

Questioning the Category of Roman Love Elegy: Ovid's *Tristia*  
IV as a "*Res Getae*" and the Power of Canon Formation

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## I: Introduction

In this thesis paper, I will attempt to unpack and problematize the definition of Roman love elegy as we have inherited it. A standard definition for Roman love elegy, as found in Barbara Gold's *Companion to Roman Love Elegy* is as follows:

“Roman love elegy was a book-length collection of poems; these poems were usually written in the first person; and many of these poems were written to or about a lover who is addressed by a specific name that is a poetic pseudonym (so Gallus' Lycoris, Tibullus' Delia, Propertius' Cynthia, Ovid's Corinna). Further, most of the love affairs recounted in the poetry are fraught with difficulty or end badly. And finally, Roman elegiac poetry, while purporting to be about an external lover, in fact is wholly inward-focused, centering almost entirely on the poet himself.”<sup>1</sup>

Such a definition is both subjective and does not hold absolutely. In practice, Roman love elegy often refers to poems (and collections of poems) which most closely resemble the *Amores* of Ovid, the elegies of Propertius and Tibullus, and whatever we assume the elegies of Gallus to be. This canon is more or less universally accepted in modern scholarship, with occasional cases being made for poets like Catullus or Sulpicia. However, the canon we have received was designed by Ovid himself, and under highly motivated circumstances. This paper will first investigate the rationales and contexts for canon creation. Then we will look at various texts of the surviving canon authors to make direct comparisons on the level of poetry and the conception of love and poetics contained within. We will also examine examples of direct reference and intertextuality between the poems to see how the authors viewed themselves in relation to their contemporaries and predecessors. Finally, the elegies of Gallus will be called into question, as well as the implications for modern scholarship to continue using the canon of Roman love elegy in this way. In reality, the modern concept of Roman love elegy may be entirely artificial, and

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<sup>1</sup> Gold, Barbara K. “Introduction” in *A Companion to Roman Love Elegy*, ed. Barbara K. Gold (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 1.

therefore limiting in the way we examine and understand the poems of not just these authors, but the ones excluded by Ovid and other canon creators.

## II: Ovid's *Tristia* and the Authority of Exile Poetry

Buried within the thousands of lines of Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* is the following, largely-unassuming passage:

“elegia quoque Graecos provocamus, cuius mihi tersus atque elegans maxime videtur auctor Tibullus. sunt qui Propertium malint. Ovidius utroque lascivior, sicut durior Gallus.”

“Also we challenge the Greeks in respect to elegy, of whom Tibullus seems to me an exceedingly terse and elegant author. There are people who prefer Propertius, Ovid is more ornamented than both, just as Gallus is rougher.” (*Inst.* 10.1.93)

With such a description, Quintilian solidified the canonical list of Roman love elegists, which exists exactly as it was written then through to this day.<sup>2</sup> While Quintilian was making an assessment based on personal preference and on cultural significance, modern scholarship has determined this listing to be the unalterable canon of Roman love elegy. Although challenges are raised on the behalf of specific authors (like Sulpicia) and on the behalf of specific poems (like Catullus 68), none of the claimants has achieved permanent or even generally accepted membership in this most-exclusive club in Roman poetry.<sup>3</sup> Found nowhere in these scanty sentences of Quintilian is any sort of delineators based on form, quality, or the socio-political climate of the author. Quintilian only explicitly defines the meter for this grouping; any additional qualifiers are drawn from the perceived similarities of the works of the included authors. Therefore, subsequent prerequisites for Roman love elegy like “many of these poems were written to or about a lover who is addressed by a specific name that is a poetic pseudonym”

<sup>2</sup> Wray, David. “Catullus the Roman Love Elegist?” in *A Companion to Roman Love Elegy*, ed. by Barbara K. Gold (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 25.

<sup>3</sup> Thorsen, Thea S. “Introduction” in *The Cambridge Companion to Latin Love Elegy*, ed. by Thea S. Thorsen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 6.

or that it “is wholly inward-focused” are merely *post factum* descriptors, not prescriptive requirements.<sup>4</sup>

For such a substantial claim, the evidence for Quintilian’s knowledge of love elegy—both Greek and Roman—is surprisingly sparse. It has been attested in multiple places that Quintilian drew his listing of the Greek elegists (whether directly or indirectly) from Propertius III.1 and likewise his listing of Roman elegists from Ovid’s *Tristia* IV.10.<sup>5</sup> There is some textual evidence that although Quintilian was extremely knowledgeable and well-researched for other genres and categories of poetry, his familiarity with love elegy specifically might not have been as robust as with other types of classical poetry. For instance, even though he credits the Roman with “contending” with the Greeks in elegy, he devotes precious few lines to his explication; only iambs receive less words in this catalogue.<sup>6</sup> Within these few lines, Quintilian also borrows a word from Ovid’s description of Gallus (*durus*) to inform his own description of Gallus (*durior*).<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, Quintilian only addresses Greek elegy in passing, as a palate-cleanser after a much more exhaustive treatment of epic.<sup>8</sup> In this treatment, Quintilian names Callimachus and Philetas as the progenitors. These two are named also in Propertius III.1 as his models in elegiac poetry. However, the poetry of Callimachus and Philetas diverges wildly from the poetry of Propertius in style, form, and subject matter. Propertius fits himself into this poetic legacy for purposes favorable to himself.<sup>9</sup> But Quintilian, theoretically working only with the agenda to identify literary models for rhetoric, equates Roman love elegy with Greek elegy, even

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<sup>4</sup> Gold, Barbara K. “Introduction” 1.

<sup>5</sup> Farrell, Joseph. “Calling Out the Greeks: Dynamics of the Elegiac Canon” in *A Companion to Roman Love Elegy*, ed. By Barbara K. Gold (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 11.

<sup>6</sup> Farrell, “Calling Out the Greeks: Dynamics of the Elegiac Canon”, 11

<sup>7</sup> Houghton, L.B.T. “Sexual Puns in Ovid’s ‘Ars’ and ‘Remedia,’” *The Classical Quarterly* 59 (2009): 283, accessed February 17, 2015, [http://www.jstor.org/stable/20616682?seq=4#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org/stable/20616682?seq=4#page_scan_tab_contents).

<sup>8</sup> Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* X.1.57-59.

<sup>9</sup> Luck, Georg. *Latin Love Elegy*. (Edinburgh: R & R Clark, 1959), 36-37.

though this is not an accurate comparison. Also, Quintilian excludes many other poets, both Roman and Greek, even poets who are attested as love elegists elsewhere in the poetry of Propertius and Ovid (*Amores* III.9, for example). It should be stated that there is no evidence Quintilian directly lifted his catalogue from Propertius and Ovid as opposed to summarizing a perception of the time, based on the popularity and legacy of these poets. This does not mean that Quintilian's listing is any more correct; both Ovid and Propertius were engaged in highly motivated canon-formation, not necessarily making an accurate list of their models and poetic progenitors.

Further to understand the problematic implications of using the poets themselves as the sources for canon-formation, it is worth examining the context and language of *Tristia* IV.10, in which Ovid makes his assertion about the canonical Roman love elegists. In this poem from exile, Ovid composes an autobiography in elegiac meter—an autobiography which provides many details about Ovid's life that are both unattested elsewhere and widely accepted to be literal fact.<sup>10</sup> When writing about his youth and the poets who were active during his lifetime, Ovid includes a chronology of love elegy, starting with Gallus and ending with himself:

Vergilium vidi tantum : nec avara Tibullo  
 tempus amicitiae fata dedere meae.  
 successor fuit hic tibi, Galle, Propertius illi;  
 quartus ab his serie temporis ipse fui.

