego* (67), which marks an internal echo with the text, the utterance of the curse and rite acting as a sort of 'spell' that has a causative effect on the *lena*.<sup>355</sup> Although Acanthis' speech causes the reader to reinterpret the poet's words from earlier books, here Propertius is recasting the *lena's* words and actions within the same poem. The poet's use of the phrase *uidi ego* to emphasize his knowledge of her death follows Acanthis' own use (61-2 *uidi ego odoratum uictura rosaria Paestum | sub matutino cocta iacere Noto*) where she employs it in a metaphor to stress how quickly youth slips away. Her analogy about roses in bloom abruptly withering pertains both to the brevity of beauty (she was presumably once a mistress herself), as well as to her own life, soon to be cut short by the poet's actions. Her words reflect an uncharacteristic elegance,<sup>356</sup> whereas the poet's words focus on a surprisingly crude act. Propertius' spell is not a veiled or toothless threat as the reader is immediately confronted with the poet's desired results. The poet's positioning the ritual between the procuress' speech and her death implies the efficacy of the ritual or, at least, the poet's belief in it. Acanthis' death might be a subtle reflection on Augustus' regime and the bloody wars that brought him to power, especially as this poem is directly followed by the patriotic 4.6, which extols the virtues of peace bought at the price of violence. Here violence on the part of the poet was necessary to produce peace in his elegiac world.

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<sup>355</sup> Cf. Tib. 1.2.45: the narrator claims to have seen (*uidi ego*) a particular witch perform a catalogue of impressive feats in a bid to convince his mistress Delia to come to him. There is clearly a parallel here between the two, placing Acanthis as a similar witch-type figure, except here her abilities are supposedly used to the detriment of the poet-lover rather than in aid of him. O'Neill (1998), 68-9 believes that Propertius uses this intertext to reinforce his claims that a *lena*, who prejudiced his mistress against him, is dead.

<sup>356</sup> Or, as the *lena* is an older version of the *docta puella*, it is not at all strange that she is 'intelligent, educated, elegant, charming' (James 2003, 26; 53-4).

In addition, there is precedent for Aphrodite as the instructor or titular deity in a magical ritual.<sup>357</sup> Despite Venus' status as a canonical Roman deity, gaining particular importance during the Augustan period, this sort of ritual would not have been considered as part of her cult in normative religion, rather it would be characterized as a malicious magical act. Due to Venus' prominence in sympathetic magical rituals, especially amatory ones, it would probably not surprise the reader to find her in an elegiac poem. Though Venus may have been commonplace in love magic, it is odd that she is present in a ritual clearly intended to produce death. One might argue that her presence is fitting as Acanthis has violated the bonds of love (cf. Tib. 1.9.19-20) and should be punished by its patroness. The reference to Isis (34 *fac simules puros Isidos esse dies*), however brief, creates a subtle juxtaposition between the two goddesses; one, the patron of the poet and more normative, is appealed to enact revenge against a rival and the other, a foreign goddess with magical associations, is supposedly used by the mistresses to excuse them from lovemaking. Isis is aligned with the procuress by her status as an outsider as well as through the procuress' own employment of the goddess as a delayer. Moreover, Isis' presence evokes both her role as a healer and her magical abilities, but Acanthis draws on neither of these.<sup>358</sup> The only ritual in evidence relates to the poet's sacrifice to Venus. Propertius' seemingly successful enactment of a spell against the *lena* exposes the hypocrisy of his charges against Acanthis.<sup>359</sup> Since he engages in magic himself, Propertius clearly only condemns it when it is used against him. The matter is not as simple as painting magic as a disruptive and malevolent force, rather the use (or lack thereof) of magic exhibits an internal incoherence that problematizes the poet's narrative. Although Acanthis' presence can certainly be seen as representing a level of resistance to the more official agenda of the book, one cannot escape the fact that it is the poet-lover who first brings her to the reader's attention by

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<sup>357</sup> Cf. Pindar *Pyth.* 4.213-219. Also, see *PGM* IV.2891ff and *PGM* IV.34-48, which both demonstrate a dove being sacrificed to Aphrodite in a spell. For torture in love magic see Faraone (1999), 56-69.

<sup>358</sup> Isis is no stranger to love spells (e.g., *PGM* IV.94-153; *PGM* VIII.1-63; *PGM* XII.14-95; *PGM* XII.365-75; *PDM* XII.50-61; *PDM* XIV.150-231). However, the Egyptian goddess is one of the most cited in spell formulae: see Betz (1992).

<sup>359</sup> There are hints of this in his initial description of Acanthis' powers. He mentions magnets, evoking Lucretius (6.1042-9), the rational philosopher. The procuress' ability to make even magnets impotent (9-10) is cited as an example of how powerful she is, that she can make people and objects act against their nature. Yet, Lucretius' description of magnets points out that magnets can both attract and repulse, something an educated reader might remember. His use of a reference to a rational philosopher only underscores the irrationality of his own position. Hutchinson (2006, 141) notes this intertext with Lucretius.

cursing her and delineating how powerful she is, despite her position as an impoverished *lena* on the fringes of society.

Following in this vein of cursing, this poem begins and closes with a curse against Acanthis, whose crime was supposedly leading Cynthia astray. It is likely inspired by Tibullus 1.5, who also vehemently curses his own *lena*. Acanthis' speech may comprise more than half of the poem, but it is bookended by the poet's maledictions; despite the *lena's* elegant rhetoric, it is Propertius who gets the first and last word. The first two couplets of 4.5 function as a curse (Prop. 4.5.1-4):

Terra tuum spinis obducat, lena, sepulcrum,  
et tua, quod non uis, sentiat umbra sitim;  
nec sedeant cineri Manes, et Cerberus ultor  
turpia ieiuno terreat ossa sono!

[May the earth cover your grave with thorns, procuress, and, what you would not want, may your shade feel thirst; may your spirit find no peace with your ashes, and may avenging Cerberus terrify your vile bones with a hungry howl.]

Here he is detailing how he wants both her physical remains and her spirit to suffer after death. It is not enough that she dies a horrible death, she must continue to pay for her crimes against love, and more importantly, her crimes against the poet. Both 4.4, which focuses on Tarpeia's inappropriate lust and betrayal of Rome, and 4.5 begin with a woman's tomb and end their first lines with the word *sepulcrum*; this echo implies that Acanthis is as terrible as one of Rome's eponymous villains. Tupet suggests that the act of cursing is Propertius' first step towards magic, his actions becoming more overtly magical and violent later in the poem, when he shifts from words to action.<sup>360</sup> The opening line of invective inverts Tibullus' wish that faithful mistresses should have a peaceful and well-tended grave (2.4.49-50).<sup>361</sup> This comes after the poet curses those who procured wealth and the gods, including Venus, who allowed such beauty and greed to run rampant. If this is meant to be a

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<sup>360</sup> Tupet (1976), 331.

<sup>361</sup> Hutchinson (2006), 139.

subtle intertext to the Tibullan poem, which additionally engages with the subject of magic, then Acanthis is receiving the punishment of those who are too avaricious in love.

The final curse, consisting of the last two couplets in the poem, concerns a more elaborate desecration of her grave (Prop. 4.5.75-78):

sit tumulus lenae curto uetus amphora collo:  
urgeat hunc supra uis, caprifice, tua.  
quisquis amas, scabris hoc bustum caedite saxis,  
mixtaque cum saxis addite uerba mala!

[Let the bawd's tomb be an old wine-jar with a broken neck, and over it, wild fig-tree, ply your might. Whoever loves, strike this grave with jagged stones, and mixed with the stones, cast curses!]

The poet enjoins all those who have loved to participate in the destruction of Acanthis' already rather meager gravesite. She has no one to mourn her passing or take care of her bones, not even any of the girls she had advised. Acanthis receives her just desserts, in the poet's view, for her corruption of love. Even this last curse could be seen as a loose description of how she died, with the reference to the broken neck of the wine-jar being analogous to both her bloody throat and the slit throat of the dove (*collo* is used at line 67 to specifically refer to Acanthis' bloody throat and at line 75 to refer to the broken amphora). The poet's fixation on Acanthis' physical appearance (67-72) recalls his curse against Cynthia at the end of Book 3, where the poet wishes that old age will bear down hard on his mistress (3.25.11-14). Control, over both Cynthia and the narrative, is an important theme here. The entire poem demonstrates a power struggle between the *lena* and the poet, who are negotiating the liminal space of the text. Myers sees the poet's imprecation of the procuress as a means to reassert his dominance over the text.<sup>362</sup> Propertius' performance of black magic takes this assertion of dominance a step further. He is not content simply to curse her, he attempts to turn the tables on Acanthis, successfully by his own account, by using her own tools against her and reasserting his dominance over

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<sup>362</sup> Myers (1996), 11.

the text. The discrepancy between their words, Acanthis' elegant speech and the poet's harsh cursing, demonstrates a fundamental difference between the two characters, and leaves the reader with a sympathetic impression of the *lena*.

There is a split in sympathy for the procuress who suffers such a horrible death for providing the elegiac *puella* with practical advice and the poet-lover who is excluded from love on account of her advice.<sup>363</sup> In this poem, Acanthis offers her guidance, presumably derived from experience, with no apparent benefit for herself, and, with the poet-lover dictating the terms of her narrative, pays the ultimate price for her interference. As someone who had such a persuasive influence over Cynthia while living, the *lena* had to be silenced. What does her death mean for elegy? One would think that it would signal the end of elegy, perhaps suggesting the poet's intention to fulfill his goal of writing aetiological poetry. This does not seem to be the case strictly speaking, as elegy haunts even the final poem of this book. Indeed, the very next 'elegiac' poem in the book, 4.7, sees the death of Propertius' love interest, Cynthia, but even this does not mark the end of elegy in his poems. There is a struggle for poetic control. More than anything else, Propertius is presented as the destructive force in this poem, at least physically. This is perhaps fitting as the next poem recounts Actium, the bloody result of male aristocratic competition and war with a foreign queen. Unlike, 4.5, which contains a female voice embedded in, or perhaps interrupting, male rhetoric, 4.6, which seems to toe the official line, is structurally embedded between two elegiac poems. Its conspicuous placement between two eerie poems both occludes the official poem and gives it more prominence. This more patriotic poem will see the poet shift from participating in ambiguous rituals to acting as a *uates* for Apollo in a civic ceremony.

#### 4.7

In this next elegiac poem we are confronted with a literal ghost. This sustains the memory of Acanthis' death and immediately follows a celebration of the battle of Actium, which certainly would have conjured up the spectre of the civil war. Despite having finished with Cynthia at the end of Book 3, here, more than halfway through the last book, she makes a

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<sup>363</sup> Gutzwiller (1985), 112.

startling reappearance. The poem opens with a description of her ghost coming to the poet in his sleep. The greater part of the poem is taken up by her direct speech, similar to Acanthis' speech in 4.5, and, much like the preceding elegiac poem, contains an accusation of witchcraft. As in Cornelia's speech, which takes control of her narrative in 4.11, this speech uses formulaic language and rhetorical techniques.<sup>364</sup> Throughout her speech, Cynthia accuses Propertius of forgetting about her (13-22); she claims that he has failed to observe proper burial rites (23-34), that a rival has poisoned her and now another usurps her position (35-48), that she has a superior status in the underworld due to her fidelity (49-70); she dictates her orders for her grave and her servants (71-86) and then bids an ominous farewell to the poet (87-94). Before the reader can hear her speak, we are confronted with the poet's description of her (Prop. 4.7.1-12):

Sunt aliquid Manes<sup>365</sup>: letum non omnia finit,  
 luridaque euictos effugit umbra rogos.  
 Cynthia namque meo uisa est incumbere fulcro,  
 murmur ad extremae nuper humata uiae,<sup>366</sup>  
 cum mihi somnus ab exsequiis penderet amoris,  
 et quererer lecti frigida regna mei.  
 eosdem habuit secum quibus est elata capillos,  
 eosdem oculos: lateri uestis adusta fuit,  
 et solitum digito beryllon adederat ignis,  
 summaque Lethaeus triuerat ora liquor.

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<sup>364</sup> Muecke (1974), 127.

<sup>365</sup> For parallels with Homeric epic see Hutchinson (2006), Muecke (1974), and Yardley (1977). The manner in which she is described (hair, eyes, clothes), besides the effects of the funeral pyre and river Lethe on her body, follows closely with the description of Patroclus' ghost (Hom. *Il.* 23.66-7).

<sup>366</sup> Or the line could be *murmur ad extremae nuper humata tubae* (recently buried to the murmur of the funeral trumpet). Heyworth (2007, 464) argues for *tubae* (Housman), as objections to this change based on Cynthia's own words would imply that she was telling the truth about her funeral, which is not a given. So, if we take *tubae* as the correct reading, it could be read as a direct refutation of her claims that her burial rites were neglected, embedded in the text before she has a chance to 'complain.' However, if we take *uiae* (Ω) as the correct reading, Cynthia's accusation of indifference on the poet's part might well be true. Replacing *uiae* would also negate the resonance it has with one of his earlier poems (3.16.21-30), where the poet expresses his wish to receive all his due burial rites from Cynthia and not be buried beside the bustling road. This seems to be another case of the poet expressing how he would want Cynthia to behave at his own death, yet not following through for her when she passes before him (see discussion of 2.27 below). Based on this, and the link with 3.16, *uiae* seems the appropriate choice.

spirantisque animos et uocem misit: at illi  
pollicibus fragiles increpuere manus

[So ghosts do exist: death is not the end of all, and a pale shade escapes the vanquished pyre. For Cynthia seemed to lean over my bed, recently buried near the murmur at the road's edge, when, because of my love's funeral, sleep was intermittent for me and I bemoaned the cold kingdom of my bed. Her hair and her eyes were the same as when she was buried: her dress was scorched to her side, and the fire had gnawed at the familiar beryl on her finger, and the Lethe's water had withered her upper lip. It was a living voice and spirit that came forth, but her brittle hands cracked with her thumbs.]

He reintroduces her revenant<sup>367</sup> by describing the same features that were so prominent to the living Cynthia (hair, eyes, dress). However, these familiar features have already experienced the degradation of death and her shade bears the marks of it. The reader is confronted with the harsh transformations that her demise has wrought on her 'physical' form. Gone is the beauty that once characterized her; the same beauty that so captivated the poet.<sup>368</sup> Her appearance is made even more uncanny by the fact that her features retain some of the characteristics she possessed while living, especially her eyes which first bewitched the poet (1.1.1 *me cepit ocellis*). She is the 'embodiment' of the poem's aesthetics and presents a rather macabre visual.<sup>369</sup> What does it mean that Cynthia, the poet's muse for the first three books, now appears in this decayed state? The changes to her appearance might imply that the identity crafted for her by the poet-lover is also starting to erode, allowing her finally to give her own account of their affair. Another possibility is that her visual condition is a reflection of the poet's attempt to pursue a different poetic project; he desires to write epic, but his elegiac past still haunts him. Thus Cynthia, an elegiac *puella*, appears in a manner reminiscent of an epic character, Patroclus, acting as a subversion of the loftier genre. It is certainly unusual for ghosts to bear the marks of the events that occur after death. Far more common is for a ghost to appear with the wounds received at the

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<sup>367</sup> Ogden (2002), 146: she seems to fit three overlapping categories of ghosts (*aōroi* 'those dead before their time'; *bi(ai)othanatoi* 'those dead by violence'; and *ataphoi* 'those deprived of burial') depending on whose side of the story you trust. Regardless, she is clearly one of the restless undead.

<sup>368</sup> Cf. 1.1 and 2.1, where her beauty is depicted as divine. For the divinity of her beauty, see Curtis (2019).

<sup>369</sup> Papanghelis (1987), 149.

moment of death (cf. Tib. 2.6.38-40; Verg. *Aen.* 2.270-3). Here it is Cynthia who wakes the sleeping poet, rather than Propertius rousing her (cf. Prop. 1.3). This ‘inversion of early elegiac tropes’ demonstrates a reversal of positions that may symbolise how she is in control of the narrative now rather than the poet.<sup>370</sup> This suggests that there are gaps in Propertius’ narrative history and that we might not know the Cynthia previously presented to us as well as we think we might.<sup>371</sup>

Her coming to the upper world to advocate for the better treatment of certain servants and to mete out punishments for others is almost a reversal of the epic *nekuia*.<sup>372</sup> Generally this technique is used by a living person, often some sort of magic user, in order to gain exclusive information from the dead.<sup>373</sup> Instead, in this poem she voluntarily comes up from the underworld to narrate the deeds, both good and bad, of those who were a part of her life. Her ghostly resurrection from the dead and manifestation before the poet, while clearly influenced by Homeric epic, could also be drawing inspiration from Hor. *Sat.* 1.8, Tib. 2.6.37-40, and even Propertius’ description of Acanthis’ actions in 4.5. Moreover, Cynthia claims that her fidelity to the poet has earned her a place in the ship sailing towards Elysium (53-70).<sup>374</sup> The benefits of the good part of the underworld seem negligible at best; the Elysium that Cynthia depicts is filled with unending suffering, where women who would have died long before her seem suspended in time, not yet reaching their destination, unless we are to believe that Elysium is the ship, which seems highly unlikely. For some reason, these virtuous women are never allowed to forget the pains they suffered in life. They bear marks of their suffering in the same manner that troubled ghosts bear the signs of their death when haunting relatives or those that wronged them. This is especially peculiar as both the women used to illustrate the character of those who are granted entrance to Elysium, Andromeda and Hypermestra, survived the ordeals they faced. Yet despite later

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<sup>370</sup> Wallis (2016), 558-60.

<sup>371</sup> E.g., The favourite beryl ring (*9 solitum digito beryllon*). Although 3.6 mentions an absence of rings on her fingers, implying she was accustomed to wearing them, there is no mention of a beryl. 3.6 is also a poem that mentions the slave Lygdamus and contains an accusation of magic.

<sup>372</sup> Allison (1984), 357. First appearing in the *Odyssey*, this ritual itself is one of the earliest literary examples of witchcraft, performed by Odysseus with the blessing of the gods rather than as a subversive act, as it is usually presented in Roman literature (cf. Tib. 1.2.47-8; Prop. 4.5.11; Ov. *Am.* 1.8.17-8). It usually involves the summoning of ghosts to seek information about both past and future events. Here Cynthia comes voluntarily with knowledge of events after her death, and warns, or threatens, that the poet-lover will join her in the underworld soon enough.

<sup>373</sup> Cic. *Tusc.* 1.37; Herod. 5.92; Plut. *Cimon* 6; Hor. *Sat.* 1.8; Lucan. *Phar.* 6.588-830; Prop. 4.5.11.

<sup>374</sup> Cf. Tib. 1.3.65-82.

marrying and having children they are not allowed to rest; in the afterlife they are defined by the misfortunes they endured earlier in life. This gives the impression that it might not have been their fidelity alone, as Cynthia states, that entitled them to Elysium, but their suffering as lovers, as in Tib. 1.5.

In keeping with the eerie atmosphere of the poem, we also find reference to magic here. There are two allusions to magic in this poem, both voiced by the recently departed Cynthia. The first, and more pertinent of the two, appears in the form of Cynthia's accusations against two slaves. She blames her death on a collusion between Lygdamus and Nomas, alleging that they used poison to remove her from the picture (Prop. 4.7.35-38):

‘Lygdamus uratur, candescat lamina uernae:  
sensi ego,<sup>375</sup> cum insidiis pallida uina bibi.  
ut Nomas arcanas tollat uersuta saliuas,  
dicet damnatas ignea testa manus.

[‘Let Lygdamus be burned, let the poker become white hot for that slave: I knew when I drank the wine that turned me pale with a treacherous trick, although resourceful Nomas disposes of her secret venoms, the burning-hot brick will condemn her hands.]

The act of poisoning was always strongly associated with magic and there was little legal distinction between the casting of spells and other acts aimed at bodily harm.<sup>376</sup> Sudden death would often evoke accusations of witchcraft, usually against outsiders or those of inferior status, and these accusations are generally believed to have been a coping

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<sup>375</sup> Cf. *uidi ego* at 4.5.61 and 67. Cynthia's words here, embedded in a line conveying an accusation of malicious magic use, might draw the reader back to the poet's earlier use of the phrase *uidi ego*, with its own magical connotations. If *sensi ego* is meant to remind us of 4.5, there is a certain amount of ambiguity here. On one hand, the phrase that it is reminiscent of is used in an act of sympathetic magic, apparently successful, enacted by Propertius. On the other, it is also voiced by Acanthis whose own speech seems to negate the accusation of witchcraft made against her by the poet. This echo might actually be calling into question the veracity of Cynthia's aspersions, rather than confirming them.

<sup>376</sup> The word *ueneficum* in the twelve tables encompassed both meanings. Though the text does not use this specific word, poison is strongly implied (see note 12). For further discussion on the link between poisoning and magic in literature see: Dickie (2001), 137; Rives (2002), 276. Also see Collins (2008, 145-6) on how the conflation between poisoner (*ueneficus*) and magician was codified in the law with the passing of the *Lex Cornelia* in 81 BC.

mechanism for dealing with the unexpected loss.<sup>377</sup> However, as ghosts are thought to possess special knowledge, Cynthia might not be making a baseless claim. Also, as related in 4.8 (which is set chronologically prior to 4.7, if we are to believe in a sense of chronology), there was a pre-existing grievance between Lydgamus and Cynthia. In this previous episode she badly beats the slave, using him as a scapegoat for Propertius' attempts at infidelity, and demands that Lydgamus be sold (4.8.68-70; 79-80). Cynthia calls the slave the cause of all her complaints (4.8.79 *omnis mihi causa querelae*), whereas now, after her death, Propertius labels Cynthia's ghostly speech to him as a querulous complaint (4.7.95 *querula lite*).<sup>378</sup> Lydgamus' actions could have been a preemptive strike against the mistress for convincing Propertius to sell him, if the poet was actually going to follow through with his promise to do so. This bit of speculation is only valid if one accepts Propertius' invitation to fill the gaps in the narrative.<sup>379</sup> Moreover, there is an intertext with 3.6 through the presence of Lygdamus (3.6.2, 11, 19, 24, 31, 36, 42), the accusation of magic (3.6.25-30), and, more generally, rings (3.6.14). This intertext strengthens Cynthia's accusations. Speaking to Lygdamus in 3.6, Cynthia exasperatedly says that the poet should mock her death (24 *si placet, insultet, Lygdame, morte mea*); a death that does occur here in the following book.

That is not the end of the allegations of magical misconduct. Following her litany of complaints against the poet and those who abused her, Cynthia makes a second accusation of witchcraft (Prop. 4.7.71-72):

'sed tibi nunc mandata damus, si forte moueris,  
si te non totum Chloridos herba tenet:

[‘But now I give you instructions, if perchance you are moved, and if Chloris' herbs do not hold complete sway over you’]

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<sup>377</sup> Graf (2014), 389-90.

<sup>378</sup> Wallis (2014), 565-6 notes that the poet, by labelling her speech as *querula*, places Cynthia in the role of an elegiac lover.

<sup>379</sup> For a discussion of narrative time in Book 4, see Liveley (2010), 111-27.

This accusation seems a bit more tongue-in-cheek than the first. Here, Cynthia provides an excuse for Propertius' neglect of her funeral rites and lack of empathy towards her now, while chastising him for his forgetful behaviour. Though the first accusation towards Lydgamus and Nomas explains her death, it does not provide a vindication of his actions after her death. Furthermore, she uses his own words against him, just as Acanthis does, revising or causing the reader to revisit previous poems. Among the many failings in the administration of her funeral, she asserts that the poet did not even call out her name (Prop. 4.7.23-24):

at mihi non oculos quisquam inclamauit eunti:  
unum impetrassem te reuocante diem:

[But no one cried out upon my eyes at my passing: had you called me back, I would have gained one more day.]

In this couplet, Cynthia complains that Propertius did not even call out her name in the hopes that she would return from the dead, the one thing he had previously asked her to do for him should he die (Prop. 2.27.13-6):

iam licet et Stygia sedeat sub harundine remex,  
cernat et infernae tristia uela ratis:  
si modo clamantis reuocauerit aura puellae,  
concessum nulla lege redibit iter.

[Though he may as a rower already sit under the Stygian reed, and perceive the sad sails of the infernal boat: if only the breath of a shouting girl will call him back, he will return over the road permitted by no law.]

These lines might be interpreted as an allusion to Orpheus, where the *puella* acts as a reverse Orpheus in the first poem (having the power to bring the poet back from the dead with her voice); yet, when the poet had a chance to perform the same act, he did not do so for her. Cynthia is further calling him out for his failings as a self-professed devoted lover as

he did not even perform a simple action that would have cost him nothing. For someone who makes words his profession, his supposed silence here is strange. The eyes that so captivated him in the beginning no longer seem to hold sway over him. There is a distinct similarity between Cynthia's dismal funeral and the poet's wish for Acanthis to die in abject poverty. That is, if you believe Cynthia's account of her death and funeral. Propertius' own silence on the matter, neither confirming nor denying her complaints, compels the reader to entertain the possibility that her account is true. The *lena* was condemned and left forgotten because of her mercenary teachings. However, if his grief at Cynthia's death is genuine, then why did he allow her to experience such a lacklustre burial? Even if we were to allow *tubae* in the place of *uiae*, the poet still fails to cry out to his mistress at the funeral. His promises of what a faithful mistress (or he as a faithful lover) should have at their death seem rather hollow. This undermines his credibility and calls into question his testimony of Cynthia's previous behaviour. Or, perhaps, she did receive an appropriate funeral considering her infidelities, as 'documented' by Propertius in earlier poems (including the one that follows).

On one level, the ambiguity of Cynthia's death and burial follows the thread of the current poem (and book four in general) by highlighting the possibility that Propertius is an unreliable narrator of his affair, and on another it undercuts the reality of his claims of everlasting love for Cynthia. By so assiduously proclaiming her faithfulness, Cynthia is attempting to displace some of the poet's cold behaviour (his dismissal of her in 3.24-5) and is subtly chastising Propertius for his lack of *fides* (attempting to adopt a new poetic project).<sup>380</sup> Thus Cynthia is being more faithful to him than he is to her. The inscription (85-86 *hic sita Tiburna iacet aurea Cynthia terra; | accessit ripae laus, Aniene, tuae*) that she asks for would be in her own words and allow her to finally dictate her own narrative. She asks that he burn any poetry related to her so that she can stand on her own merits, without the poet's conflicting portrayal of her, and rejects having ivy harm her delicate bones (79 *pelle*<sup>381</sup> *hederam tumulo mihi, quae pugnante corymbo | mollia contortis alliget ossa comis*). The ivy, his poetic control over her, threatens to suffocate her story and is reminiscent of the thorns the poet wishes might grow over Acanthis' tomb. Only once Cynthia has arrived at the shores of death can she truly find her voice. However, her potential reference to the

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<sup>380</sup> Baker (1973), 288.

