

# 'Greek' love at Rome: Propertius 1.20 and the reception of Hellenistic verse<sup>1</sup>

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## *A gay canon*

Edward Prime-Stevenson's 1913 short story 'Out Of The Sun' describes a private library wherein a 'special group of volumes' has been carefully assembled<sup>2</sup>:

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1 — Earlier versions of this paper were delivered at a workshop ('The Little Torch of Cypris: Gender and Sexuality in Hellenistic Alexandria and Beyond') organised by Eva Anagnostou-Laoutides and Daniel Orrells, and held at Monash campus, Prato in September 2013, and subsequently at a seminar at Cambridge University in December 2014. I am grateful to Eva and Daniel and Stephen Oakley respectively for invitations to speak at these events, as to all those in the audience who offered their comments, and to Eva for her helpful feedback. I would also like to thank Mark Heerink for sending me a copy of his unpublished doctoral thesis. I am also indebted to Stephen Heyworth and Ivana Petrovic for reading an earlier draft, and to Judith Hallett and the anonymous readers for *EuGeStA* for their comments, and for helping to sharpen my focus. In this paper, I take my text of Propertius from Stephen Heyworth's OCT unless otherwise stated.

2 — Prime-Stevenson 1913; reprinted in Mitchell/Leavitt 1997, 394-403. Quotation above taken from *ibid.*, 396.

They were crowded into a few lower shelves, as if they sought to avoid other literary society, to keep themselves to themselves, to shun all unsympathetic observation. Tibullus, Propertius and the Greek Antologists [sic] pressed against Al Nafsewah and Chakani and Hafiz. A little further along stood Shakespeare's Sonnets, and those by Buonarrotti; along with Tennyson's "In Memoriam", Woodberry's "The North-Shore Watch", and Walt Whitman. Back of Platen's bulky "Tagebuch" lay his poems. Next to them came Wilbrandt's "Fridolins Heimliche Ehe", beside Rachilde's "Les Hors-Nature"; then Pernauhm's "Die Infamen", Emil Vacano's "Humbug", and a group of psychologic works by Krafft-Ebing and Ellis and Moll. There was a thin book in which were bound together, in a richly decorated arabesque cover, some six or seven stories from Mardrus' French translation of "The Thousand Nights And A Night" – remorsefully [sic] separated from their original companions. On a lower shelf, rested David Christie Murray's "Val Strange" and one or two other old novels; along with Dickens' "David Copperfield", the anonymous "Tim", and Vachell's "The Hill", companioned by Mayne's "Intersexes", "Imre" and "Sebastian au Plus Bel Age".

It is no surprise that classical writers occupy pride of place in this knowing, lengthy list of authors selected for their homoerotic content<sup>3</sup>, given the important role that the reception of ancient same-sex love has played in the construction of modern homosexual identities<sup>4</sup>.

However, it is somewhat unexpected to find Propertius included in this company, not least because he is most famous for his love poems for and about Cynthia. As Peter Heslin has recently commented: 'There is only one kind of Latin love elegy which is explicitly, absolutely and programmatically heterosexual, and that is Propertian elegy'<sup>5</sup>. Heslin (*ibid.*) goes on to label Propertius' conception of Latin elegy 'militantly heterosexual', and indeed, Propertius begins his corpus by turning a homoerotic Hellenistic epigram into a poem about his love for a woman (a move which we shall discuss later), and he never writes about what purports to be his own passion for boys<sup>6</sup>. These aspects of his poetry,

3 — Including Prime-Stevenson himself, albeit under his pseudonym as 'Xavier Mayne'. Prime-Stevenson's classical education (for which, see Prime-Stevenson 2003, 27) is evident not just from his ability to extract homosexual content from Propertius, but also in his opening description of the offensive 'homosexual' books shunning the company of the rest of Dayneford's library, which draws upon Ovid's description the books of his banned *Ars amatoria* (offensive to the emperor Augustus on account of their erotic content), which avoid the company of other books on Ovid's bookshelves: Ovid, *Tristia* 1.1.105-112 (particularly 112, where they are described as *procul obscura latitantes parte*, 'hiding some distance off in a murky part [of the bookcase]').

4 — See e.g. Aldrich 1993, Dowling 1994, Halperin 2002, Orrells 2011; most studies have focused exclusively or overwhelmingly on the *Greek* influence, but cf. Ingleheart 2015 (forthcoming) on the role played by Rome.

5 — Heslin 2011, 63.

6 — I prefer such phrasing in order to avoid any suggestion of an essentialism to which I do

taken together with his pose of total devotion to one woman, mark him out as very different from his fellow love elegist Tibullus, who writes about loving the *puer* Marathus (1.4, 1.8, and 1.9)<sup>7</sup>, or even Ovid, who teasingly suggests that he might take a boy as his beloved in the opening poem of his *Amores*<sup>8</sup>, and indicates personal experience of boy-love in his *Ars amatoria*, even as he claims a preference for sex with women<sup>9</sup>.

Furthermore, boy-love features very rarely in the Propertian corpus: at 2.4.17-22, Propertius wishes that his enemies might love girls, and his friends, boys, on the grounds that boys are easier to appease, but there is no hint of personal experience of boy-love here. Again, at 2.34.71-74, Propertius cites both female and male beloveds in Virgil's *Eclogues*. These brief references can hardly account for Propertius' inclusion in any 'gay canon'<sup>10</sup>.

Propertius' place in Prime-Stevenson's catalogue can therefore be attributed in large part to his other elegy treating boy-love: 1.20, the last poem of Propertius' first book of elegies to take an erotic theme. This poem is couched as advice to one Gallus that he should protect his beloved boy from seduction<sup>11</sup>, and includes by way of both warning and example a lengthy narration of the myth of the boy Hylas, abducted by nymphs from his *erastes*, Hercules. It is surely this poem that earns Propertius his place on Prime-Stevenson's bookcase, but, as we shall see later, Propertius' treatment of the Hylas myth may also have had a broader literary-cultural impact, influencing some more modern treatments of the Hylas myth by authors whom we would nowadays identify as having homosexual interests.

The modern binary between homo- and hetero-sexual love that has influenced Prime-Stevenson's response to Propertius is of course not one that would have occurred to Propertius, or not in the way that it necessarily does to our minds. Furthermore, to read Propertius 1.20 as a 'homosexual' poem involves some pretty selective reading, not least because

not subscribe regarding homosexual identity as a transhistorical phenomenon; for more on binary notions of sexuality, see further below.

7 — On Tibullan boy-love, see recently Nikoloutsos 2007 and 2011 and Drinkwater 2012.

8 — *Am.* 1.1.19-20.

9 — *Ars* 2.683-4: *odi concubitus, qui non utrumque resoluunt: hoc est cur pueri tangar amore minus*. The final word of the pentameter is crucial and often overlooked: Ovid is *less* attracted to boys, but nevertheless drawn to love with them. Outside his first-person subjective love elegy, Ovid's corpus contains even more of interest to the student of sex and gender, as his *Metamorphoses* (for example) treat multiple myths of same-sex passion and phenomena such as changes of gender: see e.g. recently Keith 2009 on Ovid and sexuality and gender.

10 — See Williams 2012, 198 on Propertius 2.4.17-22; Williams notes (*ibid.*) that the world of Propertius' poetry is 'by no means heteronormative' – a subject which I will treat at greater length below.

11 — For possible evocation of the first Latin love elegist, the shadowy Cornelius Gallus, in this suggestive name, see below.

nymphs abduct the boy in the end, despite his resistance (20.1.45-50), leaving his male lovers ultimately unsatisfied; that homosexual men of the pre-war period had to read selectively, in order to create a gay canon, is indeed already implied by Prime-Stevenson's own text, in which (e.g.) the homoerotic episodes from the *Arabian Nights* are separated from its – far more numerous – heteroerotic stories<sup>12</sup>.

However, the fact that boy-love plays such a small part in the Propertian corpus, yet is treated at unusual length in a poem that is placed in a prominent position, suggests that we should probe the homoerotic exceptionalism of this poem, and treat as significant the fact that it apparently diverges so strikingly from the rest of Propertius' erotic poems. This element of our poem is indeed brought to the fore by any attempt to explain Prime-Stevenson's response to it.

The only full literary treatments of the myth of Hylas that we possess that antedate Propertius' elegy are the versions by two poets of Hellenistic Alexandria, Theocritus and Apollonius, in *Idyll* 13 and *Argonautica* 1 respectively<sup>13</sup>. Propertius' account of Hercules' loss of Hylas owes an important debt to these predecessors, to whose versions he clearly responds on many levels and points of detail, and there have been various studies of Propertian intertextuality with these models, including Mark Heerink's illuminating study (2010)<sup>14</sup>. Scholars have paid much more attention to Propertius' debt to Theocritus, influenced by the similar scenarios and openings of their poems, which I shall discuss below<sup>15</sup>. As I aim to demonstrate in this paper, *both* Hellenistic versions are crucial to a full appreciation of Propertius' poem.