Also I saw Vergil: and a greedy fate granted  
 To Tibullus no time for my friendship.  
 He was the follower to you, Gallus, and Propertius to him;  
 I myself was fourth from them in the series of time. (*Tristia* IV.10.51-54).

Many books and articles cite specifically this passage as either *the* source for the canonical list of Roman love elegists, or as an exact summary of a general sentiment for this time period

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<sup>10</sup> Knox, Peter E. "A Poet's Life," in *A Companion to Ovid*, ed. Peter E. Knox (Blackwell Publishing, 2009), PDF e-book.

(Thorsen, Farrell et al.). Very few include the following two lines, which also have great bearing on this subject.

utque ego maiores, sic me coluere minores,  
notaque non tarde facta Thalia mea est.

And just as I cherished the older ones, younger ones cherish me,  
And my Thalia was not known or made slowly. (*Tristia*. IV.10.55-56).

Even if these six lines of Ovid are to be taken as a truly accurate assessment (and there is evidence that they should not), the picture he paints is more complex than a simple listing of all four Roman love elegists. In this section of the *Tristia*, Ovid recounts the poets with whom he associated while they were alive and while he was in Rome, before his exile. In earlier lines, he explicitly identifies poets by specific poetic categories or by their subject matter (Bassus with iambs, Horace with polymetrics, Macer with books about snakes and herbs). He makes no genre-based assertions about the elegists, only stating that “Propertius was often accustomed to recite his *ignes* (affairs?)”, which only accounts for Propertius’ content, not his form. His listing of Gallus through himself contains no such markers, only that they were all alive at the same time and therefore connected by chronology.

Ovid’s precise wording for the following elegiac couplet merits some explication as well. The use of the word *serie* implies a continual progression from Gallus through Ovid. However, making the distinction between *ego* and the *majores* implies a distance between Ovid and the ones who came before him. The conception is of “I” and “them”, not of “we”. The valence of the word *majores* is uncertain: are they simply older than Ovid, or is there an issue of quality as well? The corresponding question can be raised about the word *minores*. The most problematic word in this couplet is *coluere*. Most literally, this can be translated as “cultivated”, meaning that Ovid developed and innovated on the themes of the preceding poets. This can also be translated

more figuratively as “honored” which would require less explication. There is an element of subversion in this simple statement; Ovid names himself as the sole honoree of the three elegists, but multiple *minores* honor him. Furthermore, the conciseness and completeness which is inferred from his *series* is undermined by this couplet. Ovid seems to imply that there are many people who are doing the same thing to his poetry as he did to the poetry of Gallus, Tibullus and Propertius. In other words, Ovid lists four elegiac love poets, but only for that specific time. Ovid merely says that he is only the most recent member of his *series*, not the final member. However, this effectively was the result of his claim.

This might seem like an overly belabored argument. To the average Roman member of the *literati*, a listing of Gallus, Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid would have instantly triggered the connection through the production of love elegy. The point is not that Ovid is making a radical assertion, inserting himself where he has no purpose belonging. But rather, by making an implication instead of an assertion, Ovid might be protecting himself from any potential detractors. In fact, the safety is two-fold: Ovid’s language is too cloaked in vagueness and Ovid himself is too far from Rome. However, an explicit statement might have elicited challenges based on form (Ovid wrote other in other genres and meters) or based on quality (Quintilian clearly did not care for Ovid’s elegies, and may have not been alone in such sentiment). Artificially inserting one’s self into a literary canon was not common practice. The preferred method was to innovate on literary predecessors by developing their themes and tropes through intertextuality and allusion.<sup>11</sup> But, the context of an autobiographical poem written from exile, and the implicit wording of Ovid’s cataloguing would have allowed him to break precedent without critics casting aspersions.

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<sup>11</sup> Hinds, Stephen. *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 2.



Even with these doubts raised, to this point it has been assumed that Ovid was merely repeated a generally assumed sentiment with no editorializing on his part. This assumption is largely based on the autobiographical nature of *Tristia* IV.10. While the other poems of the *Tristia* are treated as extremely calculating poems from exile based on Ovid's stated motivations (e.g. to return home, to not have his books banned, to move closer to Rome, writing poetry as a kind of coping mechanism, etc.), *Tristia* IV.10 has largely gotten a pass from such scrutiny. Some scholars have begun to treat this poem as a literary artifact instead of pure, factual autobiography, but even this does not fully encompass the capability for subversion that this poem possesses.<sup>12</sup> As with every poem of the *Tristia*, Ovid is trying to achieve multiple aims, some of which are sincere, others ironic. To take a hard and fast position on either side of Ovid's motivations is a mistake; the entirety of the exile poetry is designed to shape the conversation around the questions which Ovid wants the audience to be asking, overlooking more subtle intentions. This section is no different. Even if Ovid wanted to be completely sincere, the persona of "Ovid" would have prevented any sort of unquestioningly honest reception by his peers. As a result, nothing in the *Tristia* should be taken as literal, unaltered, unmotivated fact. The very act of publishing his poetry from exile demonstrates that Ovid wanted his poetry to have some sort of efficacy beyond building personal wealth and social standing—such things have no value on the fringe of empire.

### III: Ovid's *Res Getae* and Augustus' *Res Gestae*

Regardless of the specifics of Ovid's *carmen et error*, it is evident from the socio-political environment that Ovid was exiled because he posed some potential threat to the Augustan regime because of his sensibilities, his poetry and his fame. Ovid's poetry is, generally

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<sup>12</sup> Fairweather, Janet. "Ovid's Autobiographical Poem, *Tristia* 4.10" *The Classical Quarterly* 37, (1987): 181. Accessed 11 March, 2015. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/639354>.

speaking, inextricable from the Augustan climate in which he was writing. As Thomas Habinek notes, Ovid's relationship with the Augustan regime was less politically introspective (like Propertius and Tibullus) and more politically *prospective*—seeking the advantages for himself that Augustus provided.<sup>13</sup> One of these opportunities was the ability to codify official knowledge in the form of lists. Augustus himself personified this trend. The *Res Gestae* of Augustus stands as a prime example of a historical text becoming an official text by means of its manner of distribution and popularity. Even if omissions or exaggerations were included, history is rewritten in the shape of the published text.<sup>14</sup> Of course, Augustus ostensibly composed the *Res Gestae* to be a funerary inscription, but similar texts were probably being circulated even before Ovid's exile.

Nevertheless, there are parallels between the exile poetry and posthumous inscriptions. Both operate with the basic assumption that they must be true because (theoretically) lies would be exposed by the survivors and lying would serve no purpose to the deceased or exiled author. But this is inaccurate. Lies or exaggerations cannot be directly challenged since the author is either deceased or exiled, and lies or exaggerations can be incredibly beneficial for someone who is in the business of legacy building. Both Ovid and Augustus are clearly interested in shaping their legacy in their own best interests. In addition, Ovid continuously draws parallels between exile and death in order that the *Tristia* serves the same post-mortem function as the *Res Gestae*<sup>15</sup>. It has been hypothesized the *Res Gestae* of Augustus was influenced either directly or indirectly by a Euhemeristic desire to formalize his case for postmortem deification.<sup>16</sup> The listing

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<sup>13</sup> Habinek, Thomas. "Ovid and Empire" in *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid*, ed. by Philip Hardie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 46.

<sup>14</sup> Ridley, Ronald T. *The Emperor's Retrospect: Augustus' Res Gestae in Epigraphy, Historiography and Commentary*. (Leuven-Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2003), 240-241.

<sup>15</sup> Ovid, *Tristia* III.3.