<sup>381</sup> *pelle*: pone *anon*. For a discussion of the *pone* replacing *pelle*, see Heyworth (2007), 471-2.

gates of Horn and Ivory (87-8 *nec tu sperne piis uenientia somnia portis: | cum pia uenerunt somnia pondus habent*), the gates of true and false dreams (cf. Hom. *Od.* 19.560-9; Verg. *Aen.* 6.893-6), calls attention to the very issue of truth, deception and fiction that conditions this macabre elegy.<sup>382</sup>

#### 4.8

Following on the heels of Cynthia's ghost, 4.8 begins as an aetiological poem, giving a short description of an ancient rite, but it quickly takes on aspects of an amatory poem as well. The introduction of a traditional rustic ritual is an especially jarring change of pace after the events of the last poem. We move from the private ritual of a funeral (or lack thereof) to a civic ceremony that was important for the security of the state.<sup>383</sup> However, before launching into the details of the ritual, the narrator directs us to learn about an incident that recently, only the previous night, caused a commotion on the Esquiline hill (1-2 *disce quid Esquilias hac nocte fugarit aquosas | cum uicina nouis turba cucurrit agris*). This first couplet signals that the poem will not follow the pattern of the aetiological poems, despite the aetiological framework.<sup>384</sup> The two Cynthia poems of this book both start with lines that distance the mistress from the poet.<sup>385</sup> It is not immediately clear at the beginning of either poem whether the poet is actually speaking in the first person or relating a narrative. Unlike with 4.7, here we have a civic ritual, a chastity test meant to ensure a good harvest, according to Propertius, rather than a magic ritual or spectral scene (4.8.3-14):

Lanuuium annosi uetus est tutela draconis:

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<sup>382</sup> For the reading of the Gates as indicative of the fictitious nature of 4.7, see Harrison (2018), 145-6.

<sup>383</sup> Rüpke (2007), 37; 45. The grove of Juno Sospita was administered jointly by Rome and Lanuvium; the cult located in the grove seems to have played a role in the protection and welfare of its citizens. Beard, North, and Price (1998, 82-3): heavy emphasis was placed on rituals featuring Juno, including her cult at Lanuvium, during the Hannibalic wars in an attempt to avert danger. Juno Sospita is one of the few cults not brought into Rome proper (Liv. 8.14) and the consuls sacrificed at her cult site annually (Cic. *Mur.*90). There were two rituals connected to the site, one religious and one civic; the first the previously mentioned sacrifice by the consuls, the other was a renewal of the alliance treaty between Lanuvium and Rome (Orlin 2010, 50-1). Lanuvium, a prominent religious site, played an important role in Rome's mythical past as it was often conflated with the Lavinium founded by Aeneas (Orlin 2010, 45-8).

<sup>384</sup> For controversy over the beginning lines and the general placement of the poem in the fourth book, see Hutchinson (2006), 189-90; Heyworth (2007), 473-5. My interpretation of the lines as indicative of a disruption on the aetiological programme make sense of the text as transmitted.

<sup>385</sup> Warden (1996), 118-9.

hic tibi tam rarae non perit hora morae.  
qua sacer abripitur caeco descensus hiatu,  
hac penetrat (uirgo, tale iter omne cave!)  
ieiuni serpentis honos, cum pabula poscit  
annua et ex ima sibila torquet humo.  
talia demissae pallent ad sacra puellae,  
cum temere anguino creditur ore manus.  
ille sibi admotas a uirgine corripit escas:  
uirginis in palmis ipsa canistra tremunt.  
si fuerint castae, redeunt in colla parentum,  
clamantque agricolae 'fertilis annus erit.'

[Lanuvium is the ancient protectorate of an aged serpent: here an hour spent on so rare a visit is not wasted. Where the sacred descent is reft by a dark chasm, where the tribute to the hungry serpent penetrates (maiden, beware of all such paths!), when he demands his annual feed and hurls hisses from the depths of the earth. The girls sent down for such a rite turn pale when their hand is rashly trusted to the serpent's mouth. The serpent snatches the food brought for him by the virgin: the very baskets tremble in a virgin's hands. If they have been chaste, they return to the embrace of their parents, and the farmers cry out 'it will be a fruitful year.']

Although the agricultural ritual is rather chthonic, especially as the proffered maidens are sent down into a dark abyss, it is still a traditional religious rite. It is unclear if this rite is related to the two recorded ritual functions that occurred annually at the shrine of Juno Sospita (see n.383); the sources do not elaborate on the type of sacrifice involved in the rituals, though it seems unlikely to require the actual sacrifice of virgins. Regardless of whether the account is subject to some poetic fiction or not, coming after a description of the underworld in 4.7 that delineates the place of women on the basis of fidelity, or one might say chastity, it could be argued that this ritual 'anticipates' Cynthia's imminent return from the underworld. Much like the chaste girls who are allowed to return home, Cynthia who claims to have kept faith (4.7.53 *me seruasse fidem*) with the poet, 'returns' from the underworld, if only for a poem. The ghostly mistress even pronounces a curse upon herself;

if she has lied about her faithfulness to the poet, then a snake should hiss at and lie with her bones (4.7.53-4 *si fallo, uipera nostris | sibilet in tumulis et super ossa cubet*). This statement seems to 'anticipate' the ritual that begins 4.8 and to further obfuscate the relationship between Cynthia and Propertius.

Moreover, there is a pattern of shared imagery that assimilates the lover to the *puella* whose chastity is tested in the rite, and Cynthia to the deity that does the testing.<sup>386</sup> Cynthia is placed in the role of the masculine avenger and Propertius as the trembling and pale maiden, who has failed the chastity test. This reversal of roles, though by no means unusual in elegy, represents a battle for control over the poetic narrative, which the poet ultimately seems to lose to Cynthia. Her voice, which should have been silenced by death, was not silenced, and she continues to occupy his mind, even when he tries other means to forget her (such as other women). Imagery linking Cynthia both to a triumphing general (17 *Appia ... triumphum*; 56 *spectaclum capta nec minus urbe fuit*; 63 *gaudet in exuuiis uictrix*) and a fury (52 *non operosa comis sed furibunda decens*) implies that she has conquered Propertius.<sup>387</sup> The poet will be punished for his attempts to break faith with her, despite his inability to do so. Again, we have a situation where Cynthia is placed in the role of the wronged and Propertius is the one bearing her complaints as well as, this time, physical abuse. However, Cynthia's potential dalliance with another man calls into question her unwavering dedication to the poet (15-6 *huc mea detonsis auecta est Cynthia mannis | causa fuit Iuno; sed mage causa Venus*; 23 *uulsi ... nepotis*). Considering the apparent importance of the Juno Sospita cult rituals to Roman civic and religious health, Cynthia's defilement of the place insinuates a level of corruption in the heart of Roman rites. This could be a criticism of Augustus' religious reforms, which placed emphasis on restoring Roman traditions whose supposed neglect led to the civil wars; even with attempts to cleanse the past and renew old rites, the elegiac *puella* degrades the site with her ambiguous activities and morality. In a similar manner to how amatory themes continually appear in Propertius' supposedly more serious poetic project, Cynthia does not allow the poet to forget her and continues to intrude in his endeavours.

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<sup>386</sup> Walin (2009), 138-46 argues that the word *exuuiis* (63), with the double meaning of shedding skin and spoils, emphasises Cynthia's rebirth and dominion over the poet.

<sup>387</sup> Dee (1978), 48-50.

The theme of chastity and loyalty is further enhanced by intertexts with the *Odyssey*; the similarities to the climax of Book XXII are especially striking.<sup>388</sup> Propertius drops a cup just like Antinous, a table collapses just as Antinous kicks one over, Lygdamus' pleas for mercy match the men who beg Odysseus to spare their lives, the purifying of Propertius and the bed correlates with the purification of the house after the slaughter, and the changing every sheet on the bed is reminiscent of Penelope's test for Odysseus, Cynthia also becomes fatigued after striking Propertius and the others much like Odysseus does after killing all the suitors. These similarities also overlap with a series of ill omens that culminate with the entrance of Cynthia to the party. The superstitious events are evident with the flames of the lamp flickering (43 *neque suppletis constabat flamma lucernis*); a table falling down (as mentioned above); continuously bad dice rolls instead of obtaining Venus (45-46 *me quoque per talos Venerem quaerente secundam | semper damnosi subsiluisse canes*); and the poet's insensibility to the enticements of the courtesans (47 *surdo ... caeco*). The last omen especially, with the poet oblivious to his surroundings and his mind on the gates of Lanuvium, seems indicative of death.

Even where the two women live could be a portent of an unsuccessful and punishing night: Phyllis lives near Diana (29 *uicina Dianae*) and Teia lives between the Tarpeian groves (31 *inter Tarpeios lucos*). One is geographically linked to a virgin goddess, not desirable for a night of pleasure, the other to a Vestal who was punished for her wanton desire, in Propertius' amatory take on her story (4.4). This foreshadows the fact that he will be unable to perform with the girls and will be punished by Cynthia. At the end of the poem, we see a thematic resonance with the rite depicted at the beginning in the use of Cynthia's ritualistic actions to cleanse the house and poet-lover after he acquiesces to her demands. She fumigates everything that the other women touched (83-4 *quemcumque locum externae tetigere puellae | suffiit*), she purifies the threshold with water (84 *pura limina tergit aqua*) and sanitizes Propertius with sulphur (86 *terque meum tetigit sulphuris igne caput*). After a changing of the bed, the two newly consummate their relationship. This is the second poem in a row where the poet's confirmed sexual relationship with Cynthia is mentioned. Again, this calls into question his reliability as a narrator. This is not the first time Propertius has revealed that Cynthia has made an excursion to Lanuvium (2.32.7 *Appia cur totiens te uia*

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<sup>388</sup> For a discussion of these similarities, see Evans (1971), 51-3.

*Lanuuium*). The poet states that she made use of the rites of Trivia and others as a means to keep apart from him. In this previous poem, he seems to absolve her of her infidelities, whereas here she punishes the poet for attempting to emulate her habits. This may have more to do with the fact that he wanted to change camps (*28 uolui castra mouere*), which could be read as a metaphor for adopting a new poetic project, namely the aetiological one proposed in 4.1. One might assume as Cynthia is the *uictrix* that she won the battle for control and genre, but this is the last poem featuring her, and what immediately follows are two aetiological poems.

Along with the Homeric influences, 4.8 also resonates with Horace's *Satire* 1.8. In a similar fashion to this Propertian poem, Horace's poem begins with a short aetiology before launching into the main story, contains satirical actions, takes place in a *noui horti*, contains tutelary rites/figures, and contains potential political readings.<sup>389</sup> The satire briefly discusses the origin of the tutelary god Priapus from a piece of wood (*Sat.* 1.8.1-7), whereas this poem relates an ancient right involving a tutelary serpent (4.8.3-14). Both deities are hyper-masculine, but their masculinity is perverted by the presence of a subversive female figure. If we can read the second line of 4.8 as it is, one could read reference to Maecenas' new pleasure gardens in the mention of new fields (*2 nouis agris*). Given that the location is the Esquiline and that both poems start off in similar aetiological veins, it is not much of a stretch to believe that Propertius had the repurposed lands of *Sat.* 1.8 in mind as he wrote the opening lines to this poem. Labate argues that Maecenas reclaiming the Esquiline had powerful symbolic value, signifying the replacement of chaos with order.<sup>390</sup> What then, does it mean to have the peace of the Esquiline once more disturbed by a woman? Both poems contain women who challenge and subvert the normative role of women in society, especially with regards to their insatiable lust. In Horace, witches invade the new pleasure gardens at night (*Sat.* 1.8.19-22), physically dredging up the past with their acts of grave robbing. They serve to remind the reader that the past cannot be laid to rest so easily.<sup>391</sup> Even though Priapus manages to banish the witches at the end of *Sat.* 1.8, they will appear again in the *Epodes*; notably in a vicious act of infanticide (*Ep.* 5) and in Horace's palinode to

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<sup>389</sup> For the political reading of *Sat.* 1.8, see Gowers (2012) and Labate (2016).

<sup>390</sup> Labate (2016), 90-3.

<sup>391</sup> O'Rourke (2016, 215) suggests that Cynthia's eviction of her romantic rivals is similar to Priapus' eviction of the witches from the pleasure gardens, which only forces the disruptive elements back into the city, indicating that the 'ghosts of the past can never be laid to rest.'

Canidia (*Ep.* 17). Priapus' lack of strong action to ward off the offending witches, and inability to completely banish them, undermines his claims to masculinity. In elegy, the male poet-lover is already placed in a submissive position in relation to his mistress, but in 4.8 this is taken further. As mentioned above, Propertius is likened to the trembling virgins forced to undergo the civic rite, whereas Cynthia is aligned with the masculine serpent deity. By making the *puella* comparable to the tutelary god and a triumphant Roman general, her 'masculinity' functions both to threaten the poet and to subvert the authority of the civic ceremony.<sup>392</sup> Her purification of Propertius and his house at the conclusion of 4.8 places Cynthia in a role of authority that again demonstrates her likeness to the serpent deity and recalls the rites that might be carried out in a more normative civic ceremony (cf. 4.6.7-9). We are also reminded that the Esquiline, besides being a former graveyard and place for Cynthia's dalliances, was the site of some of the most scandalous episodes in Rome's history.<sup>393</sup> While Priapus manages to rid his garden of witchcraft, he chases the witches right into the city (*Sat.* 1.8.46-7). Cynthia moves from the more rustic environment of Lanuvium to the poet's house. Both poems give the impression that it is hard to let go of the past, whether it involves changing landscapes or changing erotic camps. The poet's erstwhile mistress does not only interject herself into Propertius' new poetic project, she infringes on Roman religious traditions as well.

#### 4.11

In Propertius' final poem we encounter a rather unusual figure for his genre, the virtuous Roman matron Cornelia. This is perhaps the most conspicuous of the female voices in the fourth book, made even more notable for being the subject of Propertius' last poem. Despite Propertius own words (1.12.20 *Cynthia prima fuit, Cynthia finis erit*), Cynthia is not

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<sup>392</sup> Oliensis (2012, 101-2) discusses how Scylla (Ovid. *Met.* 8) appropriates a masculine identity when she uses the language of a senator, philosopher, and soldier in an example of Freudian phallus envy. Scylla desires to 'usurp the judicial position' that belongs to Minos (and to some extent her own father). According to Oliensis, she is most effectively 'masculine' while completing the assault on her father, where she emulates a combination of Medea's and Jason's feats (killing a father and stealing something precious respectively). Compare this to how, while appropriating types of speech that generally belong to men throughout the poem, Cynthia also carries out a physical assault on Propertius (4.8.63-6).

<sup>393</sup> Labate (2016), 92: e.g., Servius Tullius' murder and the Bacchanalia scandal. Interestingly, women played a major part in both.

the last; instead, we have Cornelia.<sup>394</sup> It is not only that the choice of character is unconventional, however. The chosen setting is a tomb and the underworld. Even more remarkable, the entirety of the poem is spoken from Cornelia's point of view without an interjection from a male narrator. The late Cornelia addresses her husband, children, and underworld audience from the murky shores of the Styx. Doubtless, the reader is reminded of another woman who speaks from the grave only a few poems earlier and provides her own account of the underworld. This instigates questions of why a *matrona*, who is a real historical figure and relation of Augustus, is juxtaposed with a potential *meretrix*, who is the inspiration and subject of much of the poet's work. While scenes located in the underworld are not magical per se, there were strong associations between magic and underworld deities. The rites associated with the dead often were closely connected with the concept of magic as the patron goddess of witchcraft, Hecate, was a denizen of Hades.<sup>395</sup> Dufallo reads this elegy as a necromantic rite of a sort; he argues that through calling up the dead, Propertius is imitating the topos of *mortuos ab inferis excitare* — a technique used by Cicero in defence of Caelius, who is charged with having employed witchcraft to seduce Clodia.<sup>396</sup> This reading is of particular interest as it demonstrates an intersection between traditional rhetoric and the possibility of magic use. Cornelia's status as a shade who has died before her time (17 *immatura licet, tamen huc non noxia ueni*) would make her a perfect helper in a spell, although she shows no inclination of wanting to harm others for her misfortune.

In this version of the underworld a different picture is painted than the one provided in 4.7, where all the women, virtuous and villainous alike, are depicted as if they are in a sort of suspended animation, forced to continually relive their sorrows. Instead, when she reaches the land of the dead, Cornelia plays the part of both the *patronus* of a trial and the speaker of a *laudatio funebris* at a funeral, both her own.<sup>397</sup> In this underworld scene, we find a soul proclaiming its own defence (Prop. 4.11.19-28):

at si quis posita iudex sedet Aeacus urna,

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<sup>394</sup> For more on the discussion of the similarities between Cynthia and Cornelia, see Muecke (1974); Yardley (1977); Johnson (1997); Wyke (2002); Gold (2006); Raclette-Campbell (2016); Wallis (2016).

<sup>395</sup> Tupet (1976), xii-xiii.

<sup>396</sup> Dufallo (2003), 166-7 argues that Propertius uses the oratorical device of calling up dead family members as a means of embedding an ambiguously public and private sphere into the elegiac world, instead of using it as a means of political invective and self-aggrandisement.

<sup>397</sup> Curran (1968), 135-6. For the generic status of 4.11, see Hutchinson (2006), 231-2.

is mea sortita iudicet ossa pila:  
assideant fratres, iuxta et Minoida sellam  
Eumenidum intento turba seuera foro.  
Sisyphæ, mole uaces; taceant Ixionis orbés;  
fallax Tantaleo corripere ore liquor;  
Cerberus et nullas hodie petat improbus umbras;  
et iaceat tacita laxa catena sera.  
ipsa loquar pro me: si fallo, poena sororum  
infelix umeros urgeat urna meos.

[But if there is an Aeacus who sits as judge with the urn placed before him, let him judge my bones when my lot is drawn: let his brothers sit beside him, and next to the chair of Minos the severe band of the Furies in the expectant court. Sisyphus, be free from your stone; let Ixion's wheel be silent; deceptive water, be caught in Tantalus' mouth; let monstrous Cerberus attack no shades today, and let his slack chain hang from a silent bolt. I shall speak for myself: if I lie, let the unhappy urn that is the Danaids' punishment weigh down my shoulders.]

The citizens of the underworld become silent during Cornelia's speech (if we assume that they listen to her instructions), just as silence reigns supreme when Orpheus sings to those same inhabitants during his quest to retrieve his wife from the realm of death (cf. Verg. *G.* 4.471-86).<sup>398</sup> Cornelia is so prominent, or what she is about to say is, that all other traffic in the underworld comes to a halt when she comes forward to be judged. Despite her status as a woman, albeit an aristocratic one, Cornelia is able to command the attention of the netherworld inhabitants. All the infamous characters of the underworld will act as witness to her purity, honour, nobility, and sense of duty. She is the embodiment of everything that they are not and shall be punished like them, should she prove false.

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<sup>398</sup> For Orpheus as a sorcerer, see Ogden (2002), 22-24; 40-1. Curran (1968, 135) suggests that the first Orphic hints in the poem come from the very first line of the poem, where we receive the image of a husband weeping inconsolably at the death of his wife. He also contends that the placement of Paullus, unable to reach Cornelia, places him in the role of an *exclusus amator*.

This is not the first time that the figure of Orpheus lurks in the background of Book 4. Cornelia's presence in the underworld conjures recollections of both Alcestis and Eurydice. She resembles Alcestis in the sense that she devoted her whole life to her husband and was willing to pay the ultimate price for him. She recalls Eurydice through the associations with Orpheus and an early death. Cornelia's railing against the cruel Fates (13 *num minus immites habuit Cornelia Parcas?*) echoes Eurydice when she is recalled by the Fates after her initial release (Verg. *G.* 495-6 *crudelia ... Fata uocant*). Eurydice chastises Orpheus for not being able to win against death a second time with his tears (*G.* 4.505 *quo fletu manis, quae numina uoce moueret?*), but here Cornelia states that no amount of her husband's tears and pleas will move the gods (4.11.7-8: *uota mouent superos: ubi portitor aera recepit, | obserat umbrosos lurida porta locos*). The reader might also contrast Propertius' failure to call back Cynthia from the grave (4.7.23-4) with Paullus who does pray to the gods and weep by her tomb (4.11.1-4), although his actions and words are ineffectual. This is reminiscent of Orpheus, who while able to persuade Pluto and Proserpina to return Eurydice to life, in the end failed to bring her back because he was unable to stop himself from looking back. Perhaps, like Orpheus, one cannot help but look back over the other poems, especially in this final poem. The first word of the Propertian corpus began with Cynthia; the name of the *puella* who inspired his work up until this book. The first word of his final poem begins with 'stop'; perhaps this suggests, as is the case, that this will be Propertius' last poem.<sup>399</sup> It arrests the reader, much like Cornelia's speech arrests the underworld audience, and we are forced to listen and reflect.

Cornelia ostensibly is a paradigm of womanly Roman virtue and exists on the complete opposite end of the spectrum from the elegiac mistress. Gold argues that Propertius uses Cornelia's motherhood here as a lens through which to explore the intersection of gender and ethical behaviour.<sup>400</sup> Whether or not this life of virtue is really an ideal to be aspired to is debatable. Cynthia lived the life of a mistress, a faithful one according to her own words, but still received an abject burial. Cornelia lived a virtuous life and seems to have experienced all the honours due her position. At first glance it might seem that Cornelia's way of life should be aspired to, yet Cynthia claims to have been

<sup>399</sup> Heyworth (2007, 502-4) notes that the Greek equivalent of *desine* is echoed in the name of Paullus (παῦε).

<sup>400</sup> Gold (2006), 169-70 argues that Propertius helps us to both accept and question Roman norms by positing two supposedly diametrically opposed women, Cynthia and Cornelia, in similar scenes.

rewarded with a place in Elysium despite her lifestyle, whereas the matron laments her untimely death and the reader is left with no resolution as to her final fate. This does not immediately place Cornelia in a less hallowed position, as the two women are clearly in different stages of the underworld, and it even aligns her more closely with the still suffering women placed in Elysium in 4.7. However, as opposed to the previous poem, Cornelia's focus is openly placed on her role as a wife and a mother. She hopes to gain admission to Elysium based on how dutifully and piously she executed her function as a Roman matron. Portrayals of Hellenistic queens mirror the accomplishments that Cornelia claims to have achieved — good family lineage, birthing of children, devotion to her husband.<sup>401</sup> The fourth book of Callimachus' *Aetia*, which elegy is indebted to, ends with an ode to the marital devotion of a Hellenistic queen, Berenice II, just as Propertius 4's final poem presents a paradigm of a Roman wife. Moreover, how women conducted themselves as wives and mothers equated to proper or improper social behaviour; when even the perception of female sexual misconduct could cause a scandal, it was necessary to strictly control women.<sup>402</sup> Representations of wives and mothers acted as vehicles that often said more about male anxieties than the actual women. Cynthia's behaviour can be seen to be in direct conflict with that of Cornelia, yet the validation of both in the underworld seems to rest on their fidelity.

Cornelia certainly seems anxious to extol her chastity and place in society, as seen in the hyperbolic swearing of oaths and her self-categorization among Rome's most virtuous women of the past (4.11.49-54):

quamlibet austeras de me ferat urna tabellas,  
turpior assessu non erit ulla meo,  
uel tu, quae tardam mouisti fune Cybellen,  
Claudia, turritae rara ministra deae,  
uel cui, iuratos cum Vesta reposceret ignes,  
exhibuit uiuos carbasus alba focos.

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<sup>401</sup> Wyke (1994), 101, 109. Women of the Augustan family, such as Livia, began to imitate Hellenistic queens in their visual and literary representations in order to endorse the public role these imperial women took on. Emphasis was put on being a good mother, wife, and maintaining chastity.

<sup>402</sup> Hallett (1989), 59-78; Gardner (1986), 67-80.

[However stern the judgments of me carried by the urn, no woman will be shamed to sit beside me, whether you, Claudia, rare servant of the tower-crowned goddess, who moved the impeded Cybele with a rope, or you to whom, when Vesta demanded the fires you swore [to guard], the white robe showed that the hearth was alive.]

She places herself among the ranks of Claudia Quinta (52), responsible for bringing Cybele into Rome in a miraculous act that also served to dispel doubts concerning her chastity, and the Vestal Aemilia (53), who reignited the Vestal flame when it had been extinguished by the carelessness of another.<sup>403</sup> As well as being paragons of virtue these women played an important role in public life, one having been instrumental in the integration of a foreign religion, the other as guardian of Rome's traditional religion. Cornelia feels she deserves to be placed among such women or believes an association with them will bolster her case. While these women are paragons of virtue, women's association with religion was often negative.<sup>404</sup> The two events represent the tension between the adherence to old traditions and the adoption of new ones. Here, Cornelia is calling upon two women who were involved in scandal, and who were only spared punishment after a demonstration of great piety. The presence of these two paradigms of virtue may be more nuanced than first appears; they would not be famous now if they had not overcome their respective scandals. Even these paradigmatically virtuous women bring to mind less virtuous exempla. In more recent history, this same Claudia was used as an example of great *pudicitia* against her descendent, Clodia, whose sexual modesty was called into question during the trial of Caelius (Cic. *Cael.* 34). The person being prosecuted was her brother, Clodius, who was tried for violating the rites of the Bona Dea in 62 BC and whose testimony Cicero attempts to discredit by reminding the audience of his past crimes (Cic. *Cael.* 78). The Vestal Aemilia shares a name with another Vestal who was put to death for breaking her vows of chastity (Liv. *Per.* 63a; Dio Cass. 26.87). That Cornelia would call on potentially ambiguous figures, who have historical and literary baggage, is suggestive.

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<sup>403</sup> On Claudia: Liv. 29.12-13; Ov. *Fast.* 4.305-27; Cic. *Cael.* 34. On Aemilia: V.Max. 1.1.7; D.H. 2.68.3.

<sup>404</sup> Scandals involving religion were often seen as linked to female subversion as women were much more likely to fall prey to foreign influence due to their weak and superstitious minds (Liv. 4.30; 25.1.8-12; 39.8).

