A Note on Propertius 1.1.24

At Propertius 1.1.23-4, the *Oxford Classical Text* and apparatus of Stephen Heyworth reads:

\[\text{tunc ego crediderim vobis et sidera et umbras}\]
\[\text{posse Cytinaeis ducere carminibus.}\]

23 umbras Jeverus: amnis Ω et manes et sidera vobis Housman (et del. Morgan 1990)
24 nosse Jeverus Cytinaeis Hertzberg: cytalinis Ω (cytainis N postea): Cytaines ζ: Cytaiadis Leo

In the companion to his text, Heyworth focuses on the implications of magic for this section of the poem and argues, “it would be conventional for a Roman to think of approaching a witch to free him from the *furor* of love”.1) This is true, but I believe a specific witch is implied, Medea, and that an intertextual nod to Ennius’ *Medea* points the reader in this direction. Therefore, I argue that *Cytaines* should be read in line 24 as opposed to Heyworth’s *Cytinaeis*.2) This change stresses that the *carminibus* are those of Medea because Cytai was a town in Colchis. Camps explains the formation of this adjective as follows: “The form *Cytaeine* would be an alternative to *Cytaias* as *Nereine* is to *Nereis*, and *Cytaias* would be its (Greek) genitive”.3) Heyworth’s *Cytinaeis* implies Thessaly (where Cytina was a town) and would allude to the tradition that Thessaly was a center of witchcraft. While both readings have additional support in the Propertian corpus (2.4.7 *nocturna Cytaias*; 3.24.9–10 *quod mihi non patrii poterant avertere amici, l eluere aut vasto Thassala saga mari*), I believe the Ennian intertext at the poem’s beginning tips the scales in favor of *Cytaines*.

Propertius knew Ennius’ works and responds to his *Annales* and his tragedies in his elegies, especially in the *reçusationes* of the third and fourth books.4) Although Propertius rejects the themes and epic *gravitas* of the *Annales*, the mythological tales and heightened *pathos* of Ennian tragedy may have appealed to Propertius,

1) Heyworth 2007a, 10.
2) This alternative has been defended recently by Günther (1997, 8, 33-4). *Cytaines* is the choice of Butler’s earlier OCT (‘1960), and is defended by Richardson (1977 *ad loc*). Hertzberg (1843-5 *ad loc.*) gives the fullest discussion of the possible conjectures, dismissing his previous suggestion of *Cytinaeis*, and cautiously accepting *Cytaeines*.
3) Camps 1961 *ad loc.*, with further defense of its suitability here.
4) He names Ennius at 3.3.6 and 4.1.61 as well as possibly alluding to Ennius’ famous scene of poetic initiation at 3.1.15-20, cf. Nethercut 1970, 391.
whose elegies so often employ mythological figures as exempla for his relationship with Cynthia. One can find isolated linguistic parallels between Ennius’ tragedies and Propertius’ elegies, but the opening of Propertius 1.1 reveals a more subtle intertextual relationship between the two authors.

Medea appears eight times in Propertius’ poetic corpus, whether by name, or identified through her association with Colchis, her love for Jason, or her witchcraft. At the beginning of Propertius 1.1 the poet describes how he first fell in love with his mistress, Cynthia. The poet claims (1.1.1-5),

\[
\text{Cynthia prima suis miserum me cepit ocellis,} \\
\text{contactum nullis ante cupidinibus.}
\]

A quick glance at the commentaries shows that this passage owes its sentiment and some of its language to an epigram of Meleager (AP 12.101). The epigrammatic genre is highly important to Propertius, and he amplifies the meaning of Meleager’s poem to apply to his own subjective idea of love: “Propertius tells also of the suffering which the overthrow of wisdom has caused in his own experience . . . the pain of love is for Propertius its chief quality”. However Camps, Richardson, and Barber fail to mention another parallel to this opening couplet. One of the fragments of Ennius’ Medea, preserved in Cicero’s Tusculan Disputations (Tusc. 3.63) shows marked linguistic parallels to this passage. Cicero is writing about the effect of distress and pain on individuals, before introducing Medea’s Nurse:

\[
\text{sunt autem alii quos in luctu cum ipsa solitudine loqui saepe delectat, ut illa apud Ennium nutrix:} \\
cupido cepit miseram nunc me proloqui \\
ciaelo atque terrae Medeai miserias.}
\]

The Nurse has left Medea’s house in order to lament the troubles of her mistress and the two quoted lines reveal a similarity to Propertius’ beginning (cupido, cepit, miseram, me all repeated in some form). The use of illa . . . nutrix leads the reader

6) Cf. Prop. 2.1.54; 2.4.7; 2.21.11; 2.24.45; 2.34.8; 3.11.9; 3.19.17; 4.5.41.  
9) Cf. E. Med. (56-8), which Ennius follows, while adding the word-play miseram . . . miserias missing from the original. Most likely, this passage appeared at a similar, early point in Ennius’ play. Ahl (1974, 81) notes this Ennian parallel as support for the use of capere to