This should be clear from Propertius' opening lines, which programmatically acknowledge his debt to both models: Propertius' framing of this myth in an address to another man is the most obvious evocation of his debt to Theocritus, as we shall discuss later. Furthermore, Hylas' patronymic *Theiodamanteo* (1.20.6) also evokes Theocritus' reference to Heracles teaching Hylas like a father (*Id.* 13.8). Likewise, Propertius' explicit mention of the Argonauts, with the word *Minyis* (1.20.4), strongly foregrounds the importance of Apollonius' *Argonautica* for Propertius' version of this myth, not least given that Apollonius often refers to the

12 — For selective reading as a homosexual reading practice, see Mitchell/Leavitt 1997, xv and Hurley 2010. Propertius' elegy is very concerned with love for a woman, but other aspects of his work might also appeal to those with non-normative sexual interests: it has been argued that he figures himself as sexually transgressive, aligning himself with the feminine (see e.g. Gold 1993 and Miller 2001); Propertius also treats myths of gender-bending and transvestism at 4.2 and 4.9 (see e.g. Janan 2001, 13-15, 128-45).

13 — For other, now lost or fragmentary, versions, see below.

14 — A revised version in book form (2015) appeared too late for me to take it into consideration in this paper.

15 — See e.g. Gow 1950, 232 on Theocritus 11 and Bramble 1974.

Argonauts as ‘Minyae’, and gives an etymological explanation of this name at 1.229-32<sup>16</sup>.

There are therefore two points of focus in my paper. My starting point, Prime-Stevenson’s apparently exceptional treatment of Propertius as a poet of same-sex love, is obviously one of the areas of interest that underpin this study, and one which will be treated in some detail throughout the paper. I also intend to explore how Propertius responds to the portrait of ‘Greek love’ found in the accounts of both Theocritus and Apollonius, as I analyse how Propertius reconfigures the poems of his Hellenistic predecessors. I have styled this paper a study in ‘reception’ rather than one in intertextuality because of the applicability and attraction in this case of the methodology of classical reception studies, which stresses the importance of the receiving text in redirecting us back to the original text, bringing new insights into the latter<sup>17</sup>.

Accordingly, I analyse firstly the way in which Propertius increases the homoerotic ambience of this myth and how in the process he encourages his readers to see traces of his own approach to the myth of Hylas in his Hellenistic models<sup>18</sup>. Secondly, I interrogate Propertius’ domestication of his models’ narratives of ‘Greek love’ in a contemporary Roman and elegiac context. After examining in some detail how the Hylas myth is appropriated and made to fit an elegiac template, I consider the implications of such elegiacization of Hylas. Uniting the twin points of my enquiry, I argue that Propertius fully integrates the portrayal of a famous myth of boy-love into the poetic-erotic programme of his own first book, and, further, that Propertius uses the myth of Hylas to spell out his own poetic programme and affiliations.

### *The ‘Hellenistic’ Prop. 1.20*

Studies of the Propertian poem label it ‘Hellenistic’<sup>19</sup>, a judgement based not only on Propertius’ use of Hellenistic models, but also the learned, allusive, and ornamental style of the elegy, its extended mytho-

16 — Propertius reinforces the Apollonian allusions with *Theiodamanteo* (6; alluding to *Arg.* 1.1213, where this lengthy patronymic is found: see e.g. Enk 1946, 178, Fedeli 1980, 460) and *Athamantidos* (19; alluding to *Arg.* 1.927: see Fedeli 1980, 470). Heerink 2010, 620 notes that 1.20.21-22 allude to Apollonius rather than Theocritus, since the detail of the gathering of leaves is an Argonautic touch (*Arg.* 1.1182-4) not found in Theocritus’ version.

17 — See e.g. Hardwick 2003, 4.

18 — While Theocritus explicitly presents Heracles as an *erastes* in the tradition of pedagogic Greek pederasty (see below), the erotic relationship is not as clear in Apollonius; however, as Hunter 1993, 38, argues, ‘... it is in fact obvious both from the general shape of the story and from the details which Apollonius highlights’; see too Faerber 1932, 64, Sergent 1984, 185-194, Palombi 1985, DeForest 1994, 63-6.

19 — E.g. Camps 1961, 93: ‘This is an essay in a Hellenistic genre, the brief elegiac narrative of an episode from mythology’; cf. Hollis 2006, 108.

logical narrative, and, indeed, the myth itself. For the myth of Hylas' abduction from his *erastes* clearly enjoyed a vogue amongst writers in Hellenistic Greece: this is clear not only from the lengthy versions found in Propertius' two main models, but also its appearance in other works of the period: it featured in the C2nd AD elegiac *P. Oxy.* 3723.17-22, on which its editors, note 'Style and subject alike show that these verses are Hellenistic'<sup>20</sup>. Furthermore, if Antoninus Liberalis' summary is to be trusted, Nicander used the story to explain the origin of the echo in his *Heteroeumena*<sup>21</sup>. That there must have been other, now lost, Hellenistic versions is strongly suggested by the fact that the myth is famously labelled as clichéd by Virgil<sup>22</sup>, at *Georgics* 3.6 *cui non dictus Hylas puer ... ?* (= 'by whom/ to whom has the boy Hylas not been told?')<sup>23</sup>. Propertius, then, inserts his poem into a well established Hellenistic tradition, although it is only in the case of the Theocritean and Apollonian versions that we can fruitfully analyse his detailed interactions with his Hellenistic models.

### *Propertian homoeroticism: the myth of Hylas*

When we examine Propertius' poem in comparison with the works of his predecessors, it is clear that he gives the myth a much greater homoerotic colouring by the simple expedient of incorporating allusions to a number of male lovers beside the main mythical Hercules-Hylas pair<sup>24</sup>: namely, the Argonaut, Polyphemus; the Boreads, Zetes and Calais, who attempt to kiss Hylas but are rebuffed; and the beautiful boy Narcissus, evoked in Hylas' delight at his own beauty as he looks into the water into which he will shortly disappear. Furthermore, Propertius also increases the homoerotic feel of his poem by including a suggestion of a homoerotic relationship outside the mythical narrative: that is, he hints at a homoerotic charge to the relationship between himself and his addressee,

20 — Bremmer/Parsons 1987, 59.

21 — Antoninus Liberalis 26.4 = Nicander fr. 48 G.-S. Hunter 1999, 264 notes that the citations in Antoninus are 'of very doubtful value'. However, this particular account is given plausibility by the connexion of the myth with echoes in later accounts, such as Virgil, *Ecl.* 6.43-44 (... *Hylan nauatae quo fonte relictum/clamassent, ut litus 'Hyla, Hyla' omne sonaret*), Val. Flacc. *Arg.* 3.596-7 (*rursus Hylan et rursus Hylan per longa reclamat/auia*), or, indeed, Ovid's version of the myth of Narcissus and the link with Echo of a boy who is presented as a figure like Hylas (see further below).

22 — The scholiast to Aristoph. *Plut.* 1127 (Nauck 851: ποθείς τὸν οὐ παρόντα καὶ μάτην καλεῖς) suggests that the myth (and specifically, Heracles' calling to Hylas in vain) featured in earlier tragedy. Cairns 2006, 219-49 speculates on the treatment of the myth by Cornelius Gallus and Parthenius of Nicaea.

23 — As Servius notes (*ad loc.*), *cui = a quo* ('by whom'; i.e. the story has had many different tellers), although the natural sense of 'to whom' (i.e. the story has been much recited by slaves) still operates.

24 — Lovers plural rather than a single *erastes* frequently pursue beautiful youths in ancient poetry: e.g. Call., *Aet.* fr. 69, Ov., *Met.* 3.353.

Gallus, and this is the first aspect of his homoerotic colouring that we shall explore.

### *Gallus and homoeroticism*

Propertius plays up his poem's aura of same-sex desire in the Roman 'frame' that surrounds the mythical narrative of Hylas; that is, the opening lines which spell out the relevance of the Hylas myth for the addressee of the poem as a whole, Gallus. In these framing lines, the words *pro continuo ... amore* (1) are polyvalent, as has long been noticed by Propertian scholars and translators: so, for example, Stephen Heyworth translates 'in the name of unbroken love' (Heyworth 2007b, 530), emphasizing that the advice in this poem is 'designed to prolong Gallus's liaison with Hylas' (2007b, 100, n. 65)<sup>25</sup>, but Heyworth also notes that this phrasing 'seems designed for ambiguity' (*ibid.*). A translation with a rather different emphasis is that of G. P. Goold's 1990 Loeb: 'in return for your unwavering love'. This second translation provides more of an explanation for why Propertius addresses this poem to Gallus: it clarifies why Propertius is offering Gallus a poem warning him about his amatory conduct, by alluding to a close and ongoing relationship between Propertius and Gallus<sup>26</sup>.