There is a blurring of conceptual boundaries between matrons, vestals, and prostitutes.<sup>405</sup> Cornelia's role as a paradigm of Augustan moral virtue places her in direct opposition to many of the other women who dominate this book (Tarpeia, Acanthis, Cynthia). The juxtaposition of Cynthia and Cornelia demonstrates this conceptual blending. The emphasis that the Roman matron places on her integrity and her insistence that she should be punished if found to be lying (4.11.27-8 ...*si fallo, poena sororum | infelix umeros urgeat urna meos*) form an intertext with 4.7, when Cynthia declares her own faithfulness (4.7.53-4 *si fallo, uipera nostris | sibilet in tumulis et super ossa cubet*). Similarly, there are curious linguistic and thematic echoes that link Cornelia with Tarpeia: the urn (16 *urgebat urna*, 22 *urna*: the water urn burdening Tarpeia), the Vestal (Tarpeia herself and here Aemilia), the importance of chastity/fidelity, the blend of foreign and traditional (here represented by religion). Cornelia blends the concept of a water jug (28 *urgeat urna*), here the vessels of punishment carried by the Danaids, with Aeacus' urn (19 and 49 *urna*), which allots judgements in the afterlife. Tarpeia is a strange woman to be linked with considering how her name became associated with an execution site.<sup>406</sup> The matron's reference to water jugs used for punishments of those who violated the bonds of marriage alongside a vessel used in conferring such punishments is suspicious to begin with. Cornelia echoes Tarpeia when she employs the same phrase to describe what her punishment should be (4.4.16 *urgebat urna*; 4.11.28 *urgeat urna*) should she prove false: it is an odd expression to use in a description of the Danaids vessels as they would be mostly empty considering their inability to hold water. References to graves and bones further align her with these marginal women. Cornelia speaks from the grave and emphasizes how little of her remains, while referencing her bones (20 and 58 *mea ossa*). Bones are mentioned in many of the poems associated with more ambiguous female figures: Tarpeia's bones are enflamed with passion for Tatius (4.4.70), Propertius curses Acanthis' bones (4.5.4, 64), Cynthia describes her bones in various states of entanglement (4.7.54, 80, 94). Moreover, the word *sepulcrum* ends the first line of poems 4.4, 4.5, 4.11; this focus on women's graves is one of the most consistent topoi in the book. It is ironic that Cornelia's funeral would presumably be the most public event of her life.

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<sup>405</sup> For how the hyperbolic stories surrounding the *pudicitia* of matrons and the virginity of Vestals are complementary to each other, see Staples (1998), 103-12.

<sup>406</sup> Janan (2001), 74 notes the correspondence between Tarpeia and Cornelia.

Although Cornelia initially seems to conform to the standards of the *mos maiorum*, the manner in which she takes control as the *patronus* of her own trial subverts the claims to her perfection as a Roman matron, displaying a masculine boldness that is not befitting of her position. Cornelia appropriates, through her use of language and placement, the various roles of orator, magistrate, and triumphant general; in this respect she mimics Cynthia in 4.8.<sup>407</sup> Wyke regards this as an example of how women are ‘everywhere organized in relation to the male,’ especially here, where Cornelia is at the mercy of the male judges.<sup>408</sup> By denying Cornelia a verdict, the poem essentially denies her closure, which demonstrates the incoherencies and inconsistencies of the law that formed her life; this makes all her sacrifice meaningless. Unlike Cynthia, the Roman matron does not get a view of Elysium. The juxtaposition of the *meretrix* and the *matrona* demonstrates that this anxiety over a Roman *matrona*’s fidelity parallels that of the anxiety of the poet-lover over his mistress’ fidelity. The underworld judgment puts womanhood on trial. The figure of Cornelia incorporates the traditional and the other worldly, mixing the supernatural with the traditional in a way that challenges the assumptions of womanhood as defined in elegy and society. One could be tempted to think that this last poem dedicated to Cornelia, with her relationship to the princeps, might be the poet’s attempt to fuse both his new poetic project and his old one together. Yet by focusing on a marginal figure, at perhaps her lowest point, Propertius displaces male power; the matron’s speech, which is the entirety of the poem, leaves no room for the poet-lover to speak. In many respects, Cornelia’s poem acts as a bridge between the female ghosts that haunt this book and the male activities that should take centre stage and might be a more fitting conclusion to the book; she is a more traditional figure, albeit a female one and a ghost, she is potentially summoned before the readers, she is aligned with Orpheus, questions concerning chastity also align her with Cynthia, she associates herself with virtuous women (a claim which only further aligns her

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<sup>407</sup> Lowrie (2013), 172. This appropriation is subversive in that a woman is appropriating traditionally masculine language and repurposing it for her own use. However, this is not unique to Cornelia, Cynthia as lately as 4.8 is depicted as a triumphing general and uses legal and military terms in her speech to Propertius. The hint at the elegiac inversion of male and female roles in her use of language may be the most elegiac thing about Cornelia. However, Dufallo (2005, 117) argues that Propertius included these verbal techniques because his audience would want to see how popular techniques could be adapted to a more Augustan milieu. This was part of a process of elites adapting Republican practices to an increasingly narrow Augustan context.

<sup>408</sup> Wyke (2002), 114. McAuley (2015), 27: on the other hand, argues that the inclusion of maternal figures, whether negative or positive, acts as a challenge to the concept of the mother that refuses ‘its assigned position of matrix for the reproduction of male identity.’

with Cynthia in the afterlife). The ambiguity of Cornelia's fate after death undermines the benefits conferred by adherence to the upright lifestyle.

### 3. Male Voices: The Patriotic Sphere

This next section will examine Propertius' representations of civic rituals or their origins in Book 4. The two poems that most closely fulfil the elegist's stated goal for this aetiological collection (cf. 4.1.69) are poems 4.6 and 4.9, which focus on the dedication of the Temple of Palatine Apollo and the aetiology of the Ara Maxima respectively. The first poem participates in contemporary politics and engages with the Augustan programme of religious reform; but it is haunted by the same ambiguity that permeates the rest of the book, despite its official subject matter. In the second, the epic hero Hercules intrudes upon the rites of Bona Dea in a quest to quench the thirst he incurred in the process of establishing one of Rome's most important early cult sites through his defeat of Cacus.<sup>409</sup> Although these poems are ostensibly more conventional, masculine, and patriotic, they are not completely independent of their elegiac surroundings. Poem 4.6, wedged between two elegiac poems, appears slightly overshadowed and off-kilter, while 4.9 depicts the hyper-masculine Hercules as an elegiac lover — albeit one who is able to use force to overcome obstacles, unlike the more conventional poet-lover. It is not surprising that even these more traditional poems contain ambiguous elements. Although magic is not overtly present in these poems, ritual is used as a medium to explore the engagement of elegy with more traditional genres, and so these poems play off the presence of magic in the surrounding elegies and as a constituent of the genre. Moreover, these rituals hinge on the overpowering and conquering of women — not particularly fitting adversaries for Roman commanders or Greek heroes. The underlying elegiac subtext denies the poet the ability to fully actualise his professed poetic project.

#### 4.6

Poem 4.6 marks a return to the aetiological programme promised in 4.1. The most outwardly patriotic poem of Book 4 focuses on the dedication of the temple of Palatine Apollo and briefly recounts the battle of Actium. The recently built temple, dedicated in 28

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<sup>409</sup> For the history of the Ara Maxima, see Beard, North, and Price (1998), 18-9.

BC, was attached to Augustus' private residence; the combination of the princeps' house with an official religious site conflated public with private worship.<sup>410</sup> Propertius alludes to this temple in the opening lines of his programmatic poem (4.1.3 *atque ubi Nauali stant sacra Palatia Phoebo*), foreshadowing that this conventional subject matter will be treated more fully later in the book.<sup>411</sup> Indeed, this poem appears very masculine after the preceding poems and in light of those which follow.<sup>412</sup> However, despite the extended engagement with more contemporary discourse found here, this representation of a civic ritual is not as straightforward as it seems. The ambiguous ritual in 4.5 precedes and seems to foreshadow the more civic ritual here; where the preceding poem ended with Propertius' exercise of sympathetic magic in private, 4.6 instead opens with his performance of a public sacrifice in honour of Palatine Apollo (Prop. 4.6.1-10):

Sacra facit uates: sint ora fauentia sacris,  
 et cadat ante meos icta iuuenca focos.  
 sarta Philiteis certet Romana corymbis,  
 et Cyrenaeas urna ministret aquas.  
 costum molle date et blandi mihi turis honores,  
 terque focum circa laneus orbis eat.  
 spargite me lymphis, carmenque recentibus aris  
 tibia Mygdoniis libet eburna cadis.  
 ite procul fraudes, alio sint aëre noxae:  
 pura nouum uati laurea mollit iter.

[The priest makes the sacrifice: let voices be silent for the sacrifice and let the heifer fall struck before my altars. Let a Roman garland contend with Philitean ivy berries, and the pitcher serve Cyrenean water. Give me soft nard and offerings of pleasing incense, and let the woolen hoop pass three times around the hearth. Sprinkle me with water, and for the

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<sup>410</sup> Beard, North, and Price (1998), 189-91; Coutelle (2015), 211-29. Augustus' house on the Palatine appropriated shrines to both Apollo and Vesta (cf. *Ov. Fast.* 4.951-54: *Phoebus habet partem, Vestae pars altera cessit | quod superest illis, tertius ipse tenet | state Palatinae laurus, praetextaque quercu | stet domus: aeternos tres habet una deos*).

<sup>411</sup> Propertius describes the actual Temple of Palatine Apollo in 2.31.

<sup>412</sup> For the view of 4.6 as a particularly masculine poem, see Janan (2001), 102; Hutchinson (2006), 154; Keith (2008), 136-7.

new altars let the ivory flute offer a song from Phrygian jars. Go far away deceit, let harm exist in a different sky; pure laurel softens a new path for the priest.]

The first and last words of line 1 (*sacra* and *sacris*) reinforce the notion that this poem is describing a religious ritual.<sup>413</sup> Pillinger views the performance of this ritual in ‘real-time’ as the performance of a mimetic hymn, comparable to Callimachus (esp. *H.* 2).<sup>414</sup> O’Neill finds it suggestive that following an elegy where the poet performed a ritual of sympathetic magic (4.5), Propertius begins his next poem, one centred on official religious rites and including an account of the battle of Actium, with the phrase *sacra facit uates*, when the word *sacra* is elsewhere used to describe magic rituals rather than religious ones (e.g., 1.1.20 *magicis sacra focus*).<sup>415</sup> It is interesting that 1.1 is a poem that demonstrates a precedence for turning to alternative means before attempting a more traditional path; the poet appeals to magic before seeking the advice of his trusted friends.<sup>416</sup>

The vatic ritual of 4.6 resonates with poems in Book 4 beyond its immediate neighbour. This reminds the reader of the astrologer’s declaration of his associations with Apollo. In 4.1, Horos claims to be a *uates* of Apollo, just as the unnamed priest conducting the civic ceremony is here. He also insists that the god of poetry does not wish for Propertius to adopt a new poetic project; instead, the poet should continue his elegiac work (135 *at tu finge elegos, fallax opus*). Even the presence of an austere word only serves as a reminder that Propertius is embarking on an untrodden path. The astrologer’s more ambiguous rites work in opposition to the civic rites. Moreover, the priest’s call for silence (1 *sint ora fauentia sacris*) is echoed by Cornelia in her speech (4.11.23-6): the unnamed priest demands the attention and silence of the public and, more pointedly, the Roman elite (including, we might infer, Augustus, who was Cornelia’s stepfather); Cornelia, by contrast, commands the attention of the denizens of the underworld — both those who would judge her and those that exemplify her potential punishments should she be found wanting. The ritual call to silence in these two poems thus juxtaposes the Roman elite with the gravest sinners of the underworld. The juxtaposition of non-normative rituals and elements with the

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<sup>413</sup> Hutchinson (2006), 155.

<sup>414</sup> Pillinger (1969), 171-99.

<sup>415</sup> O’Neill (1998), 74-5. According to O’Neill, the most sordid poem of the fourth book, that is 4.5, is inextricably linked with the Augustan poem.

<sup>416</sup> Rüpke (2016), 71 argues that the presence of traditional *sacra* are implied by these magical *sacra*.

normative suggests that these different types of ritual activity are indelibly intertwined with each other.

The poet's demand for deceitful and harmful things to depart (9 *ite procul fraude, alio sint aëre noxae*), though the wish may seem par for the course in such a ceremony, resonates with Tib. 2.4 (15 *ite procul, Musae, si non prodestis amanti*; 20 *ite procul, Musae, si nihil ista ualent*), where the phrase is used twice in relation to dismissing the Muses for their inability to help in matters of love. Instead, Tibullus would rather use any means, even magic (55-60), if it were to prove more useful to his cause. When Tibullus is at a low point, his desperation causes him to push away traditional sources of support (hence his vehemence against Venus in the same poem) in favour of less normative avenues. In 4.6, it seems as if the reverse is true: in spite of being bookended by two elegiac poems, the elegiac mistress is conspicuously absent, and Propertius initially appears to have discarded his usual poetic material. As the poet adopts an increasingly more official style for his poetry his relationship with the Muses improves. Following up the claims Propertius makes in 4.1 that it is Apollo who now inspires the poet rather than Cynthia (contrast 2.1 *non haec Calliope, non haec mihi cantat Apollo; | ingenium nobis ipsa puella facit*), in this poem the poet calls on the muse Calliope (11-2 *Musa, Palatini referemus Apollinis aedem. | res est, Calliope, digna fauore tuo*). This conforms with the transition the poet began in Book 3 towards more traditional forms of poetry (3.2.16 *et defessa choris Calliopea meis*). Calliope directs the poet away from epic and endorses his continuation of elegy in this earlier poem (3.3.38-40 *ut reor a facie, Calliopea fuit: | contentus niueis semper uectabere cygnis, | nec te fortis equi ducet ad arma sonus*; 51-2 *talia Calliope, lymphisque a fonte petitis | ora Philitea nostra rigauit aqua*). This recalls the poet's more usual *recusatio* in the face of more official poetry — often another, usually divine, figure intercedes to relieve Propertius of the burden of weightier poetry. Here, it is Propertius (69 *bella satis cecini*) who reins in the talk of war before lapsing back into elegy; from line 69 onwards the poet proclaims acts of peace rendered by Augustus while the description of the celebration takes on a distinctly elegiac tone. Although Propertius seems to embrace more conventional poetic subjects and Apollo's presence might even seem to commend the poet's new project, the fact that he reverts back to elegy in the succeeding poem belies his sincerity.<sup>417</sup>

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<sup>417</sup> For a reading of switch back to elegy, see Morgan (2010), 378-84.

After 4.6 relapses into the elegiac mode, the poem ends on a curious note: Propertius alludes to a Roman military defeat — Crassus’ death at the hands of the Parthians (83-4 *gaude, Crasse, nigras si quid sapis inter harenas: | ire per Euphraten ad tua busta licet*). This might be meant to emphasise the princeps’ great victory even more — after all, Augustus did later retrieve the lost Roman standards with his diplomatic efforts (*Res. Gest.* 29.2) — but the presence of a grave adds a note of discord in a poem of celebration; the old consul’s grave haunts this joyous occasion. The use of the word *busta* in line 84 is ominous as it recalls previous references to the graves caused by the recent civil wars as well as the graves that litter Book 4. In this poem the grave is pointedly that of Crassus, a member of the triumvirate, whose loss to Parthia was a stain on Roman military prowess. Elsewhere, the poet enjoys mentioning this defeat (cf. 2.10.13-4, 3.4.9, 3.5.48). The combination of a celebration of the end of the civil wars and the mention of graves reminds the reader of the civilian graves in earlier books (2.1.27 *ciuila busta*; 75 *busto*), where the impact of the same wars is depicted in a less celebratory light. Moreover, two of the potential intertexts (2.1 and 2.10) are linked to the *recusatio* topos. These intertexts and the return to elegy — both at the end of this poem and in the return of Cynthia in the next — undermine the patriotic picture painted here. The sense of disquiet is reinforced by recollection of the other graves in the book (4.1.92, 4.5.77, 4.7.34). Horos’ reference to graves in 4.1 is implicitly tied to Roman warfare and greed: a mother sends her sons off to war for profit, against the advice of a prophecy, which leads to the death of her children (4.1.97 *fatales pueri, duo funera matris auarae*). This resonates with a later source, which claims that it was Crassus’ avarice for wealth and power that caused him to continue his campaigns despite negative omens suggesting he turn back (Plut. *Crass.* 14-18). Even the luxuries now enjoyed in the present poem come from the conquest of places like Egypt and would not be possible without war.<sup>418</sup> The other two references to graves are contained in the poems immediately preceding and succeeding 4.6.<sup>419</sup> Both these elegiac poems are marred by death, ghostly remembrances, and accusations of witchcraft. Despite the happy festivities, there is little peace to be found in Book 4.

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<sup>418</sup> Keith (2008, 139-65) notes that it was conquests, like that of Egypt, that allowed for luxury goods and indulgence in Rome.

<sup>419</sup> Cf. 4.4, which speaks on the origins of the Tarpeian Rock — as the tomb (1 *sepulcrum*) of Tarpeia; 4.11 Cornelia speaks from beyond the grave (1 *sepulcrum*).

While 4.6 is bereft of the presence of an elegiac mistress, it is not completely without women. The unnamed figure of Cleopatra is pitted against Octavius in his battle for the future of Rome in the retelling of the battle of Actium (37-66).<sup>420</sup> Despite this attempt to minimize the Egyptian queen, there are repeated references to her throughout the poem (22, 45-6, 57, 63-6); there is no mention of Antony in this poem, however. Instead, Cleopatra usurps the dominant position in this poem from Augustus' political rival, whose erasure from this account of Actium belittles the *princeps'* achievement.<sup>421</sup> The prestige to be gained from having Cleopatra as a triumphal captive is mocked in comparison to the great conquests of the past (65-6 *quantus mulier foret una triumphus, | ductus erat per quas ante Iugurtha uias!*). Her feminine status lessens the glory gained from conquering her. In keeping with the queen's general portrayal as unseemly in her behaviour, in this poem she wields javelins (22 *pilaque femineae turpiter apta manu*), a distinctly martial act, which is 'shameful' for a woman.<sup>422</sup> Cleopatra appears to be masculinized where Hercules is feminized by reference to his slavery in 4.9, just as Antony was feminized in Octavian's political propaganda for his slavishness to the Egyptian queen.<sup>423</sup> The illegitimacy of her relationship to Antony, from a Roman standpoint, and her depiction as an aberrant female align Cleopatra with the elegiac mistress, whose sway over the poet-lover turns him from the more normative path. Cynthia's tyranny over the poet in 4.8 is reminiscent of the imagined relationship of Antony to Cleopatra. In 4.8, the mistress also usurps masculine roles and Cynthia's description in the poem likens her to a triumphing Roman general. Just as the elegiac mistress makes male lovers her slaves, Cleopatra is the female despot that threatened male freedoms.<sup>424</sup> The queen's command of weapons and the threat of her ships to Rome are both described as shameful (45-6 *turpe Latinos | principe te fluctus regia uela pati*); that the word is applied twice to Cleopatra underscores the disgrace of falling prey to such a woman.

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<sup>420</sup> Some have seen this opposition as a battle of the sexes: cf. Gurval (1995), 227; DeBrohun (2003), 218.

<sup>421</sup> Or, alternatively, maintains an international rather than civil character to the battle.

<sup>422</sup> Cf. Cornelia's portrayal as an ideal woman — one that embodies many of the characteristics of a Hellenistic queen, such as Cleopatra actually was.

<sup>423</sup> Zanker (1988), 33-78 thoroughly examines how Octavian and Antony competed in arena of public opinion — using art, architecture, and literature in their power struggle. Hekster (2004) discusses the evidence for the relevance of the Omphale and Hercules comparison to Cleopatra and Antony. For how Cleopatra was portrayed, especially in Octavian/Augustan and post-Actium sources, see Wyke (1994).

<sup>424</sup> For the image of the barbarian Other as representing an inverse of social values, see Hall (1989), 1-50; Wyke (1994), 107-8.

Propertius seems to reject Cleopatra's suitability for inclusion in a distinguished civic ceremony (the triumph), but has fewer reservations about alluding to her in this commemoration of her defeat. As in the preceding poem, peace only comes with the death of a woman (57 *dat femina poenas*); Cleopatra's death here is followed by the death of Cynthia in 4.7 and is anticipated by Acanthis' death. The contrast between the preceding poem's elegiac subject matter and this one's epic matter is made more stark by the juxtaposition of two rituals of sacrifice: one that hastens the death of an old *lena* and another that repays a god's aid in battle. Acanthis' spirit haunts this poem, both in the ritual sacrifice and in the figure of Cleopatra. Moreover, this patriotic poem is ringed by elegiac poems in a manner that is quite conspicuous. The opening lines of 4.7 remind the reader that elegy is not so easily dismissed. The civic ritual is used as the locus for interrogating elegiac concerns about power and control. Though unproblematic at first glance, the poem is riddled with reminders of the elegiac past and of the women who pay the price for male greed and lust. The intertexts here cause the reader to review what came before as well as foreshadow what is to come.

#### 4.9

Poem 4.9 marks a return, yet again, to aetiological poetry. Here Propertius presents an aetiological poem that seems to fulfill his promised poetic project. Though 4.9 is ostensibly about the creation of the Ara Maxima, this account of the foundation of the cult site contains two competing sets of rites: those of the Bona Dea and those implied by the presence of the great altar. The rites of the Bona Dea are transgressed by the hero Hercules, who despite his status as a hypermasculine hero still exhibits some elegiac elements.<sup>425</sup> The feminine ritual is here perverted by the situation, Hercules' intrusion upon the rites, and a potential subtext of lust, where Hercules' thirst can be read in terms of sexual desire. The already established rites, in the context of this poem, of the Bona Dea are subordinated to the traditional epic hero, who establishes rites that will exclude women in retaliation for their lack of aid during his time of need. There is a clash between the private and feminine rites of the Bona Dea and the public and masculine rites of the Ara Maximus. This struggle

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<sup>425</sup> Anderson (1964), 1-12.

represents the struggle between the genres of elegy and epic.<sup>426</sup> In this poem, the female goddess, in the form of her rites, is subordinated to a male, who will soon be a god. However, the Greek hero, despite his traditionally epic and masculine associations, is characterized as an elegiac lover in this poem in a manner that confuses the boundaries between the competing elements.

The first indication that the hero is akin to an elegiac lover comes at the point when he finds himself locked out of the shrine of the Bona Dea. Hercules' stands outside the door to the shrine in manner that recalls an *amator exclusus* (32-34 *et iacit ante fores uerba minora deo. | uos precor, o luci sacro quae luditis antro, | pandite defessis hospita fana uiris*) and the *paraclausithyron* topos (cf. Tib. 1.2; Prop. 3.7).<sup>427</sup> Despite his disarming plea, the door remains closed to the hero (62 *ianua clausa*). The closed doors both recall elegy and imply that the hero has made an enemy of women and their goddess. When Hercules in frustration finally breaks down the door (61-2 *sic anus; ille umeris postes concussit opacos, | nec tulit iratam ianua clausa sitim*), the act echoes Cynthia's breaking of doors in the preceding poem (4.8.49-50 *cum subito rauci sonuerunt cardine postes, | nec leuia ad primos murmura facta Lares*). That Hercules eventually breaks through the doors in this *paraclausithyron* scenario might be due to his epic associations: the *antro/antra* of the grove (lines 33 and 35) in this more elegiac section parallels the *antro/antra* of Cacus' cave (lines 9 and 12) in the more epic opening.<sup>428</sup>

The second instance comes when the hero attempts to assuage any concerns about his level of threat to those performing the goddess' rites; it is Hercules himself, when he is beseeching the women of the cult to have mercy on him, who recalls the time when he acted in a slavish fashion and even wore women's clothing in service of his love for Omphale (47-9 *idem ego Sidonia feci seruilia palla | officia et Lydo pensa diurna colo, | mollis et hirsutum cinxit mihi fascia pectus*). The gender roles are reversed, much like in elegy, while Hercules is under the sway of Omphale. The great hero is feminized by his love for this eastern queen. It may have been difficult for a contemporary reader of Propertius to easily separate the association of Hercules with Augustus' defeated political rival Antony,

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<sup>426</sup> DeBrohun (2003), 118-55; Hutchinson (2006), 205-7: the poem concerns 'inclusion and exclusion from categories as well as places.' Verg. *Aen.* 8.184-305 acts as the inspiration for this poem. For the competition between Vergilian epic and Propertius elegy, see Warden (1982).

<sup>427</sup> cf. Tib. 1.1.56; Prop. 3.7.72. Anderson (1964), 1-12.

<sup>428</sup> Hutchinson (2006), 213: this echoes Vergil's description of Hercules attempting to enter Cacus' cave.

especially in light of this servitude to a foreign queen.<sup>429</sup> The hero's mention of his service in the past may well indicate that he is now free from the control of women, as is Antony, though only through his death. However, the desecration of Bona Dea's rites and the hero's own mention of crossdressing invites recollection of another instance when the same rites were violated by a man in the relatively recent past; Clodius was implicated in a scandal in 62 BC when he allegedly dressed as a woman in order to infiltrate the rites of the Bona Dea held by Julius Caesar's wife.<sup>430</sup> This connection is made more likely by reference to Claudia, an ancestor of the offending party, in 4.11. Augustus' victory<sup>431</sup> at Actium might be seen as an act of cutting out the corruption from both Rome and a former paragon of military prowess, but here, there are echoes of disorder in the religious elements that become increasingly important to the *princeps*.

When Hercules sets up the shrine (the Ara Maxima) at the end of the poem, he does so in opposition to Bona Dea and women are purposely forbidden from his rites for the part they played in preventing him from quenching his thirst (4.9.67-70):

'Maxima quae gregibus deuota est Ara repertis,  
ara per has' inquit 'maxima facta manus,  
haec nullis umquam pateat ueneranda puellis,  
Herculis externi ne sit inulta sitis.'

[he said: 'The Ara Maxima which was dedicated when my herd was recovered, the greatest altar built by these hands, this may never be open to any girls for worship, lest the thirst of Hercules the foreigner be unavenged.']

These competing cults, ostensibly assigned as female and male respectively, are diametrically opposed in ideology here.<sup>432</sup> More than any other poem, 4.9 demonstrates

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<sup>429</sup> For the association of Antony with Hercules and Cleopatra with Omphale, see Zanker 1988: 57-60; Hesker (2004).

<sup>430</sup> Welch (2005), 117-20; Berry (2011), 391-404. Cf. Plut. *Caes.* 10.

<sup>431</sup> For the allusions to this victory in this poem, see Harrison (2005), 117-31.