<sup>16</sup> Winiarczyk, Marek. *The "Sacred History" of Euhemerus of Messene*. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2013), 146.

of one's deeds and the contextualizing of one's place in history make permanent one's legacy, even if the listing and contextualizing are done with bias. Ovid demonstrates his awareness of this opportunity in his earlier poetry, notable in book XV of the *Metamorphoses* and *Tristia* IV.2. Like Augustus, Ovid stresses the primacy of his position and makes strategic omissions.<sup>17</sup> In this sense, Ovid's *Tristia* serves as a kind of "Res Getae" (referring to the tribe of barbarians among whom Ovid is exiled) in comparison to Augustus' *Res Gestae*. Ovid engages in his own specific type of official empire building, except his empire is one of poetics, not of politics.

The literal and figurative position of exile should also be examined, since this canon-formation would have had a greatly different tenor if he conducted this exercise while being in Rome. Exile provides distance. Distance provides perspective. Not only perspective, but exiling Ovid for actions detrimental to Augustan Rome gives Ovid a significant degree of authority when speaking about the institutions of Rome. If Ovid's opinion was insignificant, he would not have been exiled in the first place. In addition, the practice of exile has the effect of essentially distancing Ovid from his previous poetic ventures. The *Amores*, the *Ars* and the *Remedia* belong to Rome, the *Tristia* belong to Tomis. This separation allows Ovid to comment on poetic practice as a whole, while maintaining the illusion that he is not actively participating in the practice. He seems to be doing retrospective, unbiased analysis, while he is actually still writing love elegy in the guise of writing *about* love elegy.

All of these circumstances combine to give Ovid a powerful opportunity to define his position not only among his contemporaries but within the historical context of Latin poetry. Ovid could have chosen to align himself with epic poetics, tragedians, or polymetrics like Horace. However, he made a conscious decision to include himself exclusively among elegists,

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<sup>17</sup> Ridley. *The Emperor's Retrospect: Augustus' Res Gestae in Epigraphy, Historiography and Commentary*, 75.

specifically the most popular elegists who were able to thrive (at least speaking in terms of poetic popularity) within the Rome of Augustus. Even among Roman love elegists, Ovid did not provide the only catalogue. This is known because elsewhere in his poetry, Ovid includes himself in two *different* catalogues of Roman love elegists (*Amores*. III.9, *Tristia*. II, et al.). *Tristia* II serves a particularly interesting role in the context of Augustan listing since Ovid includes himself in an anti-proscription list: a listing of all the socially deviant poets who *were not* exiled. However, those catalogues did not have the preferred position of being found within an autobiographical exile poem—the very pinnacle of authority. Ovid, knowing well the potential power of this type of self-assertion (from the example of Augustus) made a deliberate decision to use this particular catalogue and no other.

There is an understanding among modern scholars that Ovid was probably just summarizing a popular sentiment of the contemporary literary crowd. After all, if Ovid deviated far from the truth, surely this claim would have been ignored or challenged. For this reason, this passage is not seen as particularly manipulative or subversively influential. But even if Ovid was “correct”, this does not absolve him of any deceitful motivation. First of all, at the very least this catalogue is patently simplified, ignoring not only all precursors to love elegy but also any marginal contributors (like Ovid’s *minores*). Secondly, just the very act of concretizing the canon in a poem that would last forever (and Ovid knows better than most the power of perpetuity that poetry possesses) is a subversive act. Instead of letting future poets decide on their own poetic lineage, Ovid forces himself into all subsequent adaptations of Roman love elegy, if any are to indeed follow.<sup>18</sup> Canon formation is an organic process, until someone with the proper authority and motivation artificially shapes the canon in his own image.

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<sup>18</sup> Ross Jr., David O. *Backgrounds to Augustan Poetry: Gallus, Elegy and Rome*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 3.

To this point we have analyzed the moment of canon formation for Roman love elegy. It appears that Quintilian utilized a popular conception of the “canon” of Roman love elegy, which descended (wholly or in part) from Ovid’s account in *Tristia* IV.10. We have also examined Ovid’s specific wording and how it is more suggestive and complex than it seems at first blush. Furthermore, we have explored the climate in which Ovid composed this catalogue, the authority imparted from his exile and the Augustan trend of memorializing claims through unchallengeable listings, as exemplified by the *Res Gestae*. This may not seem like a significant problem to some; at worst, Ovid slightly altered common understanding of Roman love elegy. However, Quintilian and Ovid’s firm use of exclusivity and specificity when describing the canon of Roman love elegists has had a significant impact on modern scholarship on Roman love elegy. To this day, restrictions and allowances are applied to the category of Roman love elegy in order to fit Ovid’s model. Catullus is excluded for being a polymetrician and for not “living the life” of an elegiac lover.<sup>19</sup> Gallus is given a pardon for being a career politician. Calvus is written off as too old. Ovid’s sojourns into epic and tragedy are overlooked.<sup>20</sup> The massive variance in style between Propertius and Tibullus are somehow both justified as “Callimachean”. What happens is the “official” canon of Roman love elegy often stands at odds with the reality of the texts. This concept is so powerful that it fundamentally biases all subsequent discussions of what is understood to be Roman love elegy. As a result, modern scholarship continues to contort itself to find a cohesive definition for Roman love elegy, when in fact none may exist since it may be a wholly artificial distinction.

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<sup>19</sup> Wray, David. “Catullus the Roman Love Elegist?”, 26-27.

<sup>20</sup> Miller, Paul Allen, “Catullus and Roman Love Elegy” in *A Companion to Catullus* ed. by Marilyn B. Skinner (Blackwell Publishing, 2007). eBook.

## IV: Case Study: The Infidelity Poems

The preceding chapter explored some rationales which, in theory, call into question the traditional canon of Roman love elegy, as well as the modern scholastic definition of Roman love elegy which results from this canon. However, these questions are only theoretical. This argument now requires some reinforcement from the surviving texts to move it from the theoretical to the actual. It would be most convincing to take parallel poems from each of the four authors and compare them in an ideal, almost scientific method. But, for many reasons this is impossible. Foremost among them, we have nothing surviving of Gallus which is substantial enough (or even authentic enough) to subject to such a rigorous technique. As will be investigated later, our conception of Gallus is one which is largely one of convenience so that our model of Roman love elegy can survive most easily. Furthermore, I would argue that are no apples-to-apples comparison poems between the works of the three remaining authors which are similar enough to give us the controlled experiment so that the only independent variables are the poets themselves. This is especially true if we limit ourselves to the *Amores* for Ovid, since the legitimacy of the claim to Roman love elegy proper is questioned for the *Ars Amatoria*, the *Remedia Amoris*, the *Fasti*, the *Heroides*, and the *Tristia* in various places<sup>212223</sup>.

It would be even more difficult to compare the corpus of one poet to the corpora of the other two. Even if this were possible, it would challenge the legitimate argument that the question of genre takes place at the level of poem, not poetic collection.<sup>24</sup> The best option that remains to us is to compare poems (or sections of poems) which are as similar as possible to each

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<sup>21</sup> Gold, "Introduction", 2.

<sup>22</sup> Claassen, Jo-Marie, "Tristia" in *A Companion to Ovid*, ed. Peter E. Knox (Blackwell Publishing, 2009), PDF e-book.

<sup>23</sup> Sharrock, Alison R. "Ovid" in *A Companion to Roman Love Elegy*, ed. By Barbara K. Gold (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 71-72.