That this relationship might be an erotic one is suggested both by the use of the word *amor*, and by the homoerotic charge to the other poems addressed to Gallus in Propertius' first book. While *amor* is metrically convenient here, it is also pre-eminently the word for erotic relations, rather than simply friendship, although there is of course slippage between *amor* and *amicitia* in Latin literature, as Craig Williams' work has recently demonstrated (Williams 2012). However, for the erotic charge to this particular phrasing, we might contrast 1.22.2, addressed to Tullus, who, like Gallus, frequently features in the first book of Propertius: *quaeris pro nostra semper amicitia*<sup>27</sup>. In the opening lines of that poem, *amicitia*, which can itself often have homoerotic colouring, is less erotically charged than *amor*, not least because it does not occur in a poem which is concerned with homoerotic love. Ellen Oliensis and Craig Williams

25 — The desire to prolong Gallus' relationship with his Hylas fits Propertius' programmatic instruction to lovers at 1.1.35-6 to remain in their usual love relationships.

26 — In the explanatory notes to Guy Lee's 1994 translation of Propertius, both interpretations are provided as a gloss to the phrase: 'i.e. «because we have been friends for a long time» and also «to keep your loved one»' (Lee 1994, 139). I too would prefer to see both meanings operating simultaneously.

27 — Oliensis 1997, 157-8 has also detected homoerotic overtones in the relationship between Propertius and Tullus.

have recently explored the homosocial and homoerotic undertones to the relationship between Propertius and Gallus in this and other poems<sup>28</sup>.

However, the literary consequences of such homoeroticism between Propertius and his addressee have been overlooked. The first point to note (in terms of our twin interests in homoerotics and literary reception) is that Propertius' wording encourages the reader to think about the possible homoerotic undertones in the address to Nicias which is found in his model, Theocritus, *Idyll* 13.1-4:

Οὐχ ἀμῖν τὸν Ἔρωτα μόνοις ἔτεχ', ὡς ἔδοκεῦμες,  
 Νικία, ᾧπτιν τοῦτο θεῶν ποκα τέκνον ἔγεντο.  
 οὐχ ἀμῖν τὰ καλὰ πρᾶτοις καλὰ φαίνεται ἡμεν,  
 οἱ θνατοὶ πελόμεσθα, τὸ δ' αὔριον οὐκ ἐσορῶμες

Scholars commenting on this and the other poems in the *Idylls* that are addressed to Nicias interpret Nicias as Theocritus' 'friend'<sup>29</sup>; it is taken for granted that these lines refer to Theocritus and Nicias as fellow-lovers, both sufferers in their passions for *others*<sup>30</sup>. However, once the reader accepts homoerotic connotations in Propertius' framing address to Gallus, they may be forced to re-evaluate the poem which Propertius alludes to here, and so re-read Theocritus' statement that love was not born for him and Nicias alone as suggesting to Propertius that an erotic relationship exists between Theocritus and Nicias. This is a subversive possibility, insofar as Nicias is presented in *Idyll* 11 as a doctor, hence an adult male. Any erotic relationship between the pair would therefore not fit the pederastic paradigm that the love between Heracles and Hylas follows<sup>31</sup>. Such flouting of the strict codes of 'Greek love' could be seen as typically Roman: compare for example, Catullus 50, a poem which flirts with the homoerotic aspect to the relationship between Catullus and his fellow poet, Gaius Licinius Calvus<sup>32</sup>. If the opening of Propertius' poem indeed suggests a relationship between adult males, Gallus and Propertius, which flouts the age-differentiated, pedagogical norms of Greek pederasty, then this departure from the Greek model is thrown further into relief by the Greek myth that follows<sup>33</sup>.

28 — Oliensis 1997 and Williams 2012, 197-214.

29 — E.g. Hunter 1997, 261. Nicias also appears in *Id.* 11 and 28, and *Epigram* 8.

30 — E.g. Hutchinson 1998, 194: '... it is an extraordinary paradox that this mighty figure of myth and epic should be in love, just like Theocritus and Nicias'. Hutchinson does not mean that they are in love *with each other*.

31 — DeForest 1994, 63. That Greek love was necessarily pederastic is disputed by Davidson 2007, esp. 68-98.

32 — For the homoeroticism of Catullus 50, see e.g. Finamore 1984 and Fitzgerald 1995, 45. For Roman departures from Greek (homo)sexual mores in terms of adherence to rigid age-differentiation, see Williams 2010, 84-90.

33 — There may, however, be hints of further departures from Greek and Roman social norms



has a strong literary flavour<sup>38</sup>. However, I suggest that Propertius may have read Virgil's *Eclogue* as homoerotic, with *Eclogue* 10 acting as an inspiration and precedent for Propertian homoeroticism towards Gallus. The strongly bucolic flavour of that poem is surely an influence on Propertius' engagement with Cornelius Gallus in our poem, and, taken together, the poems may hint that Gallus wrote poems about a boy-beloved in a bucolic setting<sup>39</sup>. On this interpretation, Propertius 1.20 would be a response to such Gallan poetry, and many critics (see above) have read Propertius 1.20 in this light, exploring the poetic implications of Propertian engagement with Gallan verse.

I would certainly not wish to reject interpretations of Propertius that emphasize poetics. However, Propertius' opening address to Gallus, if this is indeed the poet Cornelius Gallus, certainly also flirts with the homoerotics of engaging in the writing of poetry that responds to the verses of a fellow poet, just as Catullus had done in his poem 50.

### *Other Argonautic lovers of Hylas*

Let us turn now from the frame to the myth itself, and Propertius' multiplication of the lovers of Hylas in that myth.

First, I wish to examine Propertian appropriation of some very small hints in Apollonius of a version of the myth in which Hylas was the beloved of Polyphemus, the son of Poseidon, and one of the Argonauts. This is a tradition attested at Euphorion [fr. 76 (Powell)] and in Socrates of Argos [, *FGrHist* 310 F 15]<sup>40</sup>. Few scholars have accepted that Apollonius too presents Polyphemus as a lover of Hylas, although James Clauss 1993, 193-6 has recently noted some suggestive ways in which Apollonius hints at parallelism between Heracles and Polyphemus as lovers of the boy, which Propertius' treatment of the myth might encourage us to probe even further. Traces of this alternative version of the myth are found in Apollonius' otherwise surprising description of how it is *Polyphemus* and not Heracles who first realises that Hylas has been abducted<sup>41</sup>, and the way in which Polyphemus responds to Hylas' loss in words which are strongly suggestive of a lover's grief at *Argonautica* 1.1240-60<sup>42</sup>.

38 — See Serv. ad *Ecl.* 10.1: *Gallus ... amorum suorum de Cytheride scripsit libros quattuor*, and on this Gallan title, see recently Cairns 2006, 230-31.

39 — This is also suggested by Virgil, *Ecl.* 10.37-41, where Gallus appears to have both male and female beloveds.

40 — Some aspects of Apollonius' use of this tradition have already been noted by Palombi 1985, 84-5.

41 — Gow 1950, 231-2 whose opinion of the literary value of Apollonius is low, refers to Apollonius' 'clumsy' introduction of Polyphemus, attributing it to Apollonius' aetiological interests, and Polyphemus' importance in Mysia.

42 — Bramble 1974, 84 fails to recognize that Polyphemus is a lover here, referring to 'the

Propertius, I suggest, is a better reader of Apollonius here than most modern scholars, in recognising that there are potential erotic overtones to Polyphemus' role in Apollonius, something that is never made explicit, as indeed the erotic dimension of the Heracles-Hylas relationship is never spelled out by the epic poet<sup>43</sup>. That Polyphemus has *erotic* feelings for Hylas is hinted at by Apollonius' emphatic, repetitive description of Polyphemus' groaning, as well as the depiction of his wandering about, and shouting at lines 1247-9: ὁ δὲ στενάχων βρέμει ἄσπετον, ὄφρα κάμησιν: ὥς τότ' ἄρ' Εἰλατίδης μεγάλ' ἔστενεν, ἀμφὶ δὲ χῶρον/φοίτα κεκληγῶς. The suggestion that these are the responses of a lover to the loss of his beloved boy is confirmed by the way in which these actions are later mirrored by Heracles when he hears of Hylas' disappearance (cf. 1272, 1268-9, 1263-4)<sup>44</sup>. Furthermore, Polyphemus' status as a lover is hinted at by his fears of 1251-2, and in particular his fear of the boy's abduction by *men*. Polyphemus later clarifies to Heracles that he fears that Hylas has been attacked by *bandits* (ληιστῆρες, 1259); compare the description, focalized through Polyphemus, of Hylas as 'booty' (ληίδ') at 1252. However, a potential *sexual* dimension to Polyphemus' fears may be brought out by the placement of the word *andres* at the very end of line 1251. While *andres* here stands in contrast to the wild beasts which Polyphemus fears may have carried Hylas off, the placement of this word right at the end of the line, in a very prominent position, recalls the famous Sapphic fragment 105c L-P (οἶαν τὰν ὑάκινθον ἐν ὄρεσι ποίμενες ἄνδρες/πόσσι καταστείβοισι, χάμαι δέ τε πόρφυρον ἄνθος...). In that fragment, the placement of *andres* as the final word of its first line, far from being otiose, allows Sappho to emphasise the sexualised element to what is generally understood to be a simile for defloration<sup>45</sup>. Sappho's erotic usage of this word at the end of a line to bring out the notion of the violence involved in the youngster's experience of sex may carry

intrusive Polyphemus ... whose presence was only explicable in terms of aetiological factors outside the scope of the main theme'.

