

NON TAMEN INSECTOR: YOUR MUSE NO MORE (PROPERTIUS 4.7.49–50)*

ABSTRACT

This note on Propertius 4.7 argues that Cynthia, repeatedly cast in the role of the poet's Muse, rejects the burden of inspiration through a learned choice of words (non tamen insector, 4.7.49). The verb insector constitutes a clear reference to the invocation of the Camena in Livius Andronicus and of the Muse in Ennius. Cynthia recalibrates the parlance of poetic inspiration to end her relationship with Propertius, both as his puella and as his Muse.

Keywords: Propertius; Cynthia; Latin love elegy; intertextuality; Muses; Augustan poetry

Propertius 4.7 treats the unexpected death and equally unexpected return of the poet's on-again, off-again girlfriend Cynthia.¹ Cynthia's ghost excoriates Propertius on several points, from the minutiae of her funeral procession (4.7.23–34) to the poet's inaction against the alleged assassins Lygdamus and Nomus (4.7.35–8) to the poor treatment of her favourite handmaids Parthenie and Latris in her absence (4.7.73–6).² Cynthia suggests that Propertius deserves further criticism for his various shortcomings, but restrains herself from additional rebuke (4.7.49–50):³

non tamen insector, quamvis mereare, Properti:
longa mea in libris regna fuere tuis.

Nevertheless, I do not attack you, Propertius, even though you deserve it: long was my reign in your books.

In the works of Propertius, we find the unusual verb *insector* only here.⁴ Even so, *insector* has attracted surprisingly little attention. Some commentators pass over the verb altogether.⁵ Others identify a legal slant to *insector*, as if Cynthia prosecutes the

* I thank James Uden and *CQ*'s anonymous referee for their valuable insights and suggestions.

¹ For the colossal bibliography on Propertius 4.7, see especially S.J. Heyworth, *Cynthia: A Companion to the Text of Propertius* (Oxford and New York, 2007), 463; P. Fedeli, R. Dimundo and I. Ciccarelli, *Properzio: Elegie, Libro IV* (Nordhausen, 2015), 2.904. I frequently cite P.J. Heslin, *Propertius, Greek Myth, and Virgil: Rivalry, Allegory, and Polemic* (Oxford and New York, 2018).

² G. Hutchinson, *Propertius Elegies Book IV* (Cambridge and New York, 2006), 178, 197 and É. Coutelle, *Properce, Élégies, livre IV* (Brussels, 2015), 836 entertain Cynthia's charges of poisoning, especially since Lygdamus serves drinks again in the very next poem (4.8.37–8).

³ All translations are mine. I print the text of S.J. Heyworth, *Sexti Properti Elegi* (Oxford and New York, 2007) with consonantal *v* instead of *u*.

⁴ The verb *insequitur* appears in the manuscript tradition at 4.10.23 but lacks the iterative *-to* infix. Forms of the uncompounded *sector* appear at 1.20.25 (*sectati*), 2.8.19 (*sectetur*) and 3.14.16 (*sectatur*).

⁵ W.A. Camps, *Propertius Elegies Book IV* (Cambridge, 1965), 120 and H.E. Butler and E.A. Barber, *The Elegies of Propertius* (Oxford, 1933), 362–3 make no comment.

defendant Propertius.⁶ One critic has even compared Cynthia's *insector* with the behaviour of the rationalized Furies in Cicero's *De legibus*, where the Erinyes 'hound' (*insectenturque*, 1.40) criminals who suffer from a guilty conscience.⁷

On the one hand, Cynthia's *insector* in 4.7 corrects the poet's fantasy in 2.8, where Propertius imagines his *puella*, alive and well, 'hounding' (*sectetur*, 2.8.19) his deceased shade. On the other, I argue that Cynthia's choice of the verb *insector* acknowledges yet expressly rejects the burden of divine inspiration Propertius has repeatedly forced upon her. First, I compare Cynthia's *insector* with the invocation of the Muse or Camena in Homer, Livius Andronicus and Ennius. I then offer a brief overview of the many instances in which Propertius presents Cynthia not just as his source of inspiration or as a goddess but as one of Mnemosyne's daughters.⁸ Together, these observations suggest that Cynthia repurposes the language with which poets demand divine inspiration to end her relationship with Propertius, as both his *puella* and his Muse.