<sup>24</sup> Cairns, Francis. *Generic Composition in Greek and Roman Poetry*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1972) 70-71.

other in terms of genre and subject matter. This will allow us to focus on questions of authorial intent and the poem's relation to elegiac predecessors and contemporaries. A note here on the hypothesis of this project: identifying differences in the philosophy of poetics, the purpose of elegy, and the author's relationship to his material would not prove differences between the authors at the level of category. However, identifying these differences and exploring their consequences will help to demonstrate the possibility that lumping these works and authors together is an over-simplification.

For this task, I have chosen three poems which deal with the persona's recognition and condemnation of his beloved's faithlessness: *Amores* III.3, Propertius II.5 and Tibullus I.6.<sup>25</sup> These parallels are far from perfect and are hardly considered hallmark poems of each author. However, many other potential *loci* for comparison closely matched two poets (typically Ovid and either Propertius or Tibullus) while leaving the other more distantly removed. The infidelity poems provide a promising *locus* for this investigation. They deal pointedly with the beloved, which is a good place to start if the term "Roman love elegy" is, in fact, accurate. They are also distant enough from the poems *about* elegy (e.g. *Amores* I.1) so that, hopefully, we will not be led astray by irony or by deliberate dissembling of intention. The object of the exercise is not to distinguish differences in form or content, but rather to try to understand the distinctions in the relationships between author, persona and poetry. It is these distinctions which will be useful when we question or affirm the validity of the category Roman love elegy.

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<sup>25</sup> This case study is one of many which could have been chosen, such as comparing *epibateron*-type poems, poems about elegy itself, or poems about death. This particular case was chosen because of the opportunity to examine intertextuality and allusion as well as the relatively straightforward nature of the subject matter. In addition, one of the two fragments remaining from Gallus includes the fragment "*nequit[ia]*", so it is possible that this topic was touched on by all four canon Roman love elegists.

## IV(a): Tibullus I.6

Chronologically speaking, it is likely that Tibullus I.6 was the first in this series of poems to be published (but after the *Monobiblos* of Propertius). Although the aim here is not to identify *pro forma* distinctions, it is difficult not to note that this poem is nearly the same length as Ovid's and Propertius' combined. The setting of the poem is that Tibullus has discovered that Delia is conducting an affair additional to her one with Tibullus (I.6.3-6). Line 8 introduces Delia's husband (*viro*) who was referenced in poem 1. Lines 9-14 are Tibullus' own micro-*Ars Amatoria*: he recounts his tricks in conducting his affair, which now Delia uses against him. Then, over the course of 40 lines (15-54), Tibullus proposes what essentially looks like an apology to Delia's husband; an apology for both his own conduct and for Delia's faithlessness. He is concerned that Delia will incur a baneful punishment (55-56) if she continues in her licentious ways, and he claims he does not act out of self-interest or even care for Delia, but rather that he pities her elderly mother whose "golden old-age conquers anger" (58). He then addresses her mother directly, praising her for her accessory role in his affair, beseeching her to teach her daughter chasteness (63-68), and promising to hold himself to higher standards in the future (69-72). He then returns his gaze to Delia, assuring her that he would never strike her (73-74), expresses his hope for her constancy (75-76), and uses the example of a spinster to drive home his point (77-84). Finally, he concludes the poem by repeating his hope (from I.1) for a long, monogamous relationship with Delia, ending with both of them growing old together (85-86). At first glance, this would not seem a terribly complex poem. The changes of and between addressees are certainly interesting, but the persona remains relatively constant, and the narrative structure (if one properly exists) of the poem is both linear and free from Propertius-esque ambiguity.



So what is the point of this poem, at least for our purposes? Tibullus demonstrates an attitude towards love which is, seemingly, extremely personal. Through his reactions to other people, the persona reveals not only a very legitimate sense of hurt and betrayal, but also the sudden understanding of the negative implications of his behavior on Delia and her twice-cuckolded husband. The images of Delia's and Tibullus' conduct are poignant and read as reflective of reality (e.g. the secret messages written in wine, lines 19-20). It is these sorts of vignettes and sentiments which remind some scholars that these poets were actual men whose lives *to some degree* imitated their art, at least in their experience with romantic love.<sup>26</sup> He is capable of not only expressing his emotions in relatively straightforward terms, but also understanding the impact of his actions on those around him. For Tibullus, love is experienced in the "personal sphere". There is only the affair between him and Delia which has effects on the people immediately proximate to them. He makes reference to the *Bona Dea* and to a priestess, but not in the context of comparison, mythological allusion or analogy. The mention of divine elements is necessary because (in the context of the poem) those divine elements have legitimate impact on his personal relationships.

#### IV(b): Propertius II.5

Writing, probably, shortly after the publication of Tibullus' first book of elegies, Propertius composed a poem on a similar topic in his second book of elegies about his beloved, Cynthia. With no introduction, Propertius launches into a screed against the wantonness of Cynthia, specifically the reputation that her wantonness has garnered (1-2). His immediate reaction is of anger and he threatens *poenas* for Cynthia's misdeeds (3-4). This punishment is to replace Cynthia with another woman who "wishes to become famous by my poetry" (*quae fieri*

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<sup>26</sup> Lyne, R.O.A.M. *The Latin Love Poets from Catullus to Horace*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), viii.

*nostro carmine nota velit*) which will lead to Cynthia weeping (5-8). Propertius acknowledges the capriciousness between love and hatred, which he describes by a simile comparing lovers' anger to the Carpathian waves (9-14). He then urges Cynthia to abandon her wicked ways since they actually harm herself (17-18). Through another comparison, Propertius reminds her that not just bulls, but also wounded lambs strike back at the one threatening (*instanti*) (19-20). He assures her that his retribution will not come in the form of physical harm (21-26), but that he will ruin Cynthia by memorializing her faithlessness in verse, with the line "Cynthia, powerful in beauty; Cynthia, fickle in word" (*Cynthia, forma potens; Cynthia, verba levis*) (27-28). The overwhelming sense of this poem is one of reactive anger. Propertius answers insult with the threat of a more severe insult. However, the promise becomes the actual deed through its existence in poetic verse.

First of all, even though neither the form nor the diction are directly parallel, it is extremely likely that this poem was written in conversation with the Tibullan poem, or that both were written against an earlier model, perhaps Catullus. However, the vast discrepancy in "style and form" between the poetry of Tibullus and the early poetry of Propertius is potentially "opposed to the theory of a common model".<sup>27</sup> At the very least, Propertius' noble gesture to restrain himself from physical violence seems to echo a similar passage in Tibullus, albeit with a very different tone. Comparing these two passages highlights a thematic difference between the two infidelity poems: Tibullus' reflective sadness versus Propertius' reactive indignation. But what is most important here is the location in which Propertius contextualizes his relationship with Cynthia. For Propertius, love is a social activity and takes place at the level of community. Even in the *Monobiblos*, Propertius repeatedly uses his love for Cynthia to grant him authority to

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<sup>27</sup> Day, Archibald A. *The Origins of Latin Love-Elegy*. (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1984), 29.

pass judgment and advice on others. Here, at the moment of conflict, Propertius' first instinct is to look at the social implications of Cynthia's debauchery: "*Hoc verum est, tota te ferri, Cynthia, Roma/et non ignota vivere nequitia?*" (Is it true, Cynthia, that all Rome talks about you and that you live in well-known wickedness?) (1-2). His response to such an offence is also a very public one; he uses his fame and popularity as a poet to castigate publically Cynthia's faithlessness. This raises complicated questions about the association between the universes of the poetry and the real universe (i.e., his proposed threat in poetry is immediately executed in real life). However, Propertius demonstrates a fundamentally different reaction from that of Tibullus, not only in the manner by which infidelity is treated by the lover, but in the way a romantic relationship is conceptualized at the most basic levels. For Tibullus, love exists in a one-to-one relationship, with effects touching only a few very close others. For Propertius, love exists within the lover only, but the effects cover all of Rome.