43 — For such epic propriety, Ivana Petrovic suggests to me that one should compare Fantuzzi 2012, 187-265 on how the Achilles-Patroclus relationship is never clearly erotic in Homer's *Iliad*, but is eroticized insistently in later works (e.g. Aesch., *Myrmidons* (*TrGF* iii.135 and 136)); at 193, Fantuzzi discusses how the 'banal' nature of the erotic threatens to 'familiarize' the πρέπον of grand, martial epos. This comparison is instructive, not least because Heracles and Achilles are very similar figures: e.g. Fantuzzi 2012, 8-9. Apollonius thus may take his cue from Homer's avoidance of open treatment of pederasty in not openly treating the Heracles-Hylas myth as erotic; compare too Fantuzzi 2012, 252 on Virgil's treatment of Nisus and Euryalus in his *Aeneid*.

44 — Clauss 1993, 176-8 bases his argument almost entirely on this parallelism.

45 — DuBois 1995, 44 recognizes that 'the word *andres*, "men", serves to stress the masculine identity of these human beings who appear in the natural setting' and at 45 comments on the flower, 'trodden down by the feet of herding men, with a hint for later readers of a husband's presence'. The fragment is generally interpreted as part of an epithalamion and the simile as referring to the bride's defloration: e.g. Griffith 1989, 56.



corrupt at this point, but what is clear is that the river is described as harming the Argonauts in some way, whether we understand *crudelis* as a description of the river itself, in what is perhaps the most natural interpretation, or opt for more radical solutions, such as those of Propertius' most recent editor, Stephen Heyworth (see further below). On the traditional interpretation of the text, Propertius describes this body of water as cruel, *crudelis*, to the Argonauts<sup>49</sup>. Commentators have explained the reference to the cruelty of the Ascanius to the Argonauts *plural* (rather than to Hercules *alone* as a bereft lover) by noting that the Ascanius is the location of the loss to the Argonautic mission of Hylas, and, more importantly, of Hercules, who is already a major hero by the time that the Argo sails, unlike most of those who travel with him<sup>50</sup>. However, this explains away the plurality of the reference, and ignores the erotic implications of the vocabulary here: for *crudelis* is typical erotic vocabulary, frequently used of one who is cruel to a lover<sup>51</sup>. Thus Propertius' description of cruelty to the Argonauts plural, I suggest, allusively hints at the tradition whereby the Argonaut Polyphemus, was a lover of Hylas, and so he, as well as Hercules, feels the cruelty of the Ascanius in the loss of Hylas. Alternatively, if we follow the reading of Heyworth in his recent OCT, and understand *crudelis* as modifying *fortuna* and print *durus*, a description of the Ascanius, instead of the manuscripts' impossible *dixerat/dixerit*, this latter adjective too has very obvious elegiac-erotic connotations, and is often used in similar ways to *crudelis*<sup>52</sup>. Whatever text we print here, Propertius' description encourages us to read Apollonius for hints of Polyphemus as a lover, given its heavily erotic overtones in describing the suffering that the Ascanius causes to the Argonauts *plural*.

Further support for this interpretation is found in the fact that *Hercules* is not specified as Hylas' lover until rather later in the poem, at lines 15-16. Propertius leaves open for a long time the identity of the lover who loses Hylas by not specifying Hercules as taking this role until this point. Note too Propertius' description of the wandering that may be Gallus' lot if he fails to guard his own Hylas properly (13-14): given that Apollonius depicts both Polyphemus and Heracles wandering after Hylas' abduction (1248-9, 1263-4), this description could apply to *either* of Hylas' mythical lovers. Propertius' delay in returning to the

49 — See Heyworth 2007b, 86-87.

50 — E.g. Enk 1946, 177, Baker 1990, 205.

51 — See e.g. Prop. 1.16.17 (*ianua uel domina penitus crudelior ipsa*), 2.26c.45 (*sed non Neptunus tanto crudelis amoris*) and 51 (*crudelem et Borean rapta Orithyia*); cf. Cat. 64. 136-7, Ov. *Her.* 7.182, Pichon 1902, 117.

52 — Prop. 1.1.10 *saeuitiam durae ... Iasidos*, 1.7.6 *duram ... dominam*, 1.17.16 *quamuis dura, tamen rara puella fuit*, 2.1.78 *huic misero fatum dura puella fuit*, Tib. 1.8.50 *in ueteres esto dura, puella, senes*, 2.6.28 *dura puella*, Ov., *Am.* 1.9.19 ... *durae limen amicae*.

Argonautic story by evoking the contemporary world of Gallus and his boyfriend in lines 5 ff. thus invites the informed reader to wonder whether Polyphemus or Hercules or indeed both men are evoked as a lover of Hylas by his poem.

If, as I suggest, Propertius may have taken a hint from Apollonius for this tradition, he also arguably owes to Apollonius another, much more obvious multiplication of the lovers of Hylas. At lines 25-32, we read of the erotic pursuit of Hylas by the Boreads, Zetes and Calais. The episode is apparently Propertius' invention; at any rate, his is the sole extant recorded version of this tradition<sup>53</sup>. However, here too Propertius may take a hint from Apollonius, since the Boreads feature at Apollonius, *Arg.* 1.1300-1309, where they restrain Telamon from returning to Mysia after the Argonauts have unwittingly set sail without Heracles. They thus incur Heracles' anger and eventual vengeance. Although the brothers play a very different narrative role in Propertius' model, it is possible that Propertius' putative invention of the rape was inspired at least in part by Apollonius' picture of the Boreads as acting in such a way as to gain the enmity of Heracles in connection with the loss of Hylas in Mysia; Propertius gives an alternative motive for Heracles' later treatment of the brothers: they are punished for their hubristic attempt to woo his beloved boy<sup>54</sup>. Propertius' portrait of the brothers as attempting to seduce Hylas makes the reader of Apollonius review their actions in his epic; it is striking that Apollonius provides no motive to explain why the Boreads restrain Telamon from returning to Mysia to recover Heracles for the mission, merely noting their harsh words as they prevented him from turning back. The Propertian episode gives the reader a reason why the brothers act in this way, and when the Apollonian epic is re-visited in the light of the Propertian elegy, Propertius both explains the Boreads' motives for insisting that the Argonauts should not return to Mysia to find Heracles, and suggests that Heracles' later punishment of them is more than justified.

It is worth briefly considering at this juncture the narrative purposes that this apparently Propertian invention serves. It has a dual function; firstly, it may imply that although Gallus' Hylas is, like his famous

53 — Hollis 2006, 108 notes that *namque ferunt olim* (Prop. 1.20.17), an 'Alexandrian footnote' drawing the reader's attention to earlier versions of the myth, here 'in fact draw[s] attention to a very rare (even unique) version of the myth; ... Propertius' portrayal of Calais and Zetes as the aggressive lovers of Hylas'. This is surely a Propertian joke.

54 — Heerink 2010, 157 notes already 'Implicitly, Propertius has thus also given another, more amorous motive for Hercules' killing of the Boreads: jealousy'. Valerius Flaccus' description (*Arg.* 3.691-2) of Calais' urging of the Argonauts to set sail from Bithynia and thus leave Hercules (*ante omnes Argos iubebat/uincla rapi Calais*) hints at this apparently Propertian tradition of Calais' attempted rape of Hylas, otherwise unmentioned in the later poet's account. This is recognized by Malamud/McGuire 1993, 196.

mythical namesake, vulnerable to seduction by other male lovers, he will nevertheless resist their advances; both the mythical Hylas and the Roman boy who resembles him may share in common a refusal to entertain male suitors who try to press kisses upon them. At least, this may be the ‘comforting’ lesson that Gallus can take from reading this part of Propertius’ warning to him.

More importantly for our focus on Propertius’ homoerotic emphasis, the concerted attempt at kissing by the brothers indirectly, but nonetheless effectively, emphasises the attractiveness of Hylas. The fact that Hylas is subject to two separate erotic approaches within the space of only a few lines provides a very clear indication that his beauty causes both males and females to desire him<sup>55</sup>.

