

*Cynthia, sola parentes*: the Intertextual Makeup of Propertius 1.11

Poets such as Catullus, Tibullus, and Propertius forged intertextual dialogues with Homer, Callimachus, and other poets from the canon of Greek literature as they developed the genre of Latin elegy. This paper aims to contribute to the study of Latin elegy's intertextual design by making sense of Propertius' use of the *Iliad* in the eleventh poem of his *Monobiblos*. In that poem, the elegist alludes to Andromache's "family speech" at *Iliad* VI.407-439, where Hector's wife, attempting to keep her husband within the walls of Troy and away from the action of war, includes in her plea to him (*Iliad* VI. 429-430): Ἴκτορ ἀτὰρ σύ μοί ἐσσι πατήρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ / ἠδὲ κασίγνητος, σὺ δέ μοι θαλερὸς παρακοίτης. The Propertian echo of these lines constitutes part of an attempt to convince Cynthia to leave Baiae and return to Rome (1.11.23-24): *tu mihi sola domus, tu, Cynthia, sola parentes, / omni tu nostrae tempore deliciae.*

I argue that Propertius, in addition to including a version of these words of Andromache's speech in his plea to Cynthia, uses the "family speech" as a larger framework for both the thematic and stylistic content of 1.11. Propertius uses complex syntax to convey a frenetic emotional state and progresses to simpler constructions for the expression of a less frantic mode, in the same way Andromache's plea to Hector does. The elegist, moreover, sets as the climax of 1.11 the *topos* which puts a lover's feeling into familial terms, equating the beloved with family members. I argue further that Propertius' exploitation of Andromache's words is twofold: on the one hand, Propertius presents himself as a well-read poet; on the other hand, given that the *topos* of expressing erotic love in familial terms is ineffectual in the *Iliad*, the lines in 1.11 work toward the opposite of the elegy's ostensible goal, which is to lure Cynthia from Baiae. Read in its Homeric context as ineffectual, the plea preserves Cynthia and her absence as causes for anxiety, and therefore as *materia* for Propertius' poetry. This intertextual play showcases the

generic differences between epic poetry and his modernist verses, between the Homeric kind of love and that of Roman erotic experience.