#### IV(c): Ovid *Amores* III.3

Notably, while Ovid exhaustively covers his own adulterous affairs in the *Amores*, he gives little attention to the potentiality of Corinna's affairs. This itself represents a departure from Tibullus and Propertius, for whom the disloyalty of their beloveds is a constant anxiety which surfaces throughout their collections. *Amores* III.3 is the closest Ovid comes to a poem-length treatment on infidelity, but this poem focuses on infidelity in the context of oath-breaking, and the adulterous aspect is only alluded to and implied. *Amores* III.3 begins with Ovid addressing the gods incredulously, since Corinna broke a vow (*fidem iurata fefellit*); and yet the features of her beauty remain unchanged (1-10). He then reveals the cause of his indignation is primarily not the breaking of the vow itself, but rather that the vow was sworn on his eyes as well as Corinna's (13-16). Ovid contextualizes this slight through a mythological comparison,

Andromeda's punishment for Cassiopeia's hubris (17-18). He concludes that it is women's temerity in spite of the gods which protects them from divine power (19-32). Even though men make sacrifices to the gods, Zeus protects women while he destroys castles and woods (33-34). Ovid notes that although many women have deserved divine punishment, it was Semele who was killed by Zeus and the punishment was due to her service (*officio*) (35-38). However, it was her affair that allowed for the birth of Bacchus (39-40). At this point, Ovid ceases his castigation of the gods, proposing that if *he* were a god, he would allow women to deceive his divinity freely (41-44). He then completes the poem by entreating Corinna to use the gods' power more moderately, or at the very least, to save his eyes from her future broken promises (47-48). Like Propertius, we see an egocentric view of infidelity. However, the scale on which the effect is measured is not social nor personal, but rather divine.

For a "love poem" in a collection of poems called the *Amores*, this poem has exceedingly little to do with "love". Both Tibullus and Propertius' poems touch on an aspect of "love" which is familiar in some way to a modern audience. However, Ovid's poem is so conceptual and abstract that the connection to "love" is tenuous to the point that it frequently disappears completely. Love serves only to instigate the plot of the poem; the audience must imagine a scenario wherein Corinna made some sort of fidelity vow about her relationship with Ovid, swearing the vow upon both of their eyes, followed by Ovid suffering some sort of ocular damage while Corinna goes unscathed. This hardly resembles the universalized occasions of the poems of Tibullus and Propertius. Furthermore, the *locus* of Ovid's romantic experience is the realm of the divine. Not only does he use extremely problematic mythological comparisons (like Propertius), but (unlike Propertius) love is completely subject to the whims of the gods. In addition, Ovid is not using the gods metaphorically or metonymically; rather, the plot of the

poem hinges on the existence of gods who enforce (or do not enforce) vows made by mortal lovers. When love affairs are disrupted, the causes and consequences are wholly divine. His conception of love is much more detached from personal experience than the poems of both Tibullus and Propertius.

Clearly, the content of this poem differs drastically from the selected poems of Tibullus and Propertius. This is significant in and of itself, namely that Ovid neglected to address (at least in a complete poem) the major generic *topos* of the elegiac lover discovering his beloved's infidelity. To be fair, Ovid did compose book length treatments about the practicalities of affairs; however, the *Remedia Amoris* and *Ars Amatoria* are often considered love elegy adjacent, instead of love elegy proper, so they are not eligible for this method.<sup>28</sup> There is no direct link between this poem and the previous two; although the setting of Ovid's poem is markedly similar to Propertius'. Here there is too tenuous a connection for it to be called an "allusion" or "reference" to Propertius, but there is an association in the subject matter and context of the poems. Also, like Propertius, this poem explores such a narrow perspective of a given event (the discovery of a broken promise) that it is divorced from a narrative structure. Tibullus' poetry is also non-narrative, but it is exhaustive. Both Ovid and Propertius give brief snapshots into a relationship, giving the reader the opportunity to construct their own narrative. While Propertius balances reality, memory, fantasy and rationalizations, Ovid's *Amores* all exist in the same alternate reality (defined by the skewed perspective of the persona), tangentially connected to the Rome of Augustus.

This method of examination reveals three fundamentally different understandings of the concept of love as evidenced by three poems of similar (but not exactly the same) subject matter

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<sup>28</sup> Thorsen, "Ovid, the Love Elegist", 123.

by the three canon elegiac poets whose works survive. Again, this by itself does not prove or disprove the concept of a continuous legacy which Ovid describes in the *Tristia*. But it *does* indicate that there are remarkable discrepancies between the poets on a philosophical and conceptual level on the very topic which they are supposedly all writing about, love. On the one hand, this could indicate that all the poets were in conversation with each other, each proposing his own understanding of the concept, but varying it by personal experience, climate and philosophy. On the other hand, if this ideal were true, we would expect a more cohesive flow between the various poets. In other words, the connections between the poems would be more vivid, as the poets would be responding to something highly specific from their predecessors. Subtle allusions (like the refusal to strike the beloved in the two selected poems of Tibullus and Propertius) demonstrate that the poets are aware of their poetic legacy. But the stark divide between poems shows that the influence of the precursor poets is only one ingredient in the created poetry as a whole. At the very least, the idea that Roman love elegy forms a neat and continuous legacy from Gallus to Tibullus to Propertius to Ovid is not necessarily directly reflected in the theme or content of the poetic texts.

#### V: Allusion, Reference and Intertextuality

This issue of allusion and intertextuality should be examined further. Allusions and intertextuality are extremely useful heuristic tools for examining a poet's demonstrated conception of self in relation to his or her poetic forerunners. What they do not do is form a compelling narrative of poetic legacy which is necessary and sufficient. For example, Ovid's *Amores* I.2 works within an established poetic model (the juxtaposition of love and a triumph) which is exemplified by Propertius III.4.<sup>29</sup> Ovid employs Propertius' use of Vergilian context to

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<sup>29</sup> Miller, Paul Allen. "Palimpsest: Intertextuality and *Amores* 1.2" *APA Classics*.  
[http://apaclassics.org/sites/default/files/documents/abstracts/miller\\_1.pdf](http://apaclassics.org/sites/default/files/documents/abstracts/miller_1.pdf)

invert expectations of this generic type: he is the conquered, not the conqueror. This maneuver works since Ovid's audience was attuned to look for a Vergilian intertext from line 1 of the preceding poem, *Amores* I.1 (*Arma gravi numero violentaque bella parabam*). Likewise, Propertius twice encodes connection with the first line of the *Aeneid* in III.4, by beginning the poem with *arma* and by using *cano* in line 9 in exactly the same position and metrical scheme (*omina fausta cano*) which Vergil does in the opening line of the *Aeneid*. So what does this prove? It demonstrates that Ovid was working in the same poetic environment as Propertius, and that he would have expected his audience to draw connections between their works. It does not prove that Ovid is the direct descendant of Propertius, just as Propertius' use of Vergilian intertext does not prove he is the direct descendant of Vergil.

With that caveat in mind, we should examine how the poets relate to each other in their own works. Lacking any proof of the personal relationships between the poets (Ovid's testimony in the *Tristia* should not count as proof, perhaps as evidence) allusion, intertext and reference would be the closest thing to corroboration that the Roman love elegists did conceive of themselves as *sodales*, whether intellectually or personally.<sup>30</sup> Excavating every instance of intertext within Roman love elegy is not a guaranteed solution to our question of the legitimacy of the canon. The focus should be on the most strongly evidenced references since there is the potential for "accidental confluence", especially for three poets who were operating in *roughly* similar social environs.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, this attempt is stunted from the beginning, since this ideal lineage begins with Gallus, of whom not enough survives so that intertext or allusion to him could even be recognized.