Propertius has a particular need to stress Hylas’ beauty, because one of the ways in which Propertius diverges from his Hellenistic models is in his avoidance of the stereotypical attributes of beautiful boys in describing Hylas. The Roman poet instead chooses to communicate Hylas’ physical attractiveness in a more subtle manner<sup>56</sup>. Before this episode of attempted rape by the Boreads, Hylas’ charms had only been touched on by reference to Gallus’ ‘Hylas’ not being inferior to the mythical Hylas *specie* (‘in attractiveness’, 5); however, this early reference to his looks takes his beauty for granted, right at the start of the poem, and of course his beauty and hence Gallus’ fear of losing him are a necessary part of the poem. Hylas’ desirability is evoked even more obliquely by Propertius’ warning against the *cupidae* ... *rapinae* of nymphs with reference to Gallus’ Hylas (1.20.11). Later on in the Propertian poem, Hylas’ beauty is hardly communicated in a straightforward manner: although Hylas is captivated by his own appearance in the water into which he gazes (41-42), the indirection of Propertius’ method of indicating Hylas’ beauty is worth noting. That is, the *waters* of the pool rather than the boy himself are described with the adjective *formosus* (41). The application of this adjective to the waters rather than directly to Hylas himself is not simply a standard case of hypallage: it neatly makes the point that Hylas is himself beautiful, insofar as the waters are beautiful because they reflect the beauty of the boy whose image is reflected in them: precisely what is described in lines

55 — Malamud/McGuire 1993, 199 note the importance of Propertius thus demonstrating Hylas’ cross-gender appeal. For beautiful youths desired by both males and females, compare Ovid’s Narcissus at *Met.* 3.353 (*multi illum iuuenes, multae cupiere puellae*); see below for Narcissus’ evocation through Propertius’ portrayal of Hylas.

56 — Propertius’ indirect communication of Hylas’ beauty may seem at odds with the very vivid, pictorial quality of his narrative, particularly at 33-48, where (e.g.) Hylas’ actions as he prepares to draw water are described in great detail (43-44). Tim Whitmarsh suggests that this vivid description may evoke the figure of the contemporary pantomime artist, Hylas (for whom, see e.g. Suet., *Aug.* 45), and the description of Hylas’ upper body here (*dextro ... umero*, 44) may support this.

41-42. This is a subtle and highly effective way of communicating the extent of Hylas' beauty.

The most direct Propertian references to Hylas' good looks come at lines 45, where the nymphs are fired up by his *candor*<sup>57</sup>, and at 52, where Gallus is warned to guard against the loss of his own *formosum ... Hylan*, with obvious implications that the mythical Hylas was himself a beauty.

Both Theocritus and Apollonius treat Hylas' beauty much more obviously and provide a clearer picture of the specific physical attributes which make the boy attractive. Both also highlight details that are frequently found in homoerotic accounts of boys: Theocritus' initial description of the boy at line 7 explicitly describes him as beautiful, but simultaneously mentions his hair, which appears as the single physical detail suggesting his beauty at *P. Oxy.* 3723.19<sup>58</sup>; the detail of his golden hair also occurs at line 36 of Theocritus' poem, and the final reference in Theocritus' poem to Hylas emphasises his beauty: he is *kallistos* (72)<sup>59</sup>.

Apollonius depicts Hylas' beauty in a similar way to Theocritus: on Hylas' first mention in the *Argonautica*, he is described as being *πρωθήβης* ('in the first flush of youth', 1.132), a frequent feature of descriptions of desirable boys<sup>60</sup>. In context, this description clearly functions as a subtle marker of his erotic relationship with, and appeal to, his older *erastes*, Heracles. Propertius too refers to Hylas' youth, describing the way in which he plucks flowers as *pueriliter* at line 39. However, the erotic force of such a description is toned down to some extent by the fact that such vocabulary is not applied directly to Hylas' appearance, but to his *actions* as he engages in a stereotypically childish activity<sup>61</sup>.

57 — Although we might interpret *candor* as having a generalised sense of 'beauty' (*TLL* 3.247.33), the word may also connote the whiteness of Hylas' skin (see further below). If such connotations are present, this would be the closest Propertius gets to a stereotypical picture of the physical attributes of the beautiful boy; the word is found also of attractive women in Propertius (1.2.19, 2.25.41, 3.24.8; for the way in which 'the stereotypes of the mistress and of the *puer* share not only some superficial characteristics but also some deeper structural ones' in the descriptions of them in the adult males who desire them in Rome, see Richlin 1983, 33) and of the beautiful boy Narcissus in Ovid, *Met.* 3.423. Cf. Dover 1978, 76-78 for pale skin as a desirable attribute of beautiful young men/boys.

58 — Cf. Dover 1978, 78-80.

59 — For *kalos* denoting desirable young males, see e.g. Dover 1978, 120-1.

60 — For the age which some *erastai* found most attractive, see Plato, *Protagoras* 309a, *Symp.* 181d. Hunter 1999, 368 notes that this word indicates that Hylas is 'ready to become the object of female admiration', citing Hor. *C.* 1.4.19-20.

61 — There may be another reference to Hylas playing in a boyish way at 29 with *ludit*; although in context the verb must refer to Hylas mocking the Boreads as they attempt to press kisses on him, connotations of play, when applied to a boy-beloved, must also be present in this verb. Compare Catullus 99.1: *Surripui tibi, dum ludis, mellite luventi*: in Catullus' poem, Juventius is clearly playing boyishly, but given that Propertius' reference to a boy-beloved using the verb *ludere* is found in the context of older men trying to kiss him (Prop. 1.20.27-28), Propertius may suggest that, in Catullus too, the would-be lover who tries to press kisses on the boy, is being mocked.

Of course, for the reader of classical poetry, the fact that Hylas is plucking flowers ‘in boyish delight’ (to use the translation of G. P. Goold) contains a strong hint of how attractive this scene would appear to potential onlookers with erotic designs. For the gathering of flowers in an idyllic bucolic environment frequently precedes rape attempts upon the young person who engages in such an activity, from the Homeric Hymn to Demeter onwards<sup>62</sup>. Yet the evocation of Hylas’ charms is less obvious here, and requires more work from the reader, than the way in which Apollonius stresses Hylas’ adolescent attractions for an older man. Apollonius later focuses on Hylas’ attractive appearance at 1229-1230 and its erotic effect on the nymph who snatches him as a direct result of seeing him in this light: *νύμφη ἐφουδατή: τὸν δὲ σχεδὸν εἰσενόησεν/ κάλλει καὶ γλυκερῆσιν ἐρευθόμενον χαρίτεσσιν*. Here Hylas’ beauty and physical charms are directly noted, indeed emphasised by the words at the start and end of line 1230. In contrast, Propertius more subtly encourages the reader to picture for himself how attractive Hylas looked, as he uses elegiac vocabulary such as *tener* (39), typically used to evoke the attractions of the beloved in elegy<sup>63</sup>.

Furthermore, Propertius could have chosen to describe *Hylas himself* as having a complexion which attractively combines white and red, using a flower simile to make the point; so, for example, Virgil had described the beautiful young maiden, Lavinia, at *Aeneid* 12.67-69:

Indum sanguineo ueluti uiolauerit ostro  
si quis ebur, aut mixta rubent ubi lilia multa  
alba rosa, talis uirgo dabat ore colores.

Such ‘red-white’ descriptions of the appearance of attractive, unmarried youths, have a strong erotic force. They often suggest either that the individual is in love or that they are about to be subjected to defloration<sup>64</sup>. Thus a physical description of Hylas as combining red and white in his own looks would have neatly have prefigured his imminent abduction by the nymphs. Instead, Propertius chooses a more subtle method of

62 — *Hom. Hymn Demeter* 6; cf. e.g. Ovid, *Met.* 5.391-2. Compare also the flower imagery used by Sappho for the loss of virginity: see above.

63 — Note that Cynthia’s feet are described with this adjective at Prop. 1.8a.7; 2.25.41 refers to a *tenera ... puella*. Nikoloutsos 2007, 67 comments that the characterisation of desirable boys as *teneri* in Tib. 1.4.9 parallels descriptions of boys found in Hellenistic homoerotic epigram.

64 — The motif of red and white flowers together is a ‘hymeneal topos’ (Dyson 1999, 281; cf. too Rhorer 1980 and Lyne 1983) found before Virgil in Catullus 61.185-8. Desirable youths, often on the cusp of adulthood or marriage, are often described with reference to red and white flowers combined in Latin literature: e.g. Ovid’s Narcissus at *Met.* 3.423 (and again at 480-485; if, as I argue above, Ovid’s Narcissus passage draws on Propertius’ Hylas poem, the application of these colour terms to Narcissus himself may be Ovid’s answer to Propertian indirection in describing beautiful youths).

indicating such erotic situations, as he describes the white lilies (activating reminiscences of the Virgilian passage above) and red poppies that Hylas plucks at lines 37-38 in this way. Propertius thus subtly evokes such physical descriptions of red and white attractively juxtaposed, rather than utilising them directly in his picture of Hylas, in yet another example of his indirect approach to delineating Hylas' charms.