<sup>432</sup> Schultz (2006), 61-9; female worshipers were only restricted from participating in rites held at the Ara Maxima: Staples (1998), 24-30; Balsdon (1962), 243. Macrobius (1.12.28), drawing on Varro, offers an alternative version of the story that still details Hercules' choice to exclude women is based on his exclusion from drinking water to be given to the Bona Dea, but lacks the elegiac elements of Propertius' account. For the Bona Dea being worshipped by men as well, see Brouwer (1989), 254-96. Cf. *Ov. Ars. Am.* 3.243-4, 637-8.

how ritual becomes the locus for the battle between elegiac and epic drives. Hercules' initial intrusion on the rites of Bona Dea represents a more evident invasion of masculine epic into feminine elegy. However, this incursion is a two-way street; in the process, the reader is reminded of the elegiac elements that are not regularly associated with such a paragon of strength and masculinity. Despite the hero's ostensible triumph over the feminine, he is not free of the associations of elegy. Moreover, the reason for the establishment of the rites of the Ara Maxima is that Hercules cleansed the world through his might (*73 hunc, quoniam manibus purgatum sanxerat orbem*), which might very well be said of Augustus as well. The *princeps'* establishment of the Temple of Palatine Apollo explicitly celebrates his triumph over the corrupting elements of the east in the battle of Actium. However, neither supposedly patriarchal poem is able to escape the past, or the taint of elegy, so easily.

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This book, while markedly different from Propertius' previous books, presents an evident juxtaposition of the magical and supernatural with more deliberately civic-minded rituals. Although the poet claims to leave elegy behind for more patriotic projects, he cannot seem to escape being troubled by elegiac figures and themes. Literary constructs take on new meaning in the fourth book, with Acanthis, Cynthia, and Cornelia each gaining the role of narrator. These women even challenge Propertius' own dominance over the narrative. However, in this last book, both Cynthia and Cornelia speak from the grave as ghosts, while Acanthis, presumably dead, speaks only in the poet's memory. These women only seem able to tell their side of the story, or at least challenge the poet-lover's version, once they have died. The theme that unites all three women is death, which acts as a lens through which the reader can review their lives. The underworld acts as a liminal space in which women can finally voice their thoughts. Witches and other liminal entities such as ghosts, whose very fluidity threatens the natural order, may not figure in the characterization of all women in Propertius, but, in general and in ancient society, their actions served as negative paradigms to the proper comportment of women and served to reinforce social values.<sup>433</sup> The 'elegiac' poems of book four are composed in a manner that sharply contrasts with what was written before on the Cynthia affair, causing the reader to reevaluate what they

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<sup>433</sup> Gold (2006), 165.

thought they knew. Here the picture is murky, leaving the reader with an ambiguous view of both the poet's early books and the value of a virtuous life. These marginal characters are interwoven into Propertius' poetic landscape; their interjections remind both the poet and the reader of their continued existence. Magic acts as a disruptive force in Propertius and expresses a certain amount of resistance to Augustan views, much as Hor. *Sat.* 1.8 does. Furthermore, Book 4 uses women as a focal point to show this incoherence as voiced by the women who challenge the poet's own narrative. Even as Propertius attempts to fulfill his proposed poetic programme, the elegiac continues to intrude on the more official atmosphere. This does not necessarily suggest that he is anti-Augustan so much as willing to point out and explore the inconsistencies and uncertainties of Roman elite life in the aftermath of the civil wars. This may be why he portrays himself as a potentially unreliable narrator in the fourth book, to induce the reader to question basic assumptions and to interrogate his work. The Propertian *uates* of 4.6 is undercut by the uatic Horos and the presence of less legitimate rituals (4.5, 4.7). Thus, the certainties promised at the beginning of the book are confounded by poetry, politics, and past.

## Chapter 4: Magic as a Tool to Negotiate Erotic Frustrations

In the preceding chapters, the meaningful place held by magic in elegy was explored. This chapter will focus on how Ovid engages with the category of magic in the poet's elegiac and erotodidactic poems. Ovid remains one of the most recognisable Latin poets — his wit and self-awareness, together with his innovative contraventions of literary genres and traditions, set him apart from his contemporaries and convey a complexity that still resonates with modern audiences. Ovid struggles against his predecessors and himself; he is constantly reshaping, innovating, and commentating on earlier elegy — his own and that of his fellow elegists.<sup>434</sup> Ovid produced more poetic output and his works span a greater length of time than Tibullus and Propertius. Coming last in the elegiac tradition leaves space for Ovid to play with the pre-established conventions of the genre, as he saw them. With this final elegist magic has become something of an established set-piece. Ovid builds on the topoi adopted by Tibullus and Propertius in a manner that demonstrates that magic is both an integral part of elegy as well as something to be passed over in favour of his own *ars poetica*. The chapters on Tibullus and Propertius largely focused on the significance of magic across their books of poetry; here the focus will be more on categories of magic and how these play into the greater picture of magic in Ovid. The present chapter proposes to examine how Ovid engages with the subject of magic and to demonstrate how he both encompasses elements of his predecessors' interactions with magic as well as builds on their foundations, establishing magic as an integral part of the elegiac genre. Where his predecessors seem to use magic to highlight a certain element of ambiguity and incoherence, supporting the inversed role of the elegiac lover, Ovid presents magic more as a stage to explore specific poetic concerns.

Given the vastness of Ovid's poetic output in comparison to his fellow elegists, particular attention will be paid to a selection of elegies and erotodidactic poems in which magic makes a conspicuous appearance; that is *Heroides* 6 and 12, *Amores* 1.8, 1.11, 1.12, 2.1, 3.7, *Ars Amatoria* 2.99-108, *Remedia Amoris* lines 249-90, and *Medicamina* lines 35-42. In this chapter, magic will be divided into distinct categories to more fully explore how Ovid interacts with the category in the individual poems as well as the broader function of magic

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<sup>434</sup> While Ovid published his poetry contemporaneously with Tibullus and Propertius, his poetic career continued for longer. For the dating of Ovid's various works, see Knox (2009), xvii-xviii.

in his poems. The first section of this chapter will examine two instances of witchcraft accusations present in Ovid's works, observing how they function and offering suggestions as to the purpose of these accusations in their respective poems. The second section will look more closely at how magic seems to act as a foil for the poet's erotic frustrations, providing a justification for the poet's own failures. The third section will examine how Ovid, building on the groundwork laid out by the previous elegists and his own poems, seems to have positioned his poetic *carmen* as a powerful and superior alternative strategy to erotic magic in amatory affairs as well as how his work both encapsulates the essence of magic and surpasses it. However, this identification is misleading, as antecedent poems paint a more complex picture.

#### *Amores 2.1:*

The programmatic *Amores 2.1* provides a useful starting point for initiating a discussion of Ovidian magic. This poem in many ways sets up the themes and elements of magic that will be explored in detail in the subsequent sections. *Amores 2.1* is one of the most discussed poems in respect to Ovidian magic.<sup>435</sup> The contributions of Sharrock, and, most recently, Chadha have been especially useful in advancing the discourse on magic in *Am. 2.1*. Sharrock argues that the presence of magic in Ovid's elegy and erotodidactic functions as a metaphor for the seductive nature of his poetry.<sup>436</sup> She employs *Am. 2.1* to illustrate the significance of magic to the genre of love elegy.<sup>437</sup> Chadha, building on the work of Sharrock, suggests that Ovidian magic is a deceit intended to mislead mistress, reader, and even the poet himself.<sup>438</sup>

*Amores 2.1* is the programmatic poem for book 2 and functions as a *recusatio*. In this poem, Ovid excuses his rejection of epic poetry by claiming that it is ineffective in obtaining his amatory desires. The poet also openly associates magic with poetry here. While Ovid hints at the conceptual blending of magic *carmina* and his own *carmina* in other poems (cf. *Am. 1.12* and *3.7*), this synthesis comes to the fore in *2.1* when he appropriates magical

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<sup>435</sup> Sharrock (1994) and Myers (1996). For *Amores 2.1* as a magic spell, see Thill (1979), 331-332; Sharrock (1994), 64; Myers (1996), 10, Chadha (2014), 74-5. For elegiac poetry as spell, see Luck (1962), 5; O'Neill (1998), 65-6; Chadha (2014), 73-112; Oliensis (2019), 89-90.

<sup>436</sup> Sharrock (1994), 50-86.

<sup>437</sup> Sharrock (1994), 64: here she argues that magic is emblematic of the genre in its deceit, seduction, and ultimate failure — a failure that is necessary for the preservation of the elegiac world.

<sup>438</sup> Chadha (2014), 103-112.

qualities to describe a catalogue of his poetic abilities.<sup>439</sup> By mimicking the catalogue of powers traditionally ascribed to witches, Ovid insinuates that the power of his poetry is comparable to that of magic spells. The distinction between magic and poetry is further confounded by the allusion to a prayer for justice that precedes the poet's description of his own bewitching poetry. This contrast between two types of *carmen* brings to mind the challenge, presented in the form of Dipsas' eloquent *carmina*, to the poet's own persuasive abilities in *Am.* 1.8, as well as anticipates the poet's outright dismissal of magic in the *Remedia Amoris*. However, this section will discuss how *Amores* 2.1 serves to dismantle any possibility of delineating between magic and poetry through its alignment with magic users such as the *lena* and Orpheus. We will examine these intertexts with Ovid's poetic predecessors and give suggestions as to how magic operates here. The contrast between the prayer to Jupiter and the magical powers of elegiac poetry in the amatory realm embody and reinforce the tension between epic and elegy that exists in a *recusatio*. The focus will be on how these two genres seem to be pitted against each other as a *carmen sacrum* and a *carmen magicum*, an opposition that gains relevance again in the *Remedia Amoris*. Here magic is directly equated with poetry in a manner that suggests that magic plays an integral role in the genre of love elegy.

In this poem Ovid introduces himself and his amatory work (1-2); he describes his desired readership (3-10); muses on his former pretensions to epic (11-20); compares his elegiac poetry to magic spells (21-8); and then resumes speaking on the inefficacy of epic in love affairs (29-38). After the initial rejection of epic and the power of Jupiter, Ovid deliberately engages with the category of magic by infusing the description of his elegiac *carmen* with magical attributes. Rather than claiming or insinuating that he has participated in any amatory rituals as his predecessors do (cf. Tib. 1.2, 1.5, 2.6; Prop. 1.8, 2.28), Ovid instead appropriates the language associated with magic as a means of illustrating his own powers (*Am.* 2.1.21-28):

blanditias elegosque leues, mea tela, resumpsi:  
 mollierunt duras lenia uerba fores.

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<sup>439</sup> McKeown (1998), 17 acknowledges parallels with Verg. *Ec.* 8, Tib. 1.8, Prop. 1.1, and *Am.* 1.8, but does not elaborate on these connections.

carmina sanguineae deducunt cornua lunae  
et reuocant niueos solis euntis equos;  
carmine dissiliunt abruptis faucibus angues  
inque suos fontes uersa recurrit aqua;  
carminibus cessere fores, insertaque posti,  
quamuis robur erat, carmine uicta sera est.

[I took up my weapons, light flattering elegies: gentle words softened hard doors. Songs draw down the blood-red moon and recall the sun's white stallions from their journey; through song serpents burst apart with their throats torn asunder, and fountains flow backwards to their source. Doors yield to song, and the fixed bolt, however strong it was, is conquered at last by songs.]

The poet reframes the general catalogue of witches' powers to showcase how following his teachings will lead to amatory success by accomplishing one of the most ostensible goals of an *amator exculsus*: to open the mistress' locked door. McKeown suggests that the use of anaphora, intertextual links, and mention of the moon in combination with the word *deducunt* demonstrate that Ovid might be playing with the programmatic nature of *deducere*, which has significance in Latin poetry; it is the word used in invocation of Callimachus' style of poetry.<sup>440</sup> The intertextual links with Vergil's *Eclogues* create a model for both the use of *deducere* in a programmatic manner and for the word's association with magic. There are two poems of Vergil where *deducere* is used in such a manner, both of which are important for demonstrating the connection between magic and poetry.<sup>441</sup> The first is found in *Eclogue* 6 when Apollo orders Tityrus to continue his slender songs (Verg. *Ecl.* 6.3-5 *Cynthus aurem | uellit, et admonuit: 'pastorem, Tityre, pinguis | pascere oportet ouis, deductum dicere carmen*) rather than attempt epic. This Vergilian *recusatio* connects the word *deducere* to the tension between epic and other forms of poetry. However, *Ecl.* 6 goes further by including an allusion to magic and elegy. The poetic incarnation of Gallus is

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<sup>440</sup> McKeown (1998), 18; Barchiesi (2011), 518; Chadha (2014), 33. Gardner (2013), 126 argues that McKeown's distinction between magical *carmen* and poetic *carmen* is too rigid. For the relationship between *deducere* and Callimachus, see Clausen (1964), 193-5 and Ross (1975), 26-7.

<sup>441</sup> Chadha (2014), 30-2.

entreated to take up the pipes in the style of Hesiod, who was able to move the natural world with his song (6.69-71 *hos tibi dant calamos, en accipe, Musae | Ascraeo quos ante seni, quibus ille solebat | cantando rigidas deducere montibus ornos*). This ability to move objects through *carmina* alone speaks of magic in the vein of Orpheus.<sup>442</sup> *Ecl.* 6 establishes *deducere* as the word to describe the genre of Roman love elegy, through its association with Gallus and Callimachus. The allusion to Orpheus in this poem establishes a precedent for the association of magic with *recusatio* poems as well as between *deducere* and magic. This is not entirely novel as Propertius 3.2.3-8, a poem which similarly serves as one of the programmatic poems for his third book, uses mythological exempla of magical figures to similarly describe his poetry as magic.<sup>443</sup>

The connection between *deducere* and magic is made more implicit with the second Vergilian intertext, *Ecl.* 8, which engages with erotic spells and magic *carmina* (*Ecl.* 8.69-71 *carmina uel caelo possunt deducere lunam. | carminibus Circe socios mutauit Ulixi. | frigidus in pratis cantando rumpitur anguis*). Vergil's use of *deducere* in this second poem creates a clearer blending of this programmatic word with magic that will later be adopted by the Roman elegists. The repetition of *carmina* at 23, 25, 27, 28 in *Am.* 2.1 is reminiscent of the anaphora of *Ecl.* 8.68 (*ducite ab urbe domum, mea carmina, ducite Daphnin*). This catalogue of poetic abilities here readily calls to mind similar catalogues of witches' abilities found in elegy (cf. Tib. 1.2; Prop. 4.5, Ov. *Am.* 1.8). Ovid claims that his *carmina* can open a mistress' locked door (a Herculean task in elegy), as well as accomplish more traditional magical acts such as drawing down the moon and reversing the course of rivers. Reference to the moon (23) and killing snakes (25) reinforces the connection to *Ecl.* 8, a poem which focuses on drawing a wayward lover back with magic. These feats seem improbable given the previous track record of elegy and magic employed by or for the poet-lover. These powers are not only drawn from literary sources, but also magic texts. The mention of splitting apart a snake's jaw is reminiscent of spells to kill snakes (*Pap. Gr. Mag.* 13.262ff). Another spell details how to charm open doors (*Pap. Gr. Mag.* 36.312ff). The poet's co-option of abilities

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<sup>442</sup> For the connections between Orpheus and *Ecl.* 6, see Fantazzi (1966), 185-6 and Ross (1975), 21-30. In particular, Ross (1975), 23-6 argues that there is a line of poetic descent that shares in Orpheus' power. In this poem, Hesiod, Orpheus' successor, is passing this magic power down to Gallus. By this logic, Gallus would, in turn, pass this magical poetic power on to his successors, the Latin love elegists.

<sup>443</sup> The mention of his relationship to Apollo (3.2.9 *nobis et Baccho et Apolline dextro*) anticipates Ovid's own confession in the *Remedia* that Apollo's patronage, rather than Cupid's, produces poetry that is far more persuasive than any magic spell (cf. Prop. 4.6).

previously attributed to the *lena* belies his opposition to magic. Ovid uses the context of the catalogue of witches' powers as a foundation for demonstrating the superior power of his poetic *carmina*. The intertexts with Vergil support the poet's boasts by establishing a certain pedigree; poetry was long associated with magic, from as early as Hesiod and through figures such as Orpheus.

The juxtaposition of different types of *carmina* does not end with the *lena's* magic and the lover's poetry. Immediately preceding the poet's characterisation of his *carmina* as spells, Ovid excuses his adherence to elegy over epic as one of utility. In his comparison of the two genres, he states that Jupiter's inability to help him in erotic affairs is the reason for his choice of elegiac poetry over more traditional forms of poetry (*Am.* 2.1.15-20):

in manibus nimbos et cum loue fulmen habebam,  
quod bene pro caelo mitteret ille suo—  
clausit amica fores! ego cum loue fulmen omisi;  
excidit ingenio Iuppiter ipse meo.  
Iuppiter, ignoscas! nil me tua tela iuuabant;  
clausa tuo maius ianua fulmen habet.

[I had the thunder and lightning of Jupiter in hand, the things he throws so well through his sky — my girlfriend closed her doors! I dropped the thunderbolt along with Jove; Jupiter himself slipped from my mind. Jupiter, forgive me! Your weapons were no help to me; a closed door has a greater bolt than yours.]

Ostensibly these lines highlight Ovid's ability, but unwillingness, to write epic poetry. Tales of great wars are of no use in the battle for control of hearts and minds in the amatory realm. The poet also hints at the ineffectiveness of Jupiter in matters of love, despite the god's status as a prolific lover. The double emphasis on the closed door of his mistress (lines 17 and 20) pointedly undermines the divinity's power and necessitates the undertaking of elegy. This passage both looks back at Propertius 2.28 and looks forward to the *Remedia Amoris*. In his predecessor's poem, Jupiter is called upon to save Cynthia after Propertius has failed to effectually enact a healing ritual. This intertext suits the context of Ovid's poem: although Propertius claims to be performing a healing ritual for the sake of his

mistress, there is an insinuation that the ritual is actually intended to seduce her. Elsewhere Propertius proclaims the persuasive (and seductive) nature of his elegies (cf. Prop. 3.2 and 3.3). As previously mentioned in the discussion of Propertius 2.28, Jupiter's position as the chief of the gods places him in a dual position where he presides over both normative and non-normative practices. Jupiter, as an embodiment of epic and the traditional arbiter of justice in many types of ritual, is a fitting presence in a *recusatio*.<sup>444</sup> Here, Ovid assumes the mantle of an elegiac poet for its seductive powers. In the allusion to Jupiter, Ovid emulates his predecessor by suggesting a juxtaposition of prayers with magic, the more normative route with an alternative. The allusion to Orpheus in line 28 strengthens this intertext with Propertius and cements the comparison between these two forms of *carmen*, epic and elegiac, traditional rites and magic. Unlike his predecessor who calls on the chief god for aid, Ovid dismisses Jupiter as unnecessary. One might also read an intertext with *Her.* 6.151-64, where Hypsipyle calls on Jupiter to smite her rival, rather than help her charm Jason back to her. This lends a dangerous element to the choice of elegy over epic. The poet begs for the god's forgiveness (20 *Iuppiter, ignoscas*) because of the god's potential resentment; a god who, as a stand-in for a competing genre, represents a possible enemy and rival. This is more than a simple *recusatio*: magic is used to sharpen the antagonism between his chosen poetic project and a more traditional one. The magical qualities of Ovid's poetry, the 'lesser' status of elegy, and the general subordinate pose of the elegiac lover places elegy in conceptual alignment with the category of magic. This poem looks forward to the *Remedia Amoris*, which, as we will see, also contains an opposition between a *carmen sacrum* and *carmen magicum*.

Ovid's engagement with magic demonstrates complex relational dynamics. Oliensis sees *Amores* 2.1 as expressing the efficacy of Ovid's love poetry in the art of seduction.<sup>445</sup> This dovetails nicely with the interpretation of Sharrock who sees this addition of magical qualities to the poet's own *carmina* as a playful hint that the author is seducing his audience into reading his work, though he may of necessity fail in other attempts at seduction.<sup>446</sup> When he requests that pretty girls turn to his poems (37-8 *ad mea formosos uultus adhibete*

<sup>444</sup> Cf. Call. *Aet.* 1. fr.1.19-20 μηδ' ἀπ' ἐμεῦ διφᾶτε μέγα ψοφέουσιν ἀοιδὴν | τίκτεσθαι· βροντᾶν οὐκ ἐμόν, ἀλλὰ Διός.

<sup>445</sup> Oliensis (2019), 37-8 argues that Ovid's poetry in *Am.* 2.1 is not for opening locked doors but for providing a set of erotic experiences that serve as exempla for would be lovers.

<sup>446</sup> Sharrock (1994), 24-6.

*puellae* | *carmina*), it carries the connotation that he desires their readership and has the power to make them turn. These lines contain verbal hints that are evocative of magic. The turning of one's face is reminiscent of Propertius' plea to witches to remove his love (1.1.21-2 *en agedum dominae mentem conuertite nostrae, | et facite illa meo palleat ore magis*). Here Ovid is using the concept of magic to bolster the effectiveness of his elegies. He further strengthens the potency of his magical poetry by reference to Orpheus.<sup>447</sup> The mention of the poet-lover moving oak doors (28 *quamuis robur erat*) is reminiscent of Orpheus' ability to move oak trees, as well as Hesiod's powers from *Ecl.* 6; an intertext that carries an implication of poetic pedigree. This is not the only time Ovid has linked seductive power and magic together nor his only reference to Orpheus in an erotic context. Later, in *Am.* 3.7, the poet attributes the compelling powers of the archetypal poet-magician to his partner in an unsuccessful erotic encounter. Although the girl is able to move heavy oaks (3.7.55 *grauis quercus*) just like Orpheus, she is unable to move the poet's limp member. This intertext, along with Orpheus' own amatory failure, insinuates that despite all Ovid's posturing, his powers are either ineffective or also doomed to fail him. The semantic blending of different types of *carmina* does not allow for a strict demarcation of the categories of *carmina*. The poet's purposeful appropriation of the magic lexicon to describe his own *ars* causes a collapse of distinction between magic *carmina* and poetic *carmina*. The complex relational dynamics, and collapsing of clearly demarcated distinctions, continue in the following examination of witchcraft accusations; these accusations represent some of the most ostensible examples of magic in Ovid.

## 1. The Agency of Victimhood

This section examines Ovid's engagement with accusations of witchcraft and how the poet interrogates magic as a sphere of activity that is, more often than not, gendered female.<sup>448</sup> The *Heroides* present the inverse of the traditional elegiac pose: here women are the ones lamenting, or berating, their absent lovers. Ovid's adoption of a female lover's pose allows him to bring out an interplay between these female written epistles and subjective male elegy. In his presentation of victims of magic in *Heroides* 6 and 12, the poet elucidates how

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<sup>447</sup> McKeown notes the probable intertext with Orpheus here, but does not explore any relation to magic.

<sup>448</sup> On the gender of erotic magic users, see Winkler (1991), 214-43; Gager (1992), 80-81; Faraone (1999), 83-84; Ogden (1999), 63-67; Dickie (2000), 563-83; Pachoumi (2013), 294-352.

those in a disempowered state can regain some control over their situation. Magic in Ovid is often presented as feminine or at least not the purview of men. This is reflected in the gender of those accused of magical malpractice in Ovid's elegiac poems. Although the association of magic, especially love magic, with the feminine is not unique to Ovid, the poet seems to disassociate himself from erotic magical practices in a manner that is not found in Propertius and Tibullus, who do insinuate their participation in amatory rituals.<sup>449</sup> Two different works of Ovid will be examined here, the *Amores* and the *Heroides*. In particular, *Amores* 1.8 and *Heroides* 6 and 12 will be investigated for their inclusion of witchcraft accusations. *Amores* 1.8 reveals that an old procuress by the name Dipsas is the cause of the erotic friction (or lack thereof) between the poet-lover and his mistress. In contrast, *Heroides* 6 sees Hypsipyle, the Queen of Lemnos, accuse her rival in love of witchcraft. In return, *Heroides* 12 has this same rival, Medea, insinuate that she is also a victim of erotic magic. Both women use the medium of the epistle to renegotiate their roles as victims — one through exaggeration, the other through minimisation of actions. Drawing on recent scholarship concerning the social role of witchcraft accusations, the theories of Eidinow and Pollard will be employed to illustrate the nuances of Ovid's participation in the category of witchcraft accusations. Eidinow explores the social tensions inherent in witchcraft accusations and the relational dynamics that allow victims a certain amount of agency.<sup>450</sup> Pollard argues that among women of higher social status, accusations of witchcraft often have a competitive dimension that helps regulate social and political rankings. The magic dimension allows us to examine the overlooked sense of empowerment that victims can employ to regain some control over their narrative. In the first instance we move from a male indictment of undesirable female behaviour to accusation used in a competitive dimension against a female rival, and finally, to a women's attempt to reclaim her own narrative in a well-known story.

### *Amores* 1.8:

The first accusation we will discuss appears in *Amores* 1.8. This poem is by far the longest in Book 1, easily doubling most of the other poems in length. Unlike the earlier elegiac poets,

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<sup>449</sup> *Amores* 1.12 being a notable exception to this (discussed below). However, Ovid never directly claims to have performed magic himself. He simply allows room for the insinuation that he could have.

<sup>450</sup> Eidinow (2017), 398.

who established the importance of magic in their work almost immediately (cf. Tib. 1.2; Prop. 1.1), magic only comes into focus midway through Ovid's first book. In a similar vein to the witchcraft accusations levelled by the other elegists (cf. Tib. 1.5; Prop. 4.5), we see Ovid accusing an old *lena* named Dipsas of corrupting his mistress with her persuasive charms. In this poem the poet-lover attributes his erotic discord to the machinations of a greedy witch rather than a rival competing for his mistress' affections. Ovid, in the guise of the poet-lover, exploits the concept of victimhood to enhance his own position while sublimating his failure into displaced aggression towards an old woman. *Amores* 1.8 sees the poet drawing attention to a certain procuress (1-4), providing a description of her extraordinary powers (5-18), relating her harmful instructions to his mistress (19-108), expressing his desire to harm the procuress after being caught eavesdropping (109-12), and finally cursing the old woman (113-4). After naming the *lena*, Ovid immediately establishes her magical pedigree (*Am.* 1.8.5-18):

Illa magas artes Aeaeaque carmina nouit  
inque caput liquidas arte recuruat aquas;  
scit bene, quid gramen, quid torto concita rhombo  
licia, quid ualeat uirus amantis equae.  
cum uoluit, toto glomerantur nubila caelo;  
cum uoluit, puro fulget in orbe dies.  
sanguine, siqua fides, stillantia sidera uidi;  
purpureus Lunae sanguine uultus erat.  
hanc ego nocturnas uersam uolitare per umbras  
suspikor et pluma corpus anile tegi.  
suspikor, et fama est. oculis quoque pupula duplex  
fulminat, et gemino lumen ab orbe uenit.  
euocat antiquis proauos atausque sepulcris  
et solidam longo carmine findit humum.

