

## Propertius 2.7 and Augustan Ideology

This paper will examine the dynamic interaction in Propertius' poetry between the avowed elegiac ideals of the effeminized male lover and the epic ideals found in narratives of imperial power and domination, especially as embodied in the figure of Augustus who, himself the subject of verse, exemplifies what Matthew Santirocco calls the "essential connection between poetry and polity" (1999). One of the most defining features of Roman elegy is its apparent oppositional stance toward Augustan values and ideology. As the *recusationes* of elegy make clear, elegy-- as a genre-- explicitly defines itself through its resistance to public and political concerns and through its opposition to other kinds of verse traditionally marked as "male" such as epic or encomium (Allen 1999). Yet the discourse of Augustan elegy, however, hardly constitutes a univocal opposition to Augustan values (Kennedy 1992). Indeed, as Santirocco argues, critical approaches that focus on a search for oppositional ideology in Augustan poetry are not only reductionist but also fail to do justice to the complex literary strategies at work in those texts. The view that Augustan literature does not simply reflect a pre-existing ideology but rather participates interactively in its production applies especially well to Augustan elegy. The very conditions of elegy's existence, I would argue, depend on both the enactment and subversion of ideological norms, on the fragile tension between private life and public achievement. Nowhere is this more evident than in Propertius' amatory texts.

On the one hand, the Propertian lover appears to defy conventional gender roles by declaring himself the soft poet of elegy and occupying the "feminine" position in the amatory relationship (Greene 1999). On the other hand, beginning with Propertius' second book, we see the *amator* vacillate openly between epic and elegiac discourses and between conflicting images of himself as both lover and poet, master and mastered. This not only serves to conflate genders and genres but also to collapse conventional oppositions of love and war, official and subversive, pro and anti-Augustan. By linking *amor* to images of death and glory in his *recusatio*, the Propertian

lover subverts his own claim that epic lies beyond his sphere of interest and that Cynthia and not Augustus will be the theme for his verse.

The inscription of Augustus in Roman elegy offers itself not only as a focal point for both contestation and appropriation but also as a site of intersection between public and private modes of discourse and schemes of value. It is the purpose of this paper to explore how the doubleness of Propertius' discourse arises, in part, through the lover's conflicting allegiances to the elegiac way of life and to the traditional ideology of military *gloria* and male public culture in general. My study will focus on Poem 2.7, a text that illustrates the characteristic tension in Book 2 between epic and elegiac ideals and also shows the ways in which the subversion and legitimation of Augustan values are deeply implicated with one another in Propertian elegy (Gale 1997, Miller 2001).