I suggest that we should read Propertius' increase of the number of homosexual lovers who are interested in Hylas against his unusual methods of communicating Hylas' beauty in comparison with Hellenistic homoerotic descriptions of beautiful boys. Propertius' treatment of Hylas' looks in 1.20 further experiments with expressing Hylas' famed beauty by more or less indirect means. It is thus akin to the way in which Propertius does not provide a very clear, individualized physical description of his beloved, Cynthia, in the first book of his elegies<sup>65</sup>, and a further example of the way in which Propertius integrates 1.20 into the wider world of his elegies, a topic to which I shall return.

A final same-sex lover evoked in Propertius' version of the Hylas myth is Narcissus, who is suggested at lines 39-42 in the description of Hylas delighting at his own beautiful reflection in water, an element of Propertius' narrative that we have previously touched upon<sup>66</sup>. The reader of classical poetry expects that the *locus amoenus* of 33-8 will introduce an erotic dimension<sup>67</sup>, but Propertius adds a somewhat unexpected element to this description of the beautiful pool: Hylas is attracted by *his own appearance* as reflected in the pool, thereby evoking the myth of Narcissus, the most famous mythical representative of passion for the self<sup>68</sup>. Hints at the myth of Narcissus had already been recognised by John Bramble<sup>69</sup>, and are further analysed by Mark Heerink<sup>70</sup>. Neither, however, explores the structural parallels that make Narcissus' presence so apt here: for there are clear links between the myths of Hylas and

65 — Compare e.g. the reference at 1.1.1 to Cynthia's captivating eyes (which are nevertheless not *directly* labelled beautiful), and Propertius' poem about her natural beauty, 1.2, in which we learn more about her attempts to adorn her beauty than her looks themselves; cf. Richlin 1983, 45.

66 — Bramble 1974, 90-91 already recognizes Narcissus' presence, and Heerink 2007, 608-10 further expands upon it, discussing the *error* and the lack of knowledge that I outline below. Neither, however, explores the structural parallels.

67 — For the *locus amoenus* and erotic desire, see Segal 1969; on the *locus amoenus* in Theocritus', Propertius', and Valerius Flaccus' versions of the Hylas myth, see Malamud/McGuire 1993, 199-200.

68 — Narcissus' desire is homoerotic insofar as he desires himself; in the account of Ovid's contemporary, Conon (fr. 24; Jacoby *FrGrHist.* 1.193-99), the myth is set in the context of Greek male homoeroticism as Narcissus is described as *kalos* (see note 58 above), and pursued by *erastai*, before being labelled an *erastes* of himself. For later interpretations of Narcissus as a representative of same-sex love, see below, and Bruhm 2001, especially 11-15.

69 — 1974, 90-91.

70 — Heerink 2007, 608-10.

Narcissus: both are beautiful boys, desired by many, who expire on the very cusp of manhood. Their early deaths are also, crucially, connected with sight, desire, and water.

Narcissus and Hylas, beautiful, doomed boys, who are surrounded by an aura of homoeroticism, are linked by more modern authors with what we would now term homosexual leanings<sup>71</sup>. So far as we can tell, the connection between the two is first found in Propertius: there is no hint of Narcissus in the portrayal of Hylas by Theocritus or Apollonius, and it is in Propertius that Hylas is first distracted from his mission of gathering water for Hercules by his own appearance: contrast Theocritus 13.46-47 (Hylas eagerly gathers water) with the Propertian Hylas' dawdling (1.20.39-42). Prime-Stevenson's inclusion of Propertius in his gay canon suggests that other men with homosexual leanings (and classical educations) at around this time may also have been reading Propertius for his homoerotic content, and that Propertius influenced the portrayals (found in my previous footnote) linking Hylas and Narcissus.

That Propertius' Hylas is a Narcissus-like figure, captivated by his own beauty without realising that it is in fact *himself* that he sees reflected, is clear from Propertius' deployment of the adjective *nescius* to describe Hylas (41). It is further emphasized in the next line by the use of the noun *error* to describe simultaneously his prolonged absence, wandering away from his fellow Argonauts, and his mistake in not realising that he is gazing rapt at his own reflection. It is worth noting that Ovid's later account of Narcissus' unwitting self-infatuation labels this precisely as an *error* (*Met.* 3.431, 447), and Ovid's account also spells out Narcissus' lack of (self-) knowledge with *quid uideat, nescit* (430)<sup>72</sup>. I adduce these Ovidian parallels not to suggest that Ovid's portrait of Narcissus *necessarily* thereby alludes to Propertius' portrayal of Hylas in 1.20<sup>73</sup>, but these

71 — See e.g. lines 161-8 in Oscar Wilde's 'Charmides' (first published 1881): 'Some woodmen saw him lying by the stream/And marvelled much that any lad so beautiful could seem,/Nor deemed him born of mortals, and one said,/"It is young Hylas, that false runaway/Who with a Naiad now would make his bed/Forgetting Herakles", but others, "Nay,/It is Narcissus, his own paramour,/Those are the fond and crimson lips no woman can allure"' (Fong and Beckson 2000, 75). Again, a poem by André Raffalovich includes Hylas and a reference to the narcissus flower, named for Narcissus, in a passage referring to many beautiful mythical young men associated with homoerotic love: 'But ah! for Syrian Adonis slain/Blood-red anemones we twine indeed;/And hyacinth narcissus-like mean pain./Such flowers should never fade for Ganymede,/But where the ancient waters close and smile,/For Hylas and the Darling of the Nile' (Raffalovich 1886, 95). Compare too the link between Hylas and Narcissus (and other beautiful lost young men associated with homoerotic eros, including Antinous, as in Raffalovich's poem) at lines 7-18 of *P. Mil. R. Univ.* 1.20 (Vogliano 1937).

72 — These and other Ovidian parallels are explored by Heerink 2007, 609, who is not very interested in Propertian homoeroticism: for example, Heerink talks of Hylas' 'loss of virginity' (608) when referring to Hercules' *eromenos* being abducted by nymphs, and locates the importance of Propertius' putative invention of the Boreads as would-be lovers of Narcissus as lying in its indication that Hylas is attractive to both males and females (609).

73 — Rather, the Ovidian account enables us retrospectively to recognise proto-Narcissus

similarities at least make it clear that elements of Narcissus' self-desire and self-delusion are already present in embryo in the earlier, Propertian text<sup>74</sup>.

Propertius' intensification of same-sex desire in his account of this myth, as explored up to this juncture, can, I suggest, be labelled 'Hellenistic' in more than simply the many ways in which it responds to his major Theocritean and Apollonian models. For it is in Hellenistic literature that we find the first references connecting several of the Propertian actors to same-sex eros: Calais appears as the (apparently unmoved) recipient of Orpheus' affections in Phanocles' *Erotes*, fragment 1<sup>75</sup>, and references to Narcissus, most famous from Ovid's later account of his myth in book 3 of the *Metamorphoses*, cluster in Hellenistic literature, both prose and verse: Conon outlines a version in which Narcissus rejects all suitors and is finally captivated by his own appearance glimpsed in reflection<sup>76</sup>, and a similar version occurs in the fragmentary elegiac *P. Oxy.* 4711, which is probably of Hellenistic date and has been argued to be an extract of Parthenius of Nicaea's lost *Metamorphoses*<sup>77</sup>. Thus Propertius seems to have turned to Hellenistic literature not only for the myth of Hercules-Hylas but also for the other homoerotic myths to which he links it.

### 'Greek' love at Rome

I now turn from Propertius' adaptation of Hellenistic models to explore how and to what effect Propertius makes the myth a part of the elegiac, Roman world of his poetry<sup>78</sup>. In so doing, he reworks a myth that is very Greek, not least in terms of the relationship between Hercules and Hylas being predicated upon a Greek model of an older *erastes* who teaches and enables his young *eromenos* to enter manhood. This is most

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elements in the earlier account (cf. Malamud/McGuire 1993, 200-201). Hardie 2002, 155 suggests that the Hylas myth 'undoubtedly helped to shape the Ovidian narrative of Echo and Narcissus', with details of the Ovidian debt to Virgil, *Ecl.* 6.44 and Propertius at his n. 24. That Ovid was influenced by Propertian and other portrayals of Hylas is supported by the use of the myth of Hylas in Nicander fr. 48 as leading to the phenomenon of the echo, given Ovid's link between the nymph Echo and Narcissus (a link which Ovid is apparently the first to make).

74 — Valerius Flaccus models his Hylas at least partially on Ovid's Narcissus (see Malamud/McGuire 1993, 200-201 and Heerink 2007, who also suggests another Ovidian model, Hermaphroditus). It seems likely that Valerius recognises the influence that Propertius' Hylas had upon Ovid's Narcissus: see further Heerink 2007.

75 — Phanocles fr. 1.1-6 (at Powell 1925, 106-107).