The verb *insector* recalls two important inspiration scenes in Latin literature. Livius Andronicus translates the *incipit* of Homer's *Odyssey*—'tell me, Muse, about the man of many turns' (ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, Μοῦσα, πολύτροπον)—as *virum mihi, Camena, insece versutum* ('tell me, Camena, of the clever man', *Od.* 1.1).⁹ Livius conveys ἔννεπε with *insece*: the two verbs in fact share a common origin in PIE **en-sek*.¹⁰ Ennius, too, employs the verb *insece* in the *Annales*, where he reverts the local Italian Camena back to the *bona fide* Greek Muse (fr. 10.1 Skutsch [322–3]):

insece Musa manu Romanorum induperator
quod quisque in bello gessit cum rege Philippo

Tell me, Muse, what each of the Roman commanders accomplished by hand in the war against King Philip.

In short, poets across the Graeco-Roman literary canon employ the imperatives ἔννεπε and the etymologically related *insece* to command their Muse or Camena to inspire their undertakings.

Cynthia's *insector* diverges from *insequor* proper through the iterative *-to* infix. This discrepancy, however, does not hinder a reader's ability to connect *insector* with the Livian–Ennian *insece*. Horace provides valuable testimony on the matter. He explains that, however much some classics fall short of his standards, he does 'not, for [his] part, attack the poems of Livius' (*non equidem insector ... carmina Livi, Epist.*

⁶ J. Warden, *Fallax Opus: Poet and Reader in the Elegies of Propertius* (Toronto, 1980), 37 and Coutelle (n. 2), 782.

⁷ L. Richardson, Jr., *Propertius Elegies I–IV* (Norman, OK, 1977), 459.

⁸ As a *scripta puella*, Cynthia inspires and embodies the poetry Propertius composes. See especially M. Wyke, 'Written women: Propertius' *scripta puella*', *JRS* 77 (1987), 47–61. L. Curtis, 'Elegiac women and the epiphanic gaze: the case of Propertius' Cynthia', *CPh* 114 (2019), 406–29 compares Cynthia's entrances with divine epiphanies.

⁹ Scholarship often notes that *virum mihi* precisely captures ἄνδρα μοι both lexically and syntactically. *versutum*, meanwhile, approximates πολύτροπον, with the added twist that *versutum* can also mean 'translated'. Livius has also replaced the foreign Greek Muse with the local Italian Camena. See S. Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry* (Cambridge and New York, 1998), 58–62.

¹⁰ P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque. Histoire des mots* (Paris, 1968), 349–50. Aulus Gellius (*NA* 18.9) observes a notional, if not strictly scientific, link between ἔννεπε and *insece*.

2.1.69). The specific invocation of the name 'Livius' has led scholars such as Hinds (n. 9), 71 to see the verb *insector* as a pointed reference to *insece*, from the opening line of the *Odusia*. Horace further corroborates this link to the *incipit* with an etymological joke on the Livian Camena and her supposed namesake from the *carmina* she inspires.¹¹ The infix *-to*, therefore, does not prohibit a link between *insector* and the *insece* of Livius or Ennius.

Propertius repeatedly compares Cynthia to a Muse, sometimes as a peer, sometimes as a superior.¹² In 1.2, for instance, Calliope yields her precious lyre to the new Muse (1.2.27–8). Propertius doubles down on his claims to Cynthia's supremacy when he explicitly denies Calliope any credit in the programmatic opening elegy of his second book (2.1.3–4). Instead, the poet attributes his *ingenium* to Cynthia's fashion sense, fancy coiffure, musical talents, and so on (2.1.5–16).¹³ In fact, Propertius invites Cynthia to join the Muses in a grove which eerily resembles Mt Helicon (2.30.27–8).¹⁴ The Camenae even announce Cynthia's birthday (3.10.1–4).

As early as 2.10, however, Propertius flirts with the Pierides of different (*aliam citharam*, 2.10.10) or loftier (*magni oris opus*, 2.10.12) genres.¹⁵ Indeed, Propertius enlists the aid of the real Pierides to seduce his personal Muse: '[Love] forbid [him] from despising such graceful Muses' (*hic me tam graciles vetuit contemnere Musas*, 2.13.3). Propertius even joins hands with a chorus of Muses (3.5.19–20). More specifically, Calliope, the Muse of epic poetry, rises to greater and greater prominence over the course of the elegies, whereas Cynthia gradually fades into the background. Calliope, for instance, dances along to elegy (3.2.15–16) and castigates Propertius for straying too far from love poetry (3.3.39–52). Propertius even grants Calliope special honours in the Actian elegy (4.6.11–12). All the same, the newfound importance of Calliope in Books 3 and 4 only emphasizes the extent to which Cynthia plays the role of the Muse in the *Monobiblos* and in Book 2.