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<sup>30</sup> Luck. *The Latin Love Elegy*, 20.

<sup>31</sup> Hinds. *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry*, 34.

Traditional dating places the composition of Tibullus' two books of elegies after the circulation (and popularity) of Propertius' *Monobiblos*. Unfortunately, we do not find in Tibullus any evidence of intertext and allusion to the *Monobiblos* which is incontrovertible. Tibullus and Propertius do write within some of the same generic *topoi*; but this is more indicative that Tibullus and Propertius were aware of the same Greek models for erotic elegy.<sup>32</sup> The closest thing to true allusion to Propertius in Tibullus is a link between the reverse *epibateria* poems, Tibullus I.3 and Propertius I.17. Propertius refers to his proposed destination as "*Cassiope*", which is purportedly—but not definitely—a reference to a port on the island of Corcyra. Tibullus says that he is held against his will in Phaeacia, commonly identified as Corcyra.<sup>33</sup> Identifying the same island with a mythological label in the same type of poem would certainly indicate a close association between the poetry of the authors.<sup>34</sup> Other soft allusions between these two poems ("*ignotis...terris*" in Tibullus I.3.3 and "*ignotis...silvis*" in Propertius I.17.17) demonstrate that there is considerable evidence that these poems have an association and that Tibullus composed his poem with a "hint" of conscious response to Propertius.<sup>35</sup> Among extant poetry, the poet to whom Tibullus makes the most robust allusions is Catullus. In at least three different poems, Tibullus echoes or references a Catullan line or theme.<sup>36</sup> In poem I.4.21-24, Tibullus alludes to vows "written on the wind" which openly reminds the reader of Catullus' claim that a woman's promises to her lover are "fitting to write on water and wind" (*in vento et rapida*

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<sup>32</sup> Cairns, *Generic Composition in Greek and Roman Poetry*, 34.

<sup>33</sup> Kennedy, Duncan F. *The arts of love: five studies in the discourse of Roman love elegy*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 15.

<sup>34</sup> Myers, Micah Young, "The Frontiers of the Empire and the Edges of the World in the Augustan Poetic Imaginary" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2008), 81.

<sup>35</sup> Myers, "The Frontiers of the Empire and the Edges of the World in the Augustan Poetic Imaginary", 81-82.

<sup>36</sup> Miller, "Catullus and Roman Love Elegy", eBook.





are a few explanations for Tibullus' absence. Perhaps the traditional dating of the texts is inaccurate, and this poem actually preceded the publication of Tibullus' elegies. Perhaps Propertius thought Tibullus was too recent a poet and (like himself) Fame would determine his inclusion. Or perhaps Propertius knew of Tibullus, but did not see him as belonging to this canon, either for reasons of generic categorization or for reasons of quality. Any of these hypotheses are possible, but none can be decisively proven or disproven at this point. Another problematic aspect of this poem is that Propertius identifies the Greek forefathers of this type of poetry as Callimachus and Philetas (31-32). Propertius' very next poem, III.1, begins with the following four lines:

Callimachi Manes et Coi sacra Philitae,  
                   in vestrum, quaeso, me sinite ire nemus.  
 primus ego ingredior puro de fonte sacerdos  
                   Itala per Graios orgia ferre choros.  
 Spirits of Callimachus and shrines of Coan Philetas,  
                   I beg: permit me to enter your grove.  
 I, the first, enter as a priest of the pure spring  
                   To carry Italian orgies through Greek choruses.  
(Propertius III.1.1-4)

In contrast to II.34, Propertius says he is the first Latin poet in the line of Callimachus and Philetas. Is this a paradox, or is something very specific indicated by the word "*sacerdos*" by which Propertius would be the first Latin poet? It is unclear. It seems that Propertius is potentially holding his poetry to a higher standard than the other elegists whom he mentioned in II.34.<sup>38</sup> Conclusively, we can say that through direct reference Propertius aligns himself with a specific poetic tradition which he himself complicates. The ideal model which would place Propertius as a contemporary or follower of Tibullus is simply not attested in his elegies, given the explicit evidence of direct reference.

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<sup>38</sup> Luck, *The Latin Love-Elegy*, 134.

For his part, Ovid's *Amores* are replete with allusion and intertext. One would be hard pressed to find a poem which is not inverting or re-appropriating some poetic precedent. His poetry is so replete with these that it would be nearly impossible to sort through them in a way that would yield useful information towards understanding Ovid's place in poetic legacies (besides being the universal inheritor and innovator of all poetic types). However, looking at places where Ovid makes direct reference to his relationship to other poets is more feasible, although one should be wary of misdirection and deception from Ovid at all times. In terms of Roman love elegy, two poems of the *Amores* stand out, I.15 and III.9. The former is an exploration of poetry as a method of achieving immortality (*Mortale est, quod quaeris, opus. mihi fama perennis / Quaeritur, in toto semper ut orbe canar*, 8-9). In this context, Ovid names a series of poets of varying genres along with their eternal product of labor. Callimachus is mentioned in line 13, but Philetas is absent. The final two poets he mentions are Tibullus and Gallus. Tibullus' measures will be spoken as long as Cupid's tools are the arrow and torch and Gallus will be known from West to East with his Lycoris (27-30). Notably omitted is Propertius. In fact, Propertius is not referenced by name in the *Amores* at all, although several of his motifs are imitated by Ovid.

The second poem which is crucially important for unpacking Ovid's conception of the legacy of elegy is *Amores* III.9, the funerary elegy for Tibullus. Many of the tropes which Ovid treats lightly elsewhere (e.g. mythological allusion) here are used plaintively and sincerely. Merely the tone and gravity of this poem give some indication about Ovid's feelings towards Tibullus, either poetically or personally (if such a distinction mattered to Ovid). Importantly, the framing device for this poem is Elegy personified, weeping and rending her hair for Tibullus (3). Again, Ovid repeats the immortal aspect of poetry, stating that Delia and Nemesis will have a

name for a long time (31). Towards the end of the poem, Ovid conceives of the greeting party which Tibullus will find upon reaching Elysium:

Si tamen e nobis aliquid nisi nomen et umbra  
 Restat, in Elysia valle Tibullus erit.  
 Obvius huic venias hedera iuvenalia cinctus  
 Tempora cum Calvo, docte Catulle, tuo;  
 Tu quoque, si falsum est temerati crimen amici,  
 Sanguinis atque animae prodige Galle tuae.

Nevertheless if anything from us if not our name and shade  
 Remains, in the Elysian valley Tibullus will be.  
 Meeting him, you will come having girded the youthful temples  
 With ivy, learned Catullus, with your Calvus;  
 You also, if the crime of desecrating friendship is false,  
 Gallus, lavish of your blood and life.

(Amores III.9.59-64)

This coterie of poets is not just the welcoming committee for Tibullus. His spirit is a companion (“comes”) of theirs and he is added to their sacred group (“*Auxisti numeros, culte Tibulle, pios*”) (65-66). Obviously it would have been inappropriate to include Propertius in this group, since he was living at the time of publication of the *Amores*. But it is very interesting that Ovid sees these poets as kindred spirits with Tibullus. Years later, when Ovid writes Book II of the *Tristia*, he includes both Tibullus and Propertius in a much longer catalogue of poets which includes Calvus, Catullus and Gallus. In this specific context, Ovid is listing poets who wrote damaging material about affairs and effronteries to traditional Roman sensibilities. Tibullus gets the longest treatment of any. Ovid extensively paraphrases from Tibullus I.6, the poem discussed earlier in which Tibullus details the tricks and devices he uses to carry out his affair with Delia, and which she then uses against Tibullus.