76 — Conon, *Narrations* 24.

77 — Hutchinson 2006.

78 — Heerink 2010, 151-8 notes some rather different elements of elegiacisation in Propertius' treatment of his Hellenistic predecessors.

clear in Theocritus' account, which concentrates on this pedagogic aspect at lines 5-9<sup>79</sup>:

ἀλλὰ καὶ Ἀμφιτρύωνος ὁ χαλκεοκάρδιος υἱός,  
ὃς τὸν λῖν ὑπέμεινε τὸν ἄγριον, ἤρατο παιδός,  
τοῦ χαρίεντος Ὑλα, τοῦ τὰν πλοκαμίδα φορεῦντος,  
καὶ νιν πάντ' ἐδίδασκε πατὴρ ὡσεὶ φίλον υἱόν,  
ὅσσα μαθὼν ἀγαθὸς καὶ ἀοίδιμος αὐτὸς ἔγεντο

That the myth is, however, not treated simply as an example of Greek tradition, but becomes a part of Propertius' elegiac, Roman universe is obvious from Propertius' surrounding frame, lines 1-16 and 51-52, which insist on its contemporary 'real life' relevance for Propertius' friend Gallus. The frame for this mythical narrative in Propertius may serve a number of functions – indeed, we have glanced at literary functions in the previous section of my paper – but it is clear that one of the functions of this frame, which spells out that Gallus loves a boy who is his very own 'Hylas', is to make the reader recognize how well the world of Greek myth translates into the contemporary universe of Propertian love elegy. The appropriateness of the fit is spelled out by the connections that Propertius provides between his contemporary world and myth: at lines 7-12, we find the first specifically Italian references in the poem (*Umbrae*, 780; *Aniēna*, 8; *Gigantei ... ora*, 9; *Ausoniis ... Adryasin*, 12). This cluster of Italian place names suggest that Gallus could lose his beloved boy in a landscape and, more importantly, *milieu* familiar to Propertius' readers.

It is not just the insistently Italian place names of lines 7-12 that encourage Gallus and the reader to understand how appositely the myth of Hylas could play out in elegy, as Propertius incorporates the myth into what we might term his metaphorical elegiac landscape by referring to an area which had already featured in the erotic universe of his first book: the reference at line 9 to the Giants' shore (and hence the region near Baiae)<sup>81</sup> evokes the dangers of that resort for the lover whose beloved might be seduced there, already outlined with reference to Propertius' own love affair with Cynthia at 1.11<sup>82</sup>; furthermore, the allusion to Tibur presenting erotic dangers at line 8 anticipates the imperious summons there of Propertius by his beloved in 3.16.1-4, and Propertius' accusation at

79 — Cf. Hunter 1993, 38-39.

80 — If this is the correct reading: Ω has *umbrosae*. Heyworth 2007, 88 argues that '... the case for geographical precision in 7 to match the instances in 8 and 9 seems overwhelming', printing Hoefuff's *Umbrae sacra*, which he further sees as a pun on *umbra*, 'given that it appear as the epithet for *silvae*, the place typical for its *umbra*'.

81 — Cf. Fedeli 1980 *ad loc.*

82 — For links between 1.11 and 1.20, see Heerink 2010, 122-3. For Baiae as a location for erotic encounters, see too e.g. Cic. *Cael.* 15.

2.32.5 that Cynthia journeys to Tibur in order to pursue clandestine love affairs there. Although Propertius 1.20 presents us with a Greek myth with two very obviously acknowledged Greek Hellenistic models, then, the myth is made relevant to Rome and to Propertius' elegies through a number of allusions to contemporary life in Italy.

However, the Italian colouring of the warning that another Hylas may be lost to his lover in the backdrop of the landscape in lines 7-12 is not simply a case of Propertius presenting the Greek myths in Roman dress, as it were. This is suggested by Propertius' presentation elsewhere in his corpus of the locations that feature in these lines as the very backdrop of Propertian love elegy. Furthermore, the myth itself makes perfect sense in Propertius' world, in which erotic threats are constantly around the corner. The Propertian lover must try to ensure the survival of his affair in the face of the frequent erotic depredations of rivals. As Propertius spells out by making links between the myth of Hylas and contemporary Italy, the price of the chance at happiness for the elegiac lover is eternal vigilance; the women of Italy, no less than the nymphs of Greek myth, are constantly in pursuit of beautiful boys, as lines 11-12 make clear<sup>83</sup>.

Propertius hints at his incorporation of Hylas (a pre-eminently epic figure after his inclusion in Apollonius' *Argonautica*) into his elegiac world through programmatically elegiac language: so, for example, his description of the leaves with which the Argonauts cover the shore as *mollia* ('soft', 22) uses a word typically deployed with reference to the 'soft' genre of love elegy, as opposed to 'hard' epic, associated rather with martial deeds: *durus* or 'hard' describes the rocks that Gallus will be forced to encounter in searching for his own lost Hylas (13): cf. already Heerink 2010, 153<sup>84</sup>. Other words with a potential elegiac punch abound in Propertius' account: for example, *indomitus* (16), *dolor* (32), *cura* (35), *blandus* (42), *tener* (59). This vocabulary has a strongly erotic-elegiac flavour: for example, *tener* is applied to love elegy itself, as well as to the actors who appear within it<sup>85</sup>. Thus Propertius makes Hylas and his

83 — Lines 11-12 blend Roman, Greek, and Hellenistic elements: *nymphae* (11) can be understood firstly, as mythical nymphs, with reference to Hylas' myth, and secondly, with reference to the women of Italy, the word surely has connotations of the word's original Greek meaning of 'young bride' or 'marriageable maiden' (*LSJ* 1184); the Greek word *Adryasin*, 12, is unparalleled elsewhere in extant Greek or Latin before Nonnus (Heyworth 2007, 88; la Penna 1951, 138-9 argues that post-Propertian uses of the word depend on a now lost Hellenistic model known to Propertius); *Ausoniis* (12) is pointed in reference to the inhabitants of Italy, given Propertius' Hellenistic subject matter, as the adjective's use is heavily influenced by Hellenistic poets, who used *Ausonia* and its derivatives to refer to Italy: e.g. Hollis 1990 on Call., *Hecale* 18.14, Gow-Page 1965 on Ant. Sid. *AP* 11.24.3, and Harrison 1991 on Virgil, *Aen.* 10.54.

84 — For elegiac play on *mollis* elegy/*durus* epic, see e.g. Prop. 2.1.41, 2.34.44, Cairns 2006, 232-3, Heyworth/Morwood 2011, 31-32.

85 — Cf. (the admittedly later) Ov., *Tr.* 2.361 *denique composui teneros non solus amores*. For *tener* applied to desirable love objects in elegy, see n. 62 above.

myth an integral part of the elegiac landscape, much as Virgil in *Eclogue* 10 had naturalized Cornelius Gallus' elegies in a hexametrical bucolic environment<sup>86</sup>.

Furthermore, Propertius' presentation of Hylas as easily distracted from his duty towards his lover as he wonders at his own beautiful reflection in lines 39-42 is typical of the way in which the elegiac beloved in Propertius' world is potentially open to seduction<sup>87</sup>. Propertius spells this out by the application of the highly elegiac term *officium* ('task', or, commonly in elegy, 'the services rendered by a lover to his mistress')<sup>88</sup> to Hylas' discarded mission of gathering water for Hercules' dinner (40). Moreover, in Propertius, Hercules becomes a stereotypical elegiac lover<sup>89</sup>: he is depicted suffering (15)<sup>90</sup>, and weeping over his beloved (16)<sup>91</sup>. Propertius does not here *directly* apply to Hercules the defining characteristic of the elegiac lover, the adjective *miser*, which programmatically expresses his own erotic suffering in the first line of his corpus (*Cynthia prima suis miserum me cepit ocellis*, Prop. 1.1.1); however, the word must be understood as transferred from Hercules himself to the description of his lovestruck wandering in line 15 (*quae miser ignotis error perpessus in oris*).

Such characterisation of Hercules as the quintessential elegiac lover demands to be read against Propertius' only other reference to boy-love, at 2.4.17-22, where, as we have already seen, Propertius denies to boy-

86 — Compare Propertius' integration of homoerotic love into his elegiac world with the way in which Tibullus' own elegies on boy-love (see above) encapsulate his elegy as a whole: see Drinkwater 2012.

87 — To take examples from Propertius 1 alone, at 1.8, Cynthia appears briefly to prefer a rival to Propertius; at 1.11, Propertius fears a rival; at 1.13 he claims his mistress has been stolen from him; at 1.15.8, Cynthia looks like a woman going to meet a new lover; at 1.19.21-24, Propertius fears that Cynthia will be distracted from mourning his death by a new love. Furthermore, at 1.18.10-12, Propertius wonders whether Cynthia fears a female rival for his affections.