[She has learnt the magic arts and Aeaeian charms, it is said that she can make rivers flow back to their source with her skill; she knows well what herbs to use, how to whirl the rhombus and the efficacy of poison from a mare in heat. When she wants, the clouds are

gathered in the whole sky; when she wants, the day shines with a bright sun. If you can believe it, I saw the stars drip blood; the face of the moon was blood-red. I suspect that transformed she flies through the nocturnal shadows and she covers her old woman's body with feathers. I suspect it, and it is rumoured. Her eyes also shine with double pupils, and twin lights come from the orbs. She summons ancestors from ancient graves and with long spells splits solid earth]

This list of extensive powers positions Dipsas as a witch par excellence. Ovid establishes his poem as part of elegiac convention by asserting in the first couplet that his procuress is similar to others (1-2 *quicumque uolet cognoscere lenam, | audiat*).<sup>451</sup> Scholars note the parallels between this poem and depictions of witches in Propertius 4.5, as well as Tibullus 1.2 and 1.5.<sup>452</sup> The similarities between Prop. 4.5 and *Am.* 1.8 are especially striking. Both poems open with the male poet-lover accusing an old woman of witchcraft, are dominated by the speech of said procuress, and end with the poet cursing the obstacle to his mistress. Ovid accuses the *lena* of being a witch, but much like Acanthis in Prop. 4.5, she provides no evidence for magic practice in her own speech. Indeed, although Dipsas' dialogue only espouses practical advice to the mistress, the reader is expected to take the poet-lover at his word that she is a witch. Ovid does claim that he has seen her powers first-hand (11 *uidi*), but immediately undermines his own claims by relating how he draws on suspicions and rumours (15 *suspitor, et fama est*) as well.<sup>453</sup> The first line of the poet-lover's description of her powers evinces an identification with Medea (5 *Aeaeaque carmina nouit*). This line recalls Hypsipyle's accusation, which will be discussed below, that Medea seduced Jason with her spells (*carmina nouit*) at *Her.* 6.83. This intertext might be expected to bolster Ovid's charge of witchcraft, but unlike Medea, the *lena* does not admit to or show signs of magic herself.

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<sup>451</sup> Gross (1996), 199 argues that the apparently conventional nature of this poem has caused scholars to overlook its originality and wit.

<sup>452</sup> For parallels with Prop. 4.5 and Tib. 1.5, see Luck (1955); Barsby (1973), 93; Tupet (1976), 388-9; Gutzwiller (1985); McKeown (1987), 199-201; Myers (1996), 10; Gross (1996); O'Neill (1999), 49-80; Pillinger (2012), 56-62; Gardner (2013), 213. On the similarities to Tib. 1.2.45-54 (a catalogue of witch's powers), see Thill (1979), 323-333; McKeown (1989), 204; Chadha (2014), 59-60.

<sup>453</sup> Gordon (2009), 10 sees *fama est* as an admission by Ovid that he is relying on previous literary models for his description of her abilities.

Ovid's description of her fearsome powers is discordant with his final description of her as a rather pitiful drunk old woman with thinning white hair and shrivelled cheeks (1.8.111-2 *albam raramque comam lacrimosaque uino | lumina rugosas ... genas*). This degradation of the female appearance is similar to how Hypsipyle describes her rival Medea. Instead of denigrating her character by drawing on stereotypical depictions of Roman witches, as the antagonistic queen does, this description paints the picture of a vulnerable old woman — an image which renders the *lena* in a rather pathetic light and undermines accusations of her potent abilities.<sup>454</sup> Why then does Dipsas' advice monopolise the poem? Her speech constitutes one of the notable exceptions to the poet's narrative control in the *Amores*. The remarkable powers attributed to Dipsas corroborate the poet-lover's helplessness in the face of the *lena's* opposition. As discussed in previous chapters, the old woman figure, who is characterised as an obstacle to the poet-lover's affair, tends to act as a foil and counterpart to the male elegiac poet.<sup>455</sup> She manages to accomplish what the poet-lover consistently fails to do — influence the *puella*. By establishing the presence of an exemplar witch, Ovid provides himself with a built-in excuse for any of his failures in the amatory realm. The *lena* threatens to usurp the role of the male elegiac poet in narrative construction.<sup>456</sup> The reproach of a helpless old woman stems more from the poet's perceived loss of control over his own narrative. Much like Propertius 4.5, this can be read metapoetically, suggesting that Ovid struggles to maintain control over his own poetic creation. Classifying something as magic conveys ideas of effeminacy, foreignness, criminality, and irrationality; these concepts are diametrically opposed to everything that an elite Roman male should be.<sup>457</sup>

Unlike Propertius, whose curse seems to cause the death of Acanthis, Ovid's cursing of his procuress is far less violent and personal. Although Dipsas is right in front of him, the poet prefers to curse her instead of using his readily available hands (110 *at nostrae uix se continuere manus*; 113-14 *di tibi dent nullosque Lares inopemque senectam, | et longas*

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<sup>454</sup> For invective against old women in satire, see Richlin (1984), 72, who argues that old women in Roman elegy function 'to remove the attractive young woman from the poet's exclusive control and to pervert the sexual behaviour of the mistress.'

<sup>455</sup> For the identification of the *lena* as a counterpart to the poet-lover, see Gutzwiller (1985); Gross (1996); Myers (1996); Wyke (2002); James (2003); Pillinger (2012).

<sup>456</sup> For the magic attributed to the *lena* acting as an analogy for Dipsas' rhetorical skills, much like it does for the poet's persuasive abilities in *Am.* 2.1, see Kratins (1963), 154-155; Gross (1996), 197-198; Myers (1996), 9-10.

<sup>457</sup> Stratton (2007), 1-38; Dombrowski (2018), 164.

*hiemes perpetuamque sitim*). The poet's inability, or lack of desire, to consummate the act of killing his poetic rival suggests a need for her character. Ovid might seem powerless in the face of such a formidable opponent, but Dipsas' dialogue is still embedded in his narration. The pretence of a challenge to the poet's narrative control is useful in problematising the harmony of his elegiac construct. In *Am.* 1.8, Ovid co-opts this idea of powerlessness and uses it to his own advantage. The poet-lover's negotiation of his circumstances is refracted through the lens of magic. Magical spells and ritual activities help account for some sense of control over the highly competitive and unpredictable social circumstances in erotic relationships, playing on the agency of victimhood. His ability to narrate Dipsas' advice to *puellae* empowers him with some of the agency he lost due to the presence of such an eloquent elegiac contender.

Dipsas poses a more poignant threat to the poet-lover by challenging the conceptual rules of his amatory world and undermining his relationship with the *puella*. In a similar fashion to the lover, she employs cultured rhetoric with an opposing aim to Propertius' own.<sup>458</sup> The emphasis on Dipsas' command of verbal spells (5 *carmina*) highlights her role as a rival. The return to spells (18 *carmine*) at the close of his description of her magical aptitude, only serves to underscore the *lena's* verbal skills.<sup>459</sup> The word *carmen* forms a ring composition that uses magic to highlight the negotiation of authoritative control in elegy. This distinction between the *lena* and poet, who possess competing viewpoints, collapses further under the weight of the procuress' necessity and further intertexts with Ovidian poetry (*Am.* 2.1, *Ars.* 2.99-108, *Rem.* 249-50), which portray the poet-lover characterising his poetry as magic or dismissing magic in favour of his own *ars poetica*. The illusion of authorial control continues to break down — as the *lena* is shown to co-opt the poet-lover's persuasive abilities, so too does he appropriate characteristics of Dipsas' supposed domain, magic. The presence of magic adds another layer to the competitive nature of the *lena/lover* relationship. The poet-lover's knowledge of the tropes of the magical *ars* brings into question who the real witch is. Ovid's engagement with the category of curse tablets (to be discussed in section 2) demonstrates a knowledge of agonistic magic that a perceptive reader of the *Amores* might pick up on. The competitors espouse rival views of the rules of the amatory realm — views that are clouded by the uncertainty associated with the

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<sup>458</sup> Gross (1996), 197.

<sup>459</sup> Gross (1996), 197-8.

eloquent rhetoric both wield and their alignment with magical elements. Pillinger considers the characterisation of the *lena* as a witch dubious, simply a part of the poet-lover's attempts to blacken her character in the *puella*'s and readers' eyes.<sup>460</sup> However, she fails to note the collapsing of the boundaries at the opposite end of the spectrum — between poet-lover and witch as Ovid appropriates the powers of spells to describe the potency of his own magic. The poet's act of appropriating magical attributes serves to further collapse the distinctions between himself and the *lena* for poetic control. This act prompted Oliensis to state that 'Dipsas is no more and no less a witch than Naso himself.'<sup>461</sup> In this sense, Ovid is just as much of a magic user as the procuress Dipsas is when he claims abilities analogous to magical powers. The only proof that the *lena* is a witch comes from Ovid; given the poet's rivalry with the *lena* over the *puella*, his words are not the most reliable. This position is further muddied by his later works, such as the *Ars* 3 and *Medicamina*, where the poet takes on an explicitly didactic role to women that seemingly usurps the role of the *lena*.

### *Heroides* 6 and 12

The *Heroides* present a series of letters written by mythological female characters to their absent beloveds.<sup>462</sup> The female-driven narratives of these epistles set them apart from typically male-centred elegiac poetry. Reversing the traditional gender roles in elegy allows Ovid to explore the gendered dimensions of magic. Engaging with well-known mythological tales allows Ovid to play with readers' expectations and draw more nuanced readings from these familiar stories. In sharing an addressee and a literary background, *Heroides* 6 and 12 engage in a close intratextual dialogue with each other.<sup>463</sup> The presence of magic in these two epistles has not gone unnoticed; scholars have commented on how Hypsipyle's letter seems to act as a curse against her love rival.<sup>464</sup> The queen's letter functions as a self-

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<sup>460</sup> Pillinger (2012), 58-9.

<sup>461</sup> Oliensis (2019), 89-90.

<sup>462</sup> The exact dating of the *Heroides*, especially in relation to the composition of the *Amores*, is contested, although most scholars agree that the *Heroides* were most likely composed somewhere between 25 BC and 8 BC. On the chronology of Ovid's works and obstacles of dating, see Jacobson (1974), 300-18; McKeown (1987), 74-89; White (2002), 9-10; Boyd (2002), 110-11; Fulkerson (2009), 79; Knox (2009), xxviii; Thorsen (2014), 9-38; Murgatroyd, Reeves, and Parker (2017), 3-4.

<sup>463</sup> Hinds (1993), 27-34; Bessone (1997), 18; Bloch (2000), 197-209; Jolivet (2001), 278-83; Lindheim (2003), 114-33; Efrossi (2003), 47-8, 88-90; Fulkerson (2005), 43-50; Chadha (2014), 83-6.

<sup>464</sup> Bloch (2000), 207-9; Jolivet (2001), 279-83; Fulkerson (2005), 50-55; Chadha (2014), 87-8. Fulkerson (2005) has also suggested that these *Heroides*, especially 12, seem to signal the end of Ovid's elegiac interests.

fulfilling prophecy, or curse, for Medea — the ramifications of which are only fully realised in Medea’s own address to Jason. This section will endeavour to provide a reading of magic in these passages by focusing on how each woman characterises herself as a victim of magic. Pollard argues that magic accusations can serve as a method to regulate competitive relationships or realign factional hierarchies between competing groups.<sup>465</sup> We aim to demonstrate how both Hypsipyle and Medea, although love rivals, characterise themselves as victims of magic, and how this allows them to reclaim some sense of agency over their situation as jilted lovers.

*Heroides* 6 shifts from the traditional male dominant perspective of *Am.* 1.8 to the arena of female competition. As we move from the poet’s own erotic anxieties to those of mythological characters, magic continues to act as a vehicle to address amatory concerns. *Heroides* 6 sees Hypsipyle, queen of Lemnos, accusing Medea of stealing Jason from her through coercive magic — an accusation not extant in other versions of the story. The way the queen refers to her rival is dismissive, describing Medea as a barbarian witch (19 *barbara uenefica*) and mistress (81 *barbara paelex*; 149 *paelicis*). *Uenefica* is a term mired in negative connotations; it can either mean poisoner or witch.<sup>466</sup> The combination of barbarian (*barbara*) and witch (*uenefica*) is the same as the one used by Canidia to describe Medea and her potions (Hor. *Epod.* 5.61-2 *cur dira barbarae minus | uenena Medea ualent*) when Horace’s witch is wondering why her love spells seemed ineffective. The verbal connections between these two passages are strengthened in the following line which describes Medea’s rival, Creusa, as a mistress (*Epod.* 5.63 *paelicem*). Although applied to a rival rather than directly to Medea, there is a clear lexical similarity between the two poems. This intertext potentially undercuts Hypsipyle’s accusations as it carries a suggestion that despite Medea’s potency in other aspects of magic, the witch is useless in affairs of the heart.<sup>467</sup> This is due to Canidia’s need to create another love potion after her first, which included Medea’s usual herbs, fails to seduce her target. Although the reader of *Epode* 5 is

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<sup>465</sup> Pollard (2014). Her study focusses on how the increasing political nature of magic accusations formed part of a struggle for power and legitimacy during a period of political change, specifically examining witchcraft accusations against women in Tacitus’ *Annals*. She argues that attacking women was one of many strategies employed in the negotiation of authority in imperial Rome. These accusations were often levelled by other women who sought to eliminate a rival in the highly competitive environment of imperial Rome.

<sup>466</sup> See *OLD ueneficus, -a, -um*, sense 1 and 2. The first sense defines a *uenefica* as a sorceress. The second sense as a poisoner. For the conflation of magic user and poisoner in Roman law and literature see Rives (2012). For the vocabulary associated with witches see Paule (2014).

<sup>467</sup> See Prince (2002) and (2003) for a similar argument about Medea’s inefficacy in the realm of love.

left wondering about the outcome of this second potion, there is a clear insinuation that Medea's usual magical devices were not adequate in the first place.

Regardless of the truth of Medea's magical seduction of Jason, an accusation which she denies, the Colchian princess is tarred with an unflattering brush. When the Lemnian queen begins her accusation against Medea, she specifically denigrates her rival's appearance and virtues while dismissing the possibility that they could be the reason the 'witch' attracted the hero (*Her.* 6.83-92):

nec facie meritisque placet, sed carmina nouit  
diraque cantata pabula falce metit.  
illa reluctantem cursu deducere lunam  
nititur et tenebris abdere solis equos;  
illa refrenat aquas obliquaque flumina sistit;  
illa loco siluas uiuaque saxa mouet.  
per tumulos errat passis discincta capillis  
certaque de tepidis colligit ossa rogis.  
deuouet absentes simulacraque cerea figit  
et miserum tenues in iecur urget acus

[She pleases not with her face or merits, but she knows spells and gathers deadly herbs with an enchanted knife. She endeavours to draw the reluctant moon from her course and cloak the horses of the sun in darkness; she holds back waters, and halts winding rivers; she makes woods and rocks come alive and move from their place. She wanders among the tombs, with clothes loose and hair dishevelled, and collects particular bones from tepid funeral pyres. She bewitches absent people and pierces wax figures and forces thin needles into their wretched livers]

This description of Medea's powers begins as a rather stereotypical catalogue of witches' abilities, which attributes astounding powers to her, before transitioning into a particularly Roman depiction of a witch. Lines 83-88 match descriptions of powers found in earlier

works.<sup>468</sup> However, the image of a dishevelled Medea wandering around graves is evocative of the Roman witches found in Horace (*Sat.* 1.8.22-4 ...*ossa legant herbasque nocentis | uidi egomet nigra succinctam uadere palla | canidiam pedibus nudis passoque capillo; Epod.* 5.15 *crinis et incomptum caput*), Tibullus (1.2.48 *tepidio deuocat ossa rogo; 53 malas herbas; 1.5.53-4 furens herbasque sepulcris quaerat et ... ossa*), and Propertius (3.6.25 *non me moribus illa, sed herbis improba uicit; 4.5.9-18*). Each of these passages are related to a *lena* or old woman figure who is characterised as a witch.<sup>469</sup> The presence of the word *deducere* again reinforces these intertexts. There is a clear rhetorical attempt to reduce Medea's status to a generic and, in a literary world, rather stereotypical witch. The Colchian princess, with her foreign background and performance of magical acts, is not a fit companion for a Greek hero.<sup>470</sup> Medea is an easy target for the queen's wrath because she occupies a marginal space as both a foreigner and practitioner of magic, whereas Jason enjoys a privileged male status. This helps validate the charge of witchcraft against Medea: when the Lemnian queen accuses her rival of coercing Jason with magic and potions, just as she did other creatures (6.97-8 *scilicet ut tauros, ita te iuga ferre coegit | quaque feros anguis, te quoque mulcet ope; 131 hanc, o tu demens colchisque ablate uenenis; 150 quosque ueneficiis abstulit illa suis*), it has the added advantage of fitting an already established narrative. Hypsipyle covers her own failings and jealousy over Medea's possession of Jason by levelling accusations against her.<sup>471</sup>

Conversely, in *Heroides* 12, we have a Medea who, while admitting to being a magic practitioner, explicitly denies the charge of using love magic against Jason. Medea directly refutes the accusations of controlling Jason (163-4 *serpentes igitur potui taurosque furentes, / unum non potui perdomuisse uirum*). Medea is powerless in the face of love; her magic cannot help her (168 *nil dea, nil Hecates sacra potentis agunt*). Rather, the self-proclaimed

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<sup>468</sup> Cf. Apollon. 3.528-33; Tib. 1.2.45-54; Prop. 1.1.19-24.

<sup>469</sup> Hor. *Sat.* 1.8 and Tib. 1.2 are not accusations in the same manner as the others. The first describes Priapus' observations of old women in the cemetery, whose behaviour and activities designate them as witches. In Tibullus, the poet is describing a helpful witch and his ability to use her powers is part of his rhetorical strategy to convince Delia to sleep with him.

<sup>470</sup> For the marginal status (foreigners, women, itinerant ritual specialists) of those accused of witchcraft see Graf (1997), 104-9; Gordon (1999), 194-204; Stratton (2014), 1-40; Pollard (2014), 183-218. Frankfurter (2019), 31, states that witches often belong to the feminine realm because it is easier to see women as an alterity to be defined against.

<sup>471</sup> Eidinow (2019), 765 argues that 'personal misfortune and failure were often attributed to a malevolent magical attack by an enemy, often prompted by envy.'

witch accuses the fickle hero of taking advantage of her love to coerce her into committing unspeakable atrocities (*Her.* 12.31-6):

tunc ego te uidi, tunc coepi scire, quid esses;  
illa fuit mentis prima ruina meae.  
et uidi et perii; nec notis ignibus arsi,  
ardet ut ad magnos pinea taeda deos.  
et formosus eras, et me mea fata trahebant;  
abstulerant oculi lumina nostra tui.

[Then I saw you, then I began to know what you might be; that was the beginning of the ruin of my mind. I saw you and died; I burned with unknown flames, just as a pine-torch burning for the mighty gods. You were handsome, and my fate drew me forth; and my eyes were captured by yours.]

Medea focusses on his persuasive and deceitful speech (12 *linguae gratia ficta tuae*; 72 *infido ore*; 120 *tu fraudis*). The evocation of Prop. 1.1 in lines 31 and 36 provide an insinuation that Jason potentially bewitched her.<sup>472</sup> The mention of how the hero captured her with his eyes has clear parallels in Propertius' first poem (1-2 *Cynthia prima suis miserum me cepit ocellis | contactum nullis ante cupidinibus*).<sup>473</sup> Here the roles are reversed; instead of a male lover being charmed by a *puella*, it is an innocent young girl who is bewitched by a man. The suggestion of magic is made more plausible by the presence of the verb *abstulerant*, used here of the power of Jason's eyes. The verb conveys the suggestion that Jason captured or seized Medea by some means.<sup>474</sup> Ovid's claims about his own enchanting verses in *Am.* 2.1 strengthen Medea's accusations against Jason. The witch was helpless against the persuasive powers of the Greek hero; he was able to enchant her to the point of madness with his words alone.

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<sup>472</sup> Cf. Pind. *Pyth.* 4.213-219, which relates Jason bewitching the foreign princess with rites taught to him by Venus.

<sup>473</sup> See the discussion of Prop. 1.1 in the first Propertius chapter.

<sup>474</sup> See *OLD* *aufero*, -*rre*, especially sense 8 and 13. The first carries the sense killing or destroying something. The second of disturbing the judgement and misleading someone.

Further support for the possibility of Jason's seduction as magical comes from an intertext with Horace, who uses *abstulit* in a poem concerned with a ritual to create a love potion. In *Epode* 5 the word has direct reference to Medea, being used in the description of the punishment the witch inflicts on Creusa for taking Jason away from her (*Epod.* 5.63-4 *quibus superbam fugit ultra paelicem | magni Creontis filiam | cum palla, tabo munus imbutum, nouam | incendio nuptam abstulit?*). The intertext serves to underscore the powerlessness of Medea's magic in love affairs — although Canidia possesses Medea's potent potions, her lover fails to return. This also undermines Hypsipyle's earlier accusations against the archetypal witch. Medea does not explicitly accuse Jason of magic, but the intertexts from these earlier poems cast doubt on the nature of the hero's persuasive abilities. The witch's insinuation that Jason might have used magic to coerce her helps mitigate her responsibility for what followed. However, these intertexts also highlight Medea's magical abilities and the destructive potential of them; Medea's own words recall her future dark acts as she attempts to smooth over the crimes she has committed. The two heroines present the facts of their stories in a manner that supports their version of events while destabilising other narratives; this does not erase them, however. There is a struggle for authorial control over their own well-known stories. They are embedded in a complex web of social relations, vying for affection and status as well as power and rivalry. These narratives allow us to see something of the interpersonal dynamics that can provoke witchcraft accusations.

Throughout their letters, the heroines negotiate the liminal space between reproach, accusations, and attempts to validate their own worth. Each woman highlights the value of her particular relationship to the hero as part of a rhetorical strategy to establish the legitimacy of their marriage and persuade Jason to return. Along with positing a rival as the cause of their abandonment, these women engage in a game of virtue signalling that revolves around characterising themselves as victims. The use of magic, or lack thereof, is at the heart of the competition between the two heroines — one condemning its use and the other extolling its utility. As queen of Lemnos, Hypsipyle comes from a privileged position yet occupies an ambiguous place. The audience knows that her act of familial piety, sparing her father from the wrath of the Lemnian women, will soon ostracise the queen from her own kingdom. The very act of which she is so proud and the benefits she can confer will soon be stripped from her. In her appeal to her wayward lover, Hypsipyle highlights her

illustrious lineage (1 *Bacchi genus*; 114-15 *ego Minoo nata Thoante feror! Bacchus auus*), offers her kingdom (5 *pacta ... mea regna*; 117 *dos tibi lemnos erit*), reminds him of the bed he promised to share with her alone (20 *mihi promissi ... tori*), proclaims her willingness to join him in death (28 *me quoque fata uocant*), asserts the legitimacy of their marriage (41-2 *ubi pacta fides? ubi conubialia iura | faxque sub arsuos dignior ire rogos?*), mentions her faithful prayers for his return (73 *preces castas inmixtaque uota timori*), and relates that she has borne him children (119 *nunc etiam peperit*). The queen juxtaposes her filial piety (135 *rapui de clade Thoanta*) with Medea's fratricide (129-30 *quae fratris potuit lacerata per agros | corpora*) and betrayal of her father (135 *prodidit illa patrem*). She attempts to elicit pity by asserting that she is an abandoned wife and mother (155 *ego destituor coniunx materque*). Her pious prayers and vows are juxtaposed with Medea's nefarious potions.

The queen's letter culminates in a prayer to Jupiter for justice, which calls on the god to punish Medea in a manner that foreshadows the witch's fate (*Her.* 6.151-64):

Medeae Medea forem! quodsi quid ab alto  
 iustus adest uotis Iuppiter ille meis,  
 quod gemit Hypsipyle, lecti quoque subnuba nostri  
 maereat et leges sentiat ipsa suas;  
 utque ego destituor coniunx materque duorum,  
 a totidem natis orba sit illa uiro!  
 nec male parta diu teneat peiusque relinquat:  
 exulet et toto quaerat in orbe fugam!  
 quam fratri germana fuit miseroque parenti  
 filia, tam natis, tam sit acerba uiro!  
 cum mare, cum terras consumpserit, aera temptet;  
 erret inops, exspes, caede cruenta sua!  
 haec ego, coniugio fraudata Thoantias oro.  
 uiuite, deuoto nuptaque uirque toro!

[I would have been a Medea to Medea. But if he who is on high, Jupiter the Just, assists my prayers, let the rival who shares my bed also mourn what Hypsipyle laments and feel the effect of her own laws; I am an abandoned wife and mother of two, so let her lose her

husband after she has borne as many! May she not keep her evil place for long, and leave behind worse: may she be exiled and search the whole world for refuge. What the sister was to the brother and the daughter to the unlucky father, let that harsh woman be to her husband and her children! When she's exhausted sea and land, let her try the air; may she wander helpless, hopeless, bloodied by her crimes. I, daughter of Thoas, cheated of my husband pray that the bride and husband live in a cursed bed!]

This prayer is essentially a curse levelled at her rival — one that will be fulfilled in *Heroides* 12. The rhetoric of her letter imitates *diabolai* spells, in which one maligns a chosen target while portraying oneself as a wronged victim to earn sympathy from a divinity.<sup>475</sup> The god would then punish the target on behalf of this victim. Although the supplicant positions themselves as a victim to be avenged, they are still victimising someone else.<sup>476</sup> In fact, prayers for justice commonly blurred the lines between sanctioned and non-sanctioned ritual.<sup>477</sup> The final lines of this prayer in particular play on the ambiguity of its status by including both *oro* and *deuoto*; one invokes prayer, the other curse.<sup>478</sup> In Prop. 2.28.39-46 the poet-lover beseeches Jupiter to save the life of his mistress who has fallen gravely ill; he insinuates that her illness is caused by the jealousy of a rival.<sup>479</sup> The subtext of being a victim of magic and her appeal to appropriate authorities for aid helps further establish the queen as in the right and Medea as in the wrong. Hypsipyle, secure in the righteousness of her plight, wields a curse against her rival. There is a certain dissonance between her persona as a wronged victim and a woman who would become a Medea; the implication is that Hypsipyle knows full well that she is cursing her rival, but displaces blame by appealing to the justness of her cause as she presents it. The queen seeks to regain some control over her situation by

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<sup>475</sup> See chapter 2 for a discussion of *diabolai*. PGM. IV.2441-2621 and VI.2622-2707 are the most detailed examples of these spells. Petrović (2007), 41-51 argues that unrequited love constitutes an injustice in *defixiones* and that Simaetha's spell in Theo. *Id.* 2.64-158 is a literary representation of the ritual.

<sup>476</sup> Faraone (1999), 43-55 and 80-84 discusses the similarities between erotic magic and prayers for justice.

<sup>477</sup> They were often found alongside curse tablets proper and were often indistinguishable from them. For these kinds of *defixiones* see Gager (1992) and Versnel (1998).

<sup>478</sup> See OLD *deuoueo*, *deuouere* sense 3 and 4. See Tib. 1.5 discussion for the relevance of *deuoueo*.