Through reference, allusion and intertext we now have several competing canons of Roman love elegy. Intertext and allusion in Tibullus I.3 show a possible association with Propertius, with more straightforward evidence indicating a link with the poetry of Catullus.

From Propertius II.34 we have the listing of Varro, Catullus, Calvus, Gallus and Propertius, with Philetas and Callimachus as Greek precedents. Propertius III.1 claims that Propertius is the first Italian in the “grove” of Philetas and Callimachus. Ovid neglects Propertius in *Amores* I.15, where it would have been possibly appropriate to include him. Ovid also imagines Calvus, Catullus, Gallus and Tibullus as being companion souls.<sup>39</sup> Finally, Ovid names Ennius, Lucretius, Catullus, Calvus, Tigidas, Memmius, Cinna, Anser, Cornificus, Cato, Varro, Hortensius, Servius, Sisenna, Gallus, Tibullus and Propertius as the poets who wrote licentious or frivolous things and went unpunished.<sup>40</sup> So what do we make of this? First of all, the sheer frequency of allusion, intertext and reference between the canonical members of Roman love elegy demonstrates *some* relationship between their different works. However, this may not be an exclusive relationship, and it is certainly not universally agreed upon. In addition, the practice of searching for intertextuality and reference between extant poems is subject to a sort of “availability bias”. After all, we are missing the works of several poets (like Gallus and Varro), so we could not recognize them even if we read them in the surviving works, not to mention the unrecorded cultural touchstones of “socio-political ideologies, historical events and personages, monuments and other visual ‘texts’” which also serve as fodder for intertext, allusion and reference.<sup>41</sup> At the very least, the conception of the canon may be organically changing as poets like Tibullus come to prominence and later die. With that being said, it would certainly appear that the canon is more complex than and not nearly as neat as the one presented in *Tristia* IV.10.

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<sup>39</sup> Ovid, *Amores* III.9.59-64.

<sup>40</sup> Ovid, *Tristia* II.421-470.

<sup>41</sup> O'Rourke, Donncha, “Intertextuality in Roman Elegy” in *A Companion to Roman Elegy* ed. by Barbara K. Gold (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 392.

## VI: The Gallus Problem

The earlier case study—comparing poems of similar subject matter—would, in an ideal world, reveal a direct line of poetic heritage from Propertius’ *Monobiblos*, to Tibullus, to the later elegies of Propertius, and finally the *Amores* of Ovid. However, conspicuously absent from this lineage is the poetry of Gallus. As mentioned, both Propertius and Ovid explicitly mention Gallus as a poetic precedent (although Propertius might seem to disavow this connection to some degree).<sup>42</sup> According to the models provided by Ovid and Propertius (and later Quintilian), Gallus plays the crucial role as the “father” of Roman love elegy. In fact, the concept of Roman love elegy which is crystalized by the inherited canon (i.e., Roman love elegy consists of book length collections of poetry written in elegiac couplets with love as a primary theme) demands that the poems of Gallus look very similar to the poems of Tibullus and the *Monobiblos* of Propertius. However, it is unlikely that the answer is that simple. Classical literature existed in a realm wherein it was the responsibility of each author to innovate on his or her precedents.<sup>43</sup> These precedents could be distant or immediate, they could span different languages, and they could encompass different genres or meters (e.g. Callimachus’ influence on later writers of epic). This practice of recognition and innovation is common; it was the “primary motivation” of the poet to express himself within the confines of his or her inherited standards.<sup>44</sup> What is rare is true invention. However, invention is exactly what is attributed to Gallus in this model. If the model is true, then we have a very strong impression of what the poetry of Gallus must have looked like. However, if the model is not true, or at least more complicated than Ovid’s account would indicate, then we actually know very little with any certainty about the poetry of Gallus.

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<sup>42</sup> Propertius, III.1.1-4.

<sup>43</sup> Ross, *Backgrounds to Augustan Poetry: Gallus, Elegy and Rome*, 3.

<sup>44</sup> Ross, *Backgrounds to Augustan Poetry: Gallus, Elegy and Rome*, 37.

Already this paper has illustrated the *potential* that the model of Ovid and Quintilian is oversimplified, subjective, or intentionally misleading. Therefore, the possibility should be entertained that the impression of “Gallus” which is implied by this model is similarly prone to error. We must balance the things we know about Gallus with certainty against the inferences which seem to follow naturally from the model’s portrayal of Gallus. For instance, the evidence from ancient sources indicates that Gallus wrote four books of elegies (although not necessarily exclusively, but the elegies would have been the most well-known).<sup>45</sup> The model of Ovid and Quintilian would have Gallus being not only the first to write full-length books of only elegies, but also writing subjective, love-centric elegy in the style which would be exemplified by the *Monobiblos* of Propertius. Unfortunately, nothing that exists currently verifies either of these inferences to a satisfactory degree. In fact, the one thing that we think we know for certain—the form and meter of Gallus’ poetry—is undermined by the evidence provided in the references to Gallus in the *Amores* of Ovid and in II.34 of Propertius. In both of these poems, Gallus is closely associated with Catullus, as well as other poets like Calvus and Varro about whom we know little, *except* that they did not exclusively write subjective love elegy.<sup>46</sup> In some works of modern scholarship, composing elegy exclusively is the key issue in rejecting Catullus from the canon of Roman love elegy (a requirement which applies less strongly to Ovid).<sup>47</sup> In an optimistic sense, this seems to be the perfect indicator of Gallus’ role in the creation of Roman love elegy: he is able to fit in canons which include Catullus and Varro, while at the same time originate his own subsequent canon which includes himself, Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid (but

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<sup>45</sup> Gibson, Roy K. “Gallus: The First Roman Love Elegist”, in *A Companion to Roman Elegy* ed. by Barbara K. Gold (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 183.

<sup>46</sup> Bessone, Federica, “Latin Precursors” in *The Cambridge Companion to Latin Love Elegy*, ed. by Thea S. Thorsen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 44.

<sup>47</sup> Wray, “Catullus the Roman Love Elegist?”, 27.

not his predecessors). The simple answer would be that Gallus wrote in the style of Catullus (specifically poems like 68), but in the form of Propertius and Tibullus.

Unfortunately, while this would be a straightforward and easy solution, the evidence to conclude such a thing just does not exist. It is important to remember that Roman love elegy is an extremely delicate, allusive and complex concept which does not lend itself to a “the simplest answer is probably the best” style of analysis.<sup>48</sup> Both Propertius and Ovid engage in artificial canon-formation. The goal of this formation is not necessarily factual or historical accuracy. More likely, the goal is to cast one’s own poems in a very particular and beneficial context. The exact type of benefit is both impossible to know with certainty and not the most relevant question (examining the effect is more important than the motivations behind it). Because his poetry does not survive to the present day, Gallus is caught in the middle of a powerful intersection of assumptions, none of which are necessarily reinforced by the limited and possibly spurious fragments of his poetry which remain. Without the actual text of Gallus, all that can be offered is a best guess. However, that best guess is framed in the context of a 2000 year legacy of a poetic canon created by interested and involved parties.