88 — So McKeown 1989 on *Am.* 1.10.57, citing Ovid, *Her.* 20.144, *Ars* 1.152, 155, 2.333. Propertius uses *officium* six times: at 4.4.92 (*haec, uirgo, officii dos erat apta tuis*), there are clear hints at this erotic sense in the reference to the duty that Tarpeia performed in the hope of erotic success with Tattius; at 2.22b.24, the word clearly connotes the sexual service Propertius can perform for his mistress (23-24: ... *saepe est experta puella officium tota nocte ualere meum*); at 4.9.48, given the tradition of Hercules' erotic servitude to Omphale (for which, see e.g. *Ov. Her.* 9.53-118), *officia et Lydo pensa diurna colo* also has erotic overtones. Bramble 1974, 90, notes that 'Here in Propertius, the erotic colour of *officium* is only latent, but nonetheless evocative of a situation where Gallus could be straightforwardly spurned by his *puer delicatus*'.

89 — Heerink 2010, 179-180 examines how Valerius Flaccus presents Hercules as an elegiac lover.

90 — For the suffering of the Propertian lover indicated by the verb *perpetior*, cf. Prop. 2.26.35, and, by *pator*, Prop. 2.8.35, 2.24.39, 2.34.53, and 4.1.137 (where Propertius is programmatically told that as a writer of elegy: *militiam Veneris blandis patiere sub armis*).

91 — For the weeping of the elegiac lover expressed by the verb *fleo*, see e.g. Prop. 1.15.10, 1.18.6, 2.7.2, 2.12.15, 2.13.16, 2.15.30, 2.16.54, 3.12.31, 3.20.29, 3.25.7, 4.4.29. Compare also, e.g., Propertius' tears (*lacrimae*) at 1.6.24 and 1.9.7. See the analysis of the politics of weeping in elegy in James 2003.

love the emotional intensity and drama of the love of girls. Propertius' Hylas poem undermines his later rosy presentation of boy-love as in any way different from the agonies of his more usual brand of 'heterosexual' elegiac love: Hylas and Hercules and their respective characterisations and actions in fact look directly equivalent to those of the lover-beloved dyad (that is, the male poet and his female mistress) in Propertian elegy. In Propertius' incorporation of Greek mythical, homoerotic material into his elegies, then, we have a case of 'Greek love' translated to Roman elegy, with the actors in this mythical scenario playing parts that are recognisably those of the lover, beloved, and rivals in the more typically 'heterosexual' world of Propertius' elegies. Propertius makes it impossible for the reader to imagine that 'Greek love' is something that belongs only in Greek myth and poetry by insisting upon its applicability to and place within his own elegiac universe.

### *Greek love in Propertian elegy*

Critics have been somewhat uncertain as to how to interpret the significance of Propertius' inclusion of this famous myth of pederastic Greek love in his elegiac universe. It might be tempting to dismiss 1.20 as a one-off, an experimental Propertian foray into the treatment of a theme beloved of Hellenistic poetry, set apart not only by its unusual 'homosexually' themed content but also its form, insofar as it is a rare example of a Propertian extended mythological narrative<sup>92</sup>. Nevertheless, such an interpretation is surely undermined by the prominent placement of 1.20 as both the final full-length and also the final erotically themed poem of Propertius' first book<sup>93</sup>. The book as a whole shows signs of careful ordering<sup>94</sup>, so on such interpretations the placement of 1.20 seems wilfully eccentric: the poem would thereby have been given a significance that is apparently lacking programmatic point.

I for one cannot believe in such Propertian carelessness. I would argue that one effect of our poem's placement at the *end* of the erotically themed poems is to encourage the reader to look back to the *start* of the collection, and to think about ways in which the poem and its homoerotic theme more generally are integrated into the wider project of Propertius' first

92 — Compare 3.15, its closest parallel as an elegy devoted to a single mythical narrative, which, like Prop. 1.20, contains an opening frame (1-12) which links its illustrative myth (12-42) to erotic 'reality' in contemporary Rome, as a nameless woman – surely to be identified with Cynthia – is told to stop tormenting Propertius' previous love, with Dirce's jealousy against Antiope as a mythical analogue.

93 — Two epigrams, 1.21 and 22, treat (respectively) the death of one of Propertius' kinsmen in the civil war, and Propertius' background and origins, acting as a *sphragis* ('seal') on the book.

94 — See e.g. Ites 1908, Skutsch 1963, Otis 1965, Courtney 1968, and King 1975-6.

book of elegies and his elegiac universe. The very opening of Propertius' first poem, when taken in conjunction with 1.20, suggests further that 1.20 is part of a broader poetic programme: for 1.1 presents us with the lover-poet overcome by his love for Cynthia and treated as a conquest by the god of love, but, as many scholars have noted, this scenario alludes to an epigram by Meleager in which the Hellenistic poet presents himself as the erotic prey of a boy, who plays the conqueror's role<sup>95</sup>. While scholars have noted the allusion to Meleager at the start of Propertius' first book, and the way in which Propertius 'heterosexualises' pederastic Greek erotic epigram, they have failed to connect this with the homoeroticism of the final erotic poem of the first book<sup>96</sup>.

We might then view the homoerotically tinged opening and closing erotic poems of Propertius 1, taken together, as an elaborate Ovidian tease, akin to the lines in the first of Ovid's *Amores* poems in which Ovid tells Cupid that he cannot be a love poet because he does not yet have a suitable love object, a boy or a girl: *nec mihi materia est numeris leuioribus apta, laet puer aut longas compta puella comas* (*Am.* 1.1.19-20). As we read on in Ovid, and there is no further hint that Ovid might take a boy-love, the *puer* appears a red herring, a piece of generic playfulness alluding to the frequent presence of pederastic love in Latin love elegy and its Catullan and Hellenistic antecedents (including of course the poem that is the topic of my paper)<sup>97</sup>. Such an interpretation of the links between the prominently placed Propertius 1.1 and 1.20 receives support from the fact that Propertius only returns briefly to the theme of boy-love, as we have already seen<sup>98</sup>.

However, that our poem has greater programmatic significance than this is suggested by the way in which Propertius has presented boy-love along typically elegiac lines in 1.20. I suggest that Propertius includes a

95 — Meleager *A. P.* 12.101 = 103 G-P. Cf. e.g. Fedeli 1980 *ad loc.*; Höschle 2011, 20-26; Miller 2004, 85-87.

96 — Heerink 2010, 121-2 notes links between 1.1 and 1.20, but concentrates on the language of warning that frames 1.20 (1-2 and 51-52) and concludes 1.1 (35-8).

97 — For pederasty in Hellenistic poetry, see Buffière 1980, 279-324; for Catullus' love for the *puer* Juventius, Hexter 2015 (forthcoming).

98 — There may be a metapoetic thrust to this 'tease': many scholars (e.g. Monteleone 1979, Petrain 2000, Cairns 2006, 219-49) since Ross 1975, 74-81 have identified the Gallus of Propertius 1.20 with the love elegist Cornelius Gallus and gone on to suggest that Propertius 1.20 is not to be read as simply a warning from Propertius to a friend about his real-life affair but rather a warning to Cornelius Gallus that his poetic theme of boy-love may be about to be encroached upon by other poets (one of whom would of course be Propertius himself, given the success of his foray into this topic in 1.20 itself). Thus Propertius' warning about male rivals may suggest that metapoetically the poetical material of the beautiful boy Hylas (for 'Hylas' alluding via bilingual wordplay to *silua*, 'poetic material', see Petrain 2000) can be wrested away by men such as Propertius. For a brilliant, extended interpretation of how authors from Apollonius onwards use the Hercules-Hylas myth to talk about poetics, see Heerink 2010.

prominently-placed poem treating a famous homoerotic myth in his first book of elegies as a programmatic statement of *his* elegy's commitment to treating heteroerotic love, his major theme in his other erotic elegies. This is, after all, a myth in which the nymphs, and not any of the male suitors, possess the beautiful boy-beloved Hylas in the end. In treating the myth of Hylas in line with his own broader elegiac world, Propertius acknowledged, however, the importance of boy-love in the Hellenistic poetry and (probably) Cornelius Gallus' love elegies that were such an important influence on his own brand of elegiac love poetry, while simultaneously marking his own difference from his predecessors. His poetic models treated boy-love, but Propertius announces that his elegy is a new departure (while demonstrating that boy-love has a place within his elegy, because of its literary history). That is, Propertian love elegy not only privileges passion for a woman, but also differs from the Hellenistic (and, probably, Gallan)<sup>99</sup> homoerotic texts on which it draws by «heteroeroticizing» their scenarios, while still acknowledging the literary inspiration of his homoerotic models and their emphasis on the desirability of boys<sup>100</sup>.

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99 — For the way in which Prop. 1.20 encapsulates homosocial desire and poetic rivalry with Gallus when it comes both to elegiac love and elegiac composition, compare Keith 2008, 125.

100 — I am grateful to Judith Hallett for this formulation.

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