<sup>479</sup> The situation in Propertius is more akin to that of the female protagonist in Theo. *Id.* 2 and Verg. *Ecl.* 8, where she is appealing to the gods to aid in her seduction ritual in drawing back her wayward lover. So too does Propertius' real desires primarily seem to lie in seducing his mistress rather than saving her.

providing an external impediment to her love — she is not at fault or lacking in charm, the evil witch seduced her husband with magic.<sup>480</sup>

In a similar fashion, Medea presents her own version of events. She is careful to emphasise her former innocence and devotion to her lover. While Medea cannot refute the fact that she is a witch, she does deny that magic aided her in winning over Jason, at least in the manner that Hypsipyle claims — her magic comprised acts of service that saved her beloved's life and should earn her praise from him. Medea refers to her magic and enchantments as *medicamina* rather than the perhaps expected poisons (*uenenum*) or spells (*carmina*). Although *medicamina* could be translated as potions or drugs, it does not carry the same negative connotations as more traditional terms for witchcraft. In an attempt to dissuade the hero from marrying the Corinthian princess, Medea reminds Jason that she helped him to her own detriment (1-2 *...uacui, | ars mea cum peteres ut tibi ferret opem*), that he had vowed to be hers should she aid him (83 *effice me meritis tempus in omne tuum*), that the hero owes his life and achievements to her magic (97 *dederam medicamina; 107-8 flamma subduxi medicato lumina somno | et tibi, quae raperes, uellera tuta dedi; 203 dos mea tu sospes, dos est mea Graia iuuentus*), that she made terrible sacrifices to be with him (109 *proditus est genitor, regnum patriamque reliqui; 111 uirginitas facta est peregrini praeda latronis, | optima cum cara matre relicta soror*), and that a stepmother could be dangerous to their children (188 *saeuiet in partus dira nouerca meos*). Medea describes herself as a simple girl (89-90 *puellae | simplicis*) who fell quickly for Jason (92 *sic cito sum uerbis capta puella tuis*) and was deceived by the hero (120 *tu fraudis poenas, credulitatis ego*). She begs him to be faithful to his vows; her pleas for Jason to stay parallel his previous pleas for Medea to save him (191-4). In a move that is likely intended to garner more sympathy she demonstrates remorse for her past actions and professes that she deserves her punishments. By acknowledging and accepting that she deserves to be punished she displays a semblance of humanity not displayed during her nefarious acts. With the portrayal of herself as a naive victim of a skilled womaniser's duplicity and coercion, Medea attempts to mitigate some of the culpability for her crimes by displacing it onto Jason. She was forced to do evil on behalf of Jason (132 *pro quo sum totiens esse*

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<sup>480</sup> Caston (2012), 59 argues that jealousy is heightened when the rival has an inferior social status as that lowers the status of the first mistress as well.

*coacta nocens*). In many ways the hero is an exemplum of a successful, albeit unfortunate, lover who is able to seduce three different women, much to their detriment.

It has been argued that magical rituals helped negotiate social anxieties and tensions when there was a breakdown of social relationships and that they provided some sort of crisis resolution.<sup>481</sup> The interaction of social and cultural structures with individual perception and action is a crucial aspect of this analysis. There is a marginalizing aspect to Hypsipyle's description of Medea — she denigrates an individual already belonging to the fringes of acceptability. Hypsipyle's attempt to curate her innocence can be seen as part of a rhetorical strategy to persuade Jupiter that her cause is just. Hypsipyle speaks from a position of social and political authority over a woman who is already geographically and culturally isolated. Ovid's Medea, with her constant attempts to downplay her own crimes, is characteristic of Augustan Rome's attempt to recast the bloody history of its civil wars — she demonstrates a trend towards erasure and reframing of her past actions that would hold much cultural currency in the years following the civil wars. This dovetails neatly with Fulkerson's argument that magic in *Heroides* 6 and 12 can be read as a desire for authorial control over narratives; magic becomes the focus of the battle for these heroines to reframe their stories.<sup>482</sup> *Heroides* 6 presents an accusation from a secondary victim of a spell — Hypsipyle is a victim in the sense that *agoge* magic is attributed as the cause of her loss of Jason. The truth may be that she has been abandoned by a fickle lover. However, her displacement of the cause of the hero's infidelity onto a rival helps assuage her loss of status and power. Medea casts aspersions on the nature of Jason's persuasive abilities to provide an excuse for her horrific actions; leaning into their victimisation allows them to reclaim their narrative in part.

The inversion of power and control in victims of magic insinuates a similar mechanism at play in elegiac poetry itself. With *Heroides* 6 and 12, Ovid inverts the already inverted paradigm of the helpless elegiac lover. These female victims' powerlessness to persuade the object of their love matches the circumstances of the male poet-lover. This supports the argument that these two women are in alignment with the elegiac poet through their shared goal of appealing to an errant lover with persuasive speeches and in

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<sup>481</sup> Frankfurter (2019), 16. See Winkler (1991) for how he sees curses as a projection onto the object/victim of the commissioners' own feelings.

<sup>482</sup> Fulkerson (2005), 55-66.

their ultimate failure to seduce their intended target.<sup>483</sup> While this failure matches the general failure of the elegiac lover, it stands in contrast to Ovid's assertions in *Am.* 2.1. While each woman regains some level of control over her own narrative, what little authority is regained is lost to the greater structure of their myth. Magic is used as a mask and as a means to navigate the erotic frustrations of each woman. This corresponds to the motives behind Hypsipyle's accusations against Medea; the queen seeks to denigrate her opponent by aligning her with witchcraft — a task easily accomplished due to Medea's known performance of non-amatory magic. By tarnishing the Colchian princess' image Hypsipyle hopes to turn the tide of public opinion, and so Jason's, against her rival. Considering the importance of status and reputation, this is a sound strategy. Her efforts are successful in one sense — Jason does abandon Medea, but he does not return to Hypsipyle. Hypsipyle's concerns about public opinion and image are reflected in her letter to Jason; she seems to use Medea's witchcraft as a cover for her inability to win Jason with her personal charms. These women are pitted against each other, or at least are perceived competitors, for Jason's love. Hypsipyle and Medea employed accusations of witchcraft to regain a semblance of agency over their shifting social situations. In the next section, we will look at how, even without a direct source of antagonism, being a potential victim of witchcraft could help mitigate frustrations.

## 2. Erotic Frustrations:

Magic continues to provide a tool to interrogate the tensions between the various players and elements of the erotic world. Here we will look at two different instances of cursing in the *Amores*, poems 1.12 and 3.7, in which Ovid explores the idea of erotic frustrations and delineates different strategies to deal with them. The first poem, *Amores* 1.12, will be read in conjunction with 1.11. Scholars see this pair of poems as a metapoetic discussion of Ovid's views on the process of poetic production and his relationship to the elegiac genre.<sup>484</sup> The focus of 1.11 and 1.12 on the poet-lover's writing tablets interacts with the concepts of raw poetic material and composition. The presence of magic in poems discussing genre

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<sup>483</sup> Chadha (2014), 85-7. For Chadha, this failure is particularly linked to magic; these heroines, much like the poet-lovers, fail to entice their object with their persuasive epistolary *carmen*.

<sup>484</sup> Henderson (1991), 75-81; Fitzgerald (2000), 60-2; Roman (2006), 366-78; Chadha (2014), 79. For writing tablets as a votive offering see Lowrie (2009), 196-99.

insinuates that magic is, at least in Ovid's eyes, an integral part of love elegy. Where 1.12 sees the poet-lover's advances rejected by his mistress, *Amores* 3.7 sees the poet unable to perform despite the presence of a willing participant. Instead of meditating on cursed tablets, the poet's own body becomes the subject of a curse. Unlike in *Am.* 1.8, there is no direct accusation of witchcraft or obvious perpetrator of Ovid's impotent state; instead, the magic of another is used to justify the poet's inability to perform in the bedroom. While *Am.* 1.11/12 function as a discussion of love elegy, *Am.* 3.7 has been read as representative of the poet's flagging interest in the genre.<sup>485</sup> On the surface, both types of curses represent anxieties that are provoked by the dynamics of competition and demonstrate the poet's need to negotiate his place alongside potential rivals and failures. On a broader level, they demonstrate important associations of the genre with magic.

#### *Reading Curse Tablets in Ovid Amores 1.11 and 1.12*

Together *Amores* 1.11 and 1.12 form a diptych, both in structure and in subject matter, narrating the expectations and disappointments of the poet's love affair through the medium of his writing tablets. These two poems contain the most direct relation of the poet-lover to magic besides *Am.* 2.1's incorporation of magical language to describe Ovid's poetic prowess. *Amores* 1.11 sees Ovid sending his mistress a request to meet through his writing tablets. He predicts a positive response to his summons and even imagines dedicating his successful tablets to Venus. When the poet instead receives a negative response from his beloved in the following poem (1.12), he unleashes a bitter invective against the same tablets. What is often seen as humorously misplaced cursing at inanimate objects and other surrogates in anger over his rejection holds a more nuanced possibility. Ostensibly, these tablets embody the medium through which Ovid communicates with his beloved in his poems. More broadly, they can be read metapoetically as a representation of Ovid's love poetry. There exists a third possible interpretation of these tablets, one that plays on the multivalence of the word *tabellae*. I suggest that these tablets can also represent curse tablets (*tabellae defixiones*)<sup>486</sup> through the poet's own cursing of them and

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<sup>485</sup> Keith (1994), 37-8.

<sup>486</sup> OLD *defigo*, -ere sense 6 and *tabellae*, -ae.

in conjunction with the ritualistic backdrop of the previous poem's ending.<sup>487</sup> This section aims to demonstrate how the poet's cursing of his *tabellae* for failing him in an erotic context engages with the concept of *defixiones* and explores how the magic subtext functions as a foil for Ovid's poetic concerns — outwardly acting as an emotional strategy to deal with his erotic anxieties and frustrations while also participating in a larger metapoetic discourse on genre. To illustrate this, the relationship between the prayer language of 1.11 and the cursing of 1.12 will be explored. Then we will examine what elements of 1.12 signal that the tablets could also double as *defixiones*. Finally, we will look at how the magical intertexts interact with other Roman poets and what this means for *Amores* 1.12.

In 1.11, the poet requests that Corinna's hairdresser, Nape, act as an emissary and deliver his tablets to her (1-22); he imagines a favourable reply (23-4); and he promises to dedicate his helpful tablets to Venus (25-8). The first hint of the possible cursed nature of the tablets comes from the juxtaposition of the tablets' proposed consecration in 1.11, should they be successful in their task, with their dismal fate after their failure. Unlike in the previously discussed poems of Propertius that also engage with the concept of curse tablets and *agoge* spells, Ovid is more subtle — on the face of it, these two poems do not readily provide lexical links to magic as strong as those given by his predecessor. However, Ovid's vow to dedicate his *tabellae* to Venus (1.11), should his plea be successful, establishes a distinctive ritualistic context. The poet's promise to offer his tablets to Venus comes at the very end of the poem (1.11.25-8):<sup>488</sup>

non ego uictrices lauro redimire tabellas  
 nec Veneris media ponere in aede morer.  
 subscribam VENERI FIDAS SIBI NASO MINISTRAS  
 DEDICAT. AT NVPER VILE FVISTIS ACER.

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<sup>487</sup> Chadha (2014), 73-88 makes a similar suggestion. However, Chadha argues that this interpretation is revealed retrospectively when 1.12 is read in conjunction with *Amores* 3.7, whereas I believe this suggestion is already implicit in the text of 1.12 itself.

<sup>488</sup> McKeown (1989, 308) suggests that much like how *Amores* 1.12 seems to share many similarities to Prop. 3.23, that 1.11 might be influenced by Prop. 3.6 — a poem where a slave also acts as the mediator between the poet and his beloved.

[I would not hesitate to wreath my victorious tablets with laurel nor to place them in the middle of Venus' temple. I would inscribe underneath them: Naso dedicates these loyal servants, which formerly were worthless maplewood, to Venus.]

Although dedicating a set of tablets might seem a commonplace form of thanksgiving, the choice of the dedicated material object when paired with knowledge of the succeeding poem conveys a potentially more complex reading. Ovid's predisposition to use his tablets as a thanks offering in return for a positive response insinuates that he might use them in a comparable manner if given a negative response. Moreover, in the fourth couplet the poet-lover uses three imperatives that express the urgency of his request to Nape (1.11.7-8 *accipe et ad dominam peraratas mane tabellas | perfer et obstantes sedula pelle moras*). Here he transitions from flattery to commands. These imperatives, while stressing the poet's ardent desire, jar with the excessive compliments he previously lavished on the handmaiden. This change in behaviour is reminiscent of a poet-lover's treatment of a door in a *paraclausithyron* or of the traditional go-between, the *lena*.

Nape's role as a messenger between the two lovers aligns her with the *lena*, suggesting that she may have mercenary reasons for acting as an impediment, if she did have a role to play in the negative response, or that she might be a magic user herself. This insinuation is strengthened by the slave's apparent intimacy with and skill in nocturnal services (1.11.3-4 *inque ministeriis furtivae cognita noctis | utilis*). This line suits both an amatory setting and a magical ritual setting. In similar situations the poet-lover would often begin with blandishments, perhaps recalling past services in their favour, before ending with curses against them for being a literal or perceived obstacle to his mistress. The phrase 'opposing delays' (*obstantes ... moras*) found in line 8 may even be a reference to these possible obstructions. Thus, the subsequent shift to cursing is not wholly unexpected and, one might go so far as to say, is lightly foreshadowed here by Ovid's treatment of Nape. The imperative tense is also among the most prevalent in binding and manipulation formulas of curse tablets.<sup>489</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 2 on Propertius 1-3, binding spells commonly use objects, such as tablets, as well as verbal components to enact the spell. That Ovid is narrating the process of having the note delivered along with his desired outcome plays on

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<sup>489</sup> Kropp (2010), 358-60.

both the physical and verbal dimensions of a curse.<sup>490</sup> The tablets' function as a medium of communication and as physical objects that aid in the seduction of Corinna in part mirrors that of *tabellae defixiones*. Ovid's writing tablets seek to charm his mistress, a goal concurrent with amatory curse spells. It would not be difficult for a contemporary reader to pick up on suggestions of love magic in an elegiac setting, if such rituals were as ubiquitous as some scholars claim.<sup>491</sup> A conceptual blending occurs that allows the *tabellae* to hold a twofold meaning, being both commonplace writing objects as well as a more specialised type of tablet. While this first poem is not straightforwardly magical in nature, it is evidence of ritual activity and is still highly evocative of curse tablets. Reading the poem in this light helps set the stage for understanding the magic references in 1.12; the emphasis on giving thanks to his tablets in the previous poem anticipates the poet's prompt turn to cursing.

In *Amores* 1.12 the wax tablets are returned with a negative response (1-2); the poet recounts the previously unmentioned ominous incident of Nape stubbing her toe on the way to deliver his message to Corinna (3-6); he censures the tablets for their impure nature as the wood they were made from and the manner of their construction were associated with ominous elements (7-20); he then proceeds to curse and blame the tablets for his misfortune (29-30).<sup>492</sup> In this poem, Ovid's tablets are subject to a bitter invective in stark contrast to the veneration they received at the end of 1.11. The previous poem could be read as an attraction spell meant to draw his mistress to him, whereas this poem becomes a curse against obstructions to their communion. Not only does the poet curse his former aids, he also seems to style them as failed amatory *defixiones*. The recasting of Ovid's tablets as part of a binding spell adds a layer of ambiguity to his actions in the previous poem and engages with a psychological aspect of magic.<sup>493</sup> Amidst the poet's diatribe against his writing tablets he begins to curse them, imagining them being crushed by the weight of a passing wheel after being discarded in the crossroads (13-14 *proiectae triuiis iaceatis, inutile lignum, | uosque rotae frangat praetereuntis onus*). The act of throwing the

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<sup>490</sup> Fulkerson (2002) discussion of how Laodamia unintentionally invokes a curse through her actions and letter is a useful model for understanding prose as curse.

<sup>491</sup> Gager (1992), 3-41; Graf (1997), 15; Dickie (2001), 126.

<sup>492</sup> McKeown (1989), 323 sees lines 7-14 as the first part of a curse against the tablets, which continues in the last lines of the poem.

<sup>493</sup> Faraone (1999), 7 acknowledges the psychological and emotional nature of curse rituals; Eidinow (2018), 746-73, explores the anxieties provoked by the dynamics of competition in such spells. It is the generally accepted view that the curse ritual acts as a cathartic experience for the agent and allows them an outlet to deal with the uncertainties of existence.

tablets into the crossroads carries subtle magic undertones as crossroads were a popular place to leave both offerings and *defixiones*. Even the mention of a singular wheel (*rotae*) may be a sly reference to either an *inyx* or *rhombus*, both are especially commonplace in amatory magic rituals.<sup>494</sup> The connection to magic becomes stronger when Ovid laments that he entrusted his love to wax tablets (1.12.21-2 *his ego commisi nostros insanus amores / molliaque ad dominam uerba ferenda dedi?*). The combination of *commisi* and *dedi* in the couplet are reminiscent of the language used in curse tablets.<sup>495</sup> The suggestion that these might be curse tablets is then reinforced by the succeeding line, where he posits that the wax would have been better suited to a loquacious summons (23 *aptius hae capiant uadimonia garrula cerae*), an amusing sentiment following an entire poem aimed at summoning his mistress.<sup>496</sup> The notion of summoning is clearly interesting as it matches what Ovid hoped to achieve with his own writings and mirrors what an *agoge* spell seeks to do. The mention of wax (*cerae*) might simply refer to the wax of the of the writing tablets, but also recalls the use of the medium for effigies during both love spells and curses.<sup>497</sup> In this poem we learn that the wax is an ominous bloody red colour (12 *ille color uere sanguinolentus erat*). These tablets are imbued (11 *medicato*) with a suspicious colour; *medicato* is strange word to use for describing the colour of something, especially given Medea's claim to use only *medicamina* rather than other more recognisably magical terms. This lexical resonance further builds on the insinuation that magic is present in this poem.

Furthermore, the context, a curse poem, and the use of the word *garrula* invoke an intertext with Tib. 1.5, a poem which is memorable for its rather vicious curse against a *lena* in retaliation for her negotiating the separation between Tibullus and Delia. The word appears as a description of a talkative young slave (26 *garrulus ... uerna*) who would

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<sup>494</sup> See Theoc. *Id.* 2 where both are mentioned. For elegiac references to the rhombus see Tib. 1.5.3-4, 70; Prop. 2.28.35, 3.6.26; Ov. *Am.* 1.8.7. Tib. 1.5.70 is particularly relevant here as it cautions that fortune is fickle and its wheel turns quickly (*uersatur celeri Fors leuis orbe rotae*): a fitting intertext for a poem that demonstrates how easily fates can change.

<sup>495</sup> Kropp (2010), 362-4. This seems to mimic the committal formula type binding spell, where emphasis is placed on the ritual act of placing the curse tablet in an appropriate location. Looking at Greek tablets Eidinow (2018, 371), sees committal formulas as suggestive of consigning their target to the underworld. Placing such a tablet in a sanctuary was often part of the ritual. This resonates with the dedication of the tablets in 1.11.

<sup>496</sup> McKeown (1989), 333. He specifically draws attention to the rare use of the legal term *uadimonia* (where a person willingly binds themselves to appear in court), which further stands in contrast to Ovid's situation.

<sup>497</sup> Although it is believed that lead was most common material used in the creation of *defixiones*, other materials such as wax and wood were also used, see Gager (1992), 3; Faraone (1999), 12. For red wax in writing tablets which are used for curses see Faraone (1991), 25 and Ogden (1999), 11.

affectionately play on Delia's lap in Tibullus' idyllic and rather domestic fantasy of what life with his mistress would be like if only there were no interferences with their affair. It is also a poem where Tibullus claims to have participated in magical rituals, ostensibly to help save Delia, but is robbed of the fruits of his labour by another. This intertext introduces the possibility that Ovid failed in his endeavours due to the machinations of a rival. The helper in the poem changes from an old woman (1.5.12 *anus*) to a crafty procuress (1.5.48 *callida lena*) who has betrayed him and stolen his mistress from him. Tibullus, far more than his fellow elegists, has a habit of juxtaposing religious rituals with magical rituals; this is something that Ovid also seems to have done with 1.11 and 1.12. This intertext both establishes Ovid's engagement with magic and insinuates that the competitive element of *defixiones* might have been at play here, as they were in Tibullus; his poetic power then fails against some unknown rival.

Without a discernible target, Ovid continues his curse against the tablets in the last two couplets of the poem (1.12.27-30):

ergo ego uos rebus duplices pro nomine sensi:  
auspicii numerus non erat ipse boni.  
quid precer iratus nisi uos cariosa senectus  
rodat et immundo cera sit alba situ!

[Therefore, I felt that you are two-faced by nature: the number itself was not of good omen. Angry, what should I pray if not that withering old age might gnaw away at you and that your wax might become white from foul neglect!]

A close parallel to this level of censure from the poet can be seen in the previously discussed *Am.* 1.8, where Ovid curses the *lena* Dipsas for her interference in his love affair.<sup>498</sup> The mention of the ravages of old age personifies the tablets, recalls the poet's focus on Dipsas' hideous old age at the end of 1.8. The cursing of the tablets represents another instance of the poet blaming his erotic frustrations on external obstacles. Comparable circumstances can also be found in the previously mentioned Tibullus 1.5 where the *lena* is cursed.

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<sup>498</sup> Cf. Prop. 3.25 where the poet claims to end his relationship with Cynthia after being rejected and tricked by her too many times. In this case, it is the mistress that the lover upbraids, rather than a go-between.

However, another of Tibullus' poems aligns with the context of 1.12. In Tib. 2.6 we see the rejected poet-lover make recourse to necromantic rituals to coerce his mistress.<sup>499</sup> He also turns his curses towards a *lena* whom he blames for his misfortune. As Tibullus seeks to manipulate Nemesis with the spirit, or corpse, of her dead sister, one might imagine Ovid seeks to accomplish a similar goal with these tablets. Roman argues that this poem engages with the issues of surrogacy and authorial control with Nape, and by extension, the tablets act as failed surrogates.<sup>500</sup> In this view, Ovid fails both as a master and as an author to control the outcome. The magical undertones add to this by producing a further layer of ambiguity over the text and the poet's mastery of it. Did Ovid's poetry simply fail to persuade or were there mitigating factors competing for control of the narrative, such as a *lena* or a rival or perhaps the tablets were never delivered. Nape's role as a go-between sets her up as both a rival for Ovid's poetic control, as she had power over whether the tablets were delivered, as well as a potential witch, as she was vulnerable to accusations of witchcraft and vituperous invective just as the *lena* was. The ambiguity surrounding the slave's motivations and actions challenges the poet's version of events. The story is only told from his point of view; he shifts responsibility from himself to his tablets, but this shift suggests a loss of control.

The magical subtext of 1.12 not only participates in a discussion of authorial control, it also engages with the concept of genre.<sup>501</sup> Ovid initiates this discourse by referencing Horace's *Sat.* 1.8 in the first line of his curse against the tablets when he calls the writing tablets 'useless wood' (1.12.13 *inutile lignum*). In Horace *Satire* 1.8, the statue of Priapus relates how he was fashioned from a useless piece of wood (1.8.1 *inutile lignum*) into a god by a craftsman. As mentioned above, this poem centres on witchcraft and Priapus' fear of the monstrous witches. This fear results in unexpected flatulence, essentially a loss of control over his own body when his virility is challenged by the presence of these vile women. This intertext with a poem which has an openly magical context further enhances the impression of magic in 1.12. Priapus himself acts as a good substitute for an impotent

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<sup>499</sup> See discussion of the episode in the Tibullus chapter.

<sup>500</sup> Roman (2006), 374 draws attention to how Nape's physical action of stumbling on her feet reminds the reader of Ovid's amusing struggle with Cupid at the beginning of the *Amores* where his poetic endeavours first went awry.

<sup>501</sup> Roman (2006), 376, notes that even the opening line of 1.11 (*colligere incertos et in ordine ponere*) draws attention to composition and order.

satirist as well as an elegiac lover — he is supposed to be masculine and virile yet acts in a passive manner. His transformation from unrefined wood to divinity demonstrates the potential that raw material has in the hands of a master artisan.

This Horace intertext dovetails neatly with another one in Vergil. While Ovid's intertextual engagement with Propertius, and even Horace, have been noted,<sup>502</sup> *Am.* 1.12's relation to Vergil seems to have passed unnoticed. In *G.* 2.442 there appears a similar phrase concerning useful wood (*utile lignum*) in a section which some have argued is a metapoetical discussion of intertextuality and how to cultivate and refine predecessors' works.<sup>503</sup> In the passage, Vergil seems to be suggesting a technique akin to grafting another poet's work into one's own poetry, essentially advocating for intertextuality as a creative technique, something Ovid certainly takes to heart. The elegist grafts the line about useless wood from Horace while also evoking a line from a passage of Vergil, demonstrating that he too can be a master of this *ars* of imitation and revision — using these intertexts to express his own vision. Vergil enumerates the useful properties of different types of trees in *G.* 2.420-53, while Ovid lists sinister properties and uses of the wood from which his tablets were made. During Ovid's denigration of his tablets he accuses the person who created the tablets of having impure hands (1.12.15-6 *illum etiam, qui uos ex arbore uertit in usum | conuincam puras non habuisse manus*). This reinforces both the intertext with Vergil and with Horace through reference to trees and to something being crafted from raw material.

Moreover, the magic ritual in *Epod.* 5 makes use of funeral wood (18 *cupressos funebris*), blood (19 *sanguine*) and the feathers of screechowl (20 *plumamque nocturnae strigis*). These elements are remarkably similar to the associations Ovid gives the materials his tablets are made from in *Am.* 1.12 (7 *funebria ligna*; 12 *sanguinolentus*; 20 *strigis*). The lexical similarities could be viewed as the poet's attempt to replicate Canidia's love spell. The mention of impure hands (*Am.* 1.12.16 *puras non manus*) might even refer back to Canidia, or those like her, as she claims to use her hands (*Epod.* 5.60 *mea manus*) in her ritual to smear her concoctions over a victim. In *Am.* 1.12, then, Ovid takes Vergil's lessons on grafting to heart: he combines elements of his predecessors' works to create a poem that could function both as a love spell and as a curse (not that the two are always mutually

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<sup>502</sup> Roman (2006), McKeown (1989), Morgan (1977), Dickson (1964).

<sup>503</sup> Henkel (2014) 'without *ars*, the products of *natura* are useless,' 63. Clément-Tarantino (2006) and Pucci (1998) also comment on the metapoetical nature of Vergil's tree grafting passage.

exclusive). Ovid seems to be commenting on how the outcome, whether positive or negative, of a creative endeavour depends on the skill of the craftsman. The magical intertext reinforces a metapoetical discussion of literary genre and technique. It might be said that the poet implies that magic has become a conventional part of the elegiac genre.

