

## Elegy in a Pastoral Landscape: Propertius 1.18 and Theocritus 2

Previous scholars have discussed connections between Propertius 1.18 and Callimachus (Cairns 1969), Propertius 1.18 and the *Eclogues* (Zetzel 1977, King 1976), and Propertius 1.18 and Gallus (Ross 1975), but Propertius' appropriation of Theocritus 2.64-5<sup>1</sup> at 1.18.5-6<sup>2</sup> has only been noted in passing (Richardson 2006, Hodge 2002, Gow 1952). To understand the appropriation we must first look at the situation of Propertius 1.18, which locates the elegiac speaker in a pastoral landscape (Grant 1979). There, no longer a *praeceptor amoris*, he is as ignorant of love as many pastoral lovers. The speaker, however, indicates his distance from the foreign genre of pastoral by depicting an inhospitable landscape and by retaining the familiar elegiac trope of *servitium amoris*. Furthermore, he ultimately establishes the dominance of elegy over pastoral at the end of the poem, by having the pastoral landscape that surrounds him resound "Cynthia" - both his beloved's name and a metonym for his own elegiac poetry (Wyke 1987).

The specific use of Theocritus 2 helps Propertius expand this contest between the elegiac and the pastoral poet. Not only does the connection to Theocritus 2 in itself reinforce the background of the pastoral landscape, but the resonances Propertius creates between his own poem and Theocritus' also invite a new, anachronistic reading of the older poem. While Theocritus 2 is an urban mime similar to others in the Theocritean corpus, the foregrounding of love suggests that we read the poem as the antithesis of Propertius 1.18: it portrays a pastoral speaker in an anachronistically elegiac context. Furthermore, Theoc. 2.64-5 shows the female

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<sup>1</sup> Νῦν δὲ μῶνα ἰοῖσα πῶθεν τῶν ἄρῶτα δακρῶσω; / ἢ τίνας ἰρξωμαι; τίς μοι κακῶν ἰγαγε τοῖτο;

<sup>2</sup> "unde tuos primum repetam, mea Cynthia, fastus? / quod mihi das flendi, Cynthia, principium?"

protagonist of the pastoral poem at her most powerless and self-questioning. Propertius' adaptation of that passage at the beginning of his own poem not only evokes her at that moment, but also suggests that, as we read the remainder of Propertius 1.18 and witness the elegist's own successful competition with pastoral, we also consider the gradual rise of the protagonist over the course of Theocritus 2 to a position of "controlling subject" (Burton 67). In short, Propertius invites us to read Theocritus 2 as a transformation of a pastoral beloved to an elegiac *domina* and as a case of a *servitium amoris* restored. In this way he grounds his claim for the superiority of elegy over pastoral even in a poem by pastoral's founder.

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