In modern scholarship of Roman love elegy, Gallus’ poetry is forced to take on the role of a bridge between the poetry of Catullus and the *Monobiblos* of Propertius. In actuality, instead of a bridge, we demand Gallus’ poetry to be more like a missing puzzle piece which fits exactly the gap required of it. However, a jigsaw puzzle missing a piece has a clearly defined boundary which the missing piece is intended to fill. The “puzzle” which is Roman love elegy has no clearly defined boundary. I do not mean to say that Gallus did not fall in between Catullus and Propertius in the poetic lineage; he certainly did. But whether he was directly

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<sup>48</sup> Luck, *The Latin Love Elegy*, 9.



between Catullus and Propertius (i.e. was another poet or poets also in the interim?) and what innovations he made upon the poetry of his predecessors are both unknown. In the evolutionary history of Roman love elegy, Gallus is cast as the “missing link” between the neoterics and the Augustans. But in reality, there may have been multiple “missing links”, which might fundamentally alter our perception of Gallus’ poetry and his role in the eventual development of the poetry of his successors.<sup>49</sup>

Catullus 68 as a poem has very marked similarities to the poems of the Augustan love elegists. To name a few, it is a subjective love elegy of some length, which appropriates many themes from the Greek precedents of love elegy, and displays a remarkable degree of “lyric consciousness” both in itself and in relation to the other poems in Catullus’ corpus.<sup>50</sup> For these reasons and others, Catullus 68 is occasionally considered to be among the poems of Propertius, Tibullus and Ovid, especially by scholars who conceive of “genre” as happening at the level of poem, not poetic collection. In his seminal work on Roman love elegy, Georg Luck says that Catullus 68 “represents the prototype of the Latin erotic elegy”.<sup>51</sup> The unspoken caveat is that Catullus 68 is the prototype of Latin erotic elegy, *among extant poetry*. Catullus was not necessarily attempting to create a new genre or category of poetry; indeed, he more likely was not. There is some evidence for this. For instance, if Catullus was actively trying to create a new type of erotic poetry, why did he only write one of them? The answer is that Catullus was not attempting to fashion a brand new type of poetry, but the extant poetry which followed him as well as the contemporary, preceding and subsequent poetry which has been lost shaped the narrative in a particular way. It seems very possible that Catullus 68 represented an innovation

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<sup>49</sup> Raymond, Emmanuelle, “Caius Cornelius Gallus ‘The inventor of Latin love elegy’” in *The Cambridge Companion to Latin Love Elegy*, ed. by Thea S. Thorsen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 66.

<sup>50</sup> Miller, “Catullus and Roman Love Elegy”, eBook.

<sup>51</sup> Luck, *The Latin Love Elegy*, 56.

(in style, form, meter or complexity) on one of his contemporaries or precedents which has now been lost.

Using Catullus 68 as an example, the tension placed on the poetry of Gallus becomes starker. Even having the poetry of Catullus available to us, we still place it under considerable strain to fit the narrative of the development of later poetry. This process involves making specific assumptions, using later results to provide evidence for the simplest explanation of those results. Gallus' poetry is more flexible, since practically none of it exists. It is able to be shaped into whatever puzzle-piece which we need to plug a gap in the poetic history. This process of altering evidence to fit the results is extremely problematic. We know very little about Gallus' quality and style of poetry other than Ovid and Quintilian's description of it as "rough". What little evidence we have of Gallus' specific content and style comes from Vergil's *Eclogues* (this is problematic evidence as well since Vergil is engaged in his own sort of legacy-creation in these poems). *Eclogue VI* sets Gallus in a poetic lineage which descends from Hesiod and Callimachus, since (according to Vergil), issues of genre and form are secondary to poetic genealogy.<sup>52</sup> This raises a whole other set of questions, primary among them is whether poetic genealogy is determined at the level of poetry or poet. However, setting Gallus in a poetic lineage descended from Hesiod problematizes Ovid's (and by extension, our) conception of Roman love elegy, so this aspect of Gallus is excluded from his model. Lacking the actual text of Gallus, it is easy to make assumptions about the continuity and legacy of Roman love elegy, but the process for attaining any evidence about these claims is troublesome since we are starting with our conclusion already decided and then working backwards to fit the evidence to the result.

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<sup>52</sup> Ross, *Backgrounds to Augustan Poetry: Gallus, Elegy and Rome*, 36.

To characterize the danger in making assumptions about the style and content of Gallus' poetry, allow this thought experiment. Imagine that, instead of missing the corpus of Gallus' work, we lacked the poetry of Tibullus.<sup>53</sup> The importance of Tibullus would still be attested in Ovid's *Amores* and *Tristia*. We might even know the relative chronology of Tibullus' publications via outside sources. But in terms of style, we would have Quintilian's assessment that he is the most terse and elegant of the elegists.<sup>54</sup> In terms of content, the strongest clue we would have would be Ovid's extended discourse in *Tristia* II of Tibullus' lasciviousness. With those two indications towards style and content, how close could we come to recreating or imagining the work of Tibullus? Would we envision a poetry marked by "a progression of meanings, of emotional colorings, of reflections and ironic undercuttings that come to constitute the text itself"?<sup>55</sup> Our imagined version of Tibullus would most likely be a chimera composed of various references and inferences which would have very little resemblance to the actual text. Quintilian and Ovid's canon requires a "Gallus" which is instantly recognizable as being more similar to Ovid, Propertius and Tibullus than it is to Catullus, Calvus and Varro. Unfortunately we do not have any evidence which can lead us to deduce this with absolute certainty.

## VII: Conclusion

Throughout this paper I have raised doubts about the understanding of Roman love elegy as a continuous and consistent poetic category. The canon invented by Ovid and authorized by Quintilian relies on very specific assumptions for which the evidence either no longer exists or is inconclusive. The model of Augustus' *Res Gestae* exemplifies that factual accuracy is less

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<sup>53</sup> A similar thought experiment (with Propertius instead of Tibullus) is conducted in Gibson, "Gallus: The First Roman Love Elegist", 177.

<sup>54</sup> Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*.X.1.93.

<sup>55</sup> Miller, Paul Allen, "Tibullus" in *A Companion to Roman Love Elegy*, ed. Barbara K. Gold (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 67.

important than popularity and cultural relevance in the context of forming an official list. Nevertheless, modern scholarship often finds itself in the unenviable position of contorting to fit definitions to examples, instead of the reverse. As a result, coming up with a consistent definition of Roman love elegy can be self-contradictory or too vague. Exceptions are made to accommodate the canon authors and to exclude liminal figures like Catullus.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, this canon is upheld as if it were the lone authority on Roman love elegy which represented the overwhelming public opinion of contemporary Romans. However, not only do we have alternate canons presented in various poems of Ovid and Propertius, but Diomedes Grammaticus (writing in the fourth century) names only three Roman elegists: Propertius, Tibullus and Gallus.<sup>57</sup> Therefore, Ovid's canon was not as universally accepted in antiquity as modern scholarship would indicate. In order to maintain the official canon, modern scholarship limits itself to only examining a select amount of poets and examining them in a specific context. The few scholastic works which look beyond the canon have been successful in evolving the field of study because they are able to surpass these limitations.<sup>58</sup> The further classicists can move away from the artificial canon proposed by Ovid, the further classicists will be able to advance discussion and knowledge about these poets and others.

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<sup>56</sup> For example, David Wray (in "Catullus the Roman Love Elegist?", 27) offers the explanation that to be considered an elegist proper required a career commitment to living the life of an elegist in both poetic and personal spheres. Such a mandate would certainly exclude Catullus, but also Ovid (a polymetrician) and Gallus (a career politician as well as a poet).

<sup>57</sup> Ross, *Backgrounds to Augustan Poetry: Gallus, Elegy and Rome*, 44.

<sup>58</sup> R.O.A.M. Lyne's work from 1980 deemphasized "Roman love elegists" and instead focused on the poets who wrote about authentic love. This new grouping of Horace, Catullus, Propertius and Tibullus was able to provide new insights on all four poets by changing the context in which they were viewed.

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