Ovid attempts to control the narrative and his mistress' response, either with his poetry or a spell, ends in failure. Though magic may be a tool at the poet-lover's disposal, its efficacy is ambiguous. This recourse to magic acts as an excuse for his mistress' coldness and helps mitigate the poet's lack of confidence in the romance. Ovid's cursing of these ambiguous tablets delineates one strategy with which the poet attempts to negotiate the problem of his failure in the amatory realm. Although often evidenced as a poem where the poet's interest in love elegy is wavering, he still clearly plans to continue the affair and rather it seems that he is drawing attention to the concept of creating itself.<sup>504</sup> Magic adds another layer to this discussion by interacting with genre. One could say that curse tablets act as material surrogates for frustration and anger at his failure to persuade Corinna; not only does Ovid vehemently curse his tablets, but they function as curse tablets, that is *defixiones*. *Amores* 1.12 consummates the conceptual blending between ordinary writing tablets and curse tablets that begins in 1.11 by enacting another significant part of the curse ritual, the emotional release. Together these poems form two halves of a cathartic ritual.

### *Erotic Dysfunction in Amores 3.7*

In many ways this is the poem that confirms magic as a constituent part of elegy. *Amores* 3.7 continues the theme of erotic obstacles, this time seeing the poet-lover frustrated in the bedroom by his body's refusal to cooperate. While in *Amores* 1.8 there is an accusation against a specific person, here there is no clear perpetrator when the poet-lover asserts that he cannot perform in the bedroom because someone has bewitched him. Ovid brings together here many of the magical elements we see in the earlier *Amores*. Chadha has shown the intertextual links between *Amores* 1.12 and 3.7 — highlighting the metapoetical nature of both poems and how they represent his faltering relationship to elegy.<sup>505</sup> This interpretation of Ovid's impotence as having a metapoetical dimension, symbolising the

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<sup>504</sup> Davis (1977), 81 and Roman (2006), 373 both draw attention to the fact that Nape remains as a medium of communication for the affair.

<sup>505</sup> Chadha (2014), 78-81. See also Roman (2006) for his discussion of the intertextual relationship between these poems.

poet's wavering devotion to elegy, is not new.<sup>506</sup> However, it is important to note that he engages with magic in this final book of the *Amores*. In this poem Ovid recollects an episode where, despite the presence of a beautiful and willing partner, he was unable to rise to the occasion (1-16); he declares how ashamed he is of his body and claims to have previously satisfied a number of other girls (17-26); he wonders if magic may be the cause of this embarrassment (27-36); he praises the girl's skills and compares himself to Tantalus in this situation (39-54); he describes her seductiveness as powerful enough to move heavy oak, hard adamant, or deaf stone (55-60); he describes his humiliation, compounded by the girl's vain efforts to arouse him (63-76); the girl asks if he came to her unwillingly and derisively repeats the poet's suggestion that magical enchantment is the cause of his current predicament (77-80); the girl departs, taking steps to ensure that she saves face in front of her servants (81-84). Frustrated in his inability to perform, he blames his erectile dysfunction on a witch, or some other sort of magic (3.7.27-36):

num mea Thessalico languent deuota ueneno  
 corpora, num misero carmen et herba nocent,  
 sagaue poenicea defixit nomina cera  
 et medium tenues in iecur egit acus?  
 carmine laesa Ceres sterilem uanescit in herbam,  
 deficiunt laesi carmine fontis aquae;  
 ilicibus glandes cantataque uitibus uua  
 decidit et nullo poma mouente fluunt.  
 quid uetat et neruos magicas torpere per artes?

[Have my limbs become weak cursed with Thessalian magic, do a spell and herb harm me in my miserable state, or did a witch fasten my name down in crimson wax and drive thin needles into the middle of the liver? Grain damaged by a spell passes away into barren plants, waters damaged by a spell cease at their source; through incantations acorns drop from oak trees and grapes from vines, and apples fall down although no one moved them. What stops my muscles from also becoming numb through magical arts?]

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<sup>506</sup> Sharrock (1995), 152-80 and Keith (1994), 37-8.

Line 29 provides a direct reference to a curse tablet, one that uses wax instead of lead.<sup>507</sup> Unlike in 1.12, there is little subtlety about the presence of magic and Ovid openly evokes the image of a curse tablet. The distinct use of the verb *defixit* further signals this connection to *defixiones*. Also, as discussed previously, variations of *deuoueo* are often indicative of curses or curse tablets.<sup>508</sup> The poet's knowledge of magic is made clear with the mention of piercing the liver with needles, an action common in amatory rituals, but not so common in their literary representations.<sup>509</sup> This suggests that Ovid had at least a rudimentary understanding of how magic functioned. This is not surprising if magic was as omnipresent as scholars would like us to believe. The colour of the wax (*poenicea ... cera*) of the proposed *defixiones* here parallels the colour of the wax on the writing tablets in *Am.* 1.12 (*at tamquam minio penitus medicata rubebas | ille color uere sanguinolentus erat*).<sup>510</sup> Ovid again evokes his own writing tablets, conceptually blending his poetry with magic, reinforcing the suggestion that the power of poetry can be read as analogous to magic. However, curse tablets only form part of the possible magical weapons used against Ovid. The poet's assertion that magic is responsible for his inability to perform sexually embodies the ritualised suffering that a victim of magic undergoes.<sup>511</sup> His musing on how he was cursed (27-30), perhaps by a former mistress or an unknown rival, draws on a nexus of experiences that were culturally understood to comprise a magical attack.

The poet's situation is similar to one found in *Tib.* 1.5, which seems to serve as a partial model for both *Am.* 1.12 and 3.7, with each drawing on a different aspect of the

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<sup>507</sup> This is the specific line on which Chadha (2014) bases her argument that *Am.* 1.12 can also be read as a curse tablet through the connection of the word *cera*.

<sup>508</sup> Dombrowski (2018) discusses the importance of this word as the magic vocabulary became more prominent and distinct, especially in Ovid's works. Graf (1997, 128–129) differentiates between the *deuotio*, which is performed in public and protects against future events, and the *defixio* (represented by binding spells or curse tablets), which is performed privately and reacts to prior events. Dickie (2001, 17) links *defigere* and *deuouere* to curse tablets; where *defigere* focuses on binding the victim, *deuouere* consigns the victim to chthonic gods.

<sup>509</sup> Although the liver was considered the seat of desire (cf. *Hor. Epod.* 5.37-8), it was more common in magic practice to pierce a figure or the curse tablets themselves. For piercing see Tupet (1976), 388; Knox (1995), 190. In literature it was more common to manipulate effigies, usually wax, instead (cf. *Theoc. Id.* 2.28-29, *Verg. Ecl.* 8.80-81, *Hor. Sat.* 1.8.30-33 and 43-44; *Hor. Epod.* 17.76).

<sup>510</sup> Chadha (2014), 78 sees this line in *Am.* 3.7 as reinterpreting the earlier work and providing the suggestion that they are curse tablets rather than just writing tablets. However, as I have argued above, they stand as curse tablets even without the later allusion to magic. Hardie (2002), 242 also observes the linguistic correspondence between *Amores* 1.12.11 and 3.7.29.

<sup>511</sup> Eidinow (2017), 408 claims that the relationship between victim and caster was dynamic so the victim often played a part in recognising and naming their symptoms.

poem. In the relevant section of Tib. 1.5, an unnamed lover blames Tibullus' impotence on Delia's knowledge of nefarious practices (41-2 *me deuotum femina dixit ... narrat scire nefanda mea*). This new *puella* places the blame for Tibullus' lack of virility firmly on his former mistress and her ability to use magic. This sentiment is echoed, perhaps sarcastically, by Ovid's *puella* when she suggests that the poet might be the victim of some sorceress' enchantments (79-80 *aut te traiectis Aeaea uenefica lanis | deuouet*). As love spells were often the product of jealous competitors, it makes sense for one to assume a rival has played a part in a love encounter gone awry; magic becomes a weapon to defeat rivals in the bedroom. This dovetails nicely with the interpretation of Chadha who sees a connection between harmful magic and the girl's flatteries (3.7.11 *blanditias*) since Ovid suggests a comparison between his own flatteries and magic spells in *Am.* 2.1.<sup>512</sup>

In this light, the *puella's* flatteries might also be construed as being analogous to or as powerful as magic spells and she might be the immediate cause of the poet's impotence. Moreover, Chadha associates Ovid's lack of success with the girl, reading her as a metapoetic representation of elegy itself, as a reflection of the poet's declining interest in the *Amores*. However, one need not look as far as *Am.* 2.1 to find an affiliation between this *puella* and magic. Lines 57-8 clearly delineate the power attributed to her seductiveness when she is said to be able to move trees, adamant, and rocks (*illa graues potuit quercus adamantaque durum | surdaque blanditiis saxa mouere suis*). Her skill is evocative of the power attributed by both Ovid and Propertius (cf. Prop. 3.2.3-6) to their elegies. The intertext with Propertius' poetry comes when the poet is becoming less concerned with love elegy and beginning his move towards a new poetic project; this is a fitting passage to invoke in Ovid's final book of the *Amores*. This connection to magic is further bolstered by an allusion (15 *truncus iners iacui, species, et inutile pondus*) to Sat. 1.8.1 (*olim truncus eram ficulnus, inutile lignum*). The line in *Am.* 3.7 refers to the poet's useless member, which even the hyperbolic skills of the *puella* cannot make move. The reference in Horace is to a garden Priapus carved from an old tree, who is powerless in the face of virulent magic.

The ambiguous nature of the *puella's* flatteries in light of these intertexts brings to the forefront issues of competition and control, specifically Ovid's competing poetic interests and his lack of authorial control over his own poetry. The inherent antagonistic

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<sup>512</sup> Chadha (2014), 78-81.

nature of amatory spells enhances this sense of ambiguity in Ovid's elegies. While we are directly presented with magic as a justification of the poet's impotence in this poem, in 1.12 we were only left with the suspicion that magic may have played a part in his failure. Ovid still maintained the illusion in 1.12, that although rejected, he had some degree of authorial control. Here his masculinity and creative power are undermined by unknown, potentially female, rivals. Many of the aspects touched upon in the earlier poems come to fruition here. This later poem, 3.7, meditates on the issues present in its predecessor, that is 1.12, and substantiates the prominence of magic in the elegiac genre. Ovid is again using magic to negotiate issues of control and authority in the *Amores*. We can see how victims of magic attacks participate in the dynamics of power, politics, and control as they contribute to their narrative; Ovid draws on the tensions surrounding authority, virility, failure, and magic in the depiction of his own victimhood.

### 3. The power of *Carmen*

Magic continues to be a fertile ground in the battle for authorial control. This section will focus on how Ovid juxtaposes his poetry with magic as a means of reinforcing the power of his own poetic *carmen*. The analogy of elegiac verse as magic is strengthened in this final section. The *Amores* is not the only place where Ovid makes a deliberate comparison between magic and poetry: he also sets up magic as an erroneous erotic strategy in his erotodidactic poems, advocating instead exempla of his own experiences (*Ars. Am.* 1.25-30) as a tool to navigate the complexities of the amatory world.<sup>513</sup> Now Ovid has become a praeceptor himself, usurping the role formerly ascribed to Dipsas. These erotodidactic works represent a hybrid between elegiac and didactic works, adopting didactic goals while retaining the metre and subject matter of elegy.<sup>514</sup> The poet strongly implies that he has full mastery over love now; a mastery that renders adherence to other avenues, such as magic, superfluous. A passage in the proem to *Ars Amatoria* sets a potential precedent for reading magic into these works (*Ars.* 1.21-4):

et mihi cedet Amor, quamuis mea uulneret arcu

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<sup>513</sup> For the inspiration of the *Ars* as derived from the poet's own experiences and as a revision of the *Amores*, see La Penna (1979); Miller (1986); Gibson (2009).

<sup>514</sup> For the hybrid nature of the *Ars*, see Volk (2002), 157-88; Green (2006), 1-22; Gibson (2009), 90-1.

pectora, iactatas excutiatque faces.  
quo me fixit Amor, quo me uiolentius ussit,  
hoc melior facti uulneris ultor ero.

[And Love will yield to me, though with his bow he wounds my heart, shakes at me his burning torch. The more he pierces me, the more violently he burns me, so much the fitter am I to avenge the wounds.]

The use of a conjugation of the verb *figo*, the root of *defigo*, in Ovid's claims here insinuates a connection to magic; verbs related to burning are common in *defixiones* and the specific combination of piercing with burning recalls curse tablets and love spells.<sup>515</sup> The more violently Amor works against the poet, the more powerful he will become through the suffering. Ovid's body seems to act as a curse or attraction spell here. These lines could be read as a precursor to Sharrock's and Chadha's argument that Ovid is casting a spell on his readers to make them continue reading on.<sup>516</sup> Although Ovid seems to engage more deliberately with magic in his erotodidactic texts, the poet simultaneously dismisses the efficacy of magic. However, these lines recall the poet's initial subjugation to Amor in the *Amores* (cf. 1.1.21-30; 1.2.7-10), a subjugation that Ovid has now turned the tables on and will teach others to do the same. This third section will examine how Ovid, building on the groundwork laid out by the previous elegists and his own poems, has positioned his poetic *carmen* as a powerful and superior alternative strategy to erotic magic in amatory affairs as well as how his work both encapsulates the essence of magic and surpasses it. However, this identification is misleading, as antecedent poems — Ovid's as well as his predecessors — paint a more complex picture. The final section of this chapter will examine how the magic themes in Ovid continue to develop in the poet's erotodidactic works, specifically in *Ars Amatoria* 2.99-108, *Medicamina* 35-42, and *Remedia Amoris* 249-90. Engagement with magic acts as a signpost to dig deeper, as Ovid plays with and revises the themes, language, and values of elegiac poetics.

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<sup>515</sup> Cf. Besnier 13 *uratur, comburatur*; DT 266 *uratur*.

<sup>516</sup> Chadha (2014), 103-12 and Sharrock (1994), 25.

*Ars Amatoria* 2.99-108

Following the example of the programmatic *Am.* 2.1, the passage that engages most directly with magic in the *Ars* comes in the second book. The central position of both these magical passages carries the suggestion that magic is also central to Ovidian elegy. In this poem there is another shift in perspective as Ovid takes up the mantle of a *praeceptor amoris*. The *Ars Amatoria*, with the poet's pose as a teacher of love, is an elegiac poem that marks Ovid's foray into the didactic realm.<sup>517</sup> The elegiac metre and amatory subject matter keep the *Ars* under the umbrella of elegy, while the poet's goal, to teach others how to negotiate the throes of love, demonstrates a didactic element. Instead of focusing on his own subjective experiences in this hybrid poem, the poet here takes up the pose of a *praeceptor amoris*, prescribing the feelings, situations, and actions of his students and their beloveds while proffering advice on the best course of action based on his past experiences. His *Amores* become a subject for revision and learning in this erotodidactic text. As the *Ars* in many ways acts as a parody of normative didactic poetry, there are questions as to whether Ovid is playing a literary game or actually attempting to convey a serious message under the bluster of humour.<sup>518</sup> Ovid continues his habit of playing with genres. Some scholars see Ovid's correlation of love poetry with higher forms of poetry as a way of elevating the status of a poet-lover culturally.<sup>519</sup> In the *Ars Amatoria*, Ovid offers something impossible — the ability to manipulate an uncontrollable passion (a goal more concurrent with philosophy).<sup>520</sup> He has reduced emotion to a set of strategies used to win love. This is not the first time that emotional strategies have been delineated in elegy, but speaking from the position of a teacher as well as a lover, Ovid occupies a unique place. The *Ars*, more blatantly than Ovid's earlier works, exhibits the false opposition between magic *ars* and poetic *ars*. Sharrock argues that the rhetoric of *Ars Amatoria* 2 bears a striking resemblance to magic and that

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<sup>517</sup> For the general consensus of dating of Ovid's *Ars* between the 2 BC and 2 AD see Hollis (1977), 65-73; Henderson (1979); Gibson (2003), 37-43; Johnson (2016), xiii. For differing opinions on the date of composition see Syme (1978), 13-20, who argues for 9 BC; Murgia (1986) who dates *Ars* 3 to 8 AD. For the generic position of this poem, see Volk (2002).

<sup>518</sup> Sharrock (2002) suggests that his playfulness prevents the reader from knowing how serious his erotodidactic poetry is meant to be.

<sup>519</sup> Solodow (1977), Stroh (1979), Labate (1984), Myerowitz (1985) and (2006), Kennedy (1993).

<sup>520</sup> Caston (2012), 76 claims that the elegiac lover as *praeceptor* adopts his opponent's language, that is didactic terminology and structure, for the purposes of refutation; the incorporation of didactic elements lends greater credence to the poet's pose as a teacher while simultaneously promoting his own *ars* as better.

the powers of the magical *ars* serve as an analogy for the power of Ovid's poetic *ars*.<sup>521</sup> In his *Ars* he openly dismisses magic as an antiquated strategy that will not help lovers obtain their desires. This section will explore how Ovid, as lover-turned-*praeceptor*, portrays magic as synonymous with erotic frustrations and deadly consequences to promote his own poetic *ars* as an alternative and superior means of navigating love affairs.

Ovid begins *Ars. Am. 2* by boasting of his successful teaching and the admiration for his efforts among lovers (2.3-4 *latus amans donat uiridi mea carmina palma, | praelata Ascræo Maeonioque seni*). The poet claims here to be more popular than Hesiod and Homer, archetypal poets of didactic and epic respectively. He is strengthening the authority of his new didactic works by asserting a poetic pedigree, one that he surpasses through his apparent effectiveness as a teacher. Directly before the poet begins his dismissal of magic as an effective strategy for erotic affairs, he introduces the story of Daedalus and Icarus. He uses the Daedalus exemplum to explore many of the themes pertinent to this book.<sup>522</sup> In many ways, Daedalus is representative of Ovid and his didactic goals. The master craftsman has seen the disastrous consequences of untamed passion firsthand (cf. Pasiphae's unnatural lust and her resulting offspring, the Minotaur), though unlike the poet he has not experienced it personally, and he uses his skills to escape suffering and captivity. The inventor tells his son that so long as he follows behind him, he will be safe (2.58 *sit tua cura sequi; me duce tutus eris*). Ovid positions himself in the role of a master of love as proficient as Daedalus, perhaps more so as the poet does have experience in the field of love, and desires to guide others safely through the hardships of erotic matters. That Daedalus ultimately succeeds only at saving himself does not bode well for any young lover who might follow the elegiac poet turned *praeceptor*. In the final couplet of this exemplum, Ovid acknowledges the inventor's ingenuity while also confessing the enormity of his new task (2.97-8 *non potuit Minos hominis conpescere pinnas; | ipse deum uolucrum detinuisse paro*).

Immediately after these lines, the poet introduces the false practices of magic and dismisses them as erroneous strategies for handling erotic affairs (*Ars. 2.99-108*):

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<sup>521</sup> Sharrock (1994), 43-75.

<sup>522</sup> Sharrock (1994), 25 argues that Ovid uses the Daedalus exemplum as part of his technique of delaying gratification to seduce the reader to keep reading. In contrast, Janka (1997), 57-106 sees the exemplum as an embodiment of the teacher/pupil relationship and a warning to those who are inclined to disregard Ovid's romantic advice.

fallitur, Haemonias siquis decurrit ad artes,  
datque quod a teneri fronte reuellit equi.  
non facient, ut uiuat amor, Medeides herbae  
mixtaque cum magicis nenia Marsa sonis.  
Phasias Aesoniden, Circe tenuisset Vlixem,  
si modo seruari carmine posset amor.  
nec data profuerint pallentia philtera puellis:  
philtera nocent animis, uimque furoris habent.  
sit procul omne nefas; ut ameris, amabilis esto:  
quod tibi non facies solaue forma dabit.

[He who has recourse to Thracian magic and offers what is torn from the brow of a young horse, is deceived. Medea's herbs cannot keep love alive, nor Marsian dirges mixed with magic chants. Medea would have held Jason, Circe would have held Ulysses, if incantations were able to preserve love. It is no use giving girls paling drugs: drugs hurt the mind, and have power to cause madness. Away with all such evils: to be loved, be lovable: something face and form alone will not give you.]

Here we see an almost contradictory rejection of the magical arts given the poet's earlier predilection for assuming magical qualities for his own poetic *ars*.<sup>523</sup> Magic may be a traditional path to navigate love affairs and to coerce deities, as Ovid is attempting, but he argues here that it is a false and dangerous strategy. One might be tempted to read this as a sort of evolution where the poet has subsumed the magical *ars* under his own purview and is now promoting his own cultured *ars* as an alternative, but the relationship is not so clear cut. The reference to Circe's and Medea's powerlessness in love recalls *Her.* 12, where magic could not help in matters of love. In this sense, Ovid seems to be consistent: magic has no place in erotic affairs as even powerful Medea could not keep her lover. This does not change the fact that magic remains a continuous presence throughout Ovidian elegy from the *Amores*, as we have seen, to the last of Ovid's erotodidactic works, the *Remedia Amoris*, as we will see below.

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<sup>523</sup> Janka (1997), 109 suggests that the interdiction against magic is part of the typical rhetorical strategy of the didactic genre (cf. *Lucr.* 1.377), which forbids deviation from prescribed teachings.

However, the poet now himself advises young lovers in much the same way as the putative witch Dipsas does in *Am.* 1.8, except that Ovid advises these young male addressees of the *Ars* to behave in a manner that is antithetical to the procurers' lessons to the *puella*. Ovid's experiences thus become a weapon to use against greedy procurers, just as her experience was used against him. The poet has reached the stage where he can impart wisdom to less knowledgeable lovers just as the *lena* does for inexperienced *puellae*. His lessons are not for the rich, who could afford to win the mistress' favour with their wealth (2.161-2 *non ego diuitibus uenio praeceptor amandi: | nil opus est illi, qui dabit, arte mea*), but for those who seek to win the girl through their minds. The focus on how magic failed to keep love even for these archetypal witches suggests that less skilled practitioners of magic would cause themselves harm rather than make a conquest, which would align with the preceding Icarus exemplum. That Ovid can succeed where more traditional methods, such as magic, do not, bolsters the poet's claim to be an effective teacher of love. However, the notion of a successful poet-lover, even one who has taken up the didactic cap, does not seem to hold water in either Ovid's elegiac predecessors or his own work.<sup>524</sup>

In particular, the reference to *hippomanes* (100) perhaps draws on the *Georgics* where, following a speech outlining the dangers of uncontrollable passion, Vergil mentions the *hippomanes* of mares in heat as an exemplum of the dangers of desire (Verg. *G.* 3.280-3 *hippomanes uero quod nomine dicunt | pastores, lentum destillat ab inguine uirus | hippomanes, quod saepe malae legere nouercae | miscueruntque herbas et non innoxia uerba*).<sup>525</sup> *Hippomanes* occupy an important place in erotic spells and are only associated with love magic (Tib. 2.4.58 *hippomanes cupidae stillat ab inguine equae*; Prop. 4.5.17-8 *et in me | hippomanes fetae semina legit equae*; Ov. *Am.* 1.8.8 *...quid ualeat uirus amantis equae*).<sup>526</sup> The elegiac passages occur in moments of erotic frustration — a cold *puella* for Tibullus and a greedy *lena* for Propertius and Ovid. In each of these instances,

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<sup>524</sup> Cf. Tib.1.4.82-4 (*deficiunt artes, deficiuntque doli | parce, puer, quaeso, ne turpis fabula fiam | cum mea ridebunt uana magisteria*) where the poet fears his lack of success with his beloved will make him a laughingstock after he proclaimed to be an expert.

<sup>525</sup> Watson (1993), 842-7 believes Vergil is drawing on the Phaedra story of possibly giving a love potion to Hippolytus as the later line 3.182 repeats line 2.129 and these are the only repeated lines in all of Vergil's *Georgics*. They are both applied to poisons and/or magic. Magic highlights the first by showing to what lengths an evil stepmother will go to kill off stepchildren. The second adds poison to the mix, demonstrating the deadliness and destructiveness that lust wreaks.

<sup>526</sup> Ogden (2002), 242 claims that *hippomanes* could either be an herb, a growth found on the forehead of a newborn foal, or a secretion from a mare.

*hippomanes* are associated with women and are present in situations where the lover is blocked from his beloved. For Tibullus this frustration is so great that he states that he would drink whatever concoctions his mistress Nemesis desired, if only she would favour him again (2.4.55-6 *quidquid habet Circe, quidquid Medea ueneni, | quidquid et herbarum Thessala terra gerit*). Tibullus is willing to face danger, in the form of poison, rather than suffer living without Nemesis. He is exactly the type of lover Ovid's erotodidactic texts claim to help. The intertext that bears the greatest verbal similarity to this line of the *Ars* is found in the *Aeneid* (Verg. *Aen.* 4.515-6 *quaeritur et nascentis equi de fronte reuolsus | ... amor*). This intertext appears in the scene where Dido is pretending to perform a love spell to bring Aeneas back to her, but her actual intention is to use the rites to commit suicide; this is another case of a lover driven to perilous actions when facing the loss of love.

Through his dismissal of magic, Ovid in fact engages in an intertextual web of allusions to magic. The poet's inclusion of magic in his didactic text, even only as a negative paradigm, underscores its importance to his elegy. The intertexts draw on both the destructive nature of love and how magic is of no use in affairs of the heart. Ovid elicits magic in these passages to underscore the potential harm magic might cause, either because it is ineffective or because it may lead to death, if used instead of his *ars*. Lines 2.105-6 even hint at the history of associating madness with love potions.<sup>527</sup> That potions can hurt the mind (106 *philtrā nocent animis*) seems to be the most telling point against magical methods. The final line of the warning against the use of magic seems to advertise the need to cultivate the mind to sustain love. This is a clear advocacy for Ovid's learned *ars*, which will improve the mind rather than impair it as magic would do. By denigrating magic as dangerous, Ovid is promoting his own *ars* as the safer route, the path that will spare the physical and mental health of his readers.

### *Medicamina 35-42*

Unlike the *Ars* books 1-2, which catered to men, the *Medicamina* caters to women.<sup>528</sup> In this didactic poem ostensibly concerned with cosmetics and female adornment, Ovid has fully

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<sup>527</sup> Watson (1993), 845.

