

Propertius 1.16 and the Publication of the *Monobiblos* ‘post-Heslin:’ A Modest Proposal for a Small, but Significant Adjustment

In his 2010-article “Virgil’s ‘Georgics’ and the Dating of Propertius’ First Book,” Heslin made the well-argued point that Propertius’ *Monobiblos* was published before the Battle of Actium, and not, as Fedeli (1980), Lyne (1998), and most recently Cairns (2006) had thus far speculated, afterwards. Focusing on Elegy 1.6, which combines comments on the impending departure of Tullus for a post in the Roman province of Asia with both a reference to his uncle’s governorship in the same province and a subtle criticism of Marc Antony’s maladministration of Asia, Heslin connects the extra-textual (epigraphic, historical, conjectural) with the intra-textual (fictitious-factual, implicit, polemical) ‘dots’ for narrowing down the time-period during which the poem was written to most likely the beginning of the year 33 BC, when Octavianus started publicly attacking his rival’s arrangements in the East, but definitely not later than the middle of 32 BC, when Tullus had left Rome. Taking his deliberations a step further, Heslin uses both the new political situation and the lack of evidence that any of the poems of the *Monobiblos* were written after Actium as reference points for dating the publication of the same to the early months of 33 BC.

Supplementing as well as challenging Heslin’s argumentation with a closer look at the political-historical context evoked by the lament of the closed door of the temple of *Fides*, i.e., Elegy 1.16, this proposed paper will contend that the *Monobiblos* was published not earlier than in the year 32 BC. Key points in support of this argument include a discussion of the premise brought forth by Corbeill (2005) that the lucky man to whom *Fides* is giving her full attention behind the temple-door is Augustus; an examination of the unchaste goddess of Political Loyalty through the lens of Late Republican moralist discourse; and a recontextualization of elegiac *fides*

in the Oath of Loyalty, which Octavianus secured from the inhabitants of Italy and the Western provinces in 32 BC.

There is no doubt that Heslin's step of dating the publication of the *Monobiblos* to the pre-Actium era has made a tremendous contribution to recent attempts of reexamining and reconceptualizing the notion of 'Augustan poetry' (e.g., Farrell and Nelis 2013). By pushing the publication date of Propertius' first book of poetry back to the year 32 BC, this proposed paper contributes to a sub-aspect of this discussion in that it identifies the *Monobiblos* not as Augustan nor as proto-Augustan, but as post-Triumviral poetry.

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