In Book 4, when Cynthia finally speaks in what is ostensibly her own voice, the *puella* distances herself considerably from the elegies of Propertius.¹⁶ This estrangement applies both to the past, as Cynthia commands Propertius to burn all the elegies she previously inspired (4.7.77–8), and to the future, as the *puella* makes no mention of Cynthia in her self-composed epitaph, the means by which posterity might remember her (4.7.85–6).¹⁷

¹¹ On the folk etymology, see R. Maltby, *A Lexicon of Latin Etymologies* (Leeds, 1991), 99.

¹² In 1.1, the elegist announces that he has recently come 'to hate chaste girls' (*castas odisse puellas*, 1.1.5). Some have read this vexed phrase as a testament to Cynthia's superiority over the Muses: H.-P. Stahl, *Propertius: 'Love' and 'War'. Individual and State under Augustus* (Berkeley / Los Angeles / London, 1985), 36–41; R.O.A.M. Lyne, 'Introductory poems in Propertius: 1.1 and 2.12', *PCPhS* 44 (1998), 158–81, at 163 n. 19; Heyworth (n. 1), 4–6.

¹³ Propertius elsewhere equates Cynthia's fame, if not Cynthia proper, with his fickle Muse (*haec mea Musa levis gloria magna tua est*, 2.12.22).

¹⁴ Thus Heslin (n. 1), 210.

¹⁵ Propertius later acknowledges the dangers of courting more than one Muse. The elegist compares himself with the poet Thamyris (2.22a.19–20), who aspires to sleep with all nine Muses, but instead suffers blindness after his defeat in a singing contest. The analogy establishes Cynthia as the one Muse who demands the poet's full attention. See Heslin (n. 1), 52.

¹⁶ Hutchinson (n. 2), 171 observes a general 'emphasis on female viewpoints in book 4'. Others, however, have argued that such female speeches serve as an elaborate form of ventriloquism. On the state of the question, see E. Zimmermann Damer, *In the Flesh: Embodied Identities in Roman Elegy* (Madison, 2019), 175–82.

¹⁷ On the title *Cynthia* as the first word of the *Monobiblos*, see S.J. Heyworth, 'The elegiac book: patterns and problems', in B.K. Gold (ed.), *A Companion to Roman Love Elegy* (Malden, MA / Oxford / Chichester, 2012), 219–33, at 227–8.

Finally granted her own voice, Cynthia answers the imperative ‘tell me’ (*insece*) with a negated indicative iterative verb: ‘I will tell you nothing more’ (*non tamen insector*). In other words, Cynthia breaks up with Propertius through the same verb with which the likes of Homer, Livius Andronicus and Ennius commanded their Muses and Camenae to inspire them.

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THE GODS’ DELAY: OVID, *HEROIDES* 7.21

ABSTRACT

This note makes a new argument for van Lennep’s conjecture di at Ovid, Heroides 7.21 against the manuscript reading te.

Keywords: Ovid; *Heroides*; Dido; Aeneas; textual criticism; intertextuality

At the beginning of her letter to Aeneas, who seems to be resolute in his decision to set off from Carthage, Ovid’s Dido tries to persuade him to stay resorting to the argument that he is currently abandoning something he already has—namely, the rule over the newly founded city which she has entrusted to him—in order to leave and look for a land that he still has to find, not to say possess (*Her.* 7.13–16 *facta fugis, facienda petis; quaerenda per orbem | altera, quaesita est altera terra tibi. | ut terram inuenias, quis eam tibi tradet habendam? | quis sua non notis arua tenenda dabit?*). Even more painfully, Aeneas is also abandoning a woman whose love he has betrayed: but—provided that everything else may succeed—which other *uxor* will he possibly set at his side who might love him as much as Dido (7.21–2)?

omnia ut eueniant, nec di tua uota morentur,
unde tibi, quae te sic amet, uxor erit?
21 di van Lennep : te *codd.*

This is a challenging, even heart-breaking, question for both Dido and Aeneas, not for the readers of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, who know that Aeneas will reach Italy and marry Lavinia, albeit after a long and difficult war.¹ Editors tend to accept van Lennep’s conjecture *di* at line 21 (‘even if everything should happen and the gods should not delay your wishes’), which seems to ameliorate the universally transmitted *te* of the manuscripts.² It is not easy to understand the meaning of Aeneas’ (not) being held

¹ But will Aeneas really love Lavinia? Ovid seems to elaborate a problematic issue of Virgil’s poem: cf. P.E. Knox, *Ovid Heroides: Select Epistles* (Cambridge, 1995), ad loc.; P.A. Miller, ‘The parodic sublime: Ovid’s reception of Virgil in *Heroides* 7’, *MD* 52 (2004), 57–72, at 68 in the context of an intertextual approach I will be following.

² Cf. D.J. van Lennep, *P. Ovidii Nasonis Heroides et A. Sabini Epistolae* (Amsterdam, 1812²), 35