<sup>528</sup> Ovid gives contradictory advice at *Ars* 3.211-8 where he cautions women to be careful of applying makeup in front of their lovers as it would be unattractive. Also *Rem.* 351-6 advises men to watch a woman at her toilette to fall out of love with her. For the dating of the *Medicamina* between 2 BC and 2 AD, see Hollis (1977), xii; Rosati (1985), 42-3; Johnson (2016), 22.

usurped the traditional role of the *lena* by administering advice to her potential protégées. The poet is no longer just a rival for authority in love affairs, he is now stepping into a purely feminine arena. This poem (which is incompletely transmitted) is mostly composed of a collection of recipes for beautification. In this sense, it is more authentically didactic than the poet's other erotodidactic works.<sup>529</sup> While one might dismiss the *Medicamina* as a folly, it deliberately interacts with the category of magic. Although ostensibly concerned with how to make women more lovable, the *Medicamina* contains a passage that complements the poet-teacher's dismissal of magic in the *Ars*. However, here Ovid does not simply dismiss magic, he dismisses the effectiveness of magic altogether; it is not just that it is ineffectual in love, it is ineffectual period (*Med.* 35-42):

    sic potius nos urget amor quam fortibus herbis,  
        quas maga terribili subsecat arte manus.  
nec uos graminibus nec mixto credite suco,  
        nec temptate nocens uirus amantis equae.  
nec mediae Marsis finduntur cantibus angues,  
        nec redit in fontes unda supina suos.  
et quamuis aliquis Temesaea remouerit aera,  
        numquam Luna suis excutietur equis.

[Thus it is more likely that passion drives us rather than powerful herbs, which a witch's hand picks with a frightful skill. Do not trust grasses nor a blend of juices, and do not try the toxic venom of a mare in heat. Snakes are not split in two by Marsian spells, and the wave does not flow backwards to its source. The moon will never be shaken from her chariot, just because someone puts away Temesian bronze.]

Here Ovid again presents a rather stereotypical catalogue of witches' abilities. However, unlike in previous iterations, his lack of belief in such implausible powers is evident. This is an interesting shift in opinion now that he has become a *praeceptor* to women. In contrast to how he characterises the *lena* as a witch figure, the poet now explicitly rejects magic as a

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<sup>529</sup> Green (1979) argues that the recipes are both realistic and contain many ingredients that could be used today in cosmetics. For the dating of the *Medicamina* around 2 BC, see Johnson (2016), xiii.

profitable course of action. Magic no longer even has the advantage of being able to hinder lovers. It provides a subtle message to his new female adherents: if they take up magic, they will become pathetic old women unable to provide for themselves. The clanging of bronze cymbals (41 *Temesaea ... aera*), an action thought to be an apotropaic ritual to disrupt witchcraft (especially the act of drawing down the moon), is symbolic of this rejection.<sup>530</sup> Ovid's reference to this bronze functions to dispel the possibility of magic in his text. Even if no one performed the apotropaic ritual, the moon would not be disturbed by so-called witches. This directly contradicts an intertext with Ovid's later work, where Medea asserts that even someone banging Temesean bronze would not be able to disrupt her rituals (Ov. *Met.* 7.207-8 *te quoque, Luna, traho, quamuis Temesaea labores | aera tuos minuant*).

While one might ascribe the difference to the speaker and genre, it shows how, in the *Medicamina*, the poet adopts the role of a *praeceptor* and doles out practical advice to young women. The *Metamorphoses*, by contrast, is firmly set in a mythological background. Unlike the *Heroides*, which position their mythological women as elegiac lovers writing epistles, the *Metamorphoses* does not ask for a suspension of disbelief. As the didactic Ovid breaks down the characteristics of a typical catalogue of witches, he also deconstructs his own catalogue of poetic abilities created in *Amores* 2.1. Those powers are mirrored here — the splitting apart of snakes (2.1.25 *carmine dissiliunt abruptis faucibus angues*), the reversing the flow of water (2.1.26 *inque suos fontes uersa recurrit aqua*), the drawing of the moon from her course (2.1.23 *carmina sanguineae deducunt cornua lunae*). As mentioned in the discussion of *Am.* 2.1, Ovid draws on the powers generally attributed to magic to bolster the strength of his own *carmina*. By describing his poetic *carmina* as analogous to magic *carmina* Ovid is able to promote the potency of his poems and provide a justification for why he did not pursue loftier genres. This contradiction of the poet's own abilities is strange as it undermines the authority and efficacy of his own *ars*. The poet now seems to be attempting to distance himself from the concept of magic or, perhaps, the accusation of using magic. Now that Ovid has delved, in part, into the elevated genre of didactic, perhaps he no longer needs to draw power from marginal sources. Although magic may have been painted in a negative light before, it is only with his new erotodidactic works

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<sup>530</sup> Johnson (2016), 57 states that Temese was a city in Italy, which had copper mines that produced bronze cymbals.

that the poet begins to explicitly reject its use. Now that Ovid is in the role of a *praeceptor* solely for women, magic no longer seems to act as an obstacle to erotic affairs, but is instead an example of a misguided method of navigating love.

However, despite Ovid's dismissal of it, magic remains an ambiguous presence. There is an overlap between the title of the work and the use of the same word to describe magic in earlier works. In *Heroides* 12 the witch explicitly calls the magic she uses medicines or charms that serve to protect rather than harm (15 *praemedicatus in ignes*; 97 *ipsa ego, quae dederam medicamina*; 107 *flammea subdixi medicato lumina somno*; 165 *quaeque feros pepuli doctis medicatibus ignes*). The same word describes the potion used to restore youth to Aeson (*Met.* 7.262-3 *interea ualidum posito medicamen aëno | feruet*). Medea used her successful healing of Aeson as a means to trick the daughters of Pelias into killing their father. As a magic user, Medea symbolises both the helpful and destructive capabilities of magic; as a lover, she evokes the failure of charms to win love. Even if you strip away the magic associations, the Colchian princess simply serves as a negative paradigm of love. The very nature of magic as either a helpful or deadly *pharmakon* exemplifies the instability of the category. The use of the word *medicamina* in conjunction with *carmina*, in a magical context, seems to be an Ovidian invention.<sup>531</sup> In the *Medicamina*, iterations of the word are used in relation to dyeing objects or as a mixture to be used on the body (9 *uelleræ saepe eadem Tyrio medicantur aëno*; 67-8 *quaecumque afficiet tali medicamine uultum | fulgebit speculo leuior ipsa suo*; 77-8 *addita de querulo uolucrum medicamina nido | ore fugant maculas*). In this didactic work, *medicamina* are presented as beneficial. This overlaps with Medea's definition of her own magic in *Her.* 12. In many respects, Ovid's cosmetic recipes are no different from the ingredients for a magical potion; they both cause alterations to the body — whether that is to make a person fireproof or to make their face shine. Johnson argues that Ovid includes magic in this didactic text as a means of delineating his work and its ingredients from spurious magical ingredients.<sup>532</sup> This seems like a sensible claim, but the lexical resonance with earlier elegiac works undermines this argument.

The multivalence of *medicamina*, much like *carmina*, lends an air of ambiguity to the text. Considering the deliberate inclusion of magic, even if just to dismiss it, one cannot help

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<sup>531</sup> Ziosi (2016), 74-5. Although *OLD medicamen*, *-inis* sense 1 and 2 relate to drugs or substances applied to the body, the word is not explicitly linked to magic. Sense 3 defines the word as a cosmetic.

<sup>532</sup> Johnson (2016), 55.

but compare the different uses of *medicamina* present in Ovidian poetry. *Am.* 1.8, where the poet attributes witchcraft to the *lena*, and 2.1, where the poet appropriates magical language to describe his poetry, threaten the demarcation between *ars* and magic that the poet propounds here. Even the structure of the text, which lists beauty concoction after concoction, suggests that Ovid is well versed in herbs and potions, albeit of a different kind.<sup>533</sup> If we look at figures like Medea from the *Heroides*, magic presents as having no power over affairs of the heart, but the potential for great destruction. Ovid's assimilation of magical qualities suggests a level of instability inherent in his poetry that is not so easily dismissed by his later rejection of magic as a helpful stratagem in love. His relationship to magic seems to change as he shifts between the various poses he adopts. Ovid's erotodidactic works question the efficacy of magic while still insinuating its dangers. Magic is dismissed so blatantly in the *Medicamina* because it threatens Ovid in his guise as a *praeceptor* and, more generically, as a lover. As an alternative strategy to obtain love, magic and those who use it are rivals who threaten the poet's control over his teachings. Moreover, the title of this work, the *Medicamina*, is strange as the name aligns the text with Medea, who, as we have seen, is powerless in love. As the goal of this work is to teach women how to be appealing to men, it is curious to choose a name that would invoke the unfortunate lover for readers of Ovid.

*Remedia Amoris* 249-90:

Much like the *Ars*, the *Remedia Amoris* is an erotodidactic text. However, Ovid moves from attempting to provide a safe route through the toils of love to asserting that he will help cure them completely; this shift in the direction of the poet's teachings is one of the paradoxes of his erotodidactic works. Although Ovid offers new strategies on how his readers may deliver themselves from the destructive pull of love, magic remains a focal point for the battle for control in Ovid. The poet as *praeceptor* claims not to teach how to cure love, but how to subdue it with intellectual arts and reason (*Rem.* 9-10 *quin etiam docui, qua posses arte parari, | et quod nunc ratio est, impetus ante fuit*). The imagery and metaphor of love as a disease comes to the forefront in the *Remedia Amoris*.<sup>534</sup> Ovid now

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<sup>533</sup> Richlin (1995), 196-7 views lines 34-42 as anticipating the poet's prowess with medicinal concoctions; Fauth (1999), 158-9 sees these as helpful, rather than harmful, beauty enhancing magic potions.

<sup>534</sup> For explorations of the medical imagery see Wilkinson (1955); Henderson (1979); Watson (2002).

becomes a doctor administering antidotes to love-stricken patients. In doing so, Ovid draws on Hellenistic traditions of didactic cure poems (e.g., *Alexipharmaca* and *Theriaca*) as well as Lucretius' philosophical treatments on the dangerous nature of love.<sup>535</sup> In the *Remedia* we see the poet lover take both a new approach to love as well as a new approach to magic. The poet again takes a firm stance on magic in this final work. The inclusion of magic in this text deepens the metapoetic discourse present in Ovid's erotodidactic works.<sup>536</sup>

Lines 249-90 of the *Remedia amoris* outline magic as an erroneous and useless method of managing erotic affairs. The passage in question follows the *Ars* by beginning with a dismissal of the outdated magical arts (249-50), describes the benefits of following Apollo's creed instead (251-60), derides the uselessness of magic for Circe and Medea (261-72), includes Circe's plea to Ulysses (273-84), dismisses the potency of magic again and advocates following his own *ars* (85-90). This passage seems to combine all the magical elements from Ovid's previous poems. The first lines begin as an intertext with *Ars*. 2.99-100 (*fallitur, Haemonias siquis decurrit ad artes | datque quod a teneri fronte reuellit equi; Rem. 249-50 uiderit, Haemoniae siquis mala pabula terrae | et magicas artes posse iuuare putat*). Lines 261-4 (cf. *quid te Phasiacae iuueruant gramina terrae ... quid tibi profuerant ... Persides herbae*), directed at Medea and Circe respectively make clear the ineffectiveness of magic in love. Ovid dismisses magic again, but now he provides an alternative route for curing love, often stylised as a disease; lovers should turn to the god of poetry and healing should they wish to master their lovesickness (251-2 *ista ueneficii uetus est uia; noster Apollo | innocuam sacro carmine monstrat opem*). Much like in *Am.* 2.1 and *Her.* 6, the concept of the *carmen sacrum* (252) is placed in opposition to *carmen magicum* (254). This time the two are openly contrasted with each other.

These two types of *carmen*, if we accept the alignment of Ovid's poetry with Apollo as he claims here, are at the heart of the battle for authority and control throughout the poet's elegiac works. Instead of dismissing magic completely as the *praeceptor* in the *Medicamina* does, the poet claims that with him leading the way, no one will be able to perform harmful magic spells. This is not a sacred prayer to Jupiter as in *Amores* 2.1 —

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<sup>535</sup> For a discussion of the connection to Lucretius, see Hollis (1977), 110; Henderson (1973), xiv; Steudel (1992), 29-124; Green (2006), 14-5.

<sup>536</sup> For Ovid's erotodidactic elegies as metapoetic see Myerowitz (1985); Sharrock (1994); Rimell (2006), 177-205; Boyd (2009), 105-110.

instead, Apollo, a god associated with reason and control, is the one who should be venerated and called upon to aid in love. As the purported goal of the *Remedia* is to cure love, Apollo is a suitable choice for this new didactic effort.<sup>537</sup> The reference to magic here seems strangely unsuitable in a poem concerned with the removal of that love, especially as magic in elegy is usually concerned with keeping love. The ability of magic to cure love is a function hinted at by the other poets, but never taken up by the elegiac lovers (cf. Prop. 1.1.21-2, Tib. 1.2.61-6). Even in curing love, magic's utility is apparently negligible or cannot be advocated here without threatening the poet as *praeceptor's* authority as a teacher.

This magical passage also replicates the pattern of *Am.* 1.8 and Prop. 4.5, with Circe's direct speech embedded in the text (273-84). Ovid does not explicitly attribute the catalogue of witches' powers to Circe; instead, magic is spoken of in a generic sense with no specific caster, with both Medea and Circe referenced for their status as archetypal witches and abandoned lovers. Unlike Dipsas, Circe cannot be wholly innocent of the charge of magic as she is a well-known witch. However, her speech, much like those of the *lenae* before her, does not contain any traces of magic. Indeed, Circe even resorts to prayers (278 *quid minus optari per mea uota potest?*) in her attempts to induce Ulysses to tarry a little while longer with her. Despite being bookended by a typical catalogue of witch's power and the use of magic, the goddess' words are focused on the pain she will endure should Ulysses leave her. Her desire for the hero to remain is diametrically opposed to the aims of the *Remedia*. Through the character of Circe, magic is aligned with the goal to retain love, even if the partner is unwilling. This could be seen as magic competing with and corrupting the poetic goals, but this seems too simple and ignores previous connotations of the between the poet-lover and the female guises he wears, though it perhaps suits the typical literary characterisation of magic use in erotic situations. Circe's initial attempts to persuade Ulysses to remain is with words alone, a method advocated by elegiac lovers, although Ovid goes beyond this in his teachings.

It is only after Circe finishes her speech, and fails to persuade the hero, that the reader is told by the male narrator that she makes recourse to magic (*Rem. Am.* 287-90):

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<sup>537</sup> For Apollo, as god of medicine and poetry, as a suitable source of inspiration, one which Ovid rejected earlier in his *Ars*, see Volk (2002), 162. For the *Remedia* as unsuitable for curing love see Henderson (1979), xii-xiii; Brunelle (1997), 137; Sharrock (2002), 160-161; Fulkerson (2004), 213-223; Rosati (2006), 151-157 and 163-165.

ardet et adsuetas Circe decurrit ad artes,  
nec tamen est illis adtenuatus amor.  
ergo quisquis opem nostra tibi poscis ab arte,  
deme ueneficiis cariminibusque fidem.

[Circe burns and returns to her accustomed arts, but love was still not lessened by them. So whoever you are who call for help from my art, remove your trust in witchcraft and incantations.]

The witch goddess, still burning with passion, resorts to her usual arts. However, these do not even help lessen love — Ovid’s goal in this book. The poet’s account of this episode and the failure of magic is ostensibly used to differentiate his methods from these ineffective ones; the passage begins (249-50) and ends with a dismissal of the magical arts (289-90). If these means are so ineffective, why then the need to so clearly delineate his *ars* from the magical *ars*? The reference to the failure of magic may be part of a rhetorical strategy aimed at positioning his own teachings as the best method to navigate love. The popularity of the use of magic in love, in practice and literature, might have necessitated Ovid’s engagement with the theme here. The poet’s negation of the power of magic embodies his battle for primacy in the domain of love. He reminds his readers that time and time again magic has failed in love, even for those who possessed the strongest skills in the art, whereas his teachings will lessen the burden on the heart.

This magic passage has been read as a signpost that the poet is misleading his students and that, ultimately, the *Remedia* will fail to achieve their purported goal of curing love.<sup>538</sup> While this certainly remains a possibility, there is no certain outcome, one way or another, to Ovid’s teachings. By reimagining his negotiation with Amor, Ovid demonstrates a shift in power dynamics between the two. The poet is no longer subservient to love, but now a master of the art of love. Ovid engages self-consciously with the category of magic in

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<sup>538</sup> For discussion of how the *Remedia* fail, see Sharrock (1994), 82-6 and (1995), 155-6; Fauth (1999), 129-49; Chadha (2014), 103-12 views magic as a sign of failure and deception in elegy. See Volk (2002, 164-5) for the argument that the poet’s admissions to failure are meant to be humorous and is part of the *praeceptor’s* didactic strategy.

a manner that seems to deride the non-normative practices. However, his allusions to passages in his earlier works — the *Heroides*, the *Amores*, the *Ars* — insinuate a more ambiguous relationship to magic. In particular, the word *remedia*<sup>539</sup> can be read as a cognate with *medicamina*. While Ovid uses these similar words to mean entirely different things, the former is meant as an emotional cure and the latter as a physical one, one cannot help but read a conceptual overlap between the two. Although the *Remedia* claim to provide a cure for the woes of love, there is no proof that they achieve this goal. Here magic does not so much represent the cause of erotic frustrations, though the lack of its efficacy certainly might be a cause of frustration for women like Circe, as something to be overcome. Even if false, magic offered a popular avenue to vent frustration in amatory matters. Ovid taps into the cultural currency of magic to position himself above it and strengthen his claims to didactic authority. However, the poet's engagement with magic also destabilises this authority and acts as an internal threat to Ovid's ability to control the narrative by blurring the boundaries between *carmina*, *medicamina*, and *ars*.

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This chapter has examined the different ways in which Ovid has engaged with the category of magic in his various works of elegiac poetry. In the first section, how agency could be derived from the concept of victimhood was explored in *Heroides* 6 and 12 and *Am.* 1.8. We then looked at how erotic frustrations engaged with the category of curse tablets. The final section examined the apposition and subsequent sublimation of magical *carmina* to poetic *carmina*. It has been the goal of this chapter to deepen the understanding of magic in Ovid and to explore how he has adapted and evolved from his elegiac forerunners. While magic still acts as a signpost that initiates deeper thought concerning the place of gender, control, and authority in elegy, in Ovid it has become cemented as a topos of elegiac poetry. Magic is inescapably woven into the landscape of elegy; I hope to have shown that magic plays an underappreciated supporting role in the poet-lover's attempts to navigate erotic affairs. In the previous chapters we saw the elegiac poets' engagement with the category of magic draw out more nuanced readings of their poems. Magic in these elegiac works is able to

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<sup>539</sup> See *OLD*, *remedium*, -a, especially sense 1.

represent tumultuous emotions, captivate the reader, and act as a vehicle for competition, anxiety, and frustrations. In characteristically Ovidian fashion, the poet plays with the idea of magic, drawing on and revising the work of his elegiac predecessors in a more deliberate way. It should come as no surprise then that, even as he offers his poetry as an alternative strategy for love and to cure love, the reader is met with failure. As has already been argued in the previous chapters, there is an implicit conflation between poetic and magical *carmen* present in Latin elegy. While Ovid draws on these tensions in a manner that seems to render his own poetic *ars* more powerful in love than the magical *ars* of the more normative route, this is a false dichotomy. Ovid uses this conceptual blending between various types of magic to tease out the tensions in his poetry. The inclusion of magic should be an invitation to look deeper at the relationships between poetic norms, themes, and genres.

## CONCLUSIONS

This thesis began with an examination of the interplay between magic and conventional rituals in the poems of Tibullus. In our first chapter we demonstrated how magic permeates Tibullus' elegiac world. The prominent juxtaposition of magic with ritual exposes the cracks in the traditional façade of his peaceful world. Tibullus' engagement with the category of magic further strengthens the inverted status of his elegiac pose — poor, weak, superstitious, passive, ineffectual, feminine, and servile. The engagement with magic places the poet in opposition to the tenets of Augustan Rome and his pose places him on the reverse side of the power spectrum normally allocated to the elite male. Tibullus' programmatic poems, 1.1 and 2.1, both provide examples of civic seeming rituals that are undercut by the presence of and their apposition to magic rituals (1.1 with 1.2; 2.1 with 2.4, 2.6). traditional pastoral landscape. Throughout Tibullus' elegies the poet-lover's authority is consistently being undermined by other determinants — *amor, lenae, puellae*, romantic rivals. The presence of magic, and who wields it, further adds another wrench in the poet's struggle for control. We showed how the tension in the poet's purported relationship to traditional power is made more apparent by the connection of magic to more normative rituals. We argue that the previously unremarked insinuation of the poet's recourse to not just magic, but necromancy (2.6), shatters any pretense of the pious façade that Tibullus presents. The possibility of the poet-lover being magic-user changes the power dynamics and the reading of certain passages in the Tibullan corpus.

The second chapter demonstrated the prominence of magic in Propertius Books 1-3. The poet highlights the importance of magic to his poetry by including the topos in each of his programmatic poems. We explored the various forms of magic present in these poems, how they functioned, and offered suggestions as to the purpose of magic in the respective poems. We showed how the inclusion of magic in his very first poem (1.1), creates a precedent for seeing witches and magic as alternative methods to navigate erotic affairs. We then demonstrated how magic is linked to a resistance to norms in politics and poetry (2.1). We explored how Propertius potentially tapped into the cultural currency of magic in various forms throughout his poems. We showed how magic is connected to all the major themes of Propertian elegy — love, poetry, and politics. We contend that reading magic in Propertius, in conjunction with the contemporary background of socio-political flux and

uncertainty in Rome, problematises efforts to create a stabilised image of Rome. We aimed to demonstrate how the various instances of magic and ritual function as a foil for some of the poet's main concerns and how magic often acts as a signal for subversion and resistance to poetic and political norms throughout his poems.

In the chapter on Propertius 4, we explored how the ostensibly more patriotic façade of the book is problematised by a continued juxtaposition of ambiguous rituals with civic rituals. The self-professed patriotic programme of Book 4 sets up a greater degree of tension between normative and non-normative rituals. The ostensibly elegiac poems of Book 4 are composed in a manner that sharply contrasts with what was written before on the Cynthia affair, causing the reader to re-evaluate what they thought they knew. This chapter built on the work of the previous chapters by examining the connections to magic and ritual in 4.5, 4.7, 4.8, and 4.11. In these poems, magic and ritual play a part in undermining or upturning the audience's expectations and forcing a revision of previous encounters. The juxtaposition of the civic rituals, 4.6 and 4.9, with non-normative rituals in this book problematises the status of these more traditional poems. Propertius as *uates* is undercut by Horos, the astrologer, as *uates*. The poet's relationship to the traditional here is further undermined by his participation in a sympathetic magic rite.

The final chapter looked at how Ovid's treatment of magic codifies it as a standard element of the genre while his engagement with the topoi of elegiac magic invites his audience to interrogate the conventions, themes, and genre of elegiac poetry more deeply. In this final chapter we drew on the framework of Eidinow's theories on the agency of victimhood to show how magic, in its various forms, was used as a means of negotiating erotic frustrations and social tensions by participating in a ritualised process. Throughout Ovid's works, the poet engages with the category of magic in a manner that invites his audience to delve deeper into poetic conventions, themes, and genres. In the first section, we examined how the poet-lover employs the concept of magic accusations and victimhood (*Heroides* 6 and 12, *Am.* 1.8) to assert agency in situations that require a negotiation of shifting power dynamics. Then we showed how magic can be used to represent the anxieties provoked by the dynamics of competition in amatory affairs (*Amores* 1.11, 1.12, and 3.7). This built on the theme of elegiac failure by affording a space for romantic and erotic failures to be the fault of a rival's magical interference. We then examined the conceptual blending of magical *carmen* with poetic *carmen* in the poet's erotodidactic

works. This examination builds on the groundwork laid out in the previous chapters and demonstrates how Ovid seems to have positioned his poetic *carmen* as a powerful and superior alternative strategy to erotic magic in amatory affairs as well as how his work both encapsulates the essence of magic and surpasses it.

In the four chapters of this thesis, we explored the relationship between magic, ritual, and poetics in the works of each of the major extant Latin elegists — Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid. Our intention was to demonstrate that category of magic carries a certain cultural currency among the elegists of Augustan Rome. The Roman elegists' engagement with the subject of magic demonstrates a tension between the increasingly moral image of Augustan Rome and the elegiac *demi-monde*. The ambiguity between the representation of rituals, magic, and religion in elegy is especially conspicuous given the concurrent climate of socio-political and religious rehabilitation in Rome in the wake of the civil wars. Although rituals, both normative and non-normative, were a pervasive presence in Roman society, the elegists seem purposefully to associate their poetry with ambiguous rituals in a way that could be seen as antagonistic to the newly emerging central authority. However, this inclusion of magic suits the inverted ethos of the elegiac poet-lover and the marginal position he purports to occupy in relation to contemporary culture. Magic is embedded throughout the works of Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid, often acting as a signpost towards a more negative shift in the narrative as well as an indication of resistance to poetic and political norms.

The importance of magic to Latin elegy, and, more broadly, poetics, is often overlooked. Little systematic attention has been paid to how it functions or what its significance is. Instead, the presence of magic is often passed over as a commonplace element within elegy. In this research, I have shown how the various instances of magic and ritual are bound up with some of the elegists' main concerns — politics, gender, and authority. The interplay between magic, ritual, and poetics in Roman elegy allows the elegists to interrogate the major concerns of their genre more deeply. I draw out the juxtaposition of these rituals and provide evidence that the presence of magic and ritual in elegy provide fruitful alternative readings. This tension between what might be considered magic, on the one hand, and religion on the other expresses the ambiguity that exists between the two categories, making it a fertile ground in which to explore how magic functions in these poems and Roman discourse more generally. The magic subtext

supplements many of the existing elegiac themes and helps enhance the subversive aspects of elegiac poetics. More broadly, magic acts as a signal for subversion and resistance to poetic and political norms throughout the genre. The elegists tap into the cultural currency of the category of magic to add layers of meaning, symbolic connections, and associations to their poetry that reach beyond the elegiac demi-monde. The discursive category of magic, then, becomes a productive means of interrogating the generic concerns of elegy as well as wider literary concerns.

In the last few past decades, magic studies have emerged as a field of serious inquiry. This research has expanded the discourse of ancient magic in the context of love elegy. The scope of my thesis, exploring magic across all three elegists, was ambitious. There is likely more work that can be done on the topic in individual poems or across particular ritual practices. Future research could examine specific categories of magic or practices more deeply (e.g., astrology, prophecy, sortilege, curses). While this thesis does not focus on lived experiences of practical magic so much as look at how it taps into a cultural nexus of meaning, more could be done with curse tablets, other material evidence, and the magical texts. If we acknowledge the central role that magic plays in Roman elegy, it would be profitable to explore its function in other Latin genres. On a broader scale, a move towards understanding magic in the wider literary tradition would contribute to our knowledge of the representation of ancient magic and ritual practices.

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