

Propertius 1.1.1-10

Cynthia prima suis miserum me cepit ocellis,
Cynthia first captured wretched me with her burning eyes

contactum nullis ante cupidinibus.
no contact before.

tum mihi constantis deiecit lumina fastus
Then Love's eyes thrown down with steady disdain

et caput impositis pressit Amor pedibus,
and my head pressed down by his burdensome feet

5
donec me docuit castas odisse puellas
while he taught me to hate chaste girls

improbis, et nullo vivere consilio.
wickedly, and I make no plans to live

ei mihi, iam toto furor hic non deficit anno,
and for me, already a whole year I've raged and not deserted this place

cum tamen adversos cogor habere deos.
and the gods have gathered against me.

Milanion nullos fugiendo, Tulle, labores
Milanion was not to flee any deeds, Tullus,

10
saevitiam durae contudit lasidos.
with cruelty the harsh lasidians crushed.

Commentary on Propertius 1.1.17-30

These lines are in the first of Propertius' elegiac poems which like many of the poems is related to a woman referred to as Cynthia. The first part of the poem up to this point has described how Cynthia '*cepit*' captured the poet and how figures from mythology handled being captured by love. Lines 17-18 turn the subject to the poet's own handling of the situation; then lines 19-22 exhorts spirits to change the beloved's mind about the poet. Finally two consequences that would follow a successful change of mind are set out: in lines 23-26 the poet will believe the spirit's powers; and lines 27-30 the poet will bear the situation.

Lines 17-18 introduce the change of topic straightaway with a pronoun "*in me*" the personal nature of the topic is further emphasised by personifying Love *Amor*. The change is highlighted by Love being described as '*tardus*' slow in contrast to the mythological figures who were '*velocem*' fast. Love, when dealing with the poet, knows neither '*artes*' skills nor '*vias*' ways, with the two words moved to the line end position and in parallel to show the repeated failure of Love. In line 19 the poet turns from introspection to address spirits that could help '*at vos*' but you. The contrasting conjunction at the start of the line is followed by repeated conjunction '*et*' and at the beginning of lines 20 and 22 as the poet reiterates the demands of the spirits. The imperative is used repeatedly '*convertite*' change, '*facite*' make, rather than just an exhortative subjunctive, along with a gerundive '*agendum*' to be done to show necessity. Indeed the '*dominae mentem*' is sandwiched between an imperative and a gerundive. The contrast between poet and beloved is shown by juxtaposition of pronouns at the end of the exhortation '*illa meo*' hers than mine. Lines 17-22 have introduced the change of topic to the poet's own experience then forcefully exhorted spirits to change the poet's mind.

Line 23-26 describe the first consequence that will follow if the spirits change the beloved's mind. A temporal change is immediately signposted with '*tunc*' then and even more so with the use of the future tense '*crediderim*' I will believe. The use of the future tense also creates a sense of a definite outcome. This approach, rather than say using a conditional, contrasts with the power of the previous exhortations. In Lines 23 and 24 the poet returns to mythological name dropping that was seen in the opening of the poem '*Manes*' and '*Cytinaeis*'. In Line 25 the poet returns to his own time and space, directly addressing '*vos... amici*' you friends but the words are separated by a long relative clause reducing the force of the direct address and the imperative '*quaerite*' seek. The first consequence started optimistically with the future tense but now more instruction is needed and even more pessimistically '*sani pectoris*' can be a heart that is unhealthy but also one that is insane.

Lines 27-30 describe the second consequence. Although the future tense is used it is moved to a later position and the line opens with an adverb '*fortiter*' emphasising the manner of doing rather than the verb itself. The sense of bravery is enhanced by militaristic symbolism '*ferrum... et ignes*' steel and fire. Any sense of certainty is further diminished by a future-less-vivid conditional '*sit modo*' if only and even further because the anger merely '*velit*' wants to speak. Again imperatives bring in further instruction and their repetition here '*ferte per... ferte per*' carry me through... carry me through gives a sense of progressing through the journey described.

The alliteration of F sounds throughout these lines give an airy breathless of a rushed journey. The journey is euphemistically described as '*non ulla... femina norit iter*' a journey a lady would never know. In these lines the consequences is introduced in the future tense again but more instructions to the spirits are again issued and the journey to be taken becomes euphemistically vague.

In this section of the poem the poet has turned to how he feels Love has treated him and exhorts that his beloved's mind be changed so that he can believe in the spirits doing the changing and bear the treatment he receives. With both consequences the poet is initially confident that the consequence will follow but then adds further instructions to the spirits and dilutes the consequences down to an unhealthy heart and a